

CRYSTALIS  
ALPHA  
PART 8





*Crystalis Alpha* (A Part of *The Crystalis Saga*)

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## The Denouement

“Serena? Serena, are you okay?” ran through the princess’ ears moments after drifting into unconsciousness.

A warm glow that only the sun could produce greeted Princess Serena alongside this concerned voice. Princess Serena opened her eyes to find Jake kneeling beside her, clutching her hands. Sitting up, the Princess of Gonaga enthusiastically embraced her worried friend.

Princess Serena whimpered, “It’s finally over. I never imagined we--”

“You,” Jake interrupted. “You survived for us. You saved us. Serena... I... I think I--”

“Jake, if you don’t mind, can we continue this later? I’d like to check on my family.”

Jake wanted to say something, but decided it was best for the princess to witness what he had in mind for herself. Being helped to her feet by Jake, Princess Serena gazed in astonishment at everything around her.

“It’s all here,” Gonaga’s eldest princess said to herself. “It’s like Oni never attacked.”

Walking with Jake toward the castle, the princess’ prior statement proved truer than she ever imagined. Everything from homes near Princess Serena to the Marketplace was back to normal. Even the peoples’ minds were restored to their original states before Empress Oni’s invasion. At the castle gates awaiting their returning daughter and sister alike was the royal family.

Princess Athena yelping, “Sister!” warmed Serena’s heart upon seeing and hearing her.

The princesses’ mother, Queen Helena, grabbed her eldest child; congratulating Serena for doing something beyond comprehension. King Goga III bowed in his daughter’s presence, making the princess question how her family knew what happened while everyone else didn’t.

King Goga explained to his confused offspring, “The Gonagan Crystal. That’s the only way Gonaga could return to this state. You must have saved the crystal before Oni completely drained its energy. Retrieving it, you allowed the crystal’s blessed powers of restoration to unlock and save

Gonaga.”

“So that’s why it was in the shape of a key before?” Serena responded. “And why do you remember everything and the people don’t?”

The king immediately answered his oldest daughter, “It’s simple, my dear. Coming into contact with the crystal, our minds retained everything. Our family, your friends, and of course, yourself. We’ll remember those horrific days for the rest of our lives, but your people won’t have that burden. They will live as they did before.”

*My people*, Serena thought while her mother insisted the family’s doctor perform a physical on her daughter as soon as possible.

While the women entered Gonaga Castle, King Goga approached a quiet Jake – who was leaning against one of the front gate’s stone pillars.

Gonaga’s king ordered Jake to, “Stand up,” with Jake following the command immediately.

Looking at this young man standing at attention, King Goga said, “I want to thank you for attempting to warn me. My stubbornness almost cost me my land and, more importantly, my family. I know you and your friend were responsible for my daughter defeating Empress Oni. I don’t know what exactly happened in the National Armory, but it was you two who saved my daughter. If there is anything I can do for you and your friend, feel free to ask.”

It didn’t take long for Jake to come up with a request.

When the King of Gonaga turned around to follow his family inside, Jake spoke up, “King Goga... I have no home now. I’m a traitor to a land that bares no life. If you could--”

“I’ll set up something right away for not only yourself, but also your comrade,” the King of Gonaga said without a second thought. “Every hero needs a place to lie his head at night.”

“Actually, it’s comrades, King. Two others broke free of Oni’s brainwashing and fought alongside us. They’ll need homes, too.”

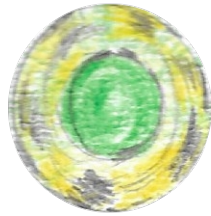
“As long as you and your friends work, you’ll have a home in Gonaga. Bring them here so they

too can hear this promise.”

“I will, King Goga.”

What both King Goga and Jake didn't know was the actual whereabouts of Dash, Ken, and Jas. Jake scoured the city, describing his friends to anyone whose face Jake remembered prior to Empress Oni's attack.

With night nearing, Jake wondered, *How much power did Oni take from that crystal? It's almost like she didn't use hardly anything for so many people to forget.*



The royal family sat in the castle's Dining Room with a wonderful fest of poultry, pork, multiple vegetables and fruits before them. Sadly, as enthusiastic as her family was, Princess Serena couldn't eat anything.

Athena asked her sulking sister, “You miss them?”

