

# Roses of Doom

S.P. Wish

**Roses of Doom**  
**S.P. Wish**

**Published by S.P. Wish at smashwords.**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without prior written permission of the author. Any person who does who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the author's prior consent in any form in any form of binding or cover other than in which it is published without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to real people or events, real or coincidental is unintended.

Smashwords edition, license notes

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased/downloaded for your use only, then please return to Smashwords.com and purchase/download for free your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

Visit [www.spwishworks.blogspot.com](http://www.spwishworks.blogspot.com) for more information, updates and special merchandise. Discover other titles by S.P. Wish at [smashwords.com](http://smashwords.com)

Copyright 2010 S.P. Wish

A map to your spooky journey.....

Character Profiles

Introduction

Chapter 1....Spooky Stories

Chapter 2....Start of an Adventure

Chapter 3....Stranger

Chapter 4....The Secret  
Chapter 5....The Rose Band  
Chapter 6....Won's past  
Chapter 7....A Scary Night  
Chapter 9....Loss  
Chapter 10....A Miracle  
Chapter 11....The Burial Ceremony  
Chapter 12....Return  
Chapter 13.....The End  
Chapter 14....A Letter to Everyone  
Acknowledgements  
About the author

## **Character Profiles**

### **Mizu**

**Name-** Mizu Williams

**Age-**11

**Date of birth-** 1st October

**Western Zodiac-** Libra

**Chinese zodiac-** Dog

**Blood type-** A+

**Hobbies-** Watching horror movies, reading, trying to kill time, writing articles for the school newspaper, chatting, criticizing brother

**Favourite colour-** Black

**Favourite person-** Sakura, Seiya, Akumu and mom.

**Least favourite person-** Kaji

**Self description in one word-** Friendly

**Kaji's description-** Lazy

### **Kaji**

**Name-** Kaji Williams

**Age-**11

**Date of birth-** 1st October

**Western zodiac-** Libra

**Chinese zodiac-** Dog

**Blood type-** A+

**Hobbies-** Studying, researching, reading, music, meeting up with Akumu

**Favourite colour-** Green

**Favourite person-** Akumu

**Least favourite person-** None

**Self description in one word-** Smart  
**Mizu's description-** Cocky

### **Akumu**

**Name-** Akumu Alexander  
**Age-**11  
**Date of birth-** 28<sup>th</sup> June  
**Western Zodiac-** Cancer  
**Chinese zodiac-** Dog  
**Blood type-** AB+  
**Hobbies-** Studying, reading horror stories, researching  
**Favourite colour-** Purple  
**Favourite person-** Kaji  
**Least favourite person-** None  
**Self description in one word-** Intelligent

### **Seiya**

**Name-** Seiya Daidouji  
**Age-**11  
**Date of birth-** 19<sup>th</sup> June  
**Western zodiac-** Gemini  
**Chinese zodiac-** Dog  
**Blood type-** O+  
**Hobbies-** Writing, reading, music, socializing  
**Favourite colour-** Yellow  
**Favourite person-** Likes everyone equally  
**Least favourite person-** Principal  
**Self description in one word-** Outgoing

### **Sakura**

**Name-** Sakura  
**Age-**11  
**Date of birth-** 5<sup>th</sup> September  
**Western Zodiac-** Virgo  
**Chinese zodiac-** Dog  
**Blood type-** B+  
**Hobbies-** Editing newspaper (school), helping Mizu, reading news, studying  
**Favourite colour-** Pink  
**Favourite person-** Mizu  
**Least favourite person-** Kaji  
**Self description in one word-** Understanding

Roses of Doom  
S.P. Wish

### Introduction

There was silence in the classroom. Not a single student whispered or sighed. Even the usually noisy fans rotated in silence. An important test was in progress. Only one week had passed since I joined the sixth grade and the teacher was giving a test.

I hated this silence. Let me introduce myself. I am Mizu Williams-the irritating girl who can't keep her big mouth shut. I also poke my nose into other people's affairs. Besides being clumsy and extremely bad in studies I am also the editor of the school newspaper. I became the editor only because no one else was ready to. My friend Sakura, the vice editor helps me out with my duties.

My big mouth keeps getting me into trouble and my lack of interest in studies gets me bad grades. I love to watch horror movies and I hate to study. I love to eat too.

Today is the day of 'the important test'. It is important because my mom said that if I got a poor grade in this test (like I usually do), she would send me to a faraway boarding school. And I don't want that to happen. That is why I tried to study the whole of last night.

It was indeed difficult. I thought I would study the whole night but I was getting so bored that I switched on the Television. I just kept the book open on my lap and watched a movie. After the movie ended, I slept.

My irritating twin brother Kaji is very good at studies. He always gets an O (outstanding) grade. He has blonde hair and blue eyes just like me. He doesn't do any other work or play. He just studies. I wish he didn't study so much. He never misses a chance to brag about his good grades. He's not interested in anything except studies and knowledge- Could someone in the universe probably be so boring?

Kaji has a best friend. His name is Akumu. He has brown eyes and brunette hair. His mother and my mother are good friends. He also gets an O grade just like Kaji. He is quiet and well-mannered.

Seiya is also a school newspaper reporter. He has black hair and small black eyes. He is Japanese. You may be wondering why all our names are Japanese although we are Americans. This is because Akumu's mother and my mother spent their childhood in Japan. That is why they wanted us to have Japanese names. Seiya is one of my best friends. He is friendly and open minded.

This is all by way of introduction. I hope you'll enjoy the story of my spooky adventure. Let's begin our story.

## Chapter 1

### Spooky stories

At last the test was over. I knew I had done badly again. When I submitted the paper, it was blank white like it had been bleached. The shining white struck everyone's eye in the class. They knew I had written absolutely nothing. I should at least have made a doodle. But there was no hope for me now. After that terrible paper, I knew that I was going away to a faraway boarding school.

But, my brother Kaji looked very happy. He knew that he had done well and would get good grades. He was talking with Akumu and was surrounded by girls who were admiring him. All the girls in the class were crazy about him. Even Miko the snob liked him. Miko had small black eyes and grey hair. She was the richest girl in the whole school. There were rumors that her father owned oil mines and a luxury cruise line. Miko was always showing off trying to remember which country she had got her accessories from.

"Hello Mizu." A familiar voice called out.

"Hello Sakura." I said turning to my best friend.

"Mizu, why don't we walk to the cafeteria and get something to eat?" she asked.

"Why not." I said.

Sakura and I started to walk to the cafeteria to get something to eat.

"Hey, do you know where they're taking us for camping this time?" Seiya asked. "Green fire forest!"

"What's so special about that place?" I asked.

"You mean, you don't know?" Seiya asked. "There's Won's mansion there."

"Won?" I asked.

"You don't know who Won is?" Seiya asked with undisguised surprise.

"He's a strange spirit monster about which we have a lot of legends. They're just stories." Sakura said.

"They're real." Seiya said.

"Such stupid things cannot be true." Sakura said.

"Will you please tell me what you're talking about?" I asked.

“It all started a long time ago” Seiya began with enthusiasm. Everyone gathered around to listen to his story. “Greenfire forest was a graveyard. All people who were mischievous, played nasty tricks and were evil used to be buried here. There was an active volcano near the cemetery in Greenfire forest. For many years the souls of the buried people were dormant but one day everything changed. It was a humid Saturday night.....

The graveyard’s night guard had come for his duty. Children came to the graveyard to look around but the guard drove all of them away. The children were persistent. They found another way into the graveyard from the backside. The guard thought that it was late night so he closed the gates and went away. The children went into the graveyard and saw many people buried. They started to dig for the coffins because they were very naughty.

Suddenly as they hit upon one of the coffins they heard a strange noise. They were frightened.

SUDDENLY, a rapid wind started blowing. A black shadow appeared. They couldn’t understand what was going on.

Soon they discovered it was the spirit of Won.

According to old legends Won was a ferocious monster. He was like the monsters that appeared in horror movies. Won was killed about two hundred years ago from that day. He was also known as the Black Rose.

Won’s spirit came alive from the coffin. It raced behind the frightened children. The children tried to run and escape but the front gate was closed. It was a dead end. A flash of light appeared. The volcano erupted and lava started to flow. That was all they remembered.....

The next morning the children were found dead. It was scary. How and why the children were killed, no one knew. Some people thought the children were killed by the volcano. The volcano had erupted that night but strangely no one had heard anything. The spirit of Won was free and his coffin was empty.

On the three children lay three garlands of black roses.....”

## Chapter 2

### Start of an Adventure

“Well now it is a busy tourist place. A famous businessman built a tourist park. Over the years many trees grew in the park and it transformed into a forest. Many people visit the forest. They go camping there. There are beautiful ponds, cottages and fun filled jogging tracks. The forest has the most beautiful birds. At one end of the forest lies the cave. They say this was where the volcano used to be.” Seiya said.

“Trrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr” the bell rang. It was time to study math- I hated math. I was still hungry. I was so caught up in listening to Seiya that I forgot all about eating. I slowly walked towards the classroom with a heavy heart and empty stomach.

I begged Sakura to miss the class with me but she was too fond of math to do anything of that sort. She dragged me to class. She’s really good at math and solves complicated sums quickly. It takes me fifteen minutes to multiply seven and nine.

Mrs. Morie gave us permission slips to get them signed from our parents.

“We’re going to the Greenfire forest.” She said. “Please get this permission slips signed.”  
“Can I skip?” I asked.

“Unfortunately, it is compulsory.” Mrs. Morrie said. “Mizu, the grades of this trip will be added to your report card. I suggest you attend it at least for the sake of getting a better grade.”

“I have a question.” Joe the nerd said. “What is seven multiplied by three.”

How dumb could someone get? Even I knew it was thirty six. I am such a genius at math only my ability is not recognized. Kaji thinks he’s smart but he says seven multiplied by three is twenty one. He says when I do math, my head gets dizzy and I see wrong numbers. Everyone knows how mistaken he is.

When I reached home, mom was waiting for us. She signed the permission slip for me.

