

# JROCK-Exzerpts

By Yangi

*Heatherfield.*

The little boy hopped down the rainy street and came to a halt in front of a pink, big van. He knocked and a big, red bearded man opened.

"Hello Han. Your mother's already waiting for you."

Han nodded and went behind the driver's cabin, where a huge room emerged, packed with all sorts of magical people of all size and color. Casually he strolled over, ducking under flying woodblocks to a boy of his age. White hair dripped over his face in curls, leaving his eyes in the shadows. Han set down beside him. The boy raised his head and a glimpse of violet appeared behind the strands.

"Han. Hello."

"Hey, Jaden. You coming home with us?"

"So it seems."

"Awesome!"

"Han, didn't Kandor tell you, that I was looking for you?"

Han gave an apologizing smile.

"Sorry, mom. Jaden's coming with us today!"

"Is that so? Well then get your things. I still need to get some shopping done."

"Yey!"

The boys ran excitedly over to a cupboard and got Jaden's jacket and backpack. Then the three of them left the school for the magical talented. On their way through town, Hay Lin had to take care not to lose one of them. Even though Jaden had the gift of foresight, he was yet in training and his forecasts still varied between few seconds, up until 1 week before its effect. They chattered, wandered around discovering the world through sparkling eyes. After they had brought Jaden home, Hay Lin and Han continued alone.

"Mommy, should I help you carry?"

Hay Lin laughed.

"That's sweet of you, but don't you think they would be a bit too heavy?"

She imagined her son dragging one of the grocery bags over the sidewalk, almost as big as himself. She spouted. Han gave her a queer look, then shrugged and jumped into a little puddle, splashing around in his gumboots.

The door clicked. Han looked at his palms carefully, muttering something for himself.

Hay Lin put down the bags and helped her focused son out of his jacket. Then she remembered something and shouted: "We're home!"

"Welcome back!", came the answer from the kitchen.

Han jumped into his slippers, without looking and shuffled onwards into the living room, where he sat down, hand up close. Hay Lin greeted her husband with a kiss and started placing the purchases into the fridge. Dish clattered, the tap squealed slightly and the water rushing dyed.

"Where's Mei?"

"She left few minutes ago to practice."

"Did she take the bus?"

"I suppose so."

"Hm."

Where was the coffee again? Hay Lin rummaged around until a hand appeared before her, holding the can of coffee. She smiled.

"Somehow I can never memorize that."

"That's what you got me for, right? That and the dishes."

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They laughed. Yon dried his hands and hugged her from the back.

“There was a call earlier from Ms. Talbert.”

“Ah, thank you. Probably something about Tira.”

“How’s school been today?”

“Oh, you know. Flying lessons, squishing objects, shadowy things floating through walls, nothing special.”

He grinned.

“Nothing special, huh?”

Han came in. His eyes still lay on his palms thoughtfully. Yon gave his wife a questioning look.

“We brought Jaden home today.”, she whispered, then got out an apple, while her son sat down on the kitchen table.

“My hands look blank. Does that mean I don’t have a future?”

Hay Lin rolled her eyes in amusement.

“Who says that?”

Han took a deep breath, then began the explanation: “Jaden said, that his grangran said, that...” he had lost the thread and froze. Yon sat down opposite to him and patiently leaned back. Hay Lin placed the apple in front of Han, then left the kitchen for the telephone in the hallway.

“Jadens grangran said...”, hinted his father.

“Ah! Jaden said, that his grangran said, that people’s future are written in their palms. But mine are really empty... look!”

That was the moment, when Yon got two tiny hands into his face.

“Well that’s just because you’re still so young.”

“But Jaden’s palms are linier than mine...”

“Really? But you know, you should be proud of that.”

Han got curious.

“Why?”

“Because, those blank hands mean, that nothing has been decided yet. You can form your own future, while people like me and Jaden already got some directions set.”

“Uuuh!”, exclaimed the child, then he got back to staring at his palms, only the motivation changed to fondness.

“Yes, Ms. Talbert. You called- What? Calm down, what happened?”

