

CRYSTALIS  
MU  
PART 3



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

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## Revenge

The Gonagan princess pulsated with a newfound energy after receiving the last fragment of the Gonagan Crystal from her mother as a birthday present. A necklace that held the emerald-colored jewelry Empress Oni and the first Princess of Gonaga Serena fought over many years ago sparkled when the heir to Queen Athena's throne held it above her head.

Princess Onita said to herself with the dual voices of her own and the dead Empress Oni of Jarad, "My goodness, this power is magnificent. I thought I felt strong before. I guess it's not fair to keep all of this power to myself. Like my mother believes, I must think of the people."

Princess Onita began sweating profusely, her eyes glowing like the sun. With the princess' power rising, Jake realized what his niece was planning.

Jake abruptly ordered, "Everybody get outta here!"

Just as the people started running, a dome of energy expanded from the princess' body. Princess Onita's energy moved fast enough to encompass everyone in the room before they could exit, trapping them inside this newly formed, almost translucent shell. Floating from her position in the room's middle to a spot above her half-eaten birthday cake put all eyes on Onita until the princess vanished.

Jas shouting, "Raye!" brought everyone's attention to Princess Onita hovering inside the energy dome with Jas' wife in a chokehold.

After several unnerving seconds, the Princess of Gonaga said to the struggling Raye, "I don't remember you. Were you a part of my death?"

Raye shook her head while muttering, "No, no, no."

Looking Raye up and down, Onita sniffed her.

"You are telling the truth," Princess Onita confirmed – releasing Raye's trembling, paralyzed-with-fear body. "I can smell the stench of purity on your breath. But your husband, he still stinks of

death. His hands are stained with my original blood.”

The sudden spike in princess’ energy caused Jas to run over to his frightened wife, stepping between Raye and this possessed form of Onita.

Jas asked Onita while motioning for Raye to move directly behind him, “You’re in there, aren’t you, Oni? If I’m right about you, Oni, remember that it was me who destroyed your first form. My wife had nothing to do with your death! Leave her out of whatever you have in mind!”

“I do remember,” Onita replied. “I remember how stubborn you were. That stubbornness bore great strength. But I can tell that your strength now is nothing compared to how you were then. And even then I took your spirit.”

Jas grew tired of Onita’s statements, telling her, “Oni, if you want to fight then let these innocent people go.”

“‘Innocent’, you say?” Princess Onita asked before lifting her right index finger.

Princess Onita’s motion caused over a dozen partygoers stuck inside her energy dome to ascend.

The princess’ little left arm moved from her side with the right index finger still extended. Watching in utter horror was Queen Athena when a ray of black energy shot from her daughter’s extremity, piercing the prone bodies of every elevated person. Blood showered the area until each lifeless body collided with their new resting places.

Queen Athena screamed, “What are you doing, Onita?”

“Having fun,” Princess Onita happily answered.

Turning to Serena, Jake, Jas, Raye & Dash as they guarded the children, the person responsible for the massacre spoke to them in the same calm tone she answered her mother with, “This newfound power is almost too much. Yet, I know there’s more energy I can handle. And the only way to find that out is by pushing myself like I did when I was finally defeated. So, get your weapons. You have one hour or I will destroy Gonaga.”

Princess Onita's energy dome dissipated as the Courtyard's only doors opened; allowing Jake, Serena, Dash, Jas, and Raye to make haste with Russell, Rini, and Jade in tow. Arriving at Jas' home, Jake ordered his son to escort Rini and Jade to their house.

Russell didn't want to leave; telling his father, "You've been trainin' me for years. I can help you."

With his back to Russell, Jake explained how he understood his eldest child's concern for his father and mother, "Son, you know that it was a long time since that day. I honestly don't know how good our chances are. When we fought Oni the first time, we had a little bit of assurance. But now, I don't know. I worried that maybe one day someone like Oni would come along. That's the reason why I've been trainin' you and your sister."

Jake's body grew more rigid & straight as he continued speaking, "If worst comes to worst, stand up; just like we did. I know if you have to, you can defeat Oni, Onita or whatever she is now. I don't wanna say goodbye... but just in case, I want you and your sister to know that your mom and I love you more than life itself. We promise that we'll be by your side no matter what happens."

Grabbing his father's right hand in a failed attempt to pull him around, Russell relented with his original plan to state while still staring at his father's back, "So to make sure you get the best result let me fight with you guys."