The trip would begin the following day and we would come back in three days. The notice was rather abrupt. After hearing so much about the forest I didn’t want to go there but this trip was compulsory. Kaji and Akumu were not afraid of such things. They thought these stories were not true.

I couldn’t help thinking about the story Seiya had said while walking home from school. All the friendly shops seemed to be hiding something. I wondered what kind of place the forest would be. I couldn’t help anything except a dark forest filled with high trees where wolves howled at night and ghosts sang. It gave me shudders.

That night I couldn’t sleep. I kept thinking about the forest. I had packed my bag for the next day. I carried four torches and a prayer book to exterminate evil. The bag consisted of my usual clothes and other necessities. I did not want to go to the forest but I had no choice. Somehow that endless night passed.

The next morning I was sleeping in the bus. I had not slept the whole of last night and was feeling sleepy.

“Wake up, Mizu.” Sakura said shaking me in the bus.

“I want to sleep.” I said. “I couldn’t sleep the whole of last night.”

“How could you sleep when you know we might die anytime?” John asked. I turned back to look at him.

“Eh?”

“If I were you, I’d never sleep.” John said. “Do you know how dangerous these forests are?”

“Everything about it is just a story. There’s no need to believe everything.” Sakura said.

“This forest is definitely haunted.” John said. “I would be glad if we came back alive.”

After a long ride that seemed like eternity, the bus finally reached Greenfire forest. Mrs. Morie took us to a man who gave us our tents and showed where to camp.

He took us to the place where we had to put up our tents.

Sakura and I built the tent with the help of the ranger’s instructions. It was easy for two masterminds like Kaji and Akumu to put a tent together. They had it done in no time. They brought a lot of books along with them to read. Their tent looked more like a library and less like a tent. These crazy people were planning to read even on camp days. Seiya was alone in his tent so, he brought a play station to spend time. Miko was fussing about the tent. She had packed almost the whole of her house. Her belongings had to be brought in two large trucks.

The scene outside seemed scary. Thick, tall trees blocked sunlight. The more I looked at it, the more afraid I felt.

As I finished building my tent, Mrs. Morie requested me to go and get some firewood to light a fire at night. Seiya, Akumu and Kaji went with me.

We wandered through the dark forest. All the trees were so high and thick that we could not get any wood from those. We would need sophisticated machinery to chop them down to bits of wood.

“Let’s go further into the forest. Probably all the smaller trees and wood pieces are hiding there.” Akumu said.

We went further into the forest. I passed through the dreaded volcanic cave. It was a small cave with an entrance at the bottom of the volcano which was dormant now. It didn’t look as spooky as I had expected it to. But the volcano had definitely erupted. I could see solidified lava on the volcano’s surface.

“I think there’s nothing here.” Seiya said giving up. “Let’s go back.”

“Thuddddd.” His head hit against something.

“Ouch!” Seiya said. He fell to the ground. He looked what he had bumped into.

It was a post box. Ahead of it, lay a large mansion. It was black due to soot deposition and was definitely old. Creepers hung to every crack on its surface deepening them. Broken tiles and some pieces of chopped wood was scattered around.

“Does anyone know who lives here?” Kaji asked.

“Maybe it belongs to the management.” Akumu said.

“Let us knock.” Seiya said.

“I am hungry.” I said.

We all walked towards the mansion and knocked the door. To our surprise, it was open.

“Seems like no one lives here.” Akumu said. “Let us look for firewood. It is getting dark.”



We went in to search for wood. It was dark so we switched on our torches. The things inside had been damaged. It looked centuries old. There was a cracked crystal ball lying in one corner of the room. The couches had been ripped and cotton was oozing out. There was a strange, large painting which showed three monsters and a thin strip which showed an egg, a monster and a human. 'B' was written as a titled. The rest was missing.

Akumu found some firewood in the fireplace. Kaji and I found twigs. Seiya went upstairs and brought a log of wood down. I observed that loose glass chandeliers that used to shine grandly hung on the ceiling. They had lost charm and looked ready to be replaced.

Seiya called everyone to have a look at a room upstairs. Kaji found his styling gel there. There was a piece of Akumu's cloth in the corridor. Seiya led us to the room. It was the furthestmost room in the top floor. The door was open. The floor was tiled with wood. There was a large cupboard and many large shelves. Four candles were lit in four corners of the room. The shelves had colourful potions, a dead stinking bat, blood preserved in jars, cloth and a bottle of styling gel. "That's mine." Kaji said looking at the styling gel. He kept the gel in his pocket.

Seiya opened the cupboard to see two wax dolls and candles. There were a lot of spider webs too. There were brass containers and pebbles. After having a look at all the things, I decided it was time to go back.

In the tent, somehow, we started talking about Won. Seiya believed that Won, an ancient spirit monster was the owner of that mansion. "He was pretty famous. There are a lot of myths surrounding him. He lived two hundred years ago." Seiya said. Kaji agreed and then went on. He said that people say Won possessed the power to communicate with spirits and he was a psychic. He had powers which no one else did but he used them for evil. He was very selfish and used his power for his own benefit.

Wow! I thought. It must have been great to have such wonderful powers. But he should have used them wisely. They say after his death his powers divided. They split into five parts-his brain, heart, sound, nails and the soul of reconstruction.

Each of these parts had a special power. His brain gives him memory. His heart keeps him alive. His voice transmits ultrasonic waves. His nails are like poison stings and his soul is for his reconstruction.

Thinking about such a monster gave me the creeps. I silently prayed that I would never have to meet Won. I felt insecure. The cold wind somehow warned me that my prayers would not be answered. I looked up with fear at the setting sun.....

## Chapter 3

### Stranger

“What do you mean by reconstruction?” asked Seiya.

“Reconstruction means ability of the soul to create itself again and get back its original physical body.” answered Akumu, scientifically as ever.

“You mean the soul of Won is free to reconstruct itself?” asked Seiya.

“Yes it is but that soul needs the five parts Kaji mentioned.” replied Akumu. “However, once the spirit is free, it can possess people. We have to be careful.”

I was amazed at Kaji and Akumu’s knowledge of Won. How come they knew so much about such centuries old stories? Akumu did not believe in spirits, souls and other make-believes. Akumu once told me that his mother tells him a spooky story every night so that he grows to be bold. That’s why I watch spooky movies too but it doesn’t seem to be helping much.

It was time for dinner. Mrs. Morrie called us out for dinner. I was sitting beside Kaji.

“Kaji.” I asked. “Does Won still live there?”

“Won died two hundred years ago. How could he probably live there?” Kaji asked.

“Now, we will be eating.” Mrs. Morrie announced.

At night we lit a fire and roasted marshmallows. We also ate burgers which Mrs. Morie had made for us. Although she was a bad teacher, she turned out to be a very good cook. “Tomorrow, you can explore the forest on your own.” Mrs. Morrie said. “Be sure to come back in the evening. Talk to me before you leave though.”

After dinner, I took out a video game that I had brought along. It was called the haunted house. I played it for a long time. Then, Sakura beckoned me to sleep.

While lying down Sakura asked me if I wanted to come with her to the volcanic cave. She was planning to go to the cave the following day. She wanted to see what had happened to the volcano. I agreed, although I was quite frightened to go there. On looking at it, the cave looked ordinary but one could never judge a book by its cover. I wonder what secrets lay hidden in the cave. While one part of me wanted to know about the mysteries another part of me was too scared to think.

I was beginning to get the feeling that all the events that occurred to day were a part of a bigger picture. A bigger and scarier picture.....

## Chapter 4

### The Secret

When the alarm clock rang the next morning I did not wake up because I thought it was not morning yet. It was still dark outside. The trees were blocking the light. Sakura woke me up after sometime.

When I went out of the tent, Mrs. Morie was waiting for me. She handed all the students a walkie talkie and a small bag. She told us that we could explore the forest that day. We could go wherever we wanted. The walkie talkies were for contacting the ranger station in case we got lost and the bag had some food and a torch in it. She also told us that we should be back by seven in the evening. Mrs. Morrie was probably spending her time with the rangers.

“Let’s go to the cave.” Sakura said. “I’ve heard the minerals around there are good for your body.”

“I am a little scared.” I said.

“Do you believe in those stories Seiya told you?” Sakura asked. “He was not serious. Those are just myths. I’m here with you.”

“I hope everything goes well. We’re leaving tomorrow.” I said.

I decided to go with Sakura. What was the worst that could happen? Definitely no human could control volcanoes. There was nothing such as an evil spirit who lived in a forest. Why should a monster live in a forest when there are better places with more facilities to live in?

Soon, Sakura and I were on our way to the cave. The cave was far from our camp. After quite a while we reached the entrance of the cave. It was dark inside. There were no lights in the cave. A part of the cave had been blocked. We went inside. Sakura turned her torch on and so did I. We saw the inner part of the cave. Many people did not visit the cave as they thought it was haunted. The cave had not been visited for at least one hundred years.

I had expected the cave to be extremely dusty and criss-crossed with cobwebs. But I was wrong. It was very clean-even cleaner than my house. I was amazed.

As we headed further things seemed even stranger. Eager to know more, Sakura and I walked on. We reached a clearing in a minute. There was a wooden door and mat blocking the second part of the cave. There was a rusty name plate. The door was open so, Sakura and I decided to walk in.

There were two couches and a big table when we entered. Another room containing four dining chairs and a dining table was separated by a curtain. The floor was furnished with a red carpet. It was so clean. There was a computer in the corner too. I decided to check the computer out for answers. This place was totally different from what I had expected. Someone was definitely living here. The firewood was still hot. There were all kinds of questions in my mind. I tried to start the computer but it was not working.

“This is far from scary.” Sakura said. “I told you, didn’t I?”

“Maybe you were right.” I agreed. “All those horror movies have made you gullible.”

I tried the computer but it didn’t open. I got frustrated after a while. All devices were protected with a security code. The person living in this cave which now seemed like a

mansion was definitely rich or influential. We started walking out. I decided to start walking back because I was hungry. Sakura came with me.

As we were walking out of the cave, we heard a loud scream. The sound was shrill and piercing. My organs jolted.