Hay Lin listened. Her expression drifted into horror.

Click. Hay Lin stood near the phone, thinking.

‘Taranee!’, she called out in her mind. No answer.

‘Taranee, please answer!’.

Nothing.

She tried another one. ‘Will? Will, are you there?’

‘Hey Hay Lin! What’s the matter?’

Relief.

‘Can I come over? Something happened and I need help.’

‘Sure, William took the twins for a walk. I’ll send Hayden as replacement for work.’

‘Thank you!’

“Honey, I’m going over to Will. I’ll be back before 3.”

“Ah? What? But I thought-“

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Wank! The door was shut. Yon turned to Han.

"Guess it's just you and me then."

"Nope!"

"Huh?"

"Got homework to do. Sorry, dad!"

10 minutes later, Hay Lins car parked in front of a tall building. The bell welcomed her in a friendly manner and opened up. Hay Lin hastily checked the staircase. No one was there. One last look and she arrowed all the way up to third floor, dropping down in front of a door to the hallway. Five steps and she was at Wills door.

"Hay Lin! Come in."

She did. The apartment opened into a grand light flooded room, a fantastic view over town, living and dining room combined in one. Toys were spread all over the place. After she got tea, Will sat down beside her old friend.

"Now, tell me. What happened."

"Tira, a girl from my school. She was kidnapped yesterday."

"What?!"

A Tear dripped.

"Her mother called. They were shopping. On the way home they had to pass a dark street. The lights have been broken for a while, but they never get changed for some reason."

"Yeah, I know that one. So that's where it happened."

Hay Lin nodded.

"A person stepped out of the shadows, a man, tall, muscular with blond hair. He talked to them, asked questions. Then he demanded Tira to leave with him. Her mother tried to stop him, but in the end he took her by force. Her powers are very limited. As soon as she panics, there's no way she could have controlled them."

"I'm sorry Hay Lin."

The woman broke down, sinking crying into the arms of her friend.

"What am I supposed to do?! It's the third time, Will! The third! Three kids, torn from their family for some wicked war! We have to do something!"

"Have you contacted Taranee?"

"I tried, but she didn't answer."

Will hesitated. It hurt seeing Hay Lin so shaken.

"Let's go to Kandrakar."

"Now?"

"You want answers, right? So do I. What do we have those powers for, if we can't even protect the ones we love?"

Hay Lin sobbed. With her arm she wiped away the tears and a new expression had befallen her.

Determination.

The friends reached out for on another. Hand in hand they left for Kandrakar.

Between beds of clouds the mighty walls of Kandrakar rose into the light of infinity. A realm within worlds, an uncharted space, a void with a name.

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Frightened the four girls clung together. Only Kia seemed unimpressed and strolled around the enlightened hall. Strange plants were growing from the pictured walls. Under her feet a slight shift, soft like drifting sand, moved about slowly in endless trails. In the air a miraculous scent drowsed their minds. The door opened and a woman entered. Her dark skin was covered in green patterned fabric. A sign marked her left hand.

“Welcome, guardians. This is Kandrakar.”, Taranee called out in ceremony, spreading her cloth hung arms wide to welcome her guests. Kia went back to the others, still fascinated with the feeling her bare feet identified underneath. The bustling robe came to a halt and the oracle gave them a bride smile: “Don’t be afraid. I know you have questions. Now is the time for answers.”

Taranee caught sight of the two women in the background and they nodded respectfully. She answered with another charming smile, then wheeled back to the guardians, ready to take every question straight on. They hesitated. Kia looked indecisively back. In the background Josephine and Olivia sat down on a bench. This would take a while.

Slowly the smile faded. “Nobody? Don’t tell me there’s nothing you want to know... come on!”, Taranee encouraged them.

There was a strange sound in the upper atmosphere of the room. A whistling and whispering in a language Kia didn’t understand. She turned to the others, seeing no change in their faces, then confronted Taranee.

“What is that?”, she spoke and unintentionally twitched at the sudden noise.

Taranee blinked.