Jake turned to Russell with a fire in his eyes unlike anything his son or daughter had ever seen. Rather than back down, Russell stood his ground.

The protective rage surging in Jake made him command Russell, "Son, this isn't the time for you to man up on the battlefield. I need you to protect your sister and Jade. And I don't wanna hear another word. Now, go!"

Russell found no support from his mother when his eyes shifted in her direction. Following a slight huff, Russell led Jade and Rini to his house. Jas and Raye had a quick conversation topped off by a kiss. Raye soon followed Russell so she too could find haven in the home Jake and Serena built.

Jas led the friends that fought alongside him so many years ago into his basement. Sitting in a corner covered with dust was the very same trunk Jas found in Jarad during their return to the land shortly before their life-changing fight with Empress Oni. Hesitantly, Jas squatted in front of the chest that once held his believed family heirlooms.

Jake enthusiastically spoke up as Jas wiped the gritty blanket from the chest, “Who would’ve thought we’d be doin’ this again.”

“Not me,” Jas replied; now slightly grinning. “The fact we’re even looking at this thing is baffling enough.”

Standing near the steps, some ten feet away from Jake and Jas, Serena couldn’t believe how her husband and friend were talking.

Dash noticed Serena’s body language change; causing him to ask her, “I know I haven’t been the most aware guy around lately, but is somethin’ wrong?”

Serena’s frame slightly shook when she replied, “It’s like they’re replaying their childhood triumph. Don’t they realize we’re about to fight a little girl possessed by Oni’s spirit? Our hands will hurt the same little girl – my niece – that I’ve grown to love like my own if everything goes badly. This isn’t some kind of game!”

Jas and Jake’s attention turned to the furious Serena after her outburst.

“Whaddya mean, Serena?” Jake asked.

“I mean that we’re about to fight Onita! Our niece! The daughter of my little sister! And you two are treating it like it’s a friendly sparring session! Through Onita, Oni has killed people again. And the only possible way to stop that from happening anymore is by possibly destroying our niece.”

For the first time since Queen Athena’s wedding, tears flowed from Serena’s eyes – causing Jake to hastily embrace his sobbing wife.

Jake whispered to Serena, “Don’t think we’re gettin’ a thrill off this. We’re gonna do everything in our power not to hurt that little girl and get the evil spirit outta her. I promise you that’s what’s gonna

happen.”

Jake pushed her wife away so he could look her in the eyes to make sure she understood that his words were sincere.

Moving from his spot in front of the chest, Jas told Dash loud enough for everyone to hear, “No matter what, those two are as cliché as you can get.”

Dash couldn't help but laugh. Both Jas and Dash tucked their heads into their chests, trying to control their chuckling. When the two laughers looked up they found Serena's eyes figuratively burning a hole through them. Dash and Jas turned their backs to each other, whistling as if nothing was going on.

“Ignore them,” Jake told his wife before moving stepping back to his original center of attention: the chest.

Jake opened Jas' trunk, removing their respective weapons. With his sickles in hand was Jas as Jake handed Dash and Serena's blades to them.

Gazing at his golden sword with the multi-colored orbs in its handle, Jake verbalized the fact, “Guys, do you realize that the kids still haven't seen these things? The children of worldwide heroes have never seen the weapons that helped save the planet.”

Dash said when Jake finished his statement, “And yet, here I stand fatherless as I said I would be even back then. Lookin' at this from a retrospective point of view, I see how selfish and dumb that decision was.”

Jas patted Dash's chest prior to telling him, “Don't worry, man. After we get through today, I'll be your wingman and help you find a good woman like Raye or Serena.”

Quickly, Dash retorted, “Please, no one like Serena!”

Once again, Dash and Jas' guffawing made Serena give her two friends a look that could kill if possible. With her sword in hand, Serena walked past her humored friends to exit the basement. Jake and Jas were about to follow Serena when Dash mumbled a statement.

Jake quickly asked, “You say somethin’, Dash?”

Dash approached the opened chest, taking a few deep breathes before answering Jake, “Guys, there’s no question that over the last several years I’ve wasted my life. While you two found love and started families, I drank myself stupid. Even though I knew there was nothin’ drinkin’ could do to make me feel better, I still did it because it was the only solution I could find. And then I woke up two days ago. On my bedroom’s only dresser is a picture of all of us at Jake and Serena’s weddin’ reception. That’s when I remembered who I am. I’m not some drunk who can’t be trusted by his friends in public. I’m a fighter – a soldier! I’m a hero! And now it’s time to prove that by savin’ that little girl from Oni’s grip.”

