

Samurai in America

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January 21, 2010

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0.1 Summary

Summary: The Pizza Cats decide that it's time for them to have a vacation, and so they make plans to go pay a visit to their canine friends over in America, the Road Rovers. Polly calls up the Rovers to let them know that they'll be coming to visit, and then the Pizza Cats board a plane down at Tokyo airport, and head out, after Francine calls up the Cats from Yokohama and asks them to watch the Pizza Parlor for them.

Chapter 1

One: Vacation Plans

A new day was beginning in the city of Little Tokyo, and for the city's most famous residents, the Samurai Pizza Cats, it was another day of running the best Pizza shop in the city, and keeping the citizens safe from crime. Francine was polishing the countertops. Polly and Sayaka were setting the tables, and Speedy was cleaning the windows. In the meantime, Guido and Lucille were doing an inventory check of the food in the freezer, while Good Bird and Carla plugged in the arcade machines. They had just finished breakfast about ten minutes ago, and Francine was eager to get things rolling. She checked her watch, and said, "Looking good. . . we've got ten minutes to go before we open up." Speedy said, "Gotcha, Fran. Hey Polly, do you wanna open up today, or is it my turn?" Polly replied, "Actually, it's Sayaka's turn. I did it yesterday." Speedy nodded, and when they finally had everything ready, Sayaka unlocked the door, flipped the sign on the window to OPEN', and the morning rush got underway. Speedy went with Polly into the kitchen, Guido stood by with Good Bird for delivery runs, while Francine and Carla manned the drivethru. Lucille and Sayaka pulled ingredients as needed, and everything was running nice and smooth, until around 11:00am, when a pair of dumb punks started making snide remarks about Speedy. Guido turned to Francine, and said, "If they know what's good for them, they'll shut their mouths before Polly comes out here and. . . too late." Polly handed a freshly-baked Pepperoni and Meatball pizza to Good Bird, and she was about to head back into the kitchen, when she heard the first punk say, "So that's the famous Speedy Cerviche, eh? He doesn't look all that tough to me. . . and what a SHRIMP! HAHahaha!" The other one said, "Yeah, and I hear that his wife's a real hothead, with breath that could peel wallpaper. . . I feel so bad for their friends." The other one didn't answer. . . his face was white as a sheet, as he stammered, "Uhm. . . h-hello, P-Polly. . . nice d-day, uh. isn't it?" Polly had a murderously calm smile on her face, and she was holding a rather large pan. She growled out, "What did you just say about Speedy?" The first punk replied, "I was just saying what I feel, Polly. . . he's kinda goofy looking, and he really doesn't look all that tough." Polly walked up and faced the punk eye-to-eye, and replied, "For YOUR information, buster. . . I don't care what Speedy looks like to you, BECAUSE IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!! I LOVE HIM, AND IN MY BOOK, HE'S THE MOST HANDSOME CAT IN THE CITY!!" Guido walked over, and he said, "Listen up you two. . . unless you want a serious butt-kicking, ya better quit insulting my best friend, or I'll make ya apologize." One of the idiots replied, "Oh look. . . it's the Casanova kitty. Who are you to be defending the ugly little goofball, when you pick on him even WORSE than we do?" Guido grabbed the goon by his shirt, and said, "Listen here, you dumb punk. . . I admit that I've done some really rotten stuff to Speedy in the past. . . stuff that I'm not proud of. However, Speedy AND Polly have BOTH forgiven me for all the bad stuff I've ever done, and I'm NOT gonna let some stupid idiot insult the Cat who saved this city from certain destruction. If anything, you should be grateful, not calling him short, or ugly." The other customer said, "Okay. . . he did save the city, I'll admit that. But he still looks and acts like an idiot. Seriously Polly. . . how do you put up with him?" That did it. Polly yanked the punk up off of his seat by the throat, tossed him onto the floor, and began pounding on him. She shouted, "DON'T YOU EVER CALL MY SPEEDY AN IDIOT, DO YOU HEAR

ME?! HE'S SMARTER THAN BOTH OF YOU COMBINED, AND HE'S ALSO BRAVER, BETTER-LOOKING, AND HE'S THE CAT THAT I LOVE WITH ALL MY HEART... AND NOTHING'S GONNA CHANGE THAT!! GET LOST!!" Polly bashed the goon in the head with her pan, and he went flying out through the door, landing across the street in a quivering heap. Guido kned his opponent in the gut, and then he kicked him out the door. He said, "That'll teach ya to mess with my buddy... NOW STAY OUT!!"

Speedy had seen the whole thing from behind the counter, and he said, "Guido... Polly... thank you both! I truly have been blessed by the heavens, Guido... to have a loyal friend like you... and especially you, Kitten. I couldn't ask for a better friend, and you're also the only Cat in the world that I'll ever love." Polly pulled Speedy into a hug, and replied, "I love you too, Pussycat... and I always will." Speedy's lips met Polly's in a long, deep kiss, until they heard Good Bird come back in. He set the delivery pack down, passed the money to Francine, and said, "Hey there, guys... anything happen while I was out... aside from Romeo and Juliet there?" Speedy and Polly both quickly pulled away, and Sayaka said, "There was a real ruckus, Good Bird... a couple dumb punks mouthed off about Speedy, so Guido... well, I'll let Guido and Polly tell ya."

Good Bird sat down, and he said, "I'm all ears. Tell me... what happened?" Francine, Lucille, and Carla came out to join them, and then Guido said, "Well, like Sayaka said... these two idiots started calling Speedy names, like idiot', shrimp', ugly'... the usual. Polly got ticked off, and she read em the riot act, but they didn't know what was good for them. They even insulted her, so I went in to defend Speedy. That's when it got ugly. Anyway... Polly and I got sick of their mouths, so she pounded the tar out of one guy, before she slammed her pan into his head, and I kicked the other one out." Good Bird said, "Oh...ya mean those two dimwits out there, the ones that are sayin' that you and Polly beat em up for no reason?" Guido looked outside, and said, "Those two little... that's them alright. Wait here, Good Bird. Polly and I can handle this." Speedy walked outside with them, and Francine followed, since she'd been a witness as well. Lt. Mizuno was there, as was Captain Kiryu. His eyes lit up when he saw Francine approaching. He winked at her, and she smiled, before they both got back to business. Lt. Mizuno looked at Polly, and said, "Polly, I certainly hope that what these two men are saying isn't true... that both YOU and Guido attacked them for no reason, and proceeded to throw them out of your establishment. If so, I'll have to arrest you both, and you may end up losing your status as Samurai... and the Pizza Emporium may end up being shut down." Polly replied, "They're lying through their teeth, Lieutenant. I swear that what I say now is true, on my code of Bushido." Lieutenant Mizuno knew that Polly wouldn't lie under oath, especially under the code of Bushido. Francine stepped up, and said, "I saw and heard all of it... those two started insulting both Speedy AND Polly... calling him names, saying that he wasn't fit to be a Samurai, and that he didn't deserve to be married to Polly. They even insulted Guido. I may not be a Samurai, but my closest friends are, and I can assure you... they're not lying. I've got proof right here, this security camera footage." Francine and the others headed inside, and after she finished showing the tape, Captain Kiryu said, "Lieutenant, arrest those two for slandering the names and reputations of our city's heroes, and for disturbing the peace." Lt. Mizuno saluted, and he then slapped cuffs onto both of the idiots, and led them away to face the wrath of Princess Vi.

Francine said, "Thanks, Ryuho... I love you." He hugged the pretty blonde-haired cat, and replied, "I love you too, Francine. I'll be seeing you." They hugged once more, and then Ryuho headed out to continue his duties. The rest of the day went nice and smooth after that. When their lunch break ended, the Cats put in another nine hours of work... baking and delivering pizzas, cleaning, a grocery run by Speedy and Guido just after 4:30pm, and finally, at 10:00pm, the Cats were overjoyed when they punched out for the evening. Speedy grabbed two bottles of Spring Water from the cooler, and sat down next to Polly in the den. She pulled her helmet off, and wiped the sweat off her forehead. Speedy handed her the bottle, and she replied, "Thanks, Pussycat... I needed that." She took a long sip, and Speedy replied, "I know what I need, Kitten... some time to be with you." Speedy pulled her into a deep, loving kiss, until Guido chuckled from the doorway. He said, "Would you like to be alone, or can Lucille and I come in and cool our heels?" Speedy and Polly both blushed, and within minutes, everyone had gotten themselves cozy. Francine said, "Nice job today, everybody. Sayaka, I'm really impressed... you're not only a great Samurai... you're

also a great cook, and you really seem to be well-liked by the customers.” Sayaka replied, “Well. . . I learned from the best. . . my sister Polly, and my big brother-in-law, Speedy. Of course, Guido and Good Bird helped out too. We really do make a great team. . . all of us.” Polly hugged her sister, and Speedy joined in. Polly said, “Hey Francine. . . I just remembered something. . . you said we could take a vacation somewhere, so I was thinking. . . how about if we take a flight from Tokyo Airport, and go pay a visit to the Road Rovers. I’ve always wanted to go to the U.S. for a vacation.” Francine replied, “That’s a great idea, Polly. . . I could use a vacation too. I’ll call up the Cats from Yokohama, and ask Kazuki and his teammates to watch the place for us.” She dialed the number, and Miyaka’s voice came up on the line. She said, “Hey there, Francine. How’s it goin’ over there?” Francine replied, “Just great. I was wondering if you could head over here to Little Tokyo for a week, and watch the place for us. We’re gonna be heading over to America, and we’ll be paying a visit to our friends over there, the Road Rovers.” Miyaka replied, “The Road Rovers. . . aren’t they the team of super-powered Canine crimefighters?” Francine replied, “The very same. We’ve worked with them a couple times, and we’ve gotten to be really good friends, so I thought we could go and see them, and see what all America has to see.” Miyaka replied, “We’ll be there in the morning, Francine. See ya!”

In the meantime, Polly dialed the Rovers, and she soon heard Hunter’s voice on the line. He said, “Hey there, Polly. How’s things down there in Little Tokyo? Seymour’s not making trouble again, is he?” Polly laughed, and replied, “No, Hunter. . . he’s on Prisoners’ Island. . . and he’d better stay there, if he knows what’s good for him. The reason I called, is that we’ve decided to take a vacation, and we’ll be coming up to see you guys. We’re heading out of Tokyo Airport tomorrow at. . . hang on.” She muted her phone, and said, “Speedy, what time did you make our flight arrangements for?” Speedy replied, “Eleven in the morning, Polly. We’ll touch down at LAX at about 5pm.” Polly relayed the info to Hunter, and he replied, “Great! We’ll be waiting for ya. See you tomorrow, Polly!” She replied, “Take care, Hunter. . . and say hi to Colleen for me!” She hung up, and then she headed upstairs to her room, along with Speedy. The others headed upstairs to pack also, and once they were done packing for their trip, Speedy said, “Hey Polly. . . before we turn in for the night, how about a duet to Tonight I Celebrate My Love For You’, by Peabo Bryson and Roberta Flack’?” Polly replied, “Speedy. . . I love that song, and I’d jump at the chance to sing it with you.” Speedy smiled, and he then took Polly into his arms, and they began to slowly dance around the room, while singing together.

Tonight I celebrate my love for you
It seems the natural thing to do
Tonight no one’s gonna find us
We’ll leave the world behind us
When I make love to you

Tonight I celebrate my love for you
And hope that deep inside you feel it too
Tonight our spirits will be climbing
To the sky lit up with diamonds
When I make love to you tonight

Tonight I celebrate my love for you (ooh)
And that midnight song is gonna come shining through
Tonight there’ll be no distance between us
What I want most to do
Is to get close to you tonight

Tonight I celebrate my love for you
And soon this old world will seem brand new
Tonight we will both discover

How friends turn into lovers
When I make love to you

Tonight I celebrate my love for you (ooh)
And that midnight song is gonna come shining through
Tonight there'll be no distance between us
What I want most to do
Is to get close to you

Tonight I celebrate my love for you'

When the song ended, Speedy sat down on the bed to catch his breath, and Polly sat down in his lap. Aiko said, "Mama... where are we going tomorrow?" Polly looked at her pretty red-haired daughter, now three years old, and the spitting image of her. She replied, "We're going on an airplane, honey. We'll be going over to a place called America, on the other side of the ocean, and we'll be meeting mommy and daddy's friends, the Road Rovers. You'll like them, honey... they're very nice, and they've got kids that you can play with." Aiko said, "I can't wait, mama." Speedy said, "It's time for bed now, sweetie... we've got a long flight ahead of us." Aiko hugged her father and mother, before climbing into her bed. Speedy and Polly got into their own bed, and after they kissed each other goodnight, they both curled up and fell asleep, so that they'd be ready for the long journey that awaited them tomorrow.

Chapter 2

Two: Leaving On A Jet Plane

As the sun's rays shone down on Little Tokyo, the Pizza Cats were already up, making their last-minute preparations for their upcoming vacation. Speedy and Polly were going over their vacation checklist, while Guido and Lucille waited for everyone to get ready, so that they could head down to the Palace for a pre-departure chat with Princess Vi. Francine and Carla were making phone calls to all of their friends, while Good Bird and Sayaka brought the luggage downstairs. Aiko was playing a game of CandyLand with the other children. After about thirty minutes, everything was all set up, and a royal limousine pulled up outside. The luggage was loaded, and with that, they were off.