“What?”, she asked, still eager to finally do her job. Kia rose her arm to the ceiling.

“That sound...”

Taranee blinked once more, her excited shoulders falling down a little: “What sound? I don’t ... hear any... There’s a sound?”

The two exchanged a few blinks, then Kia gesticulated wildly with her hands, babbling: “Well, yeah. There are voices up close to the ceiling but I don’t understand them. It’s a different language I guess.”

She had rushed through the sentences and tucked her hands under her pits uneasily. Taranee felt discouraged. This didn’t go as planned. At all. With a disappointed “Huh...” The smile faded and silence emerged again. Kia later asked about the flowing in the floor, but Taranee only shrugged and the topic fell without further discussion.

„Wh-why?“, Jess finally said.

„Yes?“, Taranee signaled the girl to step closer and she did.

„Why does this happen to me?“

Taranee smiled at her. Warmth embraced the swedish girl gently and all fear fell from her.

“You are Jessica Wisten.”

“Yes.”

„Then, I will answer your question. You-“

Loud voices echoed through the halls, making its way towards the group. Soon after, the doors barged open.

“Wait! You can’t!“, Tibors voice cried angrily.

„Don’t tell me I can’t when I already busted that door!“, Will shouted back. Taranee blinked irritated.

What was this about? Hay Lin followed and send the babbling wise man with one blow down the hallway.

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“Wha- Will! Hay Lin! What’s all this about?”

„We need to talk. Oh, hi there.“ Will made a waving motion, but her face showed nothing of kindness. Her eyes looked hard as stone, her features full of worry and rage. Hay Lin staggered. Step by step she walked towards Kia, who stood still immediately. Half a meter before her, Hay Lin stopped and fixed the blue-ish eyes.

“I know you...”, she murmured, trying to remember something but the oracle beat her to it.

Taraneer ran over, grabbing her ankle to pull Hay Lin back to Will. Turning their back towards the group of youngsters, the three discussed for a while. The girls exchanged questioning glances, but no one dared to interrupt. Their voices were too low to make out any word, but after some melodic breaths, Taraneer seemed to have lost from the look on slumped posture. She cleared her throat, facing the newcomers.

„Girls, these are my dear friends Will Vandom and Hay Lin Soonang. We”, she threw an angry side look at her friends before continuing, “were the guardians before you.”

„Guardians. You said that twice now. What does that even mean?”

CC didn’t look too excited. Instead, confusion wavered from her mimics. It made Taraneer’s brows dance in equal disturbance. Impatiently she ran through the one obvious explanation: „Well you know, your mission is to GUARD the universe, the magical worlds, your own world, this world. The whole thing.”

Will shook her head. Taraneer nodded knowingly. That wouldn’t do at all. With a sigh and a deep breath she waved over to Hay Lin: “Tell them, what happened.”

Once again the twice mother told the story of her student, the others listening carefully. After she had finished, O-Hani raised her voice: “I’m sorry about that girl but what’s that have to do with us?”

Taraneer met her in the middle of the hall and showed up to the ceiling.

“Look above you. All these faces were former guardians, just like you”

“Just like us.”, Will added with a softer expression.

The oracle continued wandering along the walls until her own face appeared, carved blue-ish lines on a light wall.

“You, as the guardians hold the duty to protect Kandrakar and the worlds connected to them. It is your responsibility to find the reason for these kidnappings and end it before things get worse.”

Now CC rushed forward: “Hold on a second! We never asked for this! I have a life to attend to!”

She looked upset. O-Hani agreed: “Why don’t *you* do it? You seem to be fine.”

Will opened her mouth but Hay Lin held her back. Everything else was Taraneer’s business now. The oracle thanked her with a faint smile. Then she came back to the middle of the hall, her dark eyes showing sympathy.

“I know you are afraid and I know it isn’t fair. But the elements have chosen you. It was never my decision to make, nor yours.” She made a pause, taking a deep breath. Rukia, who hadn’t given any sign of life yet lowered her head, a shadow covering her eyes. Kia watched her cautiously. Taraneer carried on: “We can’t fulfill this task, because we’re not meant to do so. You are. We did some mistakes in the past. Everybody does. But you have the power to change that. The elements chose you for a reason, I’ve watched you, and I know you can do this.”