It was coming from the mansion. What's more, the voice sounded like Kaji's. Had Kaji got into trouble? He was my brother after all and I had to save him.

"Sakura...did you hear that?" I asked.

"Was that Kaji?" Sakura said wanting me to tell her she was mistaken. But I nodded.

"Let's go." Sakura said. "He needs us."

"I have torches with me so we shouldn't have any problem." I said. "I hope Kaji and Akumu are all right. That mansion spooks me out."

Sakura and I ran towards the mansion. It was still the same as yesterday. In fact, it was unusually quiet. There was no scream or discord in the surroundings. This eerie silence seemed like a premonition. My heart was running on a treadmill. I couldn't bear this suspense and horror. My heart would jump out of my body any moment.

I was panting because I ran all the way from the cave. Sakura was panting too.

We reached the mansion door and opened it carefully. The door did not move as it was jammed. We tried hard to pull it, but it would not open. Now this was what I was expecting. There was definitely something wrong with this house.

"The door is not budging." Sakura said. "You went here yesterday, didn't you? Did you close it?"

"No." I said.

Kaji screamed once again. The sound was synthetic but it was definitely Kaji's voice. I walked over to the walls and tried to see what was happening through the windows. The curtains unfortunately blocked the view. I was sweating. There was some breeze which cooled my sweat making me feel chilly. I was frozen from inside. What was happening to Kaji? Where was everyone? I wondered how long by surface warmth would last. I was going to breakdown. The place just interfered with my aura. I would never come here again if I had the choice. This mansion was certainly different from the ones shown in horror movies.

"Mizu, help me kick the door open." Sakura said. "If we use force together, we might be able to break it open."

"I'm coming Sakura." I said hurrying over to her. We took a position one meter away from the door.

"Ready Mizu? When I count three, let's run and break the door." Sakura said. I nodded.

"One.....Two.....Three!!!!!!!"

Sakura and I ran with full force and managed to break the door open. It was quite fragile. It broke easily maybe because it was old. I opened the door and let Sakura enter first.

The mansion looked just like it looked yesterday-old and creaky. Sakura stepped inside then suddenly Oh No!! The floor collapsed and Sakura fell into an abyss. I tried to hold

her hand but it was too late. The gap in the floor closed and my hand was jammed. I was forced to pull it out.

“Mizu....Mizu.....Mizu.....” her voice trailed away.

“Sakura! Sakura!” I called out but no one answered.

I was terrified. How...How...How could such a thing happen. It was unbelievable. How could the gap close just like that? Was I imagining things?

I pinched myself. It hurt....that meant this was not a dream! No way! Sakura had fallen into a hole that opened on entering the house and closed in an instant. What was this if not a dream? I had to brace myself and find a way to get Kaji, Akumu and Sakura back. I decided to start by looking for Sakura.

I tried to find Sakura but I did not see her anywhere. Then, I remembered Kaji’s scream. I rushed upstairs to find out what had happened to Kaji but there was no one. All the rooms in the floor were empty. I rushed down again to check the rooms in the ground floor. But, as with the upper floor all the rooms in the ground floor were empty too. Kaji and Sakura had just disappeared! ...DISAPPEARED! Into thin air....

I rushed to the second floor and vigorously checked all the rooms. They were just like they had been left yesterday. There was just loneliness. I was standing along in this spooky mansion. I rushed downstairs to check the rooms. To my disappointment, they were empty too.

Tiny tears sprang up in my eyes. I had lost everything I had- My brother, my friends....They were gone! I wanted to cry till my stomach ached and my eyes were red but I knew this was not the time.

“You cannot give up!” I told myself. “Cry later. Your friends are waiting for you. Don’t let them down. They’re still here so, go find them. They’re still here.....somewhere.....”

But negative thoughts filled my mind. It was the last day of our camp and I had run out of water. Sakura and Kaji were nowhere to be found. While I was crying, three hours had gone by. It was evening. The fickle orange sun danced on the horizon. It could sink anytime. How could I ever find Sakura? As I sat thinking, the door to the mansion opened. In walked Kaji and Akumu. Seiya was there too.

“Kaji! Kaji! You’re here!!!!” I said. I ran to him and hugged him tightly.

“Mizu, you’ve never been so happy to see me ever in your life.” Kaji said sarcastically.

“I am so happy!” I said. “Do you know where Sakura is?”

“Sakura? I thought she was with you....” Kaji said.

“Never mind. Why did you scream?” I asked.

“Scream? What are you talking about Mizu?” Kaji asked.

“Weren’t you screaming from the mansion?” I asked.

“Are you kidding? I was in the cave all this time. I came here because I heard you scream.”

I told him what happened to Sakura and how she disappeared. He was amazed. Seiya was perplexed. Suddenly, Seiya exclaimed. Maybe he had come up with a plan.

“Come with me.” Seiya said.  
We all went upstairs with Seiya.

He went to the room which we had visited the day before. He opened the third cupboard and then the second but it looked like he did not get what he wanted. He tried to open the fourth cupboard but it did not unlock. He asked all of us to help him. We tried to use all our strength but it was of no use. I could see that it was getting dark outside.

“Let us call the ranger station” said Kaji.

We all tried calling but the waves were not transmitted. The walkie talkie was not working. Maybe there was some disruption in the network.

Akumu got an idea. The candles were still burning. He took one candle from the east corner of the room and tried to melt the lock. It worked! The lock melted. At last we were able to see what was in the cupboard. Seiya quickly opened the cupboard and started searching.

“What are you searching for?” asked Akumu.

“The book of spells” replied Seiya.

“What book of spells?” asked Kaji?

Seiya told him that he belonged to the Daidouji family. The Daidouji family is supposed to be a magical family. All the members of this family hold magical powers. When Seiya was small he was taught that every haunted house has a book of spells. If one has to do things like opening a secret passage or closing a hole it could surely be done by some special spells.

Akumu saw a book lying under the cupboard. He picked it up. It was dusty so he couldn't read it. Kaji cleaned it with his handkerchief. The title of the book said ‘The book of spells’ just as Seiya had guessed. Seiya started looking for a spell to open cracks in the house. He soon found one.

Every word was written in a strange language. I did not understand anything but Seiya did. He said we had to find a few things to be able to open the cracks. He said we needed a candle, some blood and a dead bat. We found all these things nearby. Now I understood why the things were lying on the shelf. Maybe someone used them. But the question was who?

“We have to perform a ritual.” Seiya said. “I'll guide you.”

We had to stand in four corners of the room holding a candle each. After five minutes of silence, we had to burn the bat. Before starting the ritual we had to clean the bat with blood. There should be no sound except breathing in the five minutes of silence.

We stood on four corners of the room holding a candle each. After five minutes of torturous silence we burned the bat. I felt very bad for the bat. I loved animals. The bat was already dead so Seiya said I didn't have to feel guilty.

When the bat turned black a crevice started to appear in the surface of the floor. It became larger and finally turned into a gap.

I could Sakura inside it. She saw me too. She was floating towards the top on a black plant. I reached out my hand for her. Soon, she reached the surface.

“Sakura! Sakura!” I said hugging her tightly, almost strangling her.

I lent her a hand and got her out. After she got out Seiya uttered some strange words. The crevice slowly closed again. Sakura was looking terribly relieved. She was very happy to see us. She said she was trapped in the crevice. She could hear strange noises but did not see anyone.

“I was so lonely and scared to death.” Sakura said. “I felt hungry and thirsty and thought I had met my end. I am so glad Mizu, you found me. It was so dark there.....I never want to be there again. I am so glad to be back.”

Everyone comforted Sakura. After a while, she felt better. We walked back to the camp where a worried Mrs. Morrie was waiting.

Not all was good however. Mrs. Morrie was calling out the results of the test. I was doomed.

Unfortunately, there was some bad news waiting for me. My paper had been graded and I was ready to get myself hanged. I knew I had done badly in the test. The fear of a bad grade seemed worse than the fear of Won.

“Kaji- O- Outstanding as usual.” She began. My heart was sinking.

“Mizu...” she said at last. “E...” Oh no! I had done badly again. My destiny was a far away boarding school. My life was ruined. But it had an advantage. Away from family meant away from Kaji.

I wanted to hide my paper and forget about it but with Kaji being close to me, my plans were in vain. He would reach home after the camp and immediately brag about his record of Os to mom. Then, it would be my turn to go through the misery of crying, getting lectured and being sent to a boarding school. I didn’t want to leave my friends. This place was special for me. But...I had failed....I wish there was some miracle that could turn the ‘F’ in my paper to an ‘A’.

Fortunately, that was our last day in the camp. But all these adventures and all these strange happenings. We had been connected to them. Something was definitely going on...something that gave me the creeps.

I had the feeling that this was not the last time I saw the mansion. It was summoning me with its eerie silence. What we had gone through was just one chapter in our book of doom.....

## Chapter 5 The Rose Band

The next morning we were ready to go back. The camping trip had ended. The school bus was waiting for us outside the camp. I was glad to see it. I eagerly jumped into the bus

and went to school. From school I walked home with Kaji and Akumu. Akumu was coming to our house again to study with Kaji. Akumu studied even on holidays.

When we reached home mom was waiting for us. She was very happy to see us back. She had made chocolate brownies for us. I love chocolate brownies. Mom makes them so well. Kaji however, was not so interested in eating. He wanted to study because he had not studied for three days. He felt awkward whenever he did not study and I felt awkward when I studied.

The bad news came soon enough. Kaji began bragging about his grade and it was my turn to speak up.

“Which grade did you get, Mizu?” mom asked.

“I....” I swallowed hard. “An F but I tried.”

“Sure. If watching horror movies with closed textbooks on your lap is called studying.”

Kaji said. Why did he have to say these things to me?

“F!? You’ve been getting ‘F’ forever. I hope you remember what I told you about the boarding school.” Mom said.

“Mom! Please no! Don’t send me away.” I begged. “I want to be here with my friends.”

“Watching horror movies and getting Fs?” mom asked, cross.

“I promise I’ll do better next time. I will definitely get an A.”

“Aren’t you aiming too high?” Kaji asked. There was no need for him to speak.