Upon their arrival at the Palace, Speedy and the others were immediately allowed inside, and when they entered the throne room, Empress Frieda said, "Oh my...how are you all today?" Speedy bowed, as did the others, and then he replied, "We're doing just fine, Your Highness. Where's the Princess?" Frieda replied, "She's upstairs taking a bath, but she should be out soon. In the meantime, what's the occasion for the visit?" Polly replied, "Well, we were planning on taking a trip over to America to visit our friends, The Road Rovers. We'll be leaving our friends from Yokohama in charge of the Pizza Parlor, and along with the Rescue Team, they'll be able to keep an eye on the city, in case Cheese decides to show his ugly face around here again." Princess Vi came into the room just then, and she said, "Hello, mama...oh, I see that the Pizza Cats are here. To what do we owe the honor of your visit?" Good Bird replied, "We're all gonna be heading over to America to visit our friends, the Road Rovers. You remember...the canine team that helped us out that one time when Cheese built that Tyranno-Bot, and tried to use it to flatten the city?" Princess Vi replied, "Yes, I remember them. Who's going to be watching the city, and the Pizza Parlor?" Francine stepped up, and replied, "We've got our friends from Yokohama on that, Princess. Kiyone just called me, and she said that her team just arrived at the parlor, and they're doing fine. We've got it all covered, Princess." Smiling, Princess Vi replied, "Well then, have fun...and bring us all back some souvenirs!" The Cats were about to leave, when a servant muttered, "Oh sure...they're going on vacation...to be away from you and your temper tantrums, Princess...oops..." Princess Vi screamed, "WHAT WAS THAT, YOU BLOCKHEAD?!" He stammered, "I-I didn't mean it...P-Princess Vi...please..." She screamed, "SILENCE!! SEND HIM TO PRISONERS' ISLAND!!" The guards dragged the poor soul off, and then Speedy said, "We'll see ya in a week, Princess. So long, Al!" Al Dente replied, "Take care, Speedy...and have fun out there!"

With a final wave, the Cats all headed out, and the limo took them off to the a one-hour drive, they made their way to the security station, and while their bags were inspected, they grabbed a bite to eat for lunch, since they wouldn't be landing over in America until around five in the evening. After lunch, they went to check in and get their tickets, before heading up to the passenger lounge area. Speedy looked out the huge windows that gave a view of the planes taking off, and he said, "I wonder how they're all doing over there, Polly. It's sure gonna be great to see them all again." Polly replied, "From what I heard from Hunter last night, they're all doing great. I can't wait to see Colleen again, not to mention Samantha and Kasha. Colleen's so much

fun to trade stories with, and so are the other two female Rovers. . . and of course, I'm also itching to meet Hunter's mom Starlight, and the kids." Speedy replied, "I know. . . I'm looking forward to seeing Hunter again." They chatted amongst themselves for a bit longer, and then, at long last, they heard over the PA system: Tokyo Air Flight 1122, heading to Los Angeles International Airport, now boarding at Gate 15. Passengers in Rows 1 through 10, please board now.'

Speedy said, "That's us, Kitten. Let's get on board." Polly replied, "I'm coming, Speedy." They all handed their boarding passes to the guard, and stepped onto the Boeing 7E7 Dreamliner. After the usual safety procedure briefings were done, and all of the preflight checks were complete, the pilot announced, Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to welcome you all aboard Tokyo Air Flight 1122, with service to Los Angeles, California. We'll be landing at LAX around 5:00pm, and a late lunch will be served once we reach our cruising altitude of 30,000 feet. Please strap in, get comfortable, and enjoy your flight. Thank you.' Before long, the jet's massive engines powered up, and Speedy said, "America, here we come!" Seconds later, the big jet started to roll down the runway. After reaching takeoff speed, the pilot pulled the nose up, and the giant passenger airliner was off, headed for America.

Hours later, at LAX Airport. . .

The Pizza Cats landed at long last, and Polly followed Speedy off. The others came out shortly after them, and as they waited for their luggage, they heard a familiar voice in the midst of the crowd. Speedy said, "Hey Polly. . . it's Dee Dee and the other New York Pizza Cats. . . and they've got Lucinda and Abigail with them." Polly said, "Dee Dee. . . what a pleasant surprise. What brings you out here?" She smiled, and replied, "A vacation. How about you?" Guido replied, "Same thing. We're meeting our friends, the Road Rovers." At that moment, Lucinda came up, closely followed by Abigail. Speedy said, "Hey there, Abigail. . . and how's things with you, Lucinda?" Abigail replied, "I'm doing pretty well. How about you and Polly?" Speedy smiled, and replied, "Happily married, and this is our three year old daughter, Aiko." Lucinda and Abigail both smiled at the sight of the adorable little girl. Guido and Lucille got the same reactions for their twins, Yattaro and Pururun, along with Good Bird and Carla's son Kazuma. Guido turned to Lucinda, and said, "I don't believe you've met my wife. Lucinda, this is Lucille. Lucille. . . meet Lucinda." The two young ladies shook hands, and then Lucille noticed the ring on Lucinda's hand. Lucille asked, "Are you married, Lucinda?" She replied, "Yes I am. . . to Sundance. After he came back, he professed that he would change his tune, and Cosmo, who'd been acting as the leader at the time, agreed to let him have a second chance. He proved himself when he saved me the next day from being kidnapped, and we got married a couple months later." Lucille replied, "Oh how lovely. . . how about Abigail?" Lucinda replied, "She's with Cosmo. . . he's over there, waiting for our bags. So, who's meeting you here?" Lucille replied, "The Road Rovers. They're a team of crime-fighting canines. We'll be meeting their leader, Hunter, and his wife Colleen. She's also the second-in-command of the team, and a champion martial artist." Lucinda said, "Wow. . . that sounds exciting! How'd you meet them in the first place?" Guido came over, and he said, "Well, a few years ago, our archenemy, Seymour Big'Cheese. . . he teamed up with a couple of their villains, and they conspired to take over the world together. We all pooled our talents together and stopped their plan dead in its tracks. We met up again almost four years ago, when a Taliban terror cell called the Holy Voice stole a prototype military robot, and used it to destroy the office building that belonged to a major supplier of medical equipment. We were on our way over there to see if we could help out, and we came across them. They'd added two new females to the team. . . a German Shepherd named Samantha, and a female Husky named Kasha. To make a long story short, we put those terrorist dirtbags where they belong, and we've kept in touch with each other since. We stopped Cheese again about two years ago, when he buddied up with one of their enemies, this lunatic named Zachary Storm. They should be here soon, so all we can do is wait." Lucinda replied, "They sound really interesting. . . I'm really looking forward to meeting with them now."

A few minutes later, the wait was over, as Speedy heard Colleen's voice. She said, "Cheerio, Speedy. How's everybody?" Speedy shook her hand, and then he did likewise with Hunter. He replied, "We're just fine, Colleen. How's everything with you and Hunter?" Colleen replied, "Oh. . . never been better! Huntie's still the same great dog that he's always been. In fact. . . ahh, there she is. His mom wanted to come along for the ride. Huntie, could you go and get mom,

Please?" Hunter replied, "Sure thing, Colleen." Hunter trotted off, and he came back in seconds, with Starlight right behind him. Speedy said, "Hello there. I'm Speedy Cerviche, and the lovely redhead is my wife, Polly." Starlight replied, "It's a pleasure to meet you. . . Hunter's told me so much about you. My name is Starlight, and as you can tell. . . I'm so proud of my son and daughter." Polly replied, "Daughter. . . you have another child besides Hunter?" Starlight replied, "No, actually. Hunter was my only pup, but I adopted Colleen after I met her, since she and Hunter are such perfect soulmates." It's getting late, so how about if we go and talk over dinner, and then we'll go see a few sights, before heading to Road Rover headquarters." Speedy replied, "Sounds great. Lead on, Starlight." Hunter said, "It's gonna be fun. . . what the. . . Sundance?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, YOU LITTLE PUNK?!" Colleen got into a fighting stance, and said, "One insult about my Huntie, and I'm gonna make a pretzel out of you, got that?" Sundance replied, "Honestly. . . I'm not like that anymore. I've changed. . . ask Speedy." Hunter replied, "Has he changed, or is he just giving lip service?" Speedy replied, "Oh. . . he's changed. He redeemed himself, and he's married now, to Lucinda. She's Lucille's counterpart from Manhattan." Hunter turned around, and he saw both Guido and Cosmo rubbing their wives' shoulders, so that the terminal didn't get blasted by missiles and minigun fire. Hunter said, "In that case Sundance. . . all's forgiven. I'm glad you finally saw the light." Sundance replied, "Hey, no problemo, Hunter." Colleen shook hands with him, and said, "Welcome back to the side of truth and justice, Sundance. I'm proud of you." He shook the pretty Collie's hand, and replied, "Thanks, Colleen. I'm gonna prove it to ya that I'm really sorry for all the stuff I said about you and Hunter when we last met. Here. . . some tickets to come and see Judy Collins perform at Madison Square Garden for the Christmas Concert." Colleen replied, "Oh my. . . I love her music! Thank you so much!!" After everybody had claimed their luggage, the Rovers helped the Cats and their friends carry their bags out into the Stealth Rover, and then they headed out.

While Hunter flew the plane, Starlight turned to Speedy, and asked, "Speedy, the little girl on Polly's lap. . . is she your daughter?" Speedy smiled, and replied, "Yes. . . she's our little pride and joy. Her name's Aiko. That's Japanese for beloved one'." Starlight smiled, and she said, "Oh my. . . she's so adorable, like a younger version of Polly!" Guido said, "Starlight, Lucille and I would like to introduce you to our twins. . . our son Yattaro, and our daughter Pururun. We named them after Speedy and Polly's middle names, as our way of thanking them both for all that they've done for us." Starlight was introduced to Kazuma next, and she then began swapping stories with Polly. She said, "What's it like working at the Pizza Parlor?" Polly replied, "It's pretty tough at times. . . you've gotta be on your toes, and Francine's not one to tolerate goofing off. . . but she definitely means well. She's smart, kind-hearted, and she does have a habit of being kinda sarcastic at times. All in all, she's definitely one of my best friends, and a great manager. Lucille's been my best friend since her and I were little, just like Speedy has. Oh. . . before I forget. Starlight, this is my younger sister, Sayaka." Starlight shook Sayaka's hand, and said, "I hear that you recently became a Samurai. . . what's it like?" Sayaka replied, "It's definitely not the easiest job. . . but I wouldn't trade it for anything, despite the danger. I know I can count on my big sister Polly. . . and my brother-in-law Speedy. . . along with Good Bird and Guido, to always stick by my side. Ever since I turned 12, I've wanted to follow in my sister's footsteps, since she was always there at my side when I was a kitten. She'd read to me at night, help me with my homework, and she'd always let me play with her when she had Speedy and Lucille over. When I got sick, she'd take care of me. When the power went out at night, or if we had big thunderstorms, she'd let me sleep in her room. . . she'd chase the bullies away when I was in school, and she always encouraged me to be the best that I could be. I owe her everything. . . because she helped me to be the Cat that I am today. . . she's the best sister in the world, Starlight." The female Retriever replied, "Oh my. . . she certainly sounds like it. My son's the same way with Colleen. Ever since they met. . . they could both feel the love that they had, but Hunter was just too shy to admit it, until just after they finished dealing with that Big Cheese goon that you know and hate. Ever since then, they've never been apart. I'm so proud of them both, and since Colleen lost her mother when she was a pup, I adopted her as my own daughter, since she's the perfect soulmate for my son. . . and I love her as if she were my daughter by birth." Sayaka replied, "She certainly does seem like a wonderful girl, Starlight. . . no wonder she and my sister get along so well. What are the rest

of the Rovers like?” Starlight replied, “They’re a wonderful bunch, Sayaka. We’ve got Blitz, the Doberman. . . and his wife Samantha. She’s a German Shepherd. Next, there’s the two Huskies, Exile and his wife Kasha, and then there’s Shag the Komondor, and our secret weapon, Muzzle the Rottweiler. He’s pretty calm around us, but when he’s unleashed, you don’t wanna look. Blitz and Sam have a daughter named Karina, while Exile and Kasha have a son named Alek.” Sayaka replied, “Sounds like you’ve got a nice little family there. What about Hunter and Colleen. . . do they have any kids?” Starlight chuckled at that, and then she replied, “Oh yes. . . I’ve got three lovely grandchildren. The twins Alex and Cassie, and little Kayla. She’s about Aiko’s age, and really sweet.” Starlight pulled out her wallet, and passed along her family photos. Sayaka smiled, and said, “Oh my. . . you’ve got such lovely grandchildren!” Starlight and the others then heard Hunter’s voice, as he announced, “We’re landing now, and we’ve got three choices for restaurants. Olive Garden, Applebees, or Uno’s.”