Suddenly Hay Lin made a sound. Her face lightened up and she ran towards Kia and Rukia.

“Of course! That’s where I’ve seen you! I saw your wave, that was really impressive”, she said to the black haired and made the dark face to reappear from behind the curls. Will followed her friend to the group.

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“Is that true, you made a wave already?”

Rukia nodded.

“And a pretty big one, too.”, Hay Lin added with a wink at the girls. Will laughed and the heavy mood lifted a bit. Kia sighed in relief. She glanced at her sister, but Olivia was watching something else.

“Irma couldn’t do that until we had that power upgrade. Pretty amazing. If all of you are so talented I certainly know why you’ve been chosen.”

The old guardians grinned at each other, caught by a sudden flash of memories. Not too long ago they stood in these halls, wondering what the universe might have planned for them.

“Oracle?”

The three turned. Kia waited until their attention lay completely on her.

“I was just wandering... now that we know all that, what are we supposed to do? I mean... where should we start?”

Taraneer lay a hand on her shoulder: “Don’t worry.”, then to all of them, “For now you should focus on your training. It’s true you’ll have to face other talented someday, but you should do it, when you’re ready. Also, the magic that got released onto Earth is different than yours, it’s not elemental, not in the sense, we understand it. They have a similar aura to a wish. Whoever was magical talented once, automatically calls upon others like him. It’s like magnetism, drawing everything magical close to each other.”

CC winced. Worry crossed her young face: “But isn’t that dangerous?”

This time Will answered: “It is. That’s why you have to be careful.”

“Take care no one sees you using magic. It’s the only way to keep you safe until you’re ready.”, Hay Lin said. The only way, she repeated in her mind. She would have to make a decision soon.

The oracle came to her, recognizing the sudden sadness and hugged her.

“You two should go now”, Taraneer said softly, “You have enough to worry about. We’ll meet again some other time.”

“Alright”, Hay Lin wiped her eyes, then she and Will waved the party one last time before vanishing into a flash of light.

Later that day, Taraneer returned to her rooms, the one thing she truly owned in Kandrakar. Exhausted she threw herself onto the cloudy bed and rolled onto her back to watch the many pictures on the walls. It had become a habit. Each morning she would stare down onto the water lines under her feet and each evening towards the ceiling but whatever she was looking for between the unknown stories and faces, she never discovered it. So the oracle turned towards her duties, day after day, hour after hour. She liked it. But a part of her knew, only because it kept her busy and distracted her from the gloomy thoughts circling deep within. While gazing into the air above her, Taraneer remembered Kia’s remarks. The dark woman closed her eyes, slowed her breath and listened. When she opened them again, nothing unusual had reached her ear but the woman felt relaxation. That was something, she thought. Suddenly loud knocking echoed between the walls. The sound came so unexpected that the mighty oracle jumped from her cloud. Inches before the ground she managed to steady herself and floated softly onto the platform amidst green waters. The knocking came again and Taraneer shouted: “Yes?”

When the two tall doors opened, Yan Lin peeked around, curiosity written all over her wrinkled face. Taraneer smirked and rushed to her side.

“Yan Lin! Welcome Back! I thought you wouldn’t return until tomorrow!” Excitedly she took the old woman’s hands and lead her into the room. Yan Lin was still occupied by scanning the surroundings. “Something came up and I could go earlier. I see you’ve made some changes?”

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The oracle followed her gaze towards the bed of clouds and tried not to laugh. She couldn't resist grinning widely, though.

"Yeah, I slept bad last week so I took the liberty of making myself more comfortable."

"You slept bad?", the old woman repeated with a bit of worry crossing her forehead. "The dreams again?"

Taranee's smile flickered. With a grand wave she acted as if it was nothing and jumped onto the edge of her soft bed. "I have'em all the time. You know that. Everyone does."