“Mom, don’t you love me? I want to stay here. For your sake I promise I’ll try harder.

Till now, I’ve only been sleeping with the book closed but I’ll try harder next time. I’ll really study. I’ll get help from Kaji and Akumu.”

“You said that last time too, dear.” Mom said.

“This time I am serious.” I said. I began crying. “I don’t want to go away from you mom. I will miss your fresh brownies, your care, your love, the way you scold me and the way you laugh.... I want to stay with you as long as I can. I will try harder for you next time. I have been taking things lightly but now I realize all the things I have around me are precious and by not realizing their value, I am throwing them away.”

“Mizu....” mom said her eyes suddenly cloudy. “I was secretly hoping you’d do well because I didn’t want to send you away. I love you too. I want you to always be with me. Even though I said I’d send you away to a faraway boarding school, I never wanted to. I couldn’t live without you. I couldn’t picture you away from me. Try harder next time Mizu, okay? But remember, even if you fail, you’re still my precious daughter and I will always love you the same way I love Kaji. Mizu, I think it is okay if you’re not good at studying. Everyone has different talents. As a parent, it is my duty to make you realize your potential. If you don’t like studying, I cannot force you...”

“Mom. Don’t give up. I will definitely do better next time- for you sake. I want to make you happy.”

“I will be waiting dear.” Mom said. “Look at my eyes....I’ll go and wash them...”

Mom went away to wash her eyes.

The phone rang. It was Sakura on the phone.

“Hello.” I said.



“Hello, Mizu, this is Sakura.” Sakura said. “There is a performance by Rose band today evening near your house. Please go there and get some information about them for the school newspaper.”

Rose band was one of the most popular bands in the music scene. They had made their debut just last year and they were already hitting #1 on music charts all over the world. They had a cool image and dressed like Victorian era. Their songs were rock songs and ballads. I had never seen them live.

“The show starts at five.” Sakura said. “Be there on time. Seiya will be there too.”

“I’ll be there. Bye.” I said ending the call.

Sakura had already given Seiya the passes. Sakura did not want to go because she hated the Rose band for some unknown reason. She thought they put on too much make up and looked like plastic dolls. The only reason she was sending us to the concert was because her father had got two free passes to the concert and she didn’t want to go. She wanted to kill two birds with one stone, so, she told us to write an article on their concert in the newspaper. Since I was the editor of the school newspaper I agreed to go. Our normal life was back again.

The concert was in the evening. I went upstairs after speaking to Sakura to see what Kaji and Akumu were doing. They were studying as usual. They could study the whole day. They loved to study! I told mom and them about the concert. Mom wanted to come too but unfortunately I had only one ticket. Mom said she would go next time if I ever got a ticket.

That evening I went to the concert. Mom sent Kaji and Akumu with me because they were studying too much. Kaji and Akumu were not interested in music. They wanted to study- so boring. Akumu’s mom had two tickets which she lent to Akumu.

We met Seiya that evening. Seiya had come an hour earlier to my house. He loved the Rose band and did not want to miss any part of the concert.

The concert had started when I came. I was late because Kaji and Akumu wanted to go to the cybercafé before accompanying me to the concert.

The atmosphere of the concert was dull and melancholic. The singer had a baritone voice and screamed and cried a lot. His voice was emotional. There was black smoke all around.

When I came, the Rose band was singing their second song. Curse you Kaji. I missed the best song on their album.

I started to photograph their performance from that moment. The concert went on till nine in the night. Then the audience slowly started leaving. I went out too. When we were a little far from the concert hall I remembered that I had left my camera behind. So, all of us had to go back to fetch my camera.

The reception was empty. I made my way to the room where the concert was held.

The camera was not on the chair where I had left it. I went to the counter and asked them if they knew anything about my camera. They said that maybe the camera was with the

Rose band. They said that I should check with the Rose band members if they were not sleeping.

I went upstairs to the room where the Rose band members were supposed to be. The lights were still on. That meant they were not sleeping. Just when Akumu was about to knock on the door, speedy winds started blowing and all the lights went off. The lights of the whole hotel went off. I could see someone walking towards the room of the Rose band. From what I could see, the person had long hair and was of the same height as me. I knew I had seen this woman somewhere.

Distracting me, Kaji called me. He said that something strange was happening to the Rose band. There was a big hole in the door through which we all saw what was happening to the band. First we could see that wind was blowing in that room too. Then something very strange happened.

All the members of the Rose band looked towards the door and their eyes turned rose red! It looked so frightening. Their eyes were in fact glowing rose red. We could see their eyes clearly through the darkness.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh” I yelled like a fool in the darkness. They heard me.

“Mizu, are you crazy?” Kaji asked. “Why did you yell like that?”

“I was afraid.” I said.

Akumu said that this was not the time to search for the camera. He also added that we could come back tomorrow for the camera.

“Now we should hurry home.” He said.

If the band saw us, we would get into trouble. I thought that Akumu had a point. If the lights came on before we made our exit.....I didn't want to think what would happen.

Without hesitating, we all hurried downstairs. We were halfway down the stairs when the lights came on. We quickly went out the building. We started to run home.

When I reached home with Kaji, I was very frightened and tired too. I went up to my bedroom and slept. I somehow managed to sleep that night but those red eyes still flashed in my troubled mind.....

## Chapter 6 Won's Past

Sakura called me up the other day and told me of a Rose Band performance to which she had tickets. She was sending those to me. She had four tickets this time.

“Kaji, Akumu, would you like to come with me?” I asked.

“May I study instead?” Kaji asked.

“Are you nuts?” I asked. “You want to study on Sunday?” I asked

“Let's go.” Akumu said. “I want to see Rose band. I did some research last night. Won because a spirit after death. He still has the power to reconstruct himself. Spirits are not visible. Only when they reconstruct themselves and attain their body can they be seen. When rapid winds blow, your dog starts barking or the lights go off.....you know there's a spirit.”

“Let’s visit.” I said. They agreed.

The band would sing at five in the evening and it was already four forty five. We all hurried to the venue which was near our house.

The Rose Band was already on the stage when we reached there. They were singing some strange kind of song. It was very slow and soft. It was not like the other songs of the Rose band. It was kind of hypnotizing. All the people were listening to the song carefully. When I tried to call the woman near me she did not respond. No one was listening to me except Kaji and Akumu.

Even Akumu felt that there was something strange about the song. Everyone was driven drowsy by the song. There was something different about the Rose band. I decided to wait for the song to end.

When the song ended everybody returned to normal. I returned back to my house with a lot of unsolved questions. The camp had ended two days ago but this misfortune was still following me. The worst was yet to come. When I closed my eyes, I felt that was the only time I glimpsed peace and reality.

In the night, I looked out of my window to see someone running. There were four cloaked figures running. They were wearing black cloaks and black hats. From what I could see, they had long and big white teeth which were very sharp and pointed. Their sharp edges shone in the moonlight. I was terrified.

Their skin had texture of dinosaur or reptile skin and their grin was evil. They were running towards the forest. Some part of me knew that this was the chance to discover the truth. I decided to end it for once and for all. I would go behind the suspicious men and find answers. This was my chance!

I invited Kaji and Akumu. They were planning to study all night but they changed their plan after listening to me. They were going to follow the creatures.

When we were safe into the Greenfire forest, the creatures stopped walking. They shed their skin and looked like humans. Humans - like the members of Rose band.

I moved back but hit against something which caught me. It was definitely hands. I wanted to scream but between the devil and the deep blue sea, there seemed to be no better option.

“Shhhhhh, this is Seiya.” The person holding me said. “I followed them too. Let’s investigate together.”

“I agree.” Akumu said hearing our conversation.

While we were busy chatting, the creatures fled. I could see one of their shadows running towards the mansion.

“They’re heading towards the mansion.” I said.

“What are we waiting for?” Kaji asked. “Let’s go!”

We all teamed up in the clandestine chase.

It was twelve in the night. We had been following them for five minutes. There was something strangely exciting about the whole situation. All this was like a horror movie. Everything was so paranormal. Although I liked all this fantasy and mystery in the beginning, I was now shivering. I had been having this feeling for long. All of us suddenly had this feeling that we were in for bad luck. All that we had seen till now were evil hypnotizing eyes, spirits and graveyards and black roses.....

The Rose band sped up. The members were rushing. It seemed like they were in a hurry. They rushed into the mansion-the mansion of Won. They were climbing stairs that led to the upper floor. They could possibly be going to only one room-the room which had Won's psychic belongings. The crystal ball lay on the floor as usual. There was just one difference - the candle was not burning. Most of it had already melted when we used it the last time we were in there.

The band leader went to the room in the corner. We had never gone into that room before. We were hiding behind the curtains because we did not want to get noticed. We could see what the band members were doing but none of them could see us. There was an advantage in Won's curtain - that it was long. It stretched even below our feet. I felt safe and vulnerable at the same time. Just one glance and that would be the end of our lives.

The band leader came out of the room after some time. He was carrying a piece of cloth with him. He whispered something to the other band members. They all nodded. Then the drummer went upstairs. He brought an old and dusty clock with him.

The guitarist went upstairs too. He brought an old painting with him. It was dusty too and it looked just like the painting I saw the day I came to the mansion for the first time. It was the painting whose title started with the letter 'B'. The drummer wiped the painting nicely. The title was clearly visible now- "Birth of a monster". The band members whispered something to each other and then left the mansion. They closed the door behind them.

All of us came out from behind the curtain and went downstairs. We were all discussing about the painting. Just then the door opened. Seiya was looking frightened and so was I, but there was no fear in Kaji and Akumu's face. When the door opened fully I could see Seiya's mom standing outside. She was waving her hand. She had been looking for Seiya since he left the house. She knew Seiya was going to the woods, so she followed us.

She was cheery and pleasant. She also had slender black eyes and straight black hair like Seiya. Her hair was longer than Seiya's. She looked at all of us and smiled. Then she told Seiya to come back home and told him that he had been out for too long.