After a few minutes, the group decided on Applebees, and once Hunter had touched down, they all headed inside. After they sat down for dinner, Starlight asked, “Polly, what’s Princess Vi like?” Polly replied, “She’s a bit spoiled, and REALLY hot-tempered. . . but she can also be really sweet when she wants to be. Her mother, Empress Frieda is the same way.” Hunter said, “Hey Polly. . . tell my mom about Cheese. . . that should be a real treat.” Polly chuckled, and said, “Seymour Big’Cheese. . . our archenemy. . . and one of the dumbest, most annoying villains you’ll ever meet. He’s got a voice that sounds like a nasally-congested Hillary Clinton, and he’s a cross-dresser. Plus. . . whenever he gets mad, he explodes. I’ve got videotapes of his tantrums, and I’ll let you watch em when we get to headquarters. Speaking of which, what’s your Master like?” Colleen answered, “Oh. . . where to begin? His real name’s Professor William Shepherd. . . an honest-to-god genius. He was the one that created the TransDogmafier, which made me and the other Rovers into what you see here. He was double-crossed by our archenemy, General Parvo, after they kidnapped his dog Scout. . . who now goes by the name Muzzle. . . Parvo tried running him through a badly-designed Cano-Mutator, and it turned him into a stretcher-bound, straitjacketed mess. The Cano-Mutator. . . it turns normal dogs into slobbering brutes that live to obey Parvo’s every whim. My worst memory. . . one that I still have nightmares about, was our third mission. I got jumped by a werewolf, it slobbered on me, and so I became one of those monsters. I was about to be forced to become the mate of the head werewolf, but Huntie got there with the antidote just in time. I tried to kill him after jumping on top of him, but he was able to kick me off of him, and then he shot a tennis ball covered in swamp water into my mouth. It mixed with my saliva, and that broke the curse of the werewolves. It was disgusting, but it felt great to be me again. I was so happy when he turned me back to normal. . . and I’ll never be able to love anyone other than Huntie. Whenever I get nightmares about that. . . or about the night that my mum died, back when I was a puppy. . . Huntie’s always there to comfort me.” Sayaka said, “There’s so much love. . . so much loyalty between you, just like my sister and Speedy.” Colleen put her arm around Hunter, and replied, “Oh yes. . . he’s the only one for me.” Hunter kissed her on the cheek, and said, “You’re my one and only. . . my sweet angel.” She hugged him, and then their waiter arrived. Once he took their orders, he went out to bring it to the kitchen. When their food arrived forty minutes later, they all eagerly dug in. Speedy said, “Wow. . . I never knew they had food this good here in the US. . . do you come here often, Hunter?” The Retriever-mix swallowed a bite of his burger, and replied, “Yeah, at least once a month with the team. . . and I took Colleen here for her birthday dinner.” Sundance said, “Hey Lucinda. . . we should eat at our local Applebee’s more often. . . how about we go there on our anniversary?” She smiled, and replied, “Sounds fun to me, my charming feline hero!”

Once everyone had finished their meal, along with the dessert, Hunter and Colleen went halves on the bill, and Speedy decided to leave a tip, since he and the others had converted their money into American currency upon their arrival at LAX. With that, they headed for the Stealth Rover, and headed off for a brief tour of the area. They made their first stop at Griffith Park Observatory, and spent some time gazing at the stars through the telescope. After that, they went for a walk along Zuma Beach, and then the Rovers showed their friends the famous Hollywood Boulevard. Finally, with the hour growing late, the New York Pizza Cats decided to head for their hotel, with the promise that they’d drop by Road Rover HQ tomorrow after breakfast. In the meantime, the

Rovers took their friends from Tokyo back to Headquarters.

Back at Road Rover HQ...

The Stealth Rover landed, and Hunter said, "We're home!" Blitz and Sam came out to greet them, and Polly said, "Hi there, Sam! How've you been?" Sam replied, "Just great, Polly... is that little Aiko... gods, she's gotten so big!" Aiko said, "Hi, Sam. Mom told me a lot about you... that you can fight just as good as her." Sam replied, "Well... I had a wonderful teacher. Colleen taught me everything I know." Colleen replied, "You're a great student, Sam... and a great friend too." The two female Rovers hugged each other, and then Exile came out, along with Kasha. The kids came out just then, and Aiko soon hit it off famously with Kayla. The two of them began a game of checkers, while the adults chatted over some coffee. Blitz said, "How's Lucille, Guido?" He smiled, and replied, "Just great. How about you and Sam?" The Doberman grinned, and said, "Never been better. I couldn't ask for a better wife. She's helped me to move past my insecurity and loneliness, which was why I used to compete with Hunter for Colleen. She helped me to see that not only was Colleen meant to be with Hunter, but there were other girls out there... I just needed to keep my eyes and my heart open." Hunter put a hand on Blitz's shoulder, and said, "That's right... ever since then, he's saved me quite a few times, and I've saved his hide too... we've all helped each other out in times of need." Speedy said, "That's what makes us both such great teams... we stick together no matter what, and as long as we stay true to our hearts, nothing can ever separate us, until the day we die." Polly hugged him, and then Hunter said, "How about we take a quick tour, and then we can head to bed." Speedy replied, "Sounds great. Let's do it!" With that, Hunter and Colleen began guiding their friends along.

Before long, the group reached their first stop. Hunter said, "Here it is... the Mission Control Room... oh, Hello, Master." The Master turned, and said, "Hello there, Hunter... and these must be the Samurai Pizza Cats. I'm pleased to meet you." Speedy replied, "Likewise. My name's Speedy Cerviche, and the pretty red-haired cat next to me is my wife, Polly. The little one here is our daughter Aiko." Guido came up next, and said, "Hi there. I'm Guido Anchovy, and this is my wife Lucille... and our twins Yattaro and Pururun." Good Bird came up next, and said, "I'm Good Bird, and this is Carla, my wife. The little guy here is our son Kazuma." Finally, Francine stepped up, and said, "I'm pleased to meet you, sir. My name's Francine Manx, owner of the Pizza Cats' Restaurant." The Master replied, "Again, I'm pleased to welcome you here. I've heard from the Rovers about the help you've given them when you've worked together, and as such, you're always welcome here. Enjoy your tour, and I'll see you around." Hunter and Colleen guided them down through the armory, the hangar, the labs, the medical facility, the luge dock, and to the Transdogmafiers. Their final stop was the Rec Room. Hunter said, "As you can see... we've got a fully self-sufficient base here. Everything we need to keep in tip-top shape, and great logistic support, all fully funded by the US Government." Speedy said, "Hunter, that black helicopter down in the hangar, the Night Rover... when did you guys get that?" Hunter replied, "About two years ago. We flew it first when my mom and Colleen got kidnapped by this goon named Josh Stone, head of a racist group called the League of Human Supremacists. They threatened to kill my mom and Colleen unless we reverted back to our canine forms, but we staged a surprise attack, and got them out of there. Stone's now in prison for life, and I've still got my mom, and my lovely angel." Speedy yawned, and said, "I think I'm gonna turn in for the night, how bout you, Kitten?" Polly replied, "Sounds like a plan, Pussycat. Let's go to bed."

Shortly, the Rovers led their friends to the guest rooms, and said goodnight to them. Once they got into their room, Speedy and Polly climbed into bed, and they soon began sharing some rather passionate moments with one another, as did Hunter and Colleen. Tomorrow would be a day filled with fun and excitement, and they were all looking forward to it.

Chapter 3

Three: Sights and Schemes

The first rays of daylight filtered through the window of Hunter and Colleen's room, rousing the two from a peaceful sleep. Hunter gently untangled himself from Colleen's arms, and she sat up a couple seconds later. She said, "Morning, Huntie. How's the love of my life this morning?" Hunter gently pulled her into his lap, and replied, "I feel like I'm in heaven, Colleen. I love you so much, my English Rose, and you will always have my love, until the end of eternity." Colleen kissed Hunter, and then she replied, "I love you too, Huntie-Wuntie, with all my heart and soul." Hunter smiled, remembering last night. Even though they'd shared many passion-filled nights since they'd gotten married, Hunter knew that he'd never be able to get enough of her love. She not only loved him. . . she was his closest friend in the world, she'd been at his side through all of the challenges that they'd faced, and no matter what, she'd never stopped supporting him. He knew that she would never leave him. . . ever. He couldn't even think of loving anyone else, since there was no other female dog on Earth who possessed all the wonderful gifts that Colleen had. She was brave, loyal, kind, generous. . . not to mention incredibly beautiful. She was also strong, and like him, she'd grown up on the streets, which was one of the main reasons that he'd been so easily able to bond with her when they'd first been assembled as a team.

Colleen leaned her head against Hunter's muscled chest, as he traced her spine with one hand, and stroked her hair with the other one. Her hands were on his shoulders, as she thought of just how lucky she'd been to meet this wonderful, caring dog. He was so kind, loyal, and he had a heart of gold. The instant that she'd seen him, after the team was formed, she'd been attracted to him, and in a very short time, she grew to love him. She said, "Huntie. . . I'm so glad that we met one another, because I know that there's no other dog on Earth that I could ever be this happy with. I'd like to sing this song for you, called Sakura', by Nirgilis." Hunter smiled, and replied, "I'd love to hear that, my sweet angel." Colleen kissed him again, and then she began singing.

In the morning's trance
The light creates a separate road
And the hearts are unprepared
For the love which
will suddenly fade tomorrow

It's too deep.
It can't touch our hearts directly

Cherry blossom
Cherry blossom
The hand on your shoulder is shaking
Good bye fall in love

Cherry blossom
 A silent drill
 The message that your sigh is spinning
 Good bye fall in love
 You can hear me, right?

In this vast world that is empty
 The pupil starts talking. . .
 staring at me, and smiling slightly
 You can stand with
 Something so beautiful, right?

Had I known
 What was not reduced?

Cherry blossom
 In your voice
 Which is everywhere then scatters
 Good bye fall in love

In this sky
 Of your love
 The message that your sigh is spinning
 Good bye fall in love

Cherry blossom
 Where is the end
 Of the continuous sorrow?
 Good bye fall in love

Cherry blossom
 Cherry blossom
 Forgetting all the tears
 From now on fall in love
 Am I reaching you?'

Hunter kissed Colleen when she was done. Her Cockney-accented voice was so incredibly warm and beautiful, and Hunter remembered the first night that they'd slept together, after their wedding.

Flashback. . .

Hunter was laying down on the large bed in the honeymoon suite, which he and Colleen would be sharing for a week. She was in the bathroom, changing into her nightrobe. This would be their first time ever sleeping in the same bed together, and Hunter was a little bit nervous. . . but then he remembered what Colleen had said to him, when she had taken her wedding vows. Her lovely voice still resonated in his ears, and in his heart. "Huntie, I, like you, had a rather tough early life. I lived my entire life, until the day I was chosen, on the London streets. My mum and I had to fight and beg for food, and then, one cold and rainy day, my mum got sick and died, and I was left all alone. The last thing she told me was to always be strong, and to stay true to what I believe in. She also said that she knew that, if I kept hope alive in my heart, that I'd eventually find a way out of the gutter. Well, I'm so glad that The Master provided me with that exit when he chose me, since it led me to you, Huntie. From the day we became a team, I've always felt closer to you than any of the others. I always knew, Huntie, from the day that I met you, that

you were the one I wanted to be with, and now, that day's finally come. We're finally together now, and I couldn't be happier. I will never leave you, Huntie, and you will be my first, and only love."

The door opened just then, and Colleen walked over to the bed, sitting down next to him. The moonlight caused her sable and white fur to shine, and Hunter said, "You look so beautiful, Colleen. . . and I want you to know that from this night forward, you and I will never be apart." She replied, "I love you so much, Huntie. . . and I always will love you, and only you." Moments later, the two of them took the final steps in sealing their love, and once they'd cleaned up, they happily curled up in each other's arms, both of them vowing to love one another until the end of time.

End Flashback.

Hunter said, "I've got a song for you too, Colleen. It's called Sweet Angel', by Sakurai Takahiro." Hunter cleared his throat, and then he began singing to the wonderful female Collie that he loved with all his heart.

The ocean wind tickling my cheek
The mornings I allow myself to doze off

With the happiness that may vanish
Surrounded by the sweet reverberations

I love you, only you, always
Let me strongly feel that pure soul
Woo Dear

Lighting a fire on a piece of romance
I want to chase after you
If alone together, without caring
Melting as one

Staring at the sunset sky
You say that I softly murmured
Pretending not to hear you
I entwined my fingers (with yours), wanting a kiss

Hold me, only me, quickly
Silencing the disturbed sigh, I leaned (towards you)
Woo ANGEL

Pulling on the cuffs of your white shirt
So that you can't escape
Gently confined within your arms
The sound of the dazzling waves

Lighting a fire on a piece of romance
I want to chase after you
If alone together, without caring
Melting as one'

Colleen couldn't help but kiss Hunter once he'd finished, and she said, "Oh Huntie. . . that's such a perfect song for us. . . I love it!" He replied, "You've always been my angel, Colleen. That's why I felt as if it was only right for me to use that song to let you know just how much you mean

to me.” The two of them kissed again, and then they went in for a shower. The kids were up by then, and Starlight joined them. She said, “Good morning, Hunter... and Colleen. I heard you two singing this morning, and you’re both wonderfully talented.” Hunter and Colleen both hugged Starlight, and then they all headed downstairs to begin getting breakfast ready.

Speedy and Polly’s room...

Polly woke up, and looked over beside her. Speedy was still sleeping soundly, and she gently stroked his cheek, until he woke up. She said, “Morning, Pussycat.” He sat up and kissed her, before replying, “Good morning, Kitten.” She walked over to the closet and pulled out a short-sleeved blue shirt and a pair of denim jeans, and Speedy grabbed a white shirt, and a pair of black jeans. She was about to head into the shower and get herself cleaned up, when Speedy said, “Hold on, Kitten... let’s both go in together. First, I’d like to sing for you. It’s a song that I heard last night on Hunter’s radio, called ‘Loving You Is Paradise’, by Firehouse.” Polly smiled, and she replied, “Speedy... I love it when you sing for me... it always reminds me of just how much I love you.” Speedy kissed her on the nose, and then he started singing to the love of his life.

I got lucky, I found heaven here on earth
 Oh, I can see it in your eyes
 When I look at you
 I see all my dreams come true
 Cause loving you is paradise

I never knew before I met ya
 That angels could exist
 You are the one temptation, angel
 That I can’t resist

I believe forever, we can stay together
 Cause loving you is paradise
 Never say goodbye, our love will never die
 Cause loving you is paradise

I wasn’t lookin’ for a miracle
 Oh, and then you came into me life
 You’ve opened my eyes, made me realize
 That lovin’ you is paradise

And now I know that angels do exist
 Cause your sweet loving baby
 Is what I can’t resist

I believe forever, we can stay together
 Cause loving you is paradise
 Never say goodbye, our love will never die
 Cause loving you is paradise

I believe forever, we can stay together
 Cause loving you is paradise
 Never say goodbye, our love will never die
 Cause loving you is paradise

Lovin’ you is paradise
 Lovin’ you is paradise

Lovin' you is paradise!