Dash boldly stepped from the trunk toward Jas – who was standing at the bottom of his staircase alongside Jake.

The tone in Dash’s voice was somewhat somber when he said to his closest and only friends, “You know I still remember that day? Right before we faced Oni, Jas turned around and told us he wasn’t ready to die. Those words are still in effect... now more than ever. If I knew this day would come again, I woulda been trainin’ like y’all. You guys were around me, still helpin’ me even though I didn’t know it then. Don’t die on me, ‘cause I know I won’t; ya know?”

Before the other males in the room could respond, Serena reentered the basement to ask if her husband and friends were coming up or not. Hearing Dash’s heartfelt words made Jake a little emotional. Serena noticed Jake’s inability to look her in the eyes. Stepping down the staircase, Serena wanted to know if something was wrong with her husband.

Rather than answer Serena, Jake told his friends, “Dash and Jas, we’ll be ready in a minute.”

Jake’s eyes were also red when he turned to Serena to hold her soft hands.

Somberness enveloped Jake’s words directed at his wife, “Serena, you know since the first day I met you I knew you were different. By lettin’ me be a part of your uniqueness you gave me the chance to feel somethin’ I never felt before. But over the years I’ve found out that I don’t just love you because



of what you did for us, but for what you didn't do."

Footsteps of Jake nearing Serena could be heard as he continued, "You never turned me in when you found out I was from Jarad. You never treated me like trash. You never truly distrusted me even when everything was tellin' you to do so; even when your heart was tellin' you to. Serena, you beat Oni before and I know you can do it again because your energy is as powerful and unique as the love you've given me. Just let your powers flow and take her down like you did back then."

Jas yelled from the top of the stairs at Jake and Serena – who were still in the basement – that someone was here to see them, ending the husband and wife's intimate moment.

Standing in Jas' house were his daughter and Jake & Serena's youngest child. Jake didn't understand why Rini and Jade were in Jas' home when he ordered Russell to take them to his house.

Jade yelled before Rini could explain themselves, "Father, please don't go!"

Upon finishing her statement, Jade embraced her father as hard as she could. Jas looked down at his daughter's head pressing against his chest.

Jas woefully told his daughter, "I have to. This is one of those times in life where I don't have much choice in the matter. Since you're back you might as well stay here since I'm guessing Russell wants to be alone."

Jade huffed at her father, "I'm doing this under protest, you know?"

"I know."

Jas kissed his daughter on her forehead prior to her kissing him back. It was something they always did upon parting. It didn't take long for Rini to observe how emotionally distant her mother was. Approaching her, Rini glared at Serena sternly. With a simultaneous nod and no words said, mother and daughter shared a moment they knew would epitomize their relationship. In quiet admiration, Rini watched Serena move from in front of her; leading the three friends she met when she was her daughter's age into battle again.

Nearly half an hour after leaving Jas' home, the four heroes arrived at Gonaga Castle. There

was a noticeable evil aura surrounding the building now. Without hesitation, the four entered what was to become a site of war. The entrance leading into the Courtyard were shut once again.

Knocking on the Courtyard's door, Dash yelled out, "Open up! It's us, Onita!"

The entrance slowly opened, revealing Princess Onita sitting on a large table placed in the Courtyard's center; swinging her little legs. Surrounding the area lay the dead bodies of Gonagans who were alive when Serena & everyone left with only a handful of hostages wallowing in their own fear of their potential demise. Across the Courtyard stood a stoic Octavius over his terrified, rocking wife.

Grinning at the four individuals standing in front of her, Princess Onita floated from her position on the table to ask, "So, who's first?"

Jas took it upon himself to step up for his group. Jake, Serena, and Dash concentrated on raising their energy levels while Jas neared the hovering child. Serena and Jake held each other's hands, with the combination of their energies surrounding them.

The swelling energy behind him made Jas stop in his tracks and remark, "Man, you guys are still really strong."

Without a second thought, Jake replied, "No doubt!"

Taking a moment to up his energy level as well, Jas decided it was best to strike while Princess Onita was paying attention to her family members. When the princess' eyes moved from the couple to a leaping Jas, the first attacker punched her in the chest. Falling backwards, Princess Onita landed on the table she was just sitting on moments ago. The once nearly catatonic Queen of Gonaga gasped at the sight of her daughter being hurt.

Queen Athena whimpered, "Why is this happening?"