His daughter not replying made a turkey leg-chewing King Goga speak up, “I talked to the one who escorted you home.”

“His name is Jake,” the princess whispered.

“Yes,” her father restarted. “I talked to him during your checkup. I promised to find his friends and himself homes in Gonaga. I believe he went searching for them following our conversation. Hopefully he finds them soon.”

Restless was Serena's sleep that night.

Her mind focused on Jake's delighted expression when he woke Serena from her unconscious

state almost a day ago, *Of all the people to be by my side after that, it had to be him. What would they think if a princess...? What am I saying? When I arrived here, he left. Even if he wanted to see Jas and everyone sooner than later, you'd think he'd stay here.*

Princess Serena moved from her bed, continuing her thoughts while staring at the starlit sky through her room's only window, *They know where the castle is. They know it would be the first place we'd go. He did the smart thing. Being under the watchful, judgmental eye of Father wouldn't make for a happy experience. Maybe we'll cross paths someday. But until then, this is farewell. May you find happiness during our time apart.*

With slight daylight peeking through the foggy sky, a noise awakened Princess Serena from her barely hour-long sleep. The sound of someone going through the kitchen's storage room didn't frighten her. In actuality, the person's rude loudness excited the Princess Serena. Exiting her bedroom, Serena hastily ran through the castle's halls until she arrived to find the rumbling's source.

The princess squealed, "Jas!" at seeing her friend searching through various cabinets.

Jas warmly greeted her with a question, "Hey, Princess, where do you keep the food around here?"

"What do you mean? The refrigerator is full."

"I mean some real food. Meat! Something I can sink my teeth into."

"My dad gives any whole leftovers like that to the soldiers if they want it."

"Well isn't that nice for them, but what about the heroes? Where's our leftovers?"

"Our?"

"Oh, yeah. Dash and Ken are wandering around here somewhere. I think this is the first time Dash's been in here with a clear mind. And Ken's never been out of Jarad until now."

Asking about the only name Jas didn't mention, Princess Serena's face blushed, "What about Jake?"

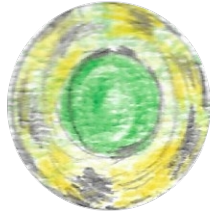
"I don't know. I thought we'd catch up with him here, but--"

“He went looking for you when he brought me home,” the princess interrupted.

“Well, that’s not good.”

“Why?”

Deciding to find something sustainable in the aforementioned fridge, Jas answered Princess Serena’s inquiry while beginning another search, “If there’s one thing about Jake it’s that he never gives up when he has something on his mind – especially when it comes to his friends. That’s why he fought so hard to protect us... to protect you.”



In the castle halls walked Dash and Ken discussing their respective futures.

Dash said while patting Ken’s back, “It just feels so nice to not be seen as an enemy anymore. For the first time we can just live normal lives. So what are you gonna do?”

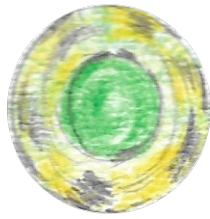
Ken stopped moving, halting Dash’s progression as well.

“Dash,” mumbled Ken before upping his voice so Dash could hear the rest of his words, “that’s what I want to do. I want to live. The entirety of my life was spent in Jarad. I now have the chance to see the rest of the world.”

“You don’t wanna live it up in Gonaga?”

“Why stay stationary now that the world is free of evil like Oni?”

Noticing Dash’s silence, Ken tried to verbally comfort him, “I’m not saying I’m leaving today or tomorrow. I’m just saying that sooner than later I’m going to explore the world.”



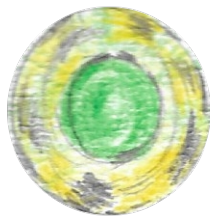
Another night passed without Jake returning. The worry Princess Serena experienced a night before increased tenfold; thus distressing her concerned family. Serena spent the next day sitting on the castle's front stoop with Athena playing in front of her. Behind the castle's front doors, Dash, Ken, and Jas conversed about Jake's whereabouts.

Jas asked his fellow heroes, "What's wrong with him? He's literally got a girl sitting and waiting for him to return. We used to talk about finding that special someone. He finds her and doesn't come back!"

Dash replied, "Do you think he was worse off than they thought? It took us a while before we could even move. Maybe--"

"You can't say such things," Ken interrupted.