Polly pulled Speedy into a warm, passionate embrace once he finished singing. She said, "Oh Speedy... you've got such a warm, caring heart... and I love you so much." Speedy kissed her, and replied, "I love you too, Polly... with all my heart." Speedy held Polly close for a few moments, and he could feel her soft hands gently rubbing his back, as he softly caressed her fiery red hair with one hand, while gently holding her around the waist with the other arm. After a few minutes, she gently broke the embrace, and she said, "Speedy, I've got a song that I'd like to sing for you now, called I Am', by Hitomi." Polly cleared her throat, and let her love for this one-of-a-kind Cat flow out through the music.

Let's search for and gather the shards of dreams
 Even if we're sad, we can probably still find them now,
 changing the shape of the brightly turning tomorrow.
 Even if we're sad, let's feel the sure present.
 It's simpler than it looks, but I can't tell it all.
 I'm always putting what I want to say away in my pocket.
 I can't say things with childlike plainness now.
 It's said that time settles all, but without understanding—
 I believe in you 24 hours a day I stare wide-eyed, even at common words
 Time is always laughing on its swift feet
 Let's find a present we want to look for more than memories.
 If we don't move, we can't start. If we worry, we can't stop.
 I don't want to be coddled by dreams of this world's limits.
 A maiden's cheeky wish is left behind as it is.
 Love is everything. Our era starts from here.
 Like a bird cutting through the sky,
 the image dancing in the great sky begins to move
 Let's walk – the road goes on for long, but
 it'll shine like a diamond before we know it.
 I believe in you 24 hours a day
 I stare wide-eyed, even at common words
 Time is always laughing on its swift feet
 Let's find a present we want to look for more than memories.
 Let's search for and gather the shards of dreams
 Even if we're sad, we can probably still find them now,
 changing the shape of the brightly turning tomorrow.
 Even if we're sad, let's feel the sure present.'

Speedy said, "Polly... you've got the most beautiful voice I've ever heard." Sayaka walked in, and said, "He's right, sis... you really are talented. You're a great singer, a great friend, a brave, strong, noble warrior... and you're also the best sister I could ever ask for." Polly pulled her younger sister into a warm hug, and then she replied, "Thank you, Sayaka... I love you too." Aiko came in just then, and said, "I smell breakfast cooking, mama." Polly and Speedy both dashed into the shower

and quickly cleaned themselves up, before getting dressed and heading downstairs to join their friends.

Once everyone had gathered around the large table in the dining room, Hunter and Colleen brought in the trays carrying the plates of pancakes that Hunter had made. After she took her first bite, Polly asked, "Colleen, where'd Hunter get the recipe for these?" Colleen swallowed a mouthful of her breakfast, and replied, "He made it up himself, Polly... like he does with battle plans." Polly smiled, and she said, "Well, I gotta tell ya... he's a great cook." Guido asked, "Where are we goin' today, Hunter?" Smiling, the Retriever-mix replied, "I was planning on taking a trip to San Francisco today, and we'll give you a tour of the city's historic sights, like the Golden Gate Bridge, the Maritime National Historical Park, San Francisco City Hall, The Presidio, and the San Francisco Zoo. After that, we'll head out and have lunch, take in a San Francisco Giants baseball game, and then we'll come back here and have dinner, before finishing the night with a nice stroll on the beach... something that Colleen and I really love to do before we go to bed." Guido looked over at Lucille, and she smiled. Francine was reading through a book of tourist attractions, and she said, "Maritime National Historical Park... they've got several historic ships in this outdoor park. Among them are... the wooden sidewheeled steam-engined paddleboat Eureka, the steam-powered ocean towing ship Hercules, and a few others, mostly from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sounds like a fun trip." Hunter replied, "Yeah, I'd like to show you some others, but due to time constraints, and the fact that we can't go too far from Headquarters in case we're needed, that's the best I can do. Besides, you'll be here for another six days, so there's plenty of time to see more of the sights." Just then, the New York Pizza Cats entered, and were brought up to speed on the day's planned itinerary. Sundance said, "Sounds good to me." Everyone else agreed, and once the breakfast dishes were cleaned up, and everyone had brushed their teeth, they all headed out.

A few hours later...

The group of friends made their first stop at the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Cats from Tokyo immediately started snapping photos. Polly read the info off of one of the plaques on the harbor's walkway.

Total length: Including approaches, 1.7 miles (8,981 feet or 2,737 m).

Middle span: 4,200 feet (1,966 m).

Width: 90 feet (27 m).

Clearance above the high water (average): 220 feet (67 m).

Total weight when built: 894,500 tons (811,500,000 kg).

Total weight today: 887,000 tons (804,700,000 kg). Weight reduced because of new decking material.

Towers:

746 feet (227 m) above the water.

500 feet (152 m) above the roadway.

Each leg is 33 x 54 feet (10 x 16 m).

Towers weigh 44,000 tons each (40,200,000 kg).

There are about 600,000 rivets in EACH tower.

Golden Gate Bridge Facts - Construction Details

One of the most interesting Golden Gate Bridge facts is that only eleven workers died during construction, a new safety record for the time. In the 1930s, bridge builders expected 1 fatality per 1 million in construction costs, and builders expected 35 people to die while building the Golden Gate Bridge. One of the bridge's safety innovations was a net suspended under the floor. This net saved the lives of 19 men during construction, and they are often called the members of the "Half Way to Hell Club."

Steel Facts:

Made in New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and shipped through the Panama Canal.

Total weight of steel: 83,000 tons (75,293,000 kg).

Cable Facts:

Two main cables pass over the tops of the main towers and are secured in concrete anchorages at each end. Each cable is made of 27,572 strands of wire. There are 80,000 miles (129,000 km) of wire in the two main cables, and it took over six months to spin them.

Cable diameter (including wrapping): 36 3/8 inches (0.92 m).

Cable length: 7,260 feet (2,332 m).

Lights:

128 lights are installed on the bridge roadway. They are 250-watt high pressure sodium lamps installed in 1972.

The 24 tower sidewalk lights are 35-watt low pressure sodium lamps.

12 light illuminate each tower, 400 watts each, and an airway beacon tops each tower.

Golden Gate Bridge Facts - Traffic

Average crossings: About 40 million per year, counting both north- and southbound crossings, compared to 33 million crossing the first year it was open.

Fewest crossings: January, 1982, during a storm which closed U. S. 101 north of the bridge. On January 6, only 3,921 southbound vehicles passed the toll gates.

Most crossings: October 17, 1989, after the Loma Prieta earthquake, when Bay Bridge was closed. 162,414 vehicles (counting those going both directions) crossed the bridge that day.

Total crossings: Through October 30, 2002, the Golden Gate Bridge Highway District says 1,754,094,967 vehicles crossed the bridge.

Closures: The bridge has been closed three times for weather, for gusting winds over 70 mph. It closed briefly for visits by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and French President Charles DeGaulle. It was also closed on its fiftieth birthday.

Golden Gate Bridge Facts -Important Dates

May 25, 1923: The California state legislature passes a law creating the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District

August 27, 1930: Joseph B. Strauss submits final plans.

November 4, 1930: 35 million bond issue approved by the six counties in the District, by a vote of 145,667 to 46,954.

January 5, 1933: Construction begins.

May 27, 1937: Bridge opens to pedestrians.

May 28, 1937: Bridge open to automobiles. The toll was 50 cents one way, 1 round trip and 5 cents surcharge if there were more than 3 passengers.

February 22, 1985: The one-billionth car crosses the bridge. Toll is 2 southbound on Friday and Saturday, 1 otherdays. No northbound toll.

May 28, 1987: Bridge closed to vehicles for its fiftieth birthday. An estimated 300,000 pedestrians jammed the bridge.

September 1, 2002: Toll increased to 5 southbound. No northbound toll.

Golden Gate Bridge Facts - Paint

The Golden Gate Bridge's paint color is orange vermillion, also called international orange. Architect Irving Morrow selected the color because it blends with the bridge's setting

The bridge was fully painted when it was first built and then touched up for the next 27 years. In 1965, the original paint was removed because of corrosion and replaced with a inorganic zinc silicate primer and an acrylic emulsion top coat, a project that took 30 years. Today, painters touch up the paint continuously.

38 painters work on the bridge, along with 17 ironworkers who replace corroding steel and rivets.

Speedy whistled, and said, "Wow...that's one awesome bit of engineering. So...where to next?" Hunter said, "Off to the Presidio. It's an old military fort, built by the Spanish back in 1776, when California and most of the western United States was their territory." After a short walk, they arrived, and Hunter led his friends inside, after they'd paid for admission. Guido said, "Look at this place, Lucille...it's incredible!" She replied, "It sure is. Who else owned this place, besides the Spanish?" Hunter replied, "In 1790, it was taken over by the Mexican Army, until 1846, when it became property of the United States. Since then, it's been refurbished extensively, and in 1994, it became part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area." Once they'd finished their tour, they headed out to see the rest of the sights, and then they took in the Giants game, which the Giants won 8-0 over the Arizona Diamondbacks. As they left the stadium, they heard a woman scream nearby, and Colleen said, "Huntie, I'll go check it out. Wait here." Polly said, "I'm coming with you, Colleen." The two brave females headed towards the source of the scream, and found three punks about to mug a young woman and her eight-year old daughter. Colleen said, "That's enough of that, you lousy scum. Back off, before my friend and I come in there and really give you a serious dose of pain." The leader of the punks replied, "You two..HAH!! I'm not afraid of girls, so either you two get lost, or you'll be the ones in trouble." Polly replied, "You want trouble, I'll give you trouble!!" She launched herself into the air, and floored one of the goons with a double-heeled flying kick. Colleen dodged a pair of knife thrusts from the second one, and then she judo-flipped him over her shoulder. Polly spotted the last one sneaking up on Colleen with a chain, intent on choking her with it. She called out, "COLLEEN, WATCH OUT!!" Colleen rolled under the punk's attack, and the blade of Polly's kodachi came up in a swift arc, slicing the chain apart like tissue paper. Polly said, "Unless you wanna end up like your two buddies, take a hike!" The punk pulled a gun and aimed it at Polly's head. He snarled, "Say goodnight, kitty!" Just as the goon was about to pull the trigger, he felt a sledgehammer-like impact on his jaw, courtesy of Colleen's fist. The idiot dropped like a stringless puppet, and then Polly went to flag down the police, while Colleen escorted the grateful mother and child to their destination across the street. When she got back to her friends, Hunter said, "Nice job in there, Colleen. Not only are you incredibly beautiful...you're also brave, and a very gifted fighter. I don't think those dirtbags are ever gonna bother anybody again." Speedy said, "You were awesome too, Polly. I loved the way you flattened that first one."

Before long, they entered the local Olive Garden restaurant, and set about ordering their meals. Little did they know, that trouble was about to start brewing again.

Prisoners' Island...

Cheese was sitting under a palm tree, trying to think of a plan to finally take over Little Tokyo and rid himself of the Samurai Pizza Cats. He was still infuriated over his last defeat...he'd kidnapped Polly's younger sister in an attempt to force her and the others to surrender. However, putting Sayaka's life in danger had only served to anger the fiery red-haired female Samurai, and she had proceeded to pummel him viciously. His head still rang from her powerful punches, and he swore that he would take his revenge on them. Jerry walked over, and Cheese said, "Have you come up with a plan yet, Jerry?" The elderly crow cleared his throat, and then he replied, "Actually, yes. I saw an article in one of the magazines that came in with our weekly food shipment, so I stole it when nobody was looking. Here...it's on the United States gold reserves, housed at Fort Knox, in Kentucky." Cheese exclaimed, "GOLD?!" Jerry replied, "Yes, Cheesy...tons and tons of it. It'd make you the richest rodent ever. The problem is...it's heavily guarded. There are armed sentries

patrolling the whole base, and they're equipped with the new Barrett XM-107 25mm sniper rifle. There are also several divisions of US Army and Marine troops, M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks, and AH-64 Apache attack helicopters. The gold vault itself has a 20-ton blast door that is not only bulletproof, but also bomb-proof. The combination has to be entered by several workers at once, making it almost impossible to get at the gold." Cheese replied, "Not if we have a robot. Jerry, get the Ninja Crows working on a new toy... I feel like making a big withdrawal. By the way... how much gold is in there, anyway?" Jerry replied, "According to the article, Cheesy... the vault holds a total of 5,037.5 tons of gold, worth one hundred and thirty-four billion dollars." Cheese's eyes went wide, and his jaw dropped. He said, "Oh Jerry... this is beautiful... that's enough gold to make tons of statues of my lovely countenance... coins with my face on them, a golden throne, and after all of that, I'll still have enough to make me the richest rat alive! I can buy anything that I could ever possibly want, for the rest of my life!" Jerry muttered, "I hope that includes breath mints, or at least a cure for your big mouth... oops..." Cheese screamed, "I HEARD THAT, YOU WALKING FEATHERDUSTER!! GET OVER HERE SO I CAN KNOCK YOU INTO THE RETIREMENT HOME!!" Cheese began beating on Jerry with his fan, until his face turned a bright red. He screamed, "JERRY... YOU MAKE ME SO ANGRY... AAARRRRGGGHHH!!" The idiotic rodent exploded, and Jerry went flying into a palm tree. Once Cheese's tantrum ended, Jerry said, "I've got the perfect robot, boss. It's based off of the Chaos Gundam, from Gundam Seed Destiny. Here are it's vital stats from the blueprints I wrote up. It's 52.2 feet tall, and weighs in at 91.6 tons. For firepower, it's got four 12.7mm machine guns, along with a pair of 20mm machine guns, all located in the head. It's also got a pair of beam blades in the feet, a chest-mounted beam cannon, and a pair of back-mounted weapon pods that are equipped with both beam machine guns and guided missiles. Rounding out it's armament is a pair of beam swords, a shield on the left arm with a pair of 76mm machine guns, and a high-energy beam rifle." Cheese replied, "It's perfect! Jerry, get the Ninja Crows working on it, right now. I want to leave this accursed island as soon as possible... AND NO GOOFING OFF!!" Jerry bit back a comment that would probably get him blasted clear across the ocean, and then he took off to begin the construction of their latest robot weapon.