For a moment, Jas thought he knocked Princess Onita out cold with his left hand. That few seconds of satisfaction ended when his enemy vanished. Everyone able to looked around the Courtyard for Princess Onita.

Jas broke the growing silence by stating, "This is too much like the old days. If she's around

here, and Oni's in her, she'll try to use our false--"

Serena abruptly interrupted Jas with a verbal warning, "Behind you!"

Jas felt someone grab his back prior to that feeling disappearing. Reaching for his sickles, Jas discovered that whatever touched him stole Jas' prized weapon.

Jas' focus moved toward his friends until he suddenly heard someone say, "Looking for these?" before a fierce pain ran through Jas' chest.

Slowly looking down at the source of this agony, Jas witnessed his golden sickles shimmering with his own blood. Holding the sickles was none other than little Onita. A delighted smile formed on the princess' face as she hoisted Jas' heaving body above her head in an unbelievable display of power; allowing Jas' blood to run down the sickles' handles and her arms. With the little bit of strength he had left, Jas produced & threw a small, blue energy sphere at Princess Onita's face. The energy exploded upon impact, only to reveal it did no damage to his target.

"You call that an attack?" Princess Onita asked; whipping Jas to the ground.

Gonaga's latest princess approached Jas' contorted body, reaching down in an attempt to pull the sickles from his body. The fury growing inside Dash became too much. Unsheathing his immaculate, clear-bladed sword and charging this unexpected adversary, Dash growled. Princess Onita hearing Dash's footsteps made her look at her next attacker. Releasing her grip of the sickles' handles, Princess Onita fell backwards to avoid Dash's wild sword swing. The Princess of Gonaga bridged herself off the floor with her hands and legs, resembling a crab for a short period of time. Suddenly, Queen Athena screamed for Dash not to kill her daughter. This slight distraction caused Dash's inability to take advantage of the princess' prone position. Princess Onita pushed herself off the floor with her hands to dropkick Dash in his stomach seconds after her mother's plea.

Using his sword as a crutch to keep from falling over, Dash gasped for air following the princess' debilitating kick. Like Jas, Dash realized a desperate attack might be necessary to catch his mark off guard. Dash waited until Princess Onita was within reaching distance. Dash sprung from his

bent position, shooting a powerful stream of opaque energy at Princess Onita's chest; sending her sailing across the room. The only thing that stopped the princess from continuing her flight was the Courtyard's northern wall.

Though her daughter had committed grave atrocities, Athena vocally worried about Onita's physical status when her little girl bounced off the stone, hit the floor and stopped moving.

Queen Athena watched her daughter until Dash yelled, "I know you're not done!"

The same cackling everyone heard when Onita was given the Gonagan Crystal returned. In a flash, the princess moved from her horizontal position to a spot beside Dash's right side.

Princess Onita told her somewhat stunned nearby adversary, "You have gotten weak in your age."

Before Dash could react, Princess Onita smacked him across his face. The amazing impact knocked Dash past his friends, through the stonewall behind him. Jake and Serena were attending to Jas' wounded chest when Dash fought Onita. Turning to his wife, Jake seemingly divulged his plan following Dash's collision. Only seconds after telling Serena something, Jake jumped from Jas' side; heading toward his niece turned foe. Unbeknownst to Princess Onita, Jake was nothing more than a distraction for his wife. Her aunt grabbed Princess Onita from behind, pressing the little girl's arms to her sides.

The current Princess of Gonaga cried out, "What are you doing?" as Serena pushed her toward a wall adjacent to the one Dash went through.

With Princess Onita in her clutches and forced against the solid barrier separating the chaos happening within Gonaga Castle and the unaware public, Serena yelled for Jake to complete his plan. Jake couldn't help but look behind him at his sobbing sister-in-law.

"I'm sorry, Athena," Jake mouthed at Gonaga's queen.

Returning his attention to the Serena-holding Onita, Jake powered up until his energy level reached its peak.

Jake commanded Serena, “On the count of three, move!”

Immediately, Jake produced a beam of red energy from his palms following his order.

Serena peered back when she heard Jake shout, “Three!”

Diving from her position, an aunt left her niece in the line of fire. Princess Onita couldn’t move in time, causing Jake’s ray to strike her. Rather than penetrate its target’s body, the beam ballooned and exploded around the Gonagan princess.