The three friends stood in silence after Ken stopped Dash's statement. But in their minds, they all worried that Dash's sentiments might be true.



Princess Serena barely slept for a week, waiting and hoping for Jake's return though she pretended she had moved on. As he'd promised, the King of Gonaga found homes for four of the five heroes. King Goga even employed Dash, Jas, and Ken in the Gonagan military as combat specialists in foreign



attacks.

Gonagan soldiers questioning why three young Jaradians were given such an important job would force Jas to stand up for himself and ask, “Who else can say they not only trained with Oni, but kicked her butt as well?”

The soldiers never understood what Jas meant, but assumed he and their new fellow servicemen had a hand in Empress Oni’s reported death due to a “Gonagan military air strike.” Nine days following the empress’ defeat and Jake’s disappearance, Princess Serena’s change in attitude since Jake’s leaving continuously perturbed the royal family. So when the princess started planning a vacation, King Goga and Queen Helena gained hope that their first daughter had accepted a life without the missing hero. The princess’ intended destination of Majan – an oceanic resort built on its peoples’ immaculate fishing techniques and even greater tasting marine life – would prove the perfect place to forget her troubles.

Princess Athena verbally pestered her sister during Serena’s packing for the trip, “Why do you have to leave again? Why can’t you just stay here and forget about the big boy?”

The eldest princess retorted to her sister’s questioning as Athena helped Serena shut her final suitcase, “And why do you, and everyone else for that matter, think I’m leaving because of Jake? A week ago I almost died. And the sad part is hardly anyone remembers or even knows it.”

“I know it!” Princess Athena shouted, jumping off her sister’s suitcase when it clicked shut.

“Thank you, Athena. But I need to go for myself. Clear my mind while I can. Next thing you’ll know, I’ll be assisting you run Gonaga.”

Before noon, Princess Serena found herself approaching Gonaga’s famous harbor. A small ship with the royal family’s crest embroidered on its sails neared the heavily guarded dock. Behind the first Princess of Gonaga stood her family and closest friends – her father and mother, her sister, Dash, Jas, and Ken. Princess Serena hugged everyone before making her way toward the awaiting vessel.

Stepping onto her ship, the princess abruptly turned around.

Princess Serena’s intention was to wave at her whimpering mother and sister, but something

caught her eye before completing her planned action: someone running through the gathering people in the dock's direction. This charging individual's face blurred in Serena's eyes during his or her haste. King Goga moved from his position, wanting to see the source of this commotion when a fast-moving person jumped above the crowd blocking his way. Princess Serena's face blushed as she recognized the leaping young man happily yelling her name.

"Jake," Princess Serena whispered to herself while he zoomed past their gleaming friends.

At the ramp's bottom connecting the dock to the ship, Princess Serena and Jake met with a strong embrace. As hard as Princess Serena tried she couldn't stop a few tears from leaving her eyes. Jake ended the hug to wipe the now-flowing tears from Serena's cheeks.

Nonchalantly, Jake asked his fellow warrior, "Why so emotional?"

Grabbing onto Jas' waist, Princess Athena started crying like her sister.

Princess Serena had to know from Jake, "Where have you been? Father said you went looking for Jas and everyone, and you return long after them."

"There were things I needed answers to. I returned to Jarad, searched the destroyed village, and explored Oni's fortress. Then I felt somethin'. The ground burst forth an energy unlike anything I've ever seen. And in that eruption, I saw your face. I knew then where I needed to be."

Grabbing her left arm, Jake bowed, kissing the princess' hand. Jas – with Athena still attached to his waist – looked at Dash, motioning that the actions between his two comrades turned his stomach.

Ken verbally reprimanded Jas, "Just because it's cliché doesn't make it any less meaningful. I'm happy for them."

Jake rose from his kneeling position to bid farewell to the princess, "I hope you have a wonderful trip."

"I'm not going anywhere!" Serena immediately told him. "I can't leave not knowing if I'll see you again!"

"Don't stop your life on account of me. Take your vacation with this promise in mind: I'll be in

Gonaga when you return. And you know I'm pretty good at keepin' my promises. Now, go. Enjoy the sights and return home to people who await you... and love you."

Beyond the princess' tearful eyes vibrated bright elation. Once she boarded the ship, Serena refused to look back because the princess knew she'd never leave Gonaga as planned. Princess Serena cut her vacation short by three days, returning home on the fourth night.