Back in San Francisco...

The Rovers and their friends left the Olive Garden restaurant, and Polly said, "That was probably some of the finest cooking I've ever had... other than yours, Speedy." The handsome and modest white-armored cat replied, "Same here, Kitten. Let's head back to Road Rover HQ for dinner, and then a stroll on the beach." Polly replied, "Sounds great, Pussycat. Let's go." They fell into step behind their canine friends, and soon, they had all boarded the Stealth Rover for the flight back to HQ.

Road Rover HQ, one hour later...

Hunter came into the dining room, carrying a tray full of homemade beef pot pie. He set it down on the table, and then he and the others began dishing up their meals. After they ate, Colleen brought out some ice cream for dessert, and then they headed out to the beach. Hunter scooped Colleen into his arms, causing her to gasp in surprise. He looked down into her sparkling blue eyes, and said, "A perfect night, to spend with the most wonderful female dog in the entire world. I love you Colleen, and nothing can ever make me stop loving you." She replied, "I love you too, Huntie... forever." Their lips met in a long, deep kiss, and then Hunter took her out to their special spot on the beach, where they liked to sit and watch the stars, and just enjoy the wonderful feeling of being together. Starlight was sitting down in a beach chair, sipping an ice-cold glass of lemon iced tea, while she watched the kids play nearby. Blitz and Sam were up in their room, enjoying some time together, as were Exile and Kasha. Shag and Muzzle were sleeping.

Speedy walked with Polly, hand-in-hand along the beach. Speedy felt so happy whenever Polly was with him... she truly was his perfect soulmate, and as long as they were together, he felt as if he could take on the world. Polly said, "It's so pretty out here, Speedy... I wish we could do this more often." Speedy sat down, and Polly got herself comfortable on his lap. He said, "So do I, Kitten... but while we're here... let's make the most of it." Polly knew what Speedy meant, and she immediately started to purr, as he gently scooped her into his arms and carried her inside, and up to their room.

Guido and Lucille were up in their room, already fast asleep, as were Good Bird and Carla. Within the hour, everyone was sound asleep. Today had been fun, and they all wanted to be fully rested for the next day, not having any clue that their vacation would soon be rudely interrupted. For now, they were only focused on being with the ones they loved most.

Chapter 4

Four: Cheese Comes To Town

After an enjoyable breakfast of scrambled eggs with bacon and hashbrowns, the Road Rovers and their feline friends headed out to do some shopping, and Colleen quickly spotted one of her favorite stores. She turned to Polly, and said, "I'm gonna go over there and look around for some new summer clothes. Would you like to come in with me?" Polly replied, "Sure, I'll come in with ya, Colleen." Francine and Lucille both decided to go with them, along with Carla. The others went to sit down on a nearby bench, and Hunter then turned to face Speedy. He said, "How've you and Polly been, Speedy?" With a smile, Speedy replied, "Just great. She's the light of my life, and I couldn't imagine being with anyone but her. Whenever I kiss her, I feel like we could re-energize all of Little Tokyo if we needed to. Every day is like a whole new experience with her... and if anything ever happened to her, I don't know what I'd do." Hunter put a hand on his friend's shoulder, and then he said, "I feel the same way about Colleen, buddy. Ever since I met her, I've known that I wanted to be more than just friends with her. We've got so much in common... both of us know what it's like to be homeless, and we were both raised without a father in our lives. When both of us were selected as Road Rovers, it not only saved us from certain death; it also led us to one another. An unbreakable friendship formed between us, and that quickly turned to love. The only reason I didn't tell her until just after we met you Pizza Cats for the first time... I've always been kinda shy, and I'd never had a girlfriend before. Heck, the only two dogs that I'd ever been really close to were my mother and Muzzle. When I met Colleen... all that shyness seemed to melt away. I could always go and talk to her about something that was on my mind, and she'd always be there to support me... she's risked her life to save me more times than I can count... and nothing's ever gonna make me stop loving her." Speedy said, "It's the same way with Polly and I. Before I almost died stopping that comet, I went out to do some thinking... about how I was gonna tell Polly about my feelings for her. When that comet came, I knew that I had to act fast, or Polly would be dead, along with everyone else in Little Tokyo." Good Bird added, "Yeah, and I owe ya my life, Speedy... after you defeated me inside the control room of Cheese's machine, your words really drove home the truth... I'd been fighting all this time, for the wrong reasons. I knew then, that it was time to shed the legacy of my evil father, and become Good Bird. I couldn't let Carla die, not to mention everyone else... or you for that matter." Speedy shook the reformed crow's hand, and then he said, "Thanks, buddy. Like I said, Hunter... Polly means everything to me, and if I lost her... I don't know how I'd be able to go through life." Hunter said, "Well... speaking of Polly, here she comes now."

Speedy walked over to join his wife, and he asked, "Hey there, kitten. What's in the bag?" Polly replied, "A couple new summer outfits for myself, one for you, and a souvenir for Princess Vi, along with one for Empress Frieda." Colleen showed Hunter the new outfit she'd picked out, and he said, "Wow... Colleen, you're gonna look great in that... but then again, ya look great no matter what you wear." The pretty Collie smiled, and she replied, "Thank you, Huntie." She kissed him on the cheek, and then Francine showed off her purchases. Lucille said, "Here, Guido... this is for you." Guido opened the package, and when he saw the contents, he pulled Lucille into a warm hug. He said, "Thanks, Lucille!" Guido showed off the shirt that his wife had picked out for him. It was

white, with a blue and silver Ford Mustang on the front, and the letters American Muscle'written above it. The group of friends continued their walk along the streets of San Francisco, unaware that trouble was on the way.

Prisoners'Island. . .

Cheese marveled at the size and ferocity of his newest robot. The green armor gleamed in the sunlight, and the beam rifle had just been test fired, right through eight mock-up buildings. The guided weapon pods unleashed a barrage of beam assault cannon and missile fire, and Jerry finished up with a blast from the chest-mounted beam cannon. Jerry walked the robot over, and then he crouched it down, before getting out of the cockpit. Cheese said, "Well done, Jerry. How long until we can take off?" Jerry replied, "Right now, Cheesy. We're all set to go." Cheese smiled, and he said, "Well then. . . I think it's time we took our leave. Ninja Crows, TO THE ROBOT!!" The crows all cheered, and then they hopped onto the machine. Cheese and Jerry got into the cockpit, and Jerry said, "America. . . here we come!" The giant machine launched into the air with a roar, and the island's guards opened up with their rifles. Cheese said, "How about a little live-fire exercise, Jerry. . . make em dance!" Jerry grinned, and he replied, "You got it, Cheesy!" He armed the weapon pods, and launched them. Before the startled guards knew what was going on, they found themselves dodging missiles, until Cheese had gotten bored with watching them run around in panic. He said, "All right, Jerry. . . that's enough fun and games. We've got a gold vault to steal, and then I've got an appointment to boot that spoiled little brat Princess Vi off to Prisoners'Island. Let's go." Jerry recalled the weapon pods, and then the huge machine accelerated towards the United States.

Hours later, in a hollowed-out mountain cave. . .

Cheese and his goons landed out in the desert area of Arizona, and Cheese said, "I like it here. It's remote, but still close enough to our target. Jerry, I want you and the Crows to start rearming and refueling the robot." He then motioned three Ninja Crows forward, and said, "Listen up. . . I want you to fly out and snoop around. Make sure we don't have any surprises waiting for us." The Crows all nodded, and then they took off. Cheese said, "Now then. . . I'm gonna go and make myself some sushi. I haven't eaten since this morning, and I'm starving." Jerry muttered, "With the way you eat, we'll need a wheelbarrow to move you around before long. . . oops!" Cheese screamed, "ARE YOU CALLING ME FAT?! WHO DO I LOOK LIKE, ROSIE O'Donnell?! AAARRRGGGGHHH!!" One of the other Ninja Crows said, "Uhm. . . I just remembered, uh. . . my soaps are on!!" Jerry replied, "Hey, you hate soap operas. . . Uh-oh. . ." Cheese exploded, and Jerry went flying out of the cave. Cheese said, "Before long, I'll have Princess Vi eating out of my hand. . . has anyone seen my hand?" He fell into a blackened dustpile, and Jerry came back in just as the stupid rodent was pulling himself together. Before long, Jerry started supervising the Ninja Crows as they worked on the robot, while Cheese munched on his Sushi and eggrolls.

Back with the Rovers and Pizza Cats. . .

The group decided to walk along the beach for a little while, and Kayla looked up at her mother. She said, "Mom, can Aiko and I go make a sandcastle together?" Colleen replied, "Of course. Just don't go too far out. Stay close enough that either me or Grandma can see you." Starlight hugged her youngest granddaughter, and she said, "Have a good time, little one." Kayla hugged her grandmother, and then she and Aiko walked over to an area shaded by palm trees. While Aiko scooped up sand with her little shovel, Kayla held the bucket. After a short while, they'd finished the castle, and they were about to dig the moat, when Kayla saw a glint of metal. She said, "Aiko, watch it!!" The little kitten moved to the side, and when she got up, she saw three Ninja Crows standing in front of her and Kayla, swords drawn. The head Crow said, "Okay, you little brats. You're comin' with us. We may have gotten lost, but once we bring ya to see Cheese, maybe he won't explode when we tell him that." Aiko said, "You leave my friend alone, you dumb birdbrain, before my mom comes over here and plucks out your feathers!" The Ninja Crow laughed, and then he replied, "Oh sure. . . by the way. . . what are you doin' here in America?" They heard Colleen's voice from behind, as the heroic Collie said, "Back away from my daughter and her friend, you stupid buzzards. . . or I'll kick the lot of ya clean across San Francisco Bay!" The first Ninja Crow leveled his blade towards Kayla, and said, "Oh yeah. . . you even twitch, and I'm gonna turn your little brat into puppy-kabobs." Hunter charged in from the left and scooped Kayla into his arms,

while Speedy did likewise with Aiko. Colleen said, "Last chance, birdbrain. Get lost, or I'm gonna use you as a punching bag. The crow replied, "Oh I'm so scared... come get me, little Girl Scout." Hunter said, "Ooohhh, bad idea!" Colleen charged the Ninja Crow at her top running speed, and then she launched herself into the air. With the yell of, "HIYA... KEN GRIFFEY JR!!", she landed a powerful airborne axekick that sent the Ninja Crow flying.

You got the touch
You got the power

Yah!

After all is said and done
You've never walked, you've never run,
You're a winner

You got the moves, you know the streets
Break the rules, take the heat
You're nobody's fool

You're at your best when the goin' gets rough
You've been put to the test, but it's never enough

You got the touch
You got the power

When all hell's breakin' loose
You'll be riding the eye of the storm

You got the heart
You got the motion

You know that when things get too tough
You got the touch

You never bend, you never break
You seem to know just what it takes
You're a fighter

It's in the blood, it's in the will
It's in the mighty hands of steel
When you're standin' your ground

And you never get hit when your back's to the wall
Gonna fight to the end and you're takin' it all

You got the touch
You got the power

When all hell's breakin' loose
You'll be riding the eye of the storm

You got the heart
You got the motion

You know that when things get too tough
You got the touch

You're fightin' fire with fire
You know you got the touch

You're at your best when the road gets rough
You've been put to the test, but it's never enough

You got the touch
You got the power

You got the touch
You got the power

Yah!

Polly engaged the second Ninja Crow in a sword duel, and the idiot thought that his single blade could match Polly's kodachi skills. The crow soon realized that Polly was far more skilled than he would ever be. Polly brought her blade up in a crescent cross slash, and shattered the Ninja Crow's blade. As the dumb bird stood there, staring stupidly at his broken weapon, Polly said, "YOU LOUSY NINJA CROWS... THREATENING MY DAUGHTER AND HER FRIEND... NOT TO MENTION YOU BIRDBRAINS RUINED OUR TIME OFF... YOU'RE DEAD!" She pulled out her flute, and in seconds, fiery pink energy swirled around her body, turning red as it collected into her blade and flute. She made the shape of a heart in front of her, and called out, "HEARTBREAKER!!" The fiery blast blew the Ninja Crow all the way back to Cheese's hideout, and Hunter turned to face the last one. The crow tried to run away, and due to fear, not to mention his stupidity, he forgot that he could fly. Hunter jumped on him and tackled him to the ground. He said, "Listen up, blunderbeak. I wanna know what Seymour's up to, and I wanna know RIGHT now." The crow replied, "Oh yeah... why don't ya try and make me talk, ya lousy mongrel." Colleen walked up and punched the Ninja Crow in the face, and she growled out, "Don't you ever call my Huntie-Wuntie a lousy mongrel, birdbrain. He may be a mixed breed... but I love him, and nobody's gonna get away with insulting him. Now start talkin', or I'm gonna call Muzzle." The crow replied, "Ooohhh... I'm so scared... the little puppy's gonna call Muzzle..." Hunter said, "Okay... that's it. MUZZLE, HERE BUDDY!!" The Rottweiler hopped over, and Hunter said, "Ready... MUZZLE EM!!" With a loud snarl, Muzzle launched himself at the terrified Ninja Crow, and plowed into him like a torpedo. After several minutes of snarling, screaming, and ripping, Hunter and the others uncovered their eyes, and they saw Muzzle laying on top of a very messed up Ninja Crow. He sighed, and then gave his trademark belch of satisfaction. Hunter hauled up the stupid bird, and said, "What's Seymour got up his sleeve, pal?" The Ninja Crow replied, "He's... he's planning on swiping the g-gold reserves from Fort Knox, using his latest robot. You'll never be able to stop us this time, not even with all of ya together! The Cheese Dynasty has..." Hunter said, "OH SHUT UP!!" He then belted the Ninja Crow, and knocked him out. The other Ninja Crow shouted, "YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, YOU LOUSY MUTTS... NOT TO MENTION YOU TOXIC TABBY CATS, AND THE FEATHERED BENEDICT ARNOLD!! WE'LL BE BACK!!" The crow flew off, and Hunter said, "When we get home, we'd best start working on a plan to protect Fort Knox." Good Bird said, "We've got at least another day. Seymour won't have his tinkertoy recharged until after midnight

tomorrow, since he likes to play around with everything on it before sending it out. Besides... he's an idiot. Let's finish up our day on the beach, and we'll worry about Seymour later." Hunter replied, "Yeah... thanks, Good Bird." With that, the group of friends resumed their day of fun.