Yan Lin walked towards the waters and looked inside. "I thought they had stopped... but there is something else you wanted tell me, isn't there?"

They shared a moment of oracle-knowledge and Taranee smiled again: "Isn't that my line now?" She sighed. "You're right. I met the new guardians today."

Yan Lin's features lightened when she exclaimed: "Oh, how exciting! How are they?"

"Fine, I guess. I was really nervous and then Hay Lin and Will showed up and everything crashed into chaos, you know, the usual stuff." Before the old woman could ask, Taranee added: "She's fine."

Appreciating, Yan Lin nodded and looked back onto the water while the oracle's dark eyes wandered back onto the ceiling.

"One of them, the guardian of earth, said she could hear voices up in the ceiling... and feel some kind of stream under her feet."

"And you were wondering if I knew what that was.", the elderly continued for her pupil.

"Yes."

Yan Lin went over to the wall and touched it with one hand. There was something caring and loving in her glimpse when she said: "I'm afraid her senses are better than ours in that concern. But what I know is, that these walls contain more than any of us may know. Secrets and Mysteries far beyond light and darkness or..." she turned to face Taranee. "...the oracle."

With that said, Yan Lin left the dark woman to herself again and the tall doors closed with a mighty humming. Taranee leaned back onto her clouds and listened as the echoes of sound danced from one to another direction until it faded completely. Later, she remembered thinking about Yan Lin's words, when a deep slumber forced the oracle to rest.

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A light went on, like the sun suddenly shining, deciding to decent again, seconds later. Yon held up his arm to shield his eyes. Darkness fell over the room again and Hay Lin stood in front of the bed, her back to Yon. When she didn't move, the man quickly got up rushing to her side.

"I have to close the school, Yon.", her voice said in a deep, hopeless tone.

"What? Why? Did Taranee-"

"No", she interrupted more fierce than intended. "It's the only way to keep them safe."

Yon opened his mouth, reconsidered and closed it again. He made another attempt.

"Are you sure about this?"

No answer. Absent-minded, Hay Lin stared onto the floor before her feet. What was she supposed to do? What was best? She didn't know anymore.

At the same time a few blocks away, toys got put back into their trunk. Will sorted through the messy room of her brother. He and the twins had to share a room and as soon as they could sit up right, there wasn't a night, when they didn't wanted to sleep with their daddy. Her hand touched the two small blankets. Fluffy. The door clicked. Immediately the volume sped up and the giggling of two little humans filled the apartment. Will tried her smile in front of a mirror, then fixed it onto her face and welcomed her family.

„Hey you two! Aw I could just eat you all up! Mjamjamjam!“

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The twins laughed as their aunt tickled and hugged them in play, carrying them over to the dining table. William sighed in relief and disappeared into the kitchen. Soon after he came with their milk and the siblings put the little ones to bed. Stars glistened outside. William switched on a lamp, grabbed the book from a table and started reading. Will bustled about the kitchen, checked again at the twins and then sat beside her brother to stare out of the big window front onto the few lights in the darkness of night. Darkness. Suddenly the word was all that was left. How Amy felt this very moment?

„Don't you want to tell me, what bothers you?“, he asked without looking up.

„Hm? Bother? What bother?“

He put the book down into his lap. „Will, I know you long enough to know, that smile of yours being a fake.“

Her smile flickered for a moment, but stabilized again: „So what? You're waaaaay younger than me.“

„What's that got to do with it? It's something... magical, isn't it?“

Will looked away.

„Mom called.“, she said, eyes still onto the reflections of glass, “Her and Collins are coming for a visit this weekend.“

William rolled his eyes: „Okay-okay. I get it. Just remember, that I'll listen, whenever you need to talk.“

Will awoke. She didn't know why. It was merely a faint vision of something. Tired she rubbed her eyes and looked at the clock. It was close to 7 o'clock, yet the sun didn't take any effort to show itself. Will sighed. It would be another gray day. Tucked in her morning frock and froggy slippers, she slurped out of her bedroom, through the hall and stopped at Williams door. She hesitated. A soft wailing sounded through the door, a grin spread over the womans' face. She knew her babies alright. As quiet as she could she entered the dark room and tiptoed over to the bed. Deep snoring came out of the dark. Typical, she thought. He slept right through it. The wailing halted to turn into a heavy sobbing and Will hurried to pick up little Michael to rock him in her arms. Before she left, Will glanced over to Emilia. The baby girl blinked, as if awakening then yawned and huddled back into the tiny blanket. Back in the hallway she looked at Michael who had stopped giving noise. Instead he was throwing his big, teary puppy eyes at his aunt who immediately had to hug him!