Seiya went back home with his mom. Now Kaji, Akumu and I were left behind. Akumu wanted to see the rooms which the band had visited. He was eager to know what secrets lay in them. Kaji went upstairs and Akumu and I strayed downstairs. Kaji wanted to see

the room which the band leader had visited. Akumu and I went into the only room that was in the ground floor. It was the room that the band drummer had visited.

Akumu and I found the door of the room that the drummer had visited. Akumu opened it. As soon as the door opened we could see something glittering inside. We went inside to see what it was.

The room had many antiques inside it. It was full of brass pots, clay tablets, diamond jewels and many other ancient things. There was also a small clay model of Tyrannosaurus Rex. If someone sold the things in that room he would surely become a millionaire. Those things were worth a fortune. I wanted to carry one of them away but Akumu said that they could be cursed; especially the diamond jewelry.

There was a tale behind this too. Akumu told me about it.

It all began in the 1800s. Wealthy people especially the queens and the noble women were interested in diamond jewelry. They wore them to parties and formal meetings. Diamonds increased the value and status of people. Moreover, women also looked beautiful in such jewels. Diamond trading was one of the biggest ways of earning money in that era; before the 'black' incident.

I eagerly asked Akumu what the 'Black incident' was. He replied in a soft voice "The incident which made the diamonds unlucky".

"The black incident was a big mistake made by someone. The person was a diamond cutter and was well known by the name "Won Nigara". Yes, the Won who this mansion belonged to. In his early age Won was a diamond cutter. He was famous for his diamonds which had one thousand cuts.

One day when he was going back home from work he saw someone standing in the way. He stopped his car and got down to see what was happening. A man was standing in the middle of the road. He looked mysterious and wore a black cloak. The strangest part was that people say he had red eyes. Won, who was quite different at that time, asked who the man was.

The man just nodded. He repeated his silent words once again. The man this time was however not so calm. He looked at Won with his red eyes and whispered something. I don't know what he whispered but it was surely something strange because after that Won's eyes glowed red too. The man caught Won's neck and then cast a spell. Won had been very strange after that. The stranger on the road died after the casting the spell. And there lay on him a black rose.

Some people say that he gave Won his psychic powers." Kaji finished the disturbing story. He read it from the newspapers.

The room contained other reading material. There were old newspapers, clippings, magazine cutouts and old books. Akumu took out one book from the bookshelf. Its title was 'your guide to black magic'. There were many chapters like black magic, how to cast

spells, what is black magic etc. The first sentence was ‘Black magic only works with those who do not have a pure heart. Its requirements are evil and selfishness. I took out a newspaper from the shelf and started reading it.

Its headline stated “Supernatural man Won left his body” I read it further. It said about Won’s death. It also said that some people believed that his spirit can come back to his body after two hundred years when the day of the solar eclipse arrives. But, for now there were no traces of solar eclipse and besides, all this was a lame belief. How can a spirit come back to its body?

I read further.

The Old Times

Supernatural Won leaves body

Famous Diamond cutter Won Nigara died yesterday. He was believed to possess supernatural powers. This controversial diamond cutter died in a volcano accident. He didn’t flee when the volcano erupted.

There are some supernatural enthusiasts who believe that Won made the volcano erupt. Also, legends say his body will be revived two hundred years later. There are still many unanswered questions.

When I headed upstairs, my gaze flew to a person sleeping in a room.

I went to that room to discover that the sleeping beauty was Sakura.

“Sakura? What are you doing here?” I asked.

“I don’t know....” Sakura said. “My head feels heavy. The last thing I remember was that I was in my house. I saw red eyes.....thoughts are swirling in my mind....black cloaks.....They took me.”

“Calm down, Sakura.” I said.

“I’ll take her home.” Akumu said.

“I’ll stay here a while longer with Mizu.” Kaji said.

“Mizu....” Sakura said weakly. “I think, they hypnotized me with their song. I was so....in trance....I remember, I went to their room one dark night.”

“Could you be the person I saw while I went to get the camera?” I thought aloud.

Sakura looked weak.

“I’ll take her home.” Akumu said leaving with Sakura.

“Look here, Mizu.” Kaji said showing me a piece of writing.

“Only the eveilest

## Chapter 7 A Scary Night

When I reached home with Kaji and Akumu mom wanted to show us something. Although she was upset about our coming late she was excited about something. She showed the newspaper to us.

“There’s a solar eclipse tomorrow. I wonder how I missed this news earlier. I want to see it. I have never seen a solar eclipse earlier in my life. Won’t it be exciting?” mom asked.

“Yes.” I agreed naively.

But, Oh NO! That meant Won was going to be reconstructed. But, what could I do now it was already two in the night and I had to sleep.

After hearing mom, I could not sleep so I kept staring at the window. I slept for only a short while and when I woke up dawn had already broken. The sun was rising. The newspapers said that the solar eclipse would start at eight in the morning and end at twelve noon. It was the time when the sun would be blocked by the moon.

From the beginning, I had this eerie feeling. The story was finally reaching the climax and I was in suspense. What would happen of me? What would happen to mom, Kaji, Seiya, Akumu, Sakura and the others?

I wanted badly to at least get an A grade before I died.

Dawn had broken. I couldn’t sleep anymore.

I quickly stood up and went down. My whole house was empty.

I could see Kaji and Akumu in the drawing room. They were studying as usual. There is a limit to studying and it has been crossed by Akumu Alexander and Kaji Williams.

How can they study so much? They’re inhuman.

I wanted them to come with me to Greenfire forest.

“Mizu, I think Won is going to reconstruct himself.” Kaji said.

“I have a bad feeling but this is the only time we have to set things right.” Akumu said.

“We have to stop Won before he reconstructs himself. This is our last hope. Let’s do it for the sake of everyone we love.”

“Yes.” I said with resolve. “Let’s end this thing forever. It’s now or never.”

We all hurried to the forest. We reached the entrance at nine but there was no one in sight. I could see a car coming. It was Seiya. He had come to the forest with his mother. His mother had the feeling that something bad was going to happen just like us. She did not want anything like the body revival to happen so she came to the forest.

As all of us were about to enter the forest an earthquake started. We fell on the ground. Something started to come up and to our amazement it was the volcano. That volcano which had been buried before two hundred years stood before our eyes!

The graveyard also started to come up. And all the sight changed. It was like we had gone back in time by two hundred years!

“I just remembered something.” Seiya’s mom said. “When a spirit wants to reconstruct itself, it needs to bring back one of the natural structures that existed during its time and is not the same now. In this case, I think it’s the volcano.”

This was going to be the last part of Won's body- his soul.

We all hurried to the newly emerged volcano.

When we reached the volcano the ritual had already began. We were late. The Rose band was performing the ritual. There was an energy wall all around so we could not enter. It was created by black magic. Seiya's mom tried to break it with a spell but it did not work out.

After a few minutes of trying, Seiya fell through the wall. And that meant... Oh no! The ritual had ended. The body had been revived. The band members fell down dead with black roses on their chests and someone appeared out of the dust. The man had red eyes, black hair and blue eyes. His sharp fangs were thirsty for blood. Around him, there were powerful energy walls. An envelope of horrid aura surrounded him. His spirit that had been left to rot was regaining its aura.

I looked closer to decide who this person was. There was no doubt. No matter how much I wanted to deny it, Won was here- The same evil Won who had been buried before two hundred years!

## Chapter 8

### Loss

"Th...at cannot be true" Kaji stammered in a worried tone. He was shaking. Akumu looked at him and a frightened expression crossed his face too. If they were all getting scared, what was I supposed to do?

Everyone was been horrified by our spooky experiences. Even I had been, after being a fan of horror stories for many years. Inside my heart I had the feeling that something terrible might happen. Something so terrible that I might not be able to digest it. 'Please god, help us' I mumbled softly to myself. I clutched my skirt tightly. This seemed like the final moment.

Seiya's mother was looking worried. Her small eyes were wet with fear. I looked at her, believing that she might be able to say something to calm my doubts. "What's the worst that can happen" I asked. "Mizu, this is not the time to ask such questions. And even if something terrible happens, we will face it" she said. Yes, we needed all the optimism in the world at this minute. I needed to stay positive and stop worrying. Mrs. Daidouji was right. Whatever happened, I was going to face it.

"Let's go into the graveyard" Mrs. Daidouji said, looking at everyone eye to eye. "If we don't, the whole world will be in danger"

Akumu, Kaji, Mrs. Daidouji and I walked past the energy wall and into the graveyard. I felt my body tingle when my skin came in contact with energy. It wasn't a bad feeling, but one I had never experienced before. I gulped. What else awaited me this evening? Seiya was lying unconscious on the ground near Won's feet. Tears sprung into my eyes



without any warning. Seeing Seiya like that had to be the worst thing in the world. He was my best friend. I could not stand the thought of him...dead. No! I had to stop thinking of such things. He was sealed in a transparent black box. The air was filled with the premonition of death and destruction. A red and black energy was flowing all around Won. As soon as we crossed the energy wall, he could feel our presence. He opened his dark amethyst eyes slowly and glared at Mrs. Daidouji sharply. Mrs. Daidouji moved back a step. She seemed really nervous. She could not break down at a time like this! We were all depending on her.

“Let Seiya go Won” Mrs. Daidouji said, firmly. Her voice wobbled slightly in the last syllable. Akumu looked at me directly. He was sweating. I slowly nodded to him, as if to say that everything was going to be alright. There was no need to worry. But I was lying to myself. Nothing was right. And probably never would be.

“He has nothing to do with this” Mrs. Daidouji said.

“It’s you Daidouji.” Won replied, contempt filling his voice. He looked at Mrs. Daidouji as if she were an insignificant insect. “You are as beautiful as your ancestors. But now your family can no longer stand the might of my power. I have become stronger over the years and now I am finally going to take over the whole universe. Everyone will be at my mercy” Won said. The energy around him started becoming stronger. I could see that Mrs. Daidouji was still determined to fight him. I clenched my fists too. Won’s harsh and raspy voice had really made my hands tremble a little but I was going to be okay now.

“Let him go Won. We will give you what you ask for. Money, jewels, a house, anything” Akumu said. Akumu was being so brave! If he could overcome his fear of ghosts and monsters, I could surely do it.