Chapter 5

Five: Calm Before the Storm

Since they knew that it would take Cheese until midnight to get his new robot ready, the Rovers and Pizza Cats decided to head out for another day of fun. Hunter was looking over the movie listings, while Colleen and Polly engaged in a practice sparring session. Speedy munched on his bagel, while Guido watched as Lucille played with their twins. Hunter's eyes finally lit on a movie that he thought everyone would like. He said, "Guys, check this out...they've got a live-action movie version of the Playstation role-playing game Front Mission 3 starting today. That game's one of my favorites, so how about it?" Colleen smiled, and she replied, "Sounds good to me, Huntie." The others quickly agreed, and so Hunter walked down the hall and knocked on The Master's door. He replied, "Come in."

Hunter walked inside, and The Master turned to face him. He said, "Hello, Hunter. What can I do for you?" Hunter replied, "We were gonna take our friends out to see that new movie that's starting today, Front Mission 3. It's based off the Playstation role-playing game that has you using giant robots called Wanzers to unravel an international conspiracy set in motion by the theft of a new superweapon. We'll be out for a few hours, and then we'll be back. Call us if you need to, Master!" Professor Shepherd replied, "Very well, Hunter. I'll see you when you get home. Have fun." Hunter waved, and then he headed back to join the others. He said, "We've got the green light, ladies and gentlemen. It's a short walk to the theater, so let's go." Hunter led the way towards the door, but then Colleen said, "Huntie, the movie doesn't really sound too safe to bring the kids along. I think they'd be better off staying here." Hunter replied, "Good thinking, Colleen." Before they left, Starlight said, "I agree with Colleen, Hunter. The movie does sound like it'd be a bit too violent for the kids. I'll stay here and keep an eye on them." Lucille also decided to stay behind, and Hunter said, "Okay, mom. I'll see ya later." Starlight hugged her son, and then Colleen knelt down in front of her three kids. She said, "You'll behave for Grandma, right?" Cassie replied, "Yes, mom. You can trust us." Colleen hugged her older daughter, and she then repeated the process with Alex and Kayla. After making sure that

When they arrived at the Cineplex, Hunter and the other guys paid for the tickets and refreshments, and then they headed into the theater. Speedy had seen movies with giant robots before, but these Wanzers were like nothing he'd ever seen. The main hero of the game, Kazuki Takemura, was currently using his Wanzer, a powerful Hoshun Mk.112, to obliterate one of the Lenghe 1's employed by the forces of Lukav, the villain of the film. Lukav Minaev was clever, evil, and extremely dangerous. He'd kidnapped Kazuki's teammate Emma, and his adopted sister Alisa, and he planned on forcing them to aid him in creating the weapon called MIDAS (Matter Irradiation Dissociative Acceleration System). When the final battle against Lukav came around, Hunter and everyone else could see the horror and pure rage on Kazuki's face when Lukav fired the beam cannons of his Kehei 0 right through the Wanzer piloted by Kazuki's father Isao, killing him. In response, Kazuki shouted, "NO MERCY!! YOU BETTER COME AT ME FULL FORCE, LUKAV...OR YOU'RE GOING SIX FEET UNDER!!" Lukav's troops came out, all four of them piloting gigantic Kexi's, which were armed with massive 92mm machine guns, and large missile racks. Lukav's Kehei also carried a 92mm machine gun, in addition to the beam cannons. Kazuki

sent his teammates Ryogo, Emma, and Marcus to deal with three of the Kexi's, while he laid into the remaining one. After a five-minute brawl, Kazuki's 300mm shotgun blew a massive hole right through the Kexi's chest, blowing it apart. Ryogo shredded his opponent with his Wanzer's 400mm gattling cannon, Emma's opponent went down to a missile shower, and Marcus killed his with a barrage of grenades. Finally, it was down to them and Lukav. While Ryogo, Emma, and Marcus dodged around, Kazuki got in close, and fired his Hoshun's beam rifle, which spelled the end for Lukav. Alisa stayed behind and triggered the detonation of MIDAS, sacrificing herself so that nobody else would ever use it again. Finally, the team fought their way inside the USN convention center, and Kazuki confronted Sasaki, Lukav's partner in crime. His Hoshun's armor easily deflected a few shots from the rifle that Sasaki's police-issue Rekson Mk.4F was carrying, and then Kazuki smashed his Hoshun's fist through Sasaki's cockpit, killing him. After that, Kazuki stood watch, while Emma delivered a speech to reveal the truth to the audience. She said, "MIDAS was stolen by the USN, OCU, and DHZ... and many people's precious lives were lost. And it was planned to keep this whole incident under wraps. However, we must etch the painful memory of this war onto our hearts. So that this foolish mistake will never be repeated, I announce a freeze on all information regarding MIDAS. The Philippines will form the core of a supervisory committee. This nightmare will never be repeated. All the world's people watching this broadcast are my witnesses."

The movie ended with Kazuki and Emma standing together in a field of flowers, promising to start a new life together. The two of them looked at one another, and Kazuki said, "So this is Alisa's and your homeland..." Emma looked at her brown-haired lover, and she replied, "This is where we were born. And where we grew up together. I only have good memories of this place. We were a true family." Kazuki said, "A true family..." Emma continued, "I'll come back here when everything is done." Kazuki looked into Emma's eyes, and then he replied, "We'll do that... with a new family." Emma was startled, and she asked, "Kazuki?" Kazuki smiled, and replied, "Yes?" Emma said, "I wonder if time really heals all wounds..." Kazuki didn't respond, and so Emma continued. "I don't want to be healed. I want to remember forever. It's going to be my motivating force." Kazuki thought of all that he and the others had gone through, and he replied, "I know I'll never forget..." After the credits rolled, the Rovers and their friends headed out.

Speedy said, "Wow... that was an awesome movie, Hunter! I loved that bit when Sasaki freaked as Kazuki's Hoshun came in... it was priceless." Polly said, "It was sure sad when Alisa and Isao died... but at least that jerk Lukav got what he deserved. If anyone ever did that to Speedy... I'd have their guts for garters, and I mean that literally!" Speedy hugged Polly, and he said, "Thanks Kitten... but I promise you, nothing's ever gonna happen to me. I've got you and the others to take care of me. I'll always be here for you, Polly." She replied, "Oh Speedy... I'll always be here for you too. I love you, Pussycat." Speedy kissed her, and then he replied, "I love you too, my sweet Pollyanna." Together, the group of friends headed back to Road Rover HQ for lunch.

When the Rovers and the Cats arrived back at Road Rover HQ, Starlight walked up and greeted her son and daughter. She took Hunter aside, and said, "How was the movie, Hunter?" He replied, "It was great, mom... I'm definitely gonna buy it when it comes out on DVD. You were right about it not being for the kids, mom. There were a lot of explosive battles, and some pretty sad scenes, like when the hero's father and sister died. At least the villain got what he deserved, and the hero got to be with the one he loved in the end." Starlight replied, "Sounds good, Hunter. The kids were no trouble at all. In fact, Kayla and Aiko really seem to have hit it off. You've got to see them... they're so cute together!" Hunter followed his mother out into the Rec room, and he smiled when he saw his younger daughter playing Air Hockey with Aiko. He walked up, and said, "Hey there, Kayla. Grandma says that you and everybody else were on their best behavior. I'm proud of you." She blushed a bit under the white fur on her cheeks, and she replied, "Thanks, dad." Aiko looked up, and she asked, "How was the movie, Hunter?" The Retriever-mix knelt down to look the young kitten in the eyes, and then he replied, "Lots of action, but way too violent for kids. Maybe you'll get to see it when you're older. In the meantime, how's the game going?" Aiko replied, "I'm having a blast! Kayla's really good... I wish we had an Air Hockey table at home." Speedy overheard, and he looked at Polly. He said, "You know something, Kitten... I think Aiko's on to

something. We could buy an Air Hockey table and put it in the den. I'm sure Francine wouldn't mind." The aforementioned blonde-haired cat replied, "You're right, I won't mind. Just make sure you don't play it during work hours." Polly replied, "Fran. . . that's something that ya don't have to worry about anymore. We've all matured a lot, especially Guido." Francine replied, "Yeah. . . I'm sorry. In fact, I'll help you look for one when we go back home." They all thanked Francine, and then Hunter went to cook lunch.

While Hunter was busy in the kitchen, Colleen and Polly sat down on one of the sofas. Polly said, "Colleen, what's life like with Hunter?" With a smile on her face, the pretty Collie replied, "Oh. . . where to begin? He's been my best friend ever since we first met, and even on our first mission, I could tell that he was the only one that I ever wanted as a leader. It was our second mission that really caused me to see just how wonderful he was. He risked his life to run back into an erupting volcano to save Muzzle from the lava, after that crackpot Storm used his ship's laser to blast the volcano. When he saved me from the werewolves, I realized just how much I meant to him. . . and how much he meant to me. After all. . . the sun was starting to rise, and if he'd been any later with shooting that tennis ball into my mouth, I'd still be a werewolf. Thanks to Huntie, I'm the proud mother of three adorable kids, and still a Road Rover. . . which I wouldn't trade for all the Earl Grey tea in England. It was close to the end of our first year together as a team, when I realized just how much I loved Huntie. He'd gone to visit his mom out in Wyoming, and we all thought it was an old girlfriend. I thought I'd lost him, and when Parvo captured all of us and tried to lower us into a pit of lava, I was shocked when he came back. After we sent Parvo and Groomer running, he told me the truth about what he'd been up to. About a year or so later, when we first met you Pizza Cats, Huntie had already started to shed a lot of his shyness. We'd been going on walks along the beach, going out to movies, and a whole lot of other stuff. Finally, after we beat Big Cheese, Parvo, and Storm. . . he proposed to me, and we got married shortly thereafter. We captured Osama Bin Laden a few months later, and then I gave birth to Alex and Cassie on Christmas of that same year, and Kayla was born two years later, after we stopped Parvo and Groomer from stealing the Space Shuttle Endeavour. I'd never be able to live without Huntie. . . he means the world to me, and I love him with all my heart."

Polly smiled, and then she replied, "I feel the same way with Speedy. For the longest time, I was in constant denial about my feelings for him, and I'd cover it up by getting angry and yelling at him, or calling him names. I even hit him a few times, but I realized that most of the time, it used to be Guido that started a lot of it. After a year had gone by of us fighting against Big Cheese's plots, Speedy was gonna tell me how he felt, and so he went out to do some soul-searching, and to let Lucille know that he was gonna be with me. Cheese had to ruin the moment with the Comet, and then Speedy went up to stop it with Good Bird in the Supreme Catatonic. When the comet blew up and nearly destroyed the Catatonic. . . I thought Speedy was dead." She started to cry as the memory of almost losing Speedy came back, and Colleen put her hands on the red-haired Cat's shoulders. After she had calmed down, Polly smiled, and then she said, "Anyway. . . when Speedy and Good Bird came back alive, everybody started hugging and cheering. I swear to you, Colleen. . . I'd never been happier in my entire life. I mean. . . I'd been through practically my whole life with Speedy. He saved me from three schoolyard bullies when I was only eight, after I moved to Tokyo from Kyoto. I was walking home from school, when they blocked my path. They started calling me names, shoving me around, and no matter how I tried, I couldn't get away. One of them eventually tore my new dress apart, and then he shoved me into a huge mud puddle. Just as the leader was about to start cutting my hair off, Speedy showed up and yelled at them to leave me alone. They tried to take him on, but he sent them packing. After that, he walked me home, and he became my best friend from that day forward. Every day after school, we were never apart, unless one of us got sick. Even then, we'd go over to each other's houses and bring get-well cards, snacks, and schoolwork. The one time he had a really bad fever when we were nine. . . I couldn't stand to see him so miserable. I stayed there with him, I talked to him, and he even asked his mom if I could stay until it was time for me to go home for supper. I had to leave, of course. . . but I made him some herbal tea using my mom's recipe, which really did the trick. He was back to school in a couple days. We were teammates all through Samurai Academy. . . he was the one that got me into training, he made sure that my temper didn't get me

kicked out, even after I beat the tar out of some snobby girl and destroyed the sensei's office in the process. He even taught me to harness the power of my finishing move, the Heartbreaker. If I hadn't met Speedy... my life would be so empty. I love him, no matter what anybody else says. Even if he isn't the tallest or richest Cat around, he's everything I want, and the only one that I'll ever love." Colleen smiled, and then she said, "I can tell. He certainly is a wonderful Cat... just like my Huntie is the most wonderful and caring dog that I've ever met." Polly replied, "He definitely is a wonderful dog, Colleen... you got a real winner there." Colleen smiled, and then she said, "I can smell lunch, Polly. Let's go eat." Polly smiled, and then she followed her friend into the kitchen.