“Aw! So cuuute!“, while she made her way towards the kitchen, she continued: “I just don't get why you wake up so early. Take a look at your sister. She's a sleep-in just like her dad.“, she thought for a moment, the open fridge breathing cold air into their direction. “Well, let's hope that means you'll turn out the enthusiastic type, once you're older.“

Michael lay his head to the side in confusion, while Will rummaged through the fridge. Dissatisfied, she put one hand onto her hip.

“Don't we have milk? I thought I had bought some just the day before yesterday.“

“It's in the lower compartment.“, the fridge answered in a British accent. Michaels eyes grew big!

“Your brother put it there to make room for his pizza.“, the fridge carried on, getting talkative. Will nodded a few times, and found the milk. Then she closed the fridge and listened to the report of food that should be eaten soon. The microwave rang. Michael blinked at it. Then touched it carefully from Wills arm.



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*"I'm not a toy, lady!"*, the microwave complained and the baby gasped! With eyes, big as plates he looked at Will, then back to the microwave, babbling some strange words. Will grinned.

*"Well you know, your aunty is a witch! So you better be good or I'll let the microwave talk for hours!"*

Uh that was a threat! At least judged from the terrified look Michael gave her. The moment she had managed to make the struggling child sit in it's chair and give him the milk, William showed up. Emilia hung, still sleeping, over his left arm. Slowly he went over to his chair. He sat for a while, yawning thrice, then got up again to search for a spoon. Before he could find it, Will had set everything needed for breakfast onto the table and they ate together. After that she mangled the twins into a matching set of bear-suits and put them into the hands of their father, who left for work. He brought them to the day care and took the bus towards the other end of town, where he would stay until the evening. Will looked out the window. It had gotten lighter, but still, grey, heavy clouds hung above the city. She shrugged. Then, in a flash of energy, ran into her room, quickly changed into clothes, hurried through the hallway, where she grabbed umbrella and coat passing by and was already out the door when she saw the envelope on the dresser. Interested she took a few steps back into the apartment to check her new mail. William must have brought it in yesterday, she thought, ripping open the top. Forth came two shiny tickets and a small letter.

"Hey Will!

I hope you get this, because I was stupid enough to relay your address...

Anyways I hope you and the guys can come to my new premier. I know it's far but if you need any help with the costs or somewhere to sleep, just call and I'll get you something!

Hopefully see ya soon!

Irma"

Will took a closer look at the tickets. It was dated for December. She laughed at the terrible smileys that covered most of the letter, then stored everything carefully away and left the apartment. Taking two steps at once, she almost bumped into a teen with flat dirty blond hair, on his way up. Immediately the boy started apologies, until he saw who he was talking to. His expression brightened.

*"Why, miss Vandom! Why didn't ya say t'was you! Would'av saved me the time o' bowin'."*

Will laughed at his accent.

*"Brought British it is today, then?"*

*"Yes, Ma'm"*, the boy answered with a proud grin and followed Will casually down the steps.

*"Say wheren't you on your way up just now?"*, she asked when they had reached the front door of the building. Hayden shrugged and said: *"Schools' got washed up by some pipes so I've got nowhere to go until late noon."*

*"Washed up, ey?"*, Will repeated with a knowing smile. The boy quickly lifted his shoulders to show his innocence in the matter.

*"Wanna come to the shop, then?"*

*"Sure thing!"*

So the two of them went along down the dreary road. It wasn't raining yet and Hayden offered to carry the umbrella. It wasn't really necessary but Will played along and bowed to him in thanks. A

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heavy wind caught up with them as they reached town center and Will lifted her collar for cover.