After dropping her bags in her room, Serena confronted King Goga about her fellow heroes' statuses, "Did they...?"

"No, they're in the city," the king informed his daughter. "I found a few homes unoccupied that I felt would accommodate their needs. Not far from the Marketplace sits a row of houses. You should find him there."

"Which one?"

King Goga smiled at his first child prior to answering, "The one you returned for."

Serena immediately left her home, making her way through Gonaga's famed Marketplace. Princess Serena could only hear one voice in her mind – the first voice that echoed through her ears and heart during the princess' fight with Empress Oni – even among the sounds of welcoming shopkeepers and customers. Surrounded by small, cozy homes, Serena stopped walking. Peering at the various faces entering, exiting, and working around their houses, Gonaga's wandering princess didn't see her target.

"Hey!" someone said loud enough for Princess Serena to hear.

The princess' attention turned toward a home two down from where she stood. Once again, an individual yelled to garner attention. Nearing the building, Serena found a man playing with his dog.

*I could've sworn...* ran through her mind.

With her head drooping, a single tear strolled down the princess' right cheek when she couldn't hold back her emotions any longer. Suddenly, someone touched her face.

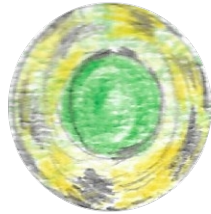
A masculine-sounding person said as he wiped Serena's cheek, "That's no way for a princess to

act.”

Upon looking at this man, the Princess of Gonaga was compelled to hug him before whispering, “I’m so glad you didn’t leave, Jake.”

“I told you I’m good at keepin’ promises.”

The gathering crowd watching this long embrace between their princess and a hero of Gonaga actually embarrassed Jake. Jake trying to push Princess Serena away only tightened the princess’ grip. When he realized the princess wouldn’t let go until she felt ready, Jake joyously accepted Serena’s happiness in warm silence.



I, Princess Serena of Gonaga, have written an account of the happenings during my father’s reign when Empress Oni betrayed the treaty agreed upon between herself and my grandfather, King Goga II. These writings will be physically reprinted and verbally recorded before being stored in Gonaga’s Royal Library. My father insisted that the truth be revealed about Empress Oni’s death on the third anniversary of the events you’ve read; thus making my friends and I worldwide heroes.

Jas has taken to his newfound celebrity like a fish to water. He’s really the life of Gonaga everywhere he goes. I think Jas might be in love, too. Over the past few weeks, he can’t stop talking about this woman named Raye. Maybe he’ll settle down and give the world some little Jases.

Shortly after I collected all of the information for this writing, Ken left Gonaga. No one knows where he went, but Dash told us Ken planned his leaving not long after we defeated the empress. Since Ken’s disappearance, Dash’s focus in grooming Gonaga’s soldiers has waned. And when he does train

our troopers, Dash pushes them like Empress Oni used to do him. I don't think I'm the only one who feels Dash's methods are becoming counter productive. Hopefully Jas and Jake can talk some sense into him before it's too late.

Speaking of Jake – he's doing his best to keep Gonaga's people in tip-top shape. My father financially approved Jake's idea for a general store with food and light weaponry. Jake also offers self-defense classes during the week; so he stays pretty busy.

The combination of Empress Oni's attack and age have worn my parents. When Athena comes of age in a few years, Father and Mother announced they will step down from the throne to allow the first single queen in Gonaga's history to rule (if someone hasn't captured her heart by then). That's right, my little sister will make history not long after the completion of this writing.

I know you're probably wondering why I didn't choose to become the new queen. If you've paid attention to anything you've read, you'd know I've never been into this whole "royalty" thing. I'd rather live on the city's outskirts with Jake and have a peaceful life together. So far, the image that was once a dream is now my reality; and I couldn't be happier. For the first time in life, I really know; y'know?

THE END



## The Epilogue

*Discovered thirty-eight years after the events of “Crystalis Alpha”.*

Entry #7048,

Though Empress Oni hasn't visited my home in many moons, I still continue to do her bidding in creating a vessel to replace her when her inevitable death occurs. Experiment #216 is the only vessel that has responded successfully to the empress' energy. He is growing at an exponential rate as well. I will be proud to showcase my greatest work to Empress Oni when that day comes.