Colleen and Polly strolled into the kitchen, just in time to see Hunter place a pot of his homemade Meatball Alphabet soup onto the kitchen table. He looked over at Colleen, and once she was seated next to him, he asked, "What were you and Polly talking about in there, Colleen?" She replied, "We were sharing stories of how we'd both met the ones we loved, and how we'd come to realize the truth of our feelings. Her and I have so much in common... not only are we both the number two on our respective teams, we're both champion martial artists, and we're both lucky to have brave, handsome, and wonderful husbands." Hunter blushed under his golden fur, and he replied, "Aww, thanks... that's nice." Colleen kissed Hunter on the nose, and then Hunter started to dish up the soup. Polly tried a small spoonful, and then she said, "Oh wow... this soup tastes great! Hunter, where'd the recipe for this come from?" Hunter replied, "From the same place as our battle plans come from, Polly... my head." Blitz added, "Ja. That's why it tastes so good. Hunter's not only a genius on the battlefield, and a great friend... he's also an awesome cook, and the best leader we could ever ask for." Colleen gently hugged Blitz, and she said, "Thank you, Blitz. I appreciate that, and I'm sure Huntie does too." Hunter replied, "I do, Colleen. Thanks a lot, Blitz. You really have matured a great deal, and I'm proud to call you my friend." The Doberman shook hands with Hunter, before the two of them exchanged a warm, friendly embrace, as if they were brothers.

Guido said, "I can remember back when I used to have a hard time getting along with Speedy. I mean... we'd been best friends since sixth grade, and I used to think that the pranks I was playing on him were just harmless fun. Truth is... I really was treating him worse than dirt at times. When he almost died in that Comet's explosion... I realized that I'd really messed up, and I vowed from that day forward to never, ever play a mean prank on him again, or call him names. The reason that I used to do it... I felt jealous. He was so much better than I could ever be with a sword, he's faster, and when Good Bird was still working for Seymour as Bad Bird, Speedy was the only one that could actually match, let alone beat him. One time when he got this ancient suit called the Armor of Vork, Bad Bird nearly killed the lot of us. In fact, Speedy took the full brunt of one of his attacks that was meant for Polly and I. When we came to and saw him laying there... I admit that I almost lost it, and Polly looked like she was gonna be a wreck. I'll admit it... we both showed our relief at seeing him alive in a rather... unpleasant way. I yelled at him, and Polly whacked him for scaring her. I'm just glad that Speedy's such a mature Cat, to the point where he was able to forgive me for all the stuff I'd done to him. We've started over on a clean slate, and there's nobody else that could ever lead the Pizza Cats like Speedy can. When he came back from demolishing that comet, he looked as though he was ready to admit his feelings for her... but I just had to butt in, and that made Speedy so nervous, he blurted out 'Now you can make me a pizza.' Polly got ticked off, and I kicked him in the head. I told him that if he wasn't gonna treat her right, that I'd take care of her, but Polly said that she didn't want me fighting her battles." Speedy said, "Excuse me, Guido... I'd like to add this particular bit of the story, but you can finish up after I'm done." Guido nodded, and Speedy said, "I felt really nervous about messing up like that... in fact, I thought Polly wouldn't want anything to do with me after that. Still, I wanted to be with her so much, and after I had a talk with my Uncle Irving, at Princess Vi's victory celebration, I managed to gear up my courage enough to go and talk to her. We went out in the Palace's courtyard, and after we sat and talked for a little while... I told her that I loved her. Just when I thought about walking away, she told me that she loved me too. I didn't believe what I'd just heard at first, until I saw the look in those gorgeous blue eyes, and the smile on her pretty face. From there, we were officially a steady couple. We went on dates to the local parks, we went skydiving, mountain climbing, carnivals, pretty much everything. Of course, Guido still

played a few more pranks on me, but on the night before we went to the carnival, he went too far. I was about to sit down, and he yanked a stool out from under me. Polly heard the crash, and she bashed Guido into the wall. Francine dragged him outside and read him the riot act, and he apologized to us the next day.” Guido added his final part of the story. ”A couple months later, we’d finally patched everything up, and one evening after work, while they were having dinner together, Speedy proposed to Polly, she said ‘yes’, and they were married a few months later, right on the eve of the birthday of Speedy’s late mother.”

The Rovers all smiled upon hearing how much Guido had matured, and how both Speedy and Polly were able to forgive him, just like Hunter and Colleen had both done with Blitz. The two of them had come so far, and now, everyone’s lives were that much better.

Blitz collected his thoughts for a few minutes, and then he said, “I had the same problem when we started out as a team...except I never raised a hand to Hunter. I called him a few names here and there, but what I regret most, is challenging his leadership on repeated occasions, not to mention my unwanted advances on Colleen. For so long, I was totally blind as to her feelings for him. Just because he’s a mixed-breed, I thought that she’d be happier with me, until Exile finally took me aside and had a long talk with me. It was shortly after that when Samantha joined us, and I started to grow really close to her. We dated a few times, and it made me realize that I’d been acting so hostile to Hunter because I was lonely and insecure of where I stood in the world. Samantha... she’s helped me to move past that. We got married shortly after a mission over in Russia to save Hunter from another of our enemies, Havoc. That little girly-boy warmonger was trying to start up a war between the US and Russia, and Hunter ended up getting caught while sabotaging his equipment. We went back in there and saved Hunter, and we got another new teammate in the process...Kasha. She and Exile had known each other as pups, and so they quickly decided that they wanted to tie the knot. I proposed to Sam, she accepted, and the rest is history.”

Speedy said, “That’s great, Blitz. I can see why you and Guido get along so well. You both overcame a lot of insecurity, and all it took was for you to find the right girl to fill that special spot in your heart.”

Sundance said, “Ya know...I think I should add my piece to this little discussion. The first time Speedy and I met, when they came over to Manhattan...I really acted like a jerk. I insulted him about his height, and I just pretty much acted like a stuck-up clown. I’m ashamed of myself for not acting like a Pizza Cat...not until Cheese’s robot had pounded both my teammates and Speedy’s into unconsciousness. We teamed up and took it down...but I didn’t learn my lesson. When I first met you Rovers, I really fouled things up. I learned two things that day...don’t insult Hunter around Colleen...and never, EVER underestimate Polly. I’m sorry for all the stuff that I did to all of ya...and I’m glad that you were all willing to let me have a second chance.” Dee Dee hugged him, while Lucinda looked fit to let off her minigun. Guido saw that Lucille wasn’t far behind, and so they both excused themselves and rushed the two girls outside. After the ensuing fireworks were over, they came back in, just in time to see The Master walk in.

Professor Shepherd said, “I’ve just finished reviewing our inventory on the computer in my office, and we’re in need of a supply run. I’ve got the list here, so all I need are some volunteers.” Hunter stood up, and he said, “I’ll take care of it, Master. You can count on me!” Colleen joined him, and said, “Count me in, Huntie.” The Master said, “Excellent. Here’s the list of what we need. Make sure you come back soon, so you can be ready for when Seymour moves on Fort Knox.” Speedy said, “I just got an idea. Professor, would it be alright with you for Polly and I to go along with Hunter and Colleen. We can get it done more quickly if there’s four of us, and that’ll give us more time to make a plan for stopping Cheese.”

The Master said, “That’s a very good idea, Speedy. Very well, you and Polly have my permission...if it’s alright with Hunter and Colleen.” Hunter smiled, and he replied, “I don’t have any problem with them coming along, Master...in fact, I was just gonna ask if they’d like to come for the ride.” Starlight once again volunteered to watch the kids, and then Hunter headed out with Colleen, while Speedy and Polly followed closely behind them.

Thirty minutes later, at the local Ultra-Mart...

Hunter had decided to split the list in half, in order to get this shopping trip done in the

shortest possible amount of time. He and Colleen had the food list, while Speedy went with Polly to pick up the maintenance and cleaning supplies. Hunter looked at the list, and he said, "Okay...next item on the list: Five cases of bottled Spring Water." With Hunter's help, Colleen was soon able to load the stuff onto the cart, and they followed suit with the rest of their list, until they reached the designated meeting area. Speedy and Polly met them in about five minutes, and Hunter checked over their list, making sure that they had everything. He said, "Nice job! You two really make a great team, and I can see now why you Pizza Cats are so successful. I'm betting Francine shares the same opinion, right?" Polly replied, "Yeah, she does. Speedy and I do supply runs for the Pizza Parlor quite a bit, so we've got this thing down pat. Let's go check out, and get this stuff home. Hunter agreed, and then they headed out to pay for their groceries. When that was done, they loaded it onto the Stealth Rover, and took off.

They were still about twenty minutes from reaching Road Rover Headquarters, when Colleen noticed some unusual activity at the local bank. She zoomed the camera in, and said, "Blimey... Huntie, there's a bank robbery goin' on down there. Sensors are reading two guys outside, loading money into the car, and another two armed suspects inside." Hunter replied, "Hang on, everybody... I'm gonna take us in there."

Minutes later, Hunter landed, and he said, "I'll go with Colleen and deal with the goons inside the bank. Speedy, you and Polly take care of the other two." Speedy nodded, and then he and Polly dashed off. Hunter said, "Ready, Colleen?" She smiled, and replied, "You bet, Huntie!" Together, the two Rovers entered the bank, and Hunter called out, "GAME'S OVER, PUNKS! LET THE HOSTAGES GO AND GIVE UP, OR YOU'LL BE SORRY!" The lead robber turned around, and he said, "Oh really... let me tell you this, buddy... I'm not afraid of you, or the little Collie. So get lost, before I fill both of you with enough lead that you'll sink like a rock in a river." Colleen said, "You better do like my husband says. This is your last warning, blighter... give up, or I'm gonna give you a four-fingered dental treatment!" The other punk whirled around and fired three shots from his .357 Magnum at Colleen, which she was able to dodge, thanks to her agility. Hunter growled, and said, "Bad idea... NOBODY SHOOTS AT MY WIFE, YOU STUPID PUNK!" Hunter charged the goon at full speed, and before he could fire again, Hunter punched him in the gut, knocking the wind out of him. He knocked the punk's lights out with an uppercut, and then he turned to watch Colleen deal with the other goon. With the cry of, "HIYA... FIRST NATIONAL!", she unleashed a spinning roundhouse that sent the robber flying all the way into the wall across the lobby, and he slumped down, unconscious. After they tied the two thieves up, Hunter and Colleen went to check on the customers and employees.

Outside, the other two thieves were busy trying to get in touch with their buddies, to no avail. One of them said, "I tell ya, Dave... we should just split now before the cops show up. We've got almost five hundred thousand already, and that's a big score." The other robber said, "We'll give em two more minutes, Andy. If they aren't out here by then, we're gone." Suddenly, they heard someone say, "The only place you'll be going is the hospital, and then right to prison, you little punk!" Speedy and Polly stepped out into the light, and Dave said, "What the... is this some kind of a joke?" Polly replied, "No, but you are. If you think you're gonna get away with terrorizing those innocent people and stealing their money, you've got another thing coming, buster!" Dave pulled out his knife, and said, "You want some of this, little girl? Come get it!" He rushed forward, intent on slicing Polly's belly. He got the shock of his life, when Polly not only dodged, but she also caught his wrist, and tossed him over her shoulder with one arm. The punk picked himself up, and he said, "That does it, girl... time to die!" He came at Polly again, but Polly was more than ready for him. She jumped up into the air, and floored him with a spinning hook kick. The other goon went after Speedy with a machete, only to have Speedy pull his Katana with blinding speed, and easily parry the incoming blade. The thief said, "Wh-what the... how do you have a Katana... those are..." Speedy replied, "My wife and I... we're Samurai, you stupid punk. Nobody's ever beaten me with a blade, ya hear me?" Speedy hacked the machete in half, and he then pinned the punk to a brick wall with a few Shuriken. Polly called the police, and when they arrived, they saw all four punks tied up, and looking like they'd been in a ten-round boxing match. The lead officer took statements from the Rovers and Pizza Cats, as well as from the bank manager, and then he instructed his partner to place the punks under arrest. A second cruiser

arrived, and each of them drove two of the punks off to prison. After a round of thanks, and a great deal of applause from the grateful bank employees, and the customers, the Rovers and Pizza Cats headed back to Road Rover HQ with their groceries.

Back at Road Rover Mission Control. . .

The Master had called Hunter and Colleen into his office, along with Speedy and Polly. Once they had all taken a seat, he said, "I'm very impressed. . . and very proud of you as well. Not only were you able to bring home the supplies that we needed, you also. . . and more importantly, protected the lives of many innocent people, and brought a gang of violent serial bank robbers to justice. Once again, you've done a fine day's work. I suggest that you go and get some dinner into your stomachs, and then get set to move out and stop Cheese." Hunter said, "Thank you, Master. We'll see you later for the mission briefing, when Cheese makes his move." Hunter and Colleen left the room, with Speedy and Polly not far behind them.

Cheese's hideout. . .

Cheese looked up at the robot, admiring it. The towering machine was fully fueled up, the armor was polished to a mirror shine, and the weapons had all passed their final test runs. He said, "How much longer until we can start Operation: Bankbuster', Jerry?" The old Crow replied, "Whenever you're ready, Seymour. The Ninja Crows are all ready and waiting to go." Cheese smiled, and then he replied, "Well then. . . let's be off! I've got lots of plans for that gold! Soon. . . VERY soon, Little Tokyo will be mine at last, the Pizza Cats will be nothing but a bad memory, and I'll be the richest villain ever!! Come, my Ninja Crows. . . to the robot!" The huge legion of Ninja Crows climbed onto the robot, and Jerry entered the cockpit, followed by Cheese. Jerry said, "Engines ready. . . weapons fully loaded, navigation and guidance systems all set. . . all systems read fully operational. Just say the word, Cheesy." With a smile on his face, Cheese said, "Take us out, Jerry!" Throwing the throttle levers forward, Jerry said, "FORT KNOX. . . HERE WE COME!!" The giant robot launched itself up out of the cave, and flew off towards its target.