“I want to take over the world. And there is no way in which you can help me” Won said, laughing an evil, sinister laugh.

While he was lost in the sound of his laughter, the evil energy surrounding Won suddenly started diminishing. I was shocked for a minute. I rubbed my eyes and looked again to see whether my eyes were tricking me or whether it was really happening. Won looked confused.

“What is happening” he said worriedly. His evil laughter seemed to have died out. I turned my head to smile at Akumu and saw him thinking. Then, to my surprise he sprinted towards the volcano.

“Follow me Won. I know where your powers are” Akumu shouted.

“Are you crazy?” I asked. “Kaji, do something. Tell Akumu to stop. Mrs. Daidouji.” I shook Kaji who seemed to be dazed. This was not the time to be spacing out! Mrs.

Daidouji was so awestruck, she didn’t know what to say.

“Akumu!!!!” I screamed, at the top of my lungs. All my energy seemed to be sapped in making my voice reach his ears. Akumu looked at me on hearing my voice and nodded positively as if to say ‘Everything will be fine.’ Everything was not going to be fine. He was going to get himself killed by Won. I found myself crying.

“Don’t do this Akumu.” I said in my mind but couldn’t say it out loud. I collapsed on the ground. Mrs. Daidouji put her hand on my shoulder to comfort me.

“Sometimes, we have to let go of our friends and allow them to choose their own path.” She whispered, gently. Her voice was like the sweet chiming of bells. Somehow, her words seemed like a soothing medicine.

“But he is in danger.” Kaji said, who was finally coming to his senses.

“You have to have faith in him.” Mrs. Daidouji said. “I am sure he has a lot of faith in all of you because he has left everything up to you now.”

“Mrs. Daidouji, what will Akumu do?” I asked. My throat was throbbing with a searing pain that I could not put into words.

“Let’ just wait and see.” She said. Then she sat down on the ground and begin chanting some prayers. Slowly, Kaji and I were enveloped by a protective shield. I couldn’t even feel the air anymore. Akumu was out there, alone. I closed my eyes to pray. Please, he had to be okay. He had to come out of this alive.

I opened my eyes. He had finished talking to Won who seemed convinced that Akumu held the key to his hidden powers which had been buried many years ago with the volcano’s eruption. Akumu took slow steps towards the volcano. Just once, his blue eyes met mine and Kaji’s as if signaling the last parting. The volcano was brimming with lava. The moon was growing redder. The air seemed heavy in the graveyard. I could only stare at Akumu’s back. Was he crazy? The volcano could erupt anytime now. I opened my mouth to tell him not to do it but nothing came out. I watched him disappear into the volcanic cave at the bottom of the volcano as tears blurred my eyes and blocked my vision.

He went into the volcano. Won followed him although he did not believe in Akumu’s story. “What is he trying to do?” Mrs. Daidouji asked.

“I know” Kaji replied. He seemed to be at peace with the fact that his best friend was inside a dangerous volcano.

“This is the best opportunity” I said. I moved outside the protective shield that Mrs. Daidouji had created and went towards the box that Seiya was sleeping in. I tried opening the black lid but it didn’t budge.

“Kaji, come on and give me a hand.” I said. Kaji pulled the lid with me but nothing happened.

“Move aside, children.” Mrs. Daidouji said. “This box is sealed with magic. I will use my powers to remove the seal. Mrs. Daidouji raised her hand as Kaji and I moved away from the box. A white light rose up from her hands and she shot it towards the box. It flew open in a fraction of a second. Inside it Seiya was laid down.

“Seiya, wake up.” I said, dragging him out of the box onto the ground. I took his face in my hands. “Can you hear me? Come on, Seiya, I know that you can do it.” Slowly, Seiya started to move. His eyes opened sluggishly and it took him some time to become fully alert and aware of the situation.

“You mean Akumu is inside that volcano!” Seiya exclaimed in disbelief. “What kind of friends are you, to let him go?”

“It’s okay Seiya. I was the one who let him go. They tried to stop him.” Mrs. Daidouji apologized.

“I hope he will be fine. Should we go into the volcano to look for him?” Seiya questioned.

“I think we should let him do this on his own.” Mrs. Daidouji answered. “And trust him when he needs us to believe in him the most.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The interior of the volcano was extremely hot. Cracks had started appearing on the surface of the walls of the volcano. They were outlined by fresh magma which looked ready to erupt. Everything in the interior was scarlet in colour. There was a small depression which was filled with boiling hot water. Steam was coming from the small pond. ‘It’s as I guessed’ Akumu thought. ‘The volcano is going to erupt in a few minutes. And there are only fifteen minutes left before the solar eclipse ends’ He looked back to make sure Won was right behind him. His body was sweating. His clothes were wet. Some pebbles were falling down from the ceiling and huge boulders had blocked the entrance; so there was no way Akumu could get out now. It seemed as if the ceiling would fall on him even if he made the slightest sound! But Akumu wasn’t scared at all. In fact, he had never felt so energized all his life. It was like a new energy he never knew existed in his body was giving him strength. Was this adrenaline?  
“Remember that I am right behind you kid” Won replied in an evil tone. Akumu turned back. Won was just half a meter away! It made Akumu’s heart flutter a bit.

Akumu made his way through the hot air and the frequently falling stones. He climbed up the scorching rocks, most of which had been covered by lava. ‘I’ll make it’ he kept assuring himself as he continued. Won was following him. “You can’t get away kid” he said.

There were stairs inside the volcanic cave leading up to the volcano. They had been carved out many years ago by Won himself. They were old now and the stones were cracking and disappearing in many places. They were almost there. Only a few more steps left to go and it would be the end. Akumu braced himself. He had to make this work.

After a few minutes, Akumu and Won finally reached the summit. Won was standing on the opposite side of Akumu. The volcanic eruption had already begun. The volcanic cone was spewing out little stones and hot air. The heat was growing by the minute. They were standing on a one metre thick lining of the cone. Any small mistake and one of them would surely lose their life.

‘Only two minutes are left’ Akumu thought. ‘I’ll make it through these two most crucial moments. Mom was right. He remembered her telling him that Won’s powers didn’t work during the time of solar eclipse. And perhaps...the other point that mom said might be true as well.

If he was able to push Won into the volcano somehow, he could destroy him forever. Won was coming closer and closer to Akumu.

Akumu held his breath. ‘It’s now or never’ he thought. When Won was quite close to him he readied himself. Won came forward in a sudden jerky movement to catch hold of him

as he had planned. When Won's fingers touched him, he put all his might into his hands and taking Won by his hand, pushed him into the volcano.

"No kid you cannot do that to me. Noooooooo" Won shouted angrily. But it was of no use. He had already been pushed and soon fell inside the volcano. A huge column of lava splashed out of the volcano and stood like a huge orange column across the sky This was the end of Won. A silent smile lit up Akumu's face. This was the happiest moment in his life!

He waited for sometime to see whether Won was actually dead or not. He was. No sound came from the volcano except the bubbling of lava. His legs were hard as lead and shaking badly. He sat down to steady himself, but the ground was so hot that he had to get up immediately. From the corner of his eye, he saw his best friends- Mizu, Kaji and Seiya all looking at him. This was the proudest moment in his life. He had saved the world and his best friends, after all.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Do something mom" Seiya demanded. "Otherwise Akumu will be swallowed up by the lava!" There was concern in his tone.

"We cannot lose Akumu" Kaji said.

"I'm trying my best" Mrs. Daidouji informed. She was very tense. She was trying to teleport Akumu but she couldn't see him. The pebbles, hot air and sprinkles of lava were stopping her magic. "It's no use" she said "It just doesn't seem to be working" The volcano was close to erupting.

"Just a second or more left till it explodes." Seiya announced in a grim tone. I was too paralyzed to say anything. My eyes fixed themselves to the volcano. Somehow, please, Akumu had to be saved. Kaji was already crying. This was over now. There was no way Akumu was going to be alive.

A deafening sound echoed through the air and a gigantic wave of lava washed down the mountain, washing away all the life along with it. It was swallowing up the whole graveyard. Mrs. Daidouji had protected us with her magic but she could do nothing for Akumu. Tears were flowing from Kaji's huge blue eyes. "This cannot be true" he said. He was stunned. He couldn't digest the fact that Akumu was gone-gone forever. Nothing could bring him back. I had never seen Kaji crying before. He had lost someone very near and dear. He felt that it was his fault, that he let Akumu go. If he had been a good friend and stopped him, nothing so dreadful would have happened. I burst out crying too. "Mizu" Kaji tried to comfort me, but he was himself crying. This was unfair, even more unfair than my E grade and going to boarding school. The volcano had destroyed everything in its way, just as it had destroyed Akumu. But we would always remember him. Although the lava had swallowed Akumu, but it could not swallow our friendship and love for him.

Mrs. Daidouji and Seiya were weeping too. Mrs. Daidouji was feeling that it was her fault. I had never see her cry before. She was an adult and adults were not supposed to cry. Seeing her, I felt it was okay to continue crying.

The sky had returned to normal after the eclipse ended. But our lives would never be normal again, not without Akumu.

. “Why did Akumu have to do this Kaji?” I asked. My throat felt like a huge lump of pain and I couldn’t even swallow properly. My face was wet.

## Chapter 9

### A Miracle

Why did things have to end like this? Why did we have to lose a friend? Couldn’t there be just happiness in the world? How were we supposed to tell Akumu’s parents about this? These were just some of the many puzzling questions that buzzed in my head. Sadly, there seemed to be no solution for even a single one of them.

The sky was bright now. The night was over. It was morning. But there was no happiness where I stood. Not even a single smile. Mrs. Daidouji looked at me with her tear stained face. She had stopped crying now. “It is selfish of me to behave so immaturely.” She said.

“There is nothing we can do about all this. Let’s do our best to tell Akumu’s parents about the situation.”

“Will Akumu’s mother shout at us?” Kaji questioned.

“I don’t think.” Mrs. Daidouji said.