Serena covered her eyes from the dust & debris until Jake asked his “better half” if she was okay. When Serena confirmed she hadn’t been injured, Jake gave his wife a huge smile. Queen Athena, King Octavius, Serena, and Jake’s eyes then focused on the dissipating concrete fragments where Princess Onita was before Jake’s energy hit her. A singed piece of Onita’s emerald dress gently floated to the destroyed ground.

Athena loudly gasped as Serena screamed at Jake, “How much energy did you use?”

“Not enough to obliterate her!” Jake quickly responded. “It should’ve just knocked her out!”

Serena felt her legs weaken until she couldn’t stand any longer. Jake ran forward to catch his falling wife while Athena let out a deafening cry.

Queen Athena whaled, “Why? Why is this happening? Jake, how could you do this? How could you kill my daughter?”

Jake turned from his kneeling, whimpering wife to the approaching queen and sister-in-law to repeat himself, “I didn’t use that much energy! I--”

“You were fighting a little girl,” Athena interrupted, coming face to face with Jake following her statement. “A little girl who couldn’t take an attack like that. You idiot, she wasn’t Oni! She was my baby girl!”

The pain in Athena’s eyes made Jake collapse to his knees like Serena.

“She wasn’t Oni...,” Jake said to himself.

Suddenly, a female voice rang out and echoed, “Of course I’m not Oni.”

Queen Athena, Serena, and Jake's eyes peered up, finding Princess Onita hovering above the Courtyard with the very bottom of her once gorgeous gown burned off. A slight glimmer of relief shown in the queen's eyes while she watched her daughter descend.

When Princess Onita's feet touched solid ground and approached her mother, the princess spoke again, "While I'm not Oni in the flesh, I feel what she felt. And it's all because of you, Queen Athena of Gonaga; you and that little piece of crystal you gave me. Aunt Serena, you know about the crystal all too well. You used its power against Oni to defeat her, right? And now I have the blessed Gonagan Crystal."

Serena shouted at her niece, "What are you trying to accomplish?"

Jake watched Serena move from her genuflect position, walking in the princess' direction. Serena looked down at her niece after reaching her. Before Princess Onita could do or say anything, Serena slapped the little aggressor's face.

Serena screamed following her action, "Why are you doing this? If you're not Oni, then why are you killing people indiscriminately like her? My niece, my little Onita isn't a murder. Oni, reveal yourself!"

"Aunt Serena, Oni revealed herself a long time ago. Then *you* killed her. You speak of her as a monster, yet you showed no mercy. Is there any difference from what you did that day than what I did here?"

"Of course there is!" Serena replied. "I stopped a monster!"

"No, Aunt Serena. You killed an empress. And now that empress' spirit beckons me to return the favor."

Jake knew what was about to happen. Running as fast as he could, Jake jumped between Serena and Onita before the princess could strike his wife. Instead of stopping her intended attack aimed at Serena, Princess Onita's right hand ran through her uncle's abdomen. Jake's body tensed up – his blood flowing from this new wound. A tearful exchange occurred between Jake and Serena when Princess

Onita hoisted her uncle into the air. Abruptly, the princess removed her arm from Jake's body, dropping him on his left side. Serena joined Jake on the ground, reaching for her gurgling husband's flailing arms with him grabbing back seconds later.

Before the lovers' hands could touch, Serena heard the sickening sound of small bones cracking. Serena blinked upon hearing the disturbing noise. When her eyes opened and Serena looked into Jake's vacant optics she realized what was the sound's source. Serena's focus moved from her husband's motionless frame to Princess Onita standing above him. The princess' right foot was placed perfectly in a trench now formed in the right side of Jake's neck. Princess Onita stepping off of Jake's neck allowed Serena to scramble on her knees until she was seated at Jake's head. Grasping Jake's color-drained cranium, Serena lifted it so she could kiss Jake's forehead.

"For so many years you kissed my forehead to sooth my worries," Serena lowly said; her voice barely louder than a whisper. "I never did the same for you because you never worried after we beat Oni. You had more confidence in me than I had in myself. But without you, I don't think I can beat Oni again – no matter what form she's taken. If there's one thing I can do, I'll make sure that Russell and Rini survive. I'll watch over them in life and in death if I have to."

The grieving widow rose from her spot in front of Jake, clutching both her and her husband's swords. Coldly, Serena stared at Princess Onita with the weapons by her sides.

Serena finally spoke after several seconds of silence, "Oni, you've tried to destroy my family more than once. This time, I'm going to make sure it never happens again."

Looking past the princess, Serena somberly told her sister, "Athena, please forgive me. This is the only way to rid the world of Oni's evil spirit."