People were rushing by, fearing what was about to come.

"Volks are quick 'n about t'day.", Hayden commented joyfully and trotted along with his neighbor.

Few minutes later they had reached their destination. Just across the market place, next to a flower shop gleamed the sign of "Olson Day Care". A bell rang and the shop-assistant looked up from behind the desk. A tiny dog came running and started jumping around Hayden in excitement. The boy bent down to pet the little creature.

"Oh, miss Vandom! I didn't know you were coming in today."

"Well it was a spontaneous decision. And you know, you are to call me Will.", Will answered taking her coat off. The assistant - a middle-aged, well built woman - laughed.

"I wish I had your enthusiasm.", she said, handing her boss bird feeding. Automatically the women went on feeding the many different animals in the shop, toyed around here, cuddled there, exchanged newest town gossip. Later a client came, taking back a talkative parrot. Even later a woman and her daughter visited to ask about prices and left content, a flyer in her hand. Hayden was mostly consumed by the puppy. In a moment of silence he asked: "Say, who would bring a puppy as young as him to a day care?"

The assistant smiled awkwardly.

"What is it Minerva?"

Will sensed something strange.

"Well,", Minerva started, fingering around with the collar of her blouse, "a few days ago, a young girl came in. She seemed very spoiled and was in a hurry. She simply pushed the poor thing into my arms, mumbled something of 3 days and left."

"When was that?", Hayden asked, still playing with the dog.

"5 days ago."

Haydens' hand came to a stop. Silence.

"Why didn't you tell me?", Will asked, more accusingly than meant. Minerva looked down at the happy japing dog.

"I guess I just hoped she would come back..."

Will got up from the chair and went over to the counter. Having reached it, she went though a drawer and took out a large book. Turning the pages she asked into the room: "Did you get her address? A name? Anything?"

The assistant shook her head.

"She was already out of sight, when I reached the door and I couldn't leave the shop. I've never seen her before, either."

"Hm."

Will stared onto the floor, thinking. Hayden looked at the puppy who was licking wildly his hand, jumping up until his head touched the hand a little. The boy lowered it for a stroke and a tail wiggled excitedly. The black fur was warm and soft. One eye was surrounded by a light brown spot. The rest of the dog was covered in dark.

"What's gonna happen to him now, miss Vandom?", he said worried. The woman sighed in reply. Indecisive she looked at the puppy, at the floor, then back at the puppy. Another sigh. Then she announced: "I guess we'll keep him here, until we find another solution."

"Yey! You heard that, Snickers?"

The dog barked, or rather squeaked a few times, as Hayden took him up, holding him against his head. He mumbled something that sounded like typical animal-cuteness-language. Will gave Minerva

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a questioning look, pointing at the scenery, forming the name soundless with her mouth. The assistant shrugged with a smile. The rest of the day went by uneventfully. Hayden left around three with the promise to visit Snickers again, as fast as he could. The accent of the day had entirely been forgotten the moment he had met that little animal.

Nervous the spoon was stirring in circles through the hot drink. The Asian woman took a look at her watch, the fingers of her right hand tapping rhythmically against the spoon. A beauty with long golden hair entered The Golden, saw her and waved one hand while walking over to the table.

“Hay Lin! Good to see you! It’s been a while.”

“It really has. Thanks for coming.”

They hugged each other and sat down. Cornelia rummaged around in her bag to reveal a sketchbook. She handed it over to her dark haired friend with the words: “From Lilian. She asked me to give it to you. She’d like an opinion.”

While taking it, Hay Lin replied: “Why don’t you give her one?” The woman started browsing through the papers with coal drawings of birds, flowers and few people. Every now and then she took a moment to enjoy it before moving on. Cornelia put her off and gesticulated wildly to show her incomprehension. “Oh, you know: family is always biased and so on. Besides I don’t know much about that kind of thing. I can only say whether I like it or not but I can’t give her advise on how to improve. That’s where you come in.” A finger pointed at Hay Lin and the woman smiled. By the time she had already reached the last page of the sketchbook, made her judgment of the young man pictured there and rose an eyebrow. The blond laughed and nodded knowingly. “I asked her about him but according to her he’s ‘just a fellow student’.” She thought about her words and mumbled on: “Wait, how can she even say that ‘fellow student’. She hasn’t started studying herself.”