“I feel heavy. Like I am stuck to the ground. I don’t want to go anywhere now.” Seiya said.

“Sadness weighs us down and stops us from moving forward. But we have no choice but to look at the future.” Mrs. Daidouji said. “Don’t disappoint Akumu. I am sure he would never have liked to see you all like this.”

“That is true.....” Kaji admitted, his eyes straying towards the sky. He was looking up just to appear mature and stop his tears from spilling. His heart was wounded badly.

I looked down at the brown earth. It was getting wet with my tears now.

“Mizu, look up.” Kaji said, hurriedly. I didn’t want to look up and show him my tears, so I didn’t move.

“Look up Mizu, it’s Akumu!” there was so much energy in Kaji’s voice, that I immediately looked up at the sky. And sure enough, amidst the blueness of the sky was a faint silhouette of Akumu. I couldn’t see it clearly because my eyes filled up with more tears.

“Mizu, Kaji, and Seiya” we heard a familiar voice say. It was his voice. The voice I remembered so well. The sound was very soft and full of unhappiness.

“Akumu” Kaji said, veering. He had recognized the voice at once. Seiya and Mrs. Daidouji turned around too. The sky was clear now and when I wiped away I saw everything clearly. Akumu’s silhouette was sitting one huge cloud.

“Is that Akumu” I asked doubtfully, looking at Mrs. Daidouji.

“It’s his spirit Mizu” Mrs. Daidouji replied.

“Akumu” Kaji said emotionally. I had never seen him get so emotional.

“Kaji” Akumu said softly. “Mizu, Seiya and Kaji; I wanted to thank you all for being such great friends and supporting me when I needed your support. Kaji, you have taught me what true friendship means. Mizu, I hope you will not forget me. I will always be appearing in your nightmares.”

“No Akumu; a friend like you can never be a nightmare. You can only appear in my happiest dream” I said confidently. Akumu had tried to be good to me and it was I who had never been good to him.

“I never thought I’d be so glad to hear you say that.” he replied. His eyes met Kaji’s and I could sense some sort of a connection. “Kaji”, he said, getting a bit emotional.

“Akumu, you’re a hero. You have saved the whole world from evil. All of us owe thanks to you. Don’t we guys?” Seiya asked.

“Yes we do” Kaji and I said together. I didn’t know why, but I was grinning now. Was that the power of friendship?

Akumu’s silhouette started disappearing. “My time’s up” he said. “I’ll have to go back”. He was turning into dust.

“No, don’t go away” Seiya shouted.

“Come back Akumu. Come back” Kaji shouted. Tears were flowing from his eyes.

“Come back” he continued to say.

“Don’t worry Kaji. You will make new friends” Akumu said.

“Mom this can’t be happening. Can’t you do anything to bring Akumu back to life?”

Seiya protested. His throat was sore but he was trying his best to appear normal.

“Please do something, Mrs. Daidouji.” Kaji pleaded. He looked depressed, as if he had lost the most precious thing. Mrs. Daidouji looked at Seiya, determination filling her eyes.

“Seiya, if you help me, I can try to do something.” She said.

“I will give it my all.” Seiya answered optimistically.

“Can I do something to help?” Kaji asked, looking at Mrs. Daidouji hopefully.

“Just pray that we succeed.” She instructed.

Mrs. Daidouji and Seiya held each other’s hands and closed their eyes. They started muttering strange words. Few sparks of light started appearing from the sky. Were they succeeding? I looked at their faces which seemed drained of energy now. Was it such a powerful spell that in one second it had drained them of so much energy? Their faces were in agony. They couldn’t go on any longer. Seiya shouted out in pain once but he didn’t give up. Mrs. Daidouji tightened her grip on his hand. I saw that Kaji was still praying with all his might. He had really loved Akumu a lot. Still did.

Seiya’s scream pierced once more through the graveyard before he collapsed on the ground and fainted. “Are you okay?” I rushed to his side. He was breathing but he couldn’t open his eyes. Mrs. Daidouji continued to try even without him, until she too, fainted. Kaji opened his eyes then.

“Is everything okay?” he asked. Mrs. Daidouji looked up at him, opening her eyes slowly.

“I’m sorry. My powers have been completely drained. I cannot do anything now.” She said. “Very powerful magic is needed to bring someone back from the dead. I don’t possess that kind of magic. No one has that kind of power.”

“Thank you for trying.” Kaji said. “And what do we do now?”

“We will have to inform Akumu’s parents. I feel really bad for them.” I said.

“Mizu is right.” Mrs. Daidouji said. “They have the right to know about Akumu. I think they might also want to have his funeral though there is no body left.”

“We will go to the funeral, won’t we?” I asked Kaji. He nodded silently.

## Chapter 10 The Funeral

The next few days were terribly gloomy. Mom, Mrs. Daidouji and Mrs. Alexander were busy with the funeral. Mom had told Kaji and me to take a few days off from school so that we could recover. I was getting bored at home. Kaji had stopped talking. He was always locked up in his room, looking at a photo of Akumu and him during the school trip.

Even when he came out of his room to eat, there was no sign of happiness on his face. He was eternally looking at that photograph and weeping. I had tried talking to him many times but he had ignored me. Seiya was much the same. He had a photo like that too. He had called up Kaji yesterday.

I was the only one who was still sane. I was working hard to be cheerful but sometimes, I couldn’t help feeling that way Kaji did. At such moments, I also looked at Akumu’s photo. But not more than once a day. If Akumu saw me sad too, he would feel horrible. Mom was away from home, helping Mrs. Alexander all the time. Akumu’s dad had been very sad to hear the news of Akumu’s death. In fact, when Mrs. Daidouji had told him for the first time, he was so utterly shocked that he couldn’t move.

The funeral was in the evening. I looked at the huge wall clock. The time was two p.m. in the afternoon. Sakura had come to visit me and insisted on going to the funeral with all of us. She wanted to be a representative of the class at Akumu’s funeral.

It was five in the evening when Kaji emerged out of his room. He was holding that photo. “It’s time.” I said. I already had my coat on. “Let’s go Kaji. We cannot be late.”

Kaji put on a brown jacket and stuffed the photograph into his pocket. He wiped his tears with the sleeve of the jacket. Sakura tried to comfort him by putting an arm around his shoulder, but he shook her off. That was so rude of him!

It was the beginning of winter and the air was cold. It numbed our already cold and expressionless faces. Trees had lost their leaves. The road from our house to the graveyard was a long and empty one, with only the howling wind keeping us company. We passed a lot of restaurants and bakeries on our way. Even though the windows displayed a multitude of tasty treats, I had no appetite. Kaji noticed nothing. His head was bowed. The expression on his face was indescribably miserable. I wanted to say something to make him feel better but all that came out of my mouth was: “Hurry up. We are going to be late.”

When Sakura, Kaji and I made it to the graveyard, most of it was already over. We were late. Sakura started praying. Kaji’s gaze was fixed on the coffin which was empty.

Mom and all the adults were standing close to the coffin. Mrs. Alexander opened her mouth: “I would like to thank all of you for coming here. I have a request for everyone.

Please close your eyes and say whatever you want to say to Akumu in your hearts. I am sure it will reach him.”

Then she and everyone else except me closed their eyes. Tears rolled down Kaji’s cheeks through his eyelids. I knew what he was thinking. He was saying “Thank you for being my friend. I sometimes wonder what kind of person I would have been if I had not met you. I would probably very different. I would not have been as happy as I was able to be with you. Even in the end, I was smiling all the time you were with me. Although you are not here now, I will not forget. All the feelings that I could experience by being close to you are etched in my memory forever.”

I looked at Seiya whose face was tense. Sakura was about to cry. So was Mrs Daidouji. I was the only one at least attempting to not let grief overcome me. I had to be stronger now.

“I promise to get you flowers every week.” I said, as my last words to Akumu.

People were beginning to open their eyes and Mrs. Alexander thanked everyone for taking the time to talk to Akumu.

Then the formalities stretched on for long. I started feeling drowsy until I unknowingly dozed off on Kaji’s arm. A few minutes later, I was woken up by a violent shake.

“Get up, everyone’s gone now.” Kaji said. I looked around. Mrs. Daidouji, Seiya, Sakura, Kaji and I were the only people standing. Everyone else had left. There was a sorrow in the air. I wished I could go back and prevent Akumu from dying. I closed my eyes and prayed sincerely. I prayed that Akumu would come back. Mom had told me that I prayed sincerely, god would listen to me. When I opened my eyes, nothing had changed. I looked up at the sky, where I had last seen Akumu. I heard Mrs. Daidouji say something and then my eyes were blinded by a bright flash of light. I kept my eyes tightly shut for some time, and when I opened them, I saw something unbelievable. It was Akumu. He was sitting on a cloud like the last time and looking at me intently. I could not see very clearly but there were tears in his eyes.....I was not sure they were tears.

Kaji could not believe his eyes either. He rubbed them twice to make sure he wasn’t hallucinating. His tears froze the minute he realized he wasn’t dreaming. A bright streak of light shone from the cloud Akumu was sitting on to the graveyard. A lady started appearing bit by bit. Was she an angel? Her form became clear and I was left stunned at her beauty. She was enveloped by light.

“Thank you, Akumu.” She said, looking at Akumu. Akumu watched her. He didn’t recognize her . “I’m Heria, queen of gods.” She said. Her lips barely moved but her words were crystal-clear. “We the gods have been trying to destroy Won but he always managed to escape us. We could only turn him into a spirit. But you have performed a miracle by destroying Won.”

As she spoke, other gods appeared beside her. The goddess of love smiled at me. A beautiful ruby-studded, golden staff was in her hand. Her dress was sparkling like a thousand diamonds.

“And to thank you all,” she paused to look at Kaji, Seiya and me. “I would like to return your friend to you.”

“You mean.....” the rest of the words didn’t make it out of Kaji’s voice box because he was mesmerized by what he was seeing. All the gods and goddesses gathered around in a circle and shot huge bolts of light.



“Thank you!!!” Kaji shouted at the top of his lungs. Seiya and I joined him. Heria smiled at us. “You have already thanked us by obliterating Won.” Then, all the gods disappeared from the sky.