An enormous amount of energy suddenly poured from Serena's body. Princess Onita smiled at her aunt powering up similar to the day the first Princess of Gonaga defeated Empress Oni. Queen Athena screamed when Serena ran with her and Jake's swords indicating her direction: forward. The princess ducked and dodged the rabid, unfocused sword swings. Serena abruptly let out a deep breath,

visibly changing her game plan by lowering herself when she realized the princess was anticipating her torso-targeted strikes. Princess Onita couldn't avoid Serena's sword cutting into her right thigh.

Princess Onita lost her base, kneeling before her aunt. Tears that stained Serena's face following Jake's death returned as she raised her sword over Onita's head. The queen couldn't take it anymore, moving from her spot on the ground.

"Stop, Serena!" Athena demanded, rushing toward her sister and daughter.

Crying and trembling was Queen Athena as she embraced the princess from behind while staring at her sister's intended instruments of death.

Athena pleaded, "Don't do this, Serena. What Onita has done is reprehensible, but she's just a child. She must have some kind of mental illness. We can get her help. But we won't be able to if she's dead. The people who have perished today will not die in vain if she lives."

"You don't understand," Serena bluntly replied. "This isn't your daughter. She looks like Onita, but her energy – her spirit – reflects Oni's. Oni's taken Onita's soul! The only help she can get is in the peaceful bosom of--"

The same burning pain that Jake's body must have felt thanks to Princess Onita's hand engulfed Serena's body. Serena's wavering frame tried its best to steady itself when Queen Athena scooted from her child. King Octavius pulled his wife to her feet, turning her away from the sight of Princess Onita's bloody right arm penetrating Serena's stomach.

Serena's grip tightened around the handle of her sword – already having dropped her husband's prized weapon. Trembling was Serena and her arms as she lifted her blade so it hovered above her niece's head like the guillotine Serena intended her sword would become. As the blade began descending, the princess slid her arm out of Serena's torso and turned her palms upward.

The sound of Serena's sword hitting the floor rang out after a thin line of Onita's energy exited the princess' right palm; cutting off Serena's hands. Watching her sister collapse, another disturbing bellow exited Athena. Princess Onita rose from her knees, glaring at Serena's quivering form.



Perplexed was the princess when she noticed a painful smile forming on Serena's face.

Princess Onita had to know, "Why are you smiling, Aunt Serena?"

Instead of answering Onita, Serena proclaimed, "Russell, Rini, be good. And Jake, my love... I'll see you soon."

With a single tear running from her right eye, Serena passed from this world. Princess Onita's attention moved from her deceased aunt to Jas lying against the wall that Dash's body went through. Though Jas heard Princess Onita approaching, he never looked up.

Upon reaching Jas, Gonaga's only living princess asked, "Have you accepted your fate yet?"

Jas' response was almost inaudible, "My fate was to die before them. And here I sit; the only one alive. The man who feared death the most has seen it over and over again without experiencing it himself. I don't know what you did to that little girl, but Serena was right. You're not Onita."

"Enough of your words. If your fate is to perish, then let me assist you one last time."

Princess Onita suddenly kicked Jas in the chest, sending Jas' own sickles still penetrating his chest deeper into his body. Shallow in his breathing, Jas started pouring blood from his wounded chest and his gaping mouth.

The Princess of Gonaga bent in front of a heaving Jas to tell him, "Your child and your friends' children will die at my feet just like their parents."

Similar to Serena, Jas' spirit drifted from his body only seconds after Princess Onita touched him one last time. Princess Onita lazily peered behind her to see where her parents were. Upon seeing her expressionless father and weeping mother, Princess Onita reentered Gonaga Castle.

The bright, clear sky that had shown down on the Courtyard so immaculately only a few hours earlier was beginning to set. The townspeople who believed they were privileged enough to attend Princess Onita's birthday party hours earlier finally found the strength to move when they assumed their potential executioner wasn't returning any time soon. A little boy waddled over to Dash after noticing Dash's back moving. The child was about to touch this bloody carcass when Dash's eyes

opened. Dash glared at the kid – who fell off of his feet in awe. Everything about Dash ached when he stood up. No one noticed Dash was standing except for the child. Seeing the many people crying around him, Dash knew exactly what occurred during his unconscious state. Instead of grieving alongside the Gonagans, the tattered survivor grabbed his friends' weapons; limping out of the Courtyard toward the streets.

...to be continued