Hay Lin laughed and Cornelia joined in. They spend some time filling each other up with life’s news. Over Mei Mei’s many competitions in rhythmical sports gymnastics, Cornelia’s ice skater courses, Peter and the health state of Mrs. Hale. The topic ‘magical school’ was avoided very systematically. Will and Cornelia had telepathically agreed on waiting until the other one had arrived for full support and just as topics ran out, the redhead swung from her bike outside The Golden.

“Oh, look!” The friends rose to welcome Will appropriately until they sat down again. After a short fill in on Cornelia’s fast-paced and tight-scheduled life, they finally arrived at the reason for their meeting.

“What did Taranee say?”, the blond inquired after silence had spread between them. Will and Hay Lin sighed, the Asian massaging her forehead. Will left the word to her: “She’s very busy up there. I could barely reach her. That’s why I called you. I need opinions. From you guys not my husband or the students or their parents or whoever. I need it from someone who knows me and all that stuff that’s been going on out there.” Her arm swung towards the windows where people bustled about, Most of them ignorant of the danger that grew within the shadows. The two others nodded in agreement. Then they exchanged questioning looks for a moment until Cornelia drew in her breath and started speaking: “Will and I already talked about your situation and...” Carefully she searched for the right words, eyes closely watching every wee bit of reaction in her dark haired friend. “... we both think you’re overreacting.”

Will hit her forehead hard. Before Hay Lin could even grasp air for protest, Cornelia hastily blabbered on: „About closing the school! Not the students. That’s terrible. I meant the school.“ ,Close one‘, Will grunted in her mind and Cornelia felt guiltiness heavy on her shoulders. ‘You’re better with words. Why don’t you go on then?’, she replied. The whole time, Hay Lin was watching their faces with suspicion. “Are you using telepathy just now? There! You reacted to her! I can’t believe it! Just say it out loud!“, she half yelled throwing over the mug of coffee. Slowly the black fluid spread across the table all three of them observing how it build a pond reflecting their surprised expressions. The dark mass came to a halt and nobody seemed to feel the need for any

## JROCK-Exzerpts

By Yangi

cleaning so they ignored the incident and continued the discussion. Will rested her elbows onto the table, careful not to touch the coffee.

“We’re on your side, Hay Lin and to ensure you of our support, we...” they exchanged glances once more and Cornelia took over: “...decided to help you out with the teaching. I already talked to Peter so every Monday and Tuesday I’ll be in Heatherfield and we can take turns watching the young ones.”

“And I have Hayden to look after the twins and the shop doesn’t really need my presence anyways.” Cornelia smiled warmly and added: “That way the two remaining of us could go investigating on the missing cases. If we find a lead we might at least prevent the remaining students from being abducted.”

Will nodded towards her Asian friend and reached for her hand. A tear glistened in the corner of Hay Lins eye. With one finger she wiped it away and laughed. “Thank you. Thank you so much!”

After hours of talking of old times, the three split up for their walk home. Hay Lin offered to give Cornelia a lift but she declined. “It’ll be fun to see how everything’s changed since I’ve last been here.” Will passed her and jumped right into the family car. “Good for me! See ya tomorrow and greetings to your mom and Lilian!”

“Same to your loved ones.”

Hay Lin and Will waved through the windows and Cornelia waited until they had turned down Marketstreet to the southern ends. Slowly and smiling the former guardian left the parking lot and walked the other direction. Street names changed in cozy pace while Cornelia let memories fill up her conscience, coloring her eyes with laughter and sorrow. The last thoughts she had in front of the protective high gates, were dedicated to Irma and Taranee. They were happy ones flying away with the breeze off into the sunset.