## Chapter 11

### Return

“Hey guys, missed me?” a familiar voice asked.

“Akumu!!!” Kaji and Seiya yelled together. But there was excitement and happiness in their scream. It indeed was Akumu. He was standing before our eyes, looking perfectly fine. “Akumu...” Kaji said softly. Tears were rolling down his cheeks. His cheeks were already quite wet. “You cannot imagine how much I missed you”.

“I was away just for a few minutes” Akumu said but he knew exactly how Kaji must have felt. He had felt the same. The thought of not seeing Kaji again filled him with horror. I was grinning to the best of my potential. Mt heart could burst with excitement and joy anytime.

Kaji put his hands around Akumu and embraced him. His tears were dripping on Akumu’s shirt and wetting it, but Akumu didn’t seem to mind it. “Kaji, come on. I’m back now” he said comfortingly. But Kaji didn’t seem to listen.

“He’s missed you a lot Akumu” I said. “It was stupid of you to do that Akumu” Seiya said. “Do what?” Akumu asked.

“To try to defeat Won by yourself” Seiya replied. Akumu said nothing. It was okay this way.

“Come on Kaji that’s enough” I said pulling Kaji away from Akumu. “He’s not going to run away now” But Kaji had no intentions of listening. He hugged Akumu even tighter.

“I’m with Kaji” Seiya said. He too hugged Akumu.

“Now this is something I can’t do” I said sarcastically. “I am not going to hug him like a small child.”

“Why not?” Akumu asked. I blushed. “I was just kidding Mizu” he said laughing. “Mizu did you really think...”

“No, I thought nothing” I snapped rudely. Kaji smiled at me. So did Seiya. I looked away. Then they all started laughing at me. I couldn’t help it, so I joined them too. This was the best thing that could happen to me. I would never forget this instant.

“What about your promise, Mizu?” Kaji asked , out of the blue.

“Which promise?” What was he talking about? I couldn’t remember any promise.

“The one you made to mom. To get a better grade this time.” Kaji prompted. I had completely let that slip out of my mind. I didn’t want to recollect it. I was going to gget an E this time too.

“You still have time.” Seiya said, as if he had read my thoughts. “The finals start next week only, after all.”

“Next week!” Kaji and Akumu exclaimed together, like it was already the day of the test.

“I’ll meet you at five tomorrow in the cyber café.” Akumu said to Kaji. They were already thinking of studying? What about partying? And were they sure they could wake up by five?

“Can I join too? I have missed a lot of studies due to club activities.” Seiya asked.

“The more the merrier.” Kaji answered, laughing.

“I’ll join you at seven.” I said, albeit loudly. There was silence for a moment. Kaji and Akumu stared at me in surprise. They blinked and then pinched themselves to make sure they weren’t dreaming.

“Is this you, Mizu?” Kaji pinched my cheek to see whether I was the real Mizyu or some mixed-up clone. “Hey!” I retorted.

“It’s hard to believe.” Akumu said. “So you’re going to give up watching horror movies? I thought it was the first-time-television-premiere of *Zombies from underworld* tomorrow.”

“I’ve had enough horror for the rest of my life so no more horror movies for me.” I declared.

“I never thought I would hear you say this.” Seiya said.

“But I’ll have to leave at eight for the release of *Aliens from Venus*.” I informed.

“But didn’t you just say that you’ve had enough of horror for the rest of your life?”

“Enough of horror but not enough of science fiction.” I answered, smiling.

“At least she’s changed her interests.” Kaji remarked.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Do you believe in friendship Daidouji?” Heria asked Mrs. Daidouji. Mrs. Daidouji nodded. She could only hear Heria’s voice. “These children are very close” Heria said gently.

“Thank you for giving Akumu a chance” Mrs. Daidouji said. “It would not have been possible without you and your magic” “It’s not my magic but their friendship and desire that made it possible” Heria replied. Saying this Heria vanished. The bright sky turned normal again. Mrs. Daidouji looked at us.

“I understand” she said softly to herself.

## Chapter 12 Graduation

I was nervous. That’s right. I was really nervous. It was graduation today. And that meant grades which the principal would announce to the whole school. Our school had this really weird custom of announcing the grades of all the students during graduation day. Kaji and Akumu were looking ahoy. They knew they were going to get an A again. I knew I was going to get an E. It was the only alphabet I had seen in my report card ever since I could read. I clutched my pink watch tightly. It was lucky for me. I always wore it on graduation day. I wanted to get a B this time. I had studied really hard with Kaji, Sakura, Seiya and Akumu. Akumu had helped me with math, Kaji had taught me science and computers and Seiya had made me master Japanese.

‘Please let me get a B, god’ I prayed.

“What’s the matter, Mizu?” Sakura asked, seeing my worried face.

“I’m nervous.” I answered. Seiya smiled at me. He was clicking away with his camera. He had to get some really amazing shots for the school newspaper. On graduation day, students were allowed to wear whatever they wished. I was wearing a pink skirt and an orange jacket. Kaji and Akumu were wearing their uniforms (insane!). Miko was sheathed in expensive-looking jewelry and a glittery black dress.

The auditorium was full of students who were exchanging last minute anxious words with each other. Many were confident like Kaji while some were apprehensive like me. I looked at Sakura, who was calm as ever, sitting beside me. She looked cute today. I wished I could disappear from here. I was already feeling guilty over breaking the promise I made to mom. Poor mom. She had so much faith in me. Results were a strange test of nerves. I closed my eyes as my body shuddered in anticipation. I felt someone’s hand touching mine. My eyes flew open and met Sakura’s steady gaze.

“Don’t worry, Mizu.” She said sweetly. “You will surely get a wonderful grade this time.” It was nice of her to try and build up my confidence. I thanked her and then squeezed her hand with mine. She didn’t flinch.

The lights came on and the principal appeared on stage. I was shivering. All my hard work and hopes had been for this. The principal surveyed the auditorium like a hawk. He was a cold man who had no feelings. His cold eyes met those of the students and he frowned. He was always frowning. He had nothing better to do. ‘He’s more evil than Won’ I thought. His appearance on stage meant that he would be announcing the grades soon. I crossed my fingers. “I’m going to shut my eyes and ears.” I warned Sakura. “Tell me my grades after the principal announces.”

Sakura nodded and then she said: “Don’t be afraid, Mizu. You’ll get a good grade this time.” That’s what she always said, but it never happened.

I tightly shut my eyes until the principal’s mean voice reached my ears. “I’ll start with those who got O. This year- Akumu Alexander.”

I watched Akumu flash a huge grin at the girl admiring him. The principal smiled at him too. I had never known that the principal was capable of smiling. It was probably a fake smile. He couldn’t actually smile.

“Excellent.” Kaji congratulated Akumu. After the excitement and whispers vanished, the principal continued: “Kaji Williams A+ well done.”

“What??” Kaji could not believe what he had heard. He covered his mouth which was wide open with surprise. It was surely a shock to Kaji. He had been getting an O grade since fourth grade. An a+ was like a bolt from the blue. Kaji and I were polar opposites. Akumu tried to comfort Kaji with little success. To make him get over this, something as shocking as an earthquake was needed.

“Seiya Daidouji A+”

I gave a thumbs up to Seiya who was really happy. He even took a photo of the principal!

“Sakura Korowaii A+”

“You did it, Sakura!” I said, hugging Sakura tightly. She blushed. She was always full of joy, whatever grade she got so she seldom got a bad grade.

Sakura had got an A+, so had Kaji and Seiya. What kind of fate awaited me? My heart was going into overdrive. I was getting restless. Was this a signal that something was going to happen soon?

“Now the A graders. Lee George, Jane Parker, Koko Li, John Sampson. ....” the principal went on and on until something written on the paper caught his eye. He stopped abruptly. Then, with the widest smile I had ever seen on anyone’s face he announced: “And finally, Mizu Williams- A grade.”

“You did it, Mizu!” Sakura shouted and hugged me so forcefully that she might have knocked me down. Seiya clicked a photo of me. Akumu clapped for me. Kaji looked at me with his mouth wide open. I had succeeded in making Kaji jealous of me. Everyone in the auditorium was looking at me. Just at me. I had finally managed to get an A grade. I was an inspiration to all the E graders in the world.

Miko looked at me with jealousy but it didn’t matter. This was my moment. I had arrived at my destination! Nothing could spoil this rush of joy I felt inside. The principal said: “Well done, Mizu Williams.” I couldn’t help jumping up. This was the best graduation day ever!! I had got an A!!

Kaji and Akumu were standing beside me now with Seiya and Sakura. They had all taught me very important things. And my A grade was due to their efforts too. I could never have done it without Kaji, Sakura, Seiya and Akumu- my best friends!

Not long ago, I had hoped that a miracle would change my E grade to an A grade. Now, I realize, that wonderful miracle is called friendship.

## Chapter 13

### A Letter to Everyone

Hi there,

Thank you for reading my story to the end. I hope you enjoyed it and were able to understand it clearly.

This was the best year ever. I fought an evil guy, Akumu came back to us, I had a great deal of adventure and excitement and to top it all up was my huge, fantastic A grade. I hope you will write to me (rather the authors who created me i.e. S.P. Wish) at [rosesofdoom@gmail.com](mailto:rosesofdoom@gmail.com) and share your thoughts about the story.

Don’t forget to have fun with your friends!

Mizu Williams

Now in seventh grade (Graduated with an ‘A’ grade)

## Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to the following people who played an important part in its existence.

The readers who gave it a chance.

Our grandfather who encouraged us to continue writing.

The computer for not breaking down (it has a lot of viruses in it.)

And to everyone else in the world. We are all friends, after all!

S.P Wish

## About the authors



S.P Wish is a writing duo made up of twins S. Wish and P. Wish (pen names) who love to write, read, sing, listen to music and play computer games. This is their debut work.

They offer free chapters of their works on their site-

<http://www.spwishworks.blogspot.com>.

You can also purchase/download e books by S.P. Wish on their Smashwords page-

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/spwish>

Drop by and share your thoughts!