Back with the Rovers. . .

Professor Hubert spotted something on the satellite monitor, and zoomed in for a closer look. It was a huge green robot, and clinging to it were a bunch of Ninja Crows. Hubert pressed the intercom switch, and he said, "Master, I've got a positive sighting on Cheese's robot. They're heading out towards Fort Knox, and at their current speed, it'll be about three hours until they get there. I suggest that the Rovers be sent out immediately." The Master replied, "Thank you, Professor. I'll get them on it."

The Master's voice rang out across the base, "ROVERS, PIZZA CATS. . . REPORT TO THE BRIEFING ROOM. CHEESE IS ON HIS WAY TO FORT KNOX, AND YOU MUST STOP HIM!!"

Minutes later, everyone had gathered, and Hunter said, "Here's my plan. . . while you Pizza Cats deal with the robot, my team can handle the Ninja Crows. Since our weapons won't do much to that thing, your finishing moves are gonna have to pop that overgrown tinkertoy." Speedy replied, "No problem, Hunter. Leave it to us. Are we ready?" Guido, Polly, Sayaka, and Good Bird all chorused, "YEAH!!" Sundance, Cosmo, and Dee Dee donned their armor, and the Samurai Pizza Cats were quick to follow suit. Hunter and his teammates suited up, and then Hunter said, "LET'S HIT THE ROAD, ROVERS!!"

Together, the two teams of heroes headed down into the armory. Once the Rovers had picked up their gear, they made their way into the hangar, and went for the Stealth Rover. Just as Hunter was about to climb in, Starlight came in, and she said, "Be careful out there, son. I'll see you when you get back." Hunter hugged her, and replied, "Thanks, mom. I love you." Starlight replied, "I love you too, Hunter. Colleen, take care of him out there." She replied, "I will, mom. . . count on it!" Hunter waved to his mother once more, and then he sealed the hatch. Starlight went up and joined the kids in the observation booth, and in minutes, the Stealth Rover's massive jet engines roared to life, as Hunter kicked in the afterburners. Before long, the big jet was off and flying, on course to stop Cheese's plan dead in its tracks.

Chapter 6

Six: Plowing the Road

Inside their giant robot, Cheese and Jerry watched on the map display, as they neared their final destination. Cheese said, "It's wonderful, Jerry... simply wonderful! Another twenty minutes, and we'll be on our way to seizing all that lovely gold. The best part is... no annoying Pizza Cats to get in our way!" Jerry replied, "You're right, Cheesy... in fact, when we take over Little Tokyo, and I hold the title of Prime Minister... I'll make the biggest golden statue of you that can possibly be built. I'll destroy that hideous Pizza Cats statue, and put yours in its place. How does... Big Cheese Boulevard sound for the new name of the street?" Cheese replied, "Oh Jerry... I love it. In fact, I'm gonna rename Little Tokyo as Seymouropolis'... and where the Pizza Cats'Parlor now stands... I'm gonna open up a store that sells tourist trinkets dedicated to me and my greatness! HAHAHA!!"

The radar suddenly beeped, and Jerry looked at the screen. He said, "Uhm... Cheesy?" The rodent replied, "What is it, Jerry... for your sake, you better not be telling me that you forgot something for the robot." Jerry bit back a smart-mouthed remark that would likely cause Cheese to explode, and then he said, "No, Cheesy... we've got an unidentified aircraft coming up fast from behind." Cheese said, "Wha... let me see it." Jerry flipped to a rear outside view, and there on the screen, Cheese could clearly see the large black and silver fighter coming in. From the readouts, he could see that it was doing Mach 3 easily... which meant that it wasn't just following them to take pictures. Jerry said, "Hold on... Cheesy, the pilot's calling us on radio. He says we've got two minutes to land and surrender... or he'll blow us out of the sky." Cheese yanked the headset off of Jerry's head, and shouted, "WHO ARE YOU TO THREATEN SEYMOUR CHEESE, FUTURE EMPEROR OF LITTLE TOKYO... OR SHOULD I SAY, SEYMOUROPOLIS?!" The vidscreen snapped on, and Cheese was shocked when he saw the enemy pilot... Hunter. The Retriever-mix said, "Long time no see, you idiotic Cheddar-muncher. Your plan's done for, and so are your dreams of taking over Little Tokyo. Land now, before I open fire." Cheese shouted, "HOW DID YOU PESKY MUTTS FIND ME?!" The camera panned over a bit, and Cheese saw Speedy. The gallant leader of the Pizza Cats said, "Easy... three of your dimwit walking featherdusters attacked our kids on the beach, and after we beat em up, they sang like jaybirds. Ya better do what my pal Hunter said, garbage-breath... or I'm gonna personally tear off your whiskers, and then I'll watch as Polly turns you into a pretzel!" Cheese shouted, "NO CHANCE, FUZZBALL!! PREPARE TO DIE!!" The robot spun in midair, and fired a trio of blasts from the beam rifle.

Hunter dodged the blasts, and let fly with a burst from the 30mm cannons. The rounds pinged off of the robot's armor, and Cheese said, "Haha... you can't stop my machine, mongrel. I've got gold to steal, but I'll leave some of my Ninja Crows to play with you, while I go and make a withdrawal of VERY large proportions!"

The robot accelerated away at top speed, and a huge flock of fifty Ninja Crows came at them. Hunter growled, and Colleen said, "We've got no choice, Huntie... we've gotta plow our way through these turkeys, so we can get over there and stop Cheese before it's too late." Hunter replied, "You're right, Colleen... Rovers, let's get ready to take out the trash!" Speedy turned to his teammates, and he said, "Let's rock and roll!" Guido, Polly, Good Bird, and Sayaka all pumped

their fists into the air, and they chorused, “YAH!!!” Sundance, Cosmo, and Dee Dee got themselves prepped and ready, and before long, Hunter touched down. Together, the group of heroes headed straight for the mob of stupid Ninja Crows, and the battle was on.

Hunter dashed between two idiot Ninja Crows, causing them to whack one another in the head with the handles of their swords. Both of the stupid birds fell over, and Hunter said, “Boy, you really are too slow.” He then spun around and punched another one right in the beak, before tossing him into a tree.

Colleen found herself surrounded by four Ninja Crows, and one of them said, “Looks like the pretty puppy needs a haircut...so let’s give it to her!” The Crow charged her with his blade raised, and Colleen flipped up and over his head. She landed behind him, and said, “Excuse me, fella...you might wanna look behind ya.” The birdbrain turned, and Colleen called out, “HIYA...KIT CARSON!! DAVID BOWIE!! ABRAHAM LINCOLN!!!” (Three famous people from the state of Kentucky.) The dumb crow went flying when Colleen’s foot slammed into his gut, and she whirled on the other three. The second one got a rising uppercut to the chin, Colleen dropped the third one with a scissor kick, and her last enemy got judo flipped.

I’m a soldier, meaning that I’m
Both the defendent and the judge
I’m standing on both sides of the fire
Going around turns, overtaking death and life
I’m running to fight with the shadow of a lie

No matter how many threads deception would weave
Truth will show its face of light

Save your tears
for the day
when our pain is far behind
on your feet
come with me
we are soldiers stand or die

Save your fears
take your place
save them for the judgement day
fast and free
follow me
time to make the sacrifice
we rise or fall!

I’m a soldier, born to stand
in this waking hell I am
witnessing more than I can compute

pray myself we don’t forget

lies, betrayed and the oppressed
please give me the strength to be the truth

people facing the fire together
if we don’t, we’ll lose all we have found

Save your tears
 for the day
 when our pain is far behind
 on your feet
 come with me
 we are soldiers stand or die

After a dream to the edge of a chasm
 Only that way can the world be saved

Don't you cry,
 Hide the tears,
 Because a new day will start
 Your fire
 Will be heated
 By thousands of hearts
 But now get up
 Hide the pain and fear far
 The one who's right will win
 Know that everything is in your hands

Save your tears
 for the day
 when our pain is far behind
 on your feet
 come with me
 we are soldiers stand or die

Save your fears
 take your place
 save them for the judgement day
 fast and free
 follow me
 time to make the sacrifice
 we rise or fall!

Blitz's claws sliced effortlessly through the blade of a Ninja Crow, and he said, "Sorry, little girly-bird. . . you lose! Now, it's my turn. LET THE BITING BEGIN!" The Ninja Crow squawked in fear and ran away. . . or tried to. He tripped over a tree branch, and Blitz's fangs clamped down hard. The Ninja Crow screamed in agony, and Blitz put the dumb bird out with a punch to the head.

Samantha snap-kicked one Ninja Crow between the legs, and then she nailed him with an elbow drop. Two more came at her, and she grabbed one and tossed him head-first into a bunch of other crows. She said, "Look. . . bowling for birdbrains!" The other Ninja Crow got bodyslammed, and Samantha then put him out with an elbow drop.

Exile used his heat vision to torch the blades of six Ninja Crows, and as they ran for the hills, Exile let loose with another heat blast, knocking a tree branch down on them. He said, "Is nothing like beating birds in bush!" Kasha froze a pack of ten more stupid crows, and Shag sent twelve of them flying with a solid swing from his nine-iron.

Sundance heard a noise up in a tree, and with his sharpshooter's accuracy, he shot the branch, and down fell a Ninja Crow. He said, "Nice try, birdbrain. . . NOT!! Now it's time for lights out!" He whacked the Ninja Crow in the head, and then he spotted another one going after Polly.

He said, "Polly, get down!" Polly ducked, and Sundance shot the Ninja Crow's blade, shattering it. Polly then decked the dumb bird, and sent him flying. She said, "Thanks, Sundance." He replied, "No prob, Polly. I'm not gonna let ya die... Speedy would never forgive me then."

Cosmo disarmed eight Ninja Crows with his rapier, and then he bashed each one in the head, one at a time. Dee Dee cracked her whip, and said, "You've all been VERY bad... I think I need to whip you into shape!" She tripped one crow, another got tied up and tossed into a rock, and she punched the other one's lights out.

Speedy was facing down four crows, and the first one got Speedy's fist in the face. The next two got dropped by a pair of roundhouse kicks, and Speedy nailed the last one with a backwards sommersault kick.

Sayaka unleashed a barrage of rapid fire punches and kicks on a pair of Ninja Crows, and when she was finished with them, she was about to go and aid Polly, when she heard another one mouth off. He said, "Oh... it's the younger sister of that redheaded nutjob with bad breath, Sayaka Esther. Tell me... how do you put up with your sister anyway... or are you just as out of it as she is. Oh yeah... I feel sorry for Speedy, since he has to sleep with her at night!" Sayaka shouted, "DON'T YOU INSULT MY SISTER, YOU STUPID PUNK!! POLLY IS THE MOST WONDERFUL SISTER I COULD EVER HAVE ASKED FOR, AND SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME WHEN I NEEDED HER... NOBODY INSULTS MY ONLY SIBLING... AND I MEAN NOBODY!!" Sayaka uprooted a tree and smashed the Ninja Crow with it, using every bit of her strength. The idiot went flying, and she said, "There... that'll teach ya to insult my sister!"

Good Bird flattened eight of his former flunkies, and then another one stepped up. He said, "Look at you... ya threw away a life of honoring the greatest Ninja Crow of all, Super Bad Bird! Ya coulda been even more evil than him, but ya went and left us when we needed ya most... and for what?!" Good Bird replied, "I left you and that rat Seymour for a life of happiness, friendship, and love, you stupid twit! All I knew when I was Bad Bird was a life of crime, lying, hate, and most of all... it threatened to tear me apart from Carla, the one I love most. Now that I've seen the light, thanks to Speedy... I can be with Carla forever. I'm through with you guys, ya hear me? I'm with the Pizza Cats now, and I'm never going back to being Bad Bird!" The crow replied, "You'll pay for this, ya lousy traitor!! I'm gonna rip your helmet off and bring it back to Cheese as a trophy... along with your sword!" Good Bird replied, "Oh yeah... come get me, stupid!!" The two Crows locked blades, but the Ninja Crow soon realized that Good Bird was far stronger with a sword than he'd ever be. Good Bird disarmed the Ninja Crow, pinned him to a tree, and then he punched his lights out. He said, "Speedy's the only one around here that can match or beat me with a blade, dimwit!"

Guido blasted six of them with his umbrella's solar beam, and he then hypnotized three more. He said, "Hey fellas... there's a new club opening up, and if ya wanna get in, ya gotta fight for it, cuz there's only one membership card left!" The stupid Crows all began pummeling each other, and Guido started laughing at their unending stupidity.

Polly launched her heart bombs at seven of the idiotic crows, and then she clawed up ten more. Another crow tried to go airborne and stab Speedy in the back, while he was occupied with another Ninja Crow, and Polly said, "Oh no ya don't!" She jumped up and plowed the Ninja Crow into the ground, and began to viciously pound the tar out of him. She shouted, "NOBODY TRIES TO KILL THE CAT I LOVE, BUSTER... AND IF THEY DO, I'M GONNA GO MEDIEVAL ON YA!! I HOPE YOU LIKE PAIN, BECAUSE I'M GONNA HAVE YOUR GUTS FOR GARTERS!!" The Ninja Crow tried to squirm away, but he was no match for Polly's strength and speed. She jumped up, and slammed the Ninja Crow into the ground headfirst, knocking him out. Speedy finished off the other Ninja Crow, and he said, "Thanks, Kitten. You really are incredible, ya know that?" She replied, "I know, Pussycat... you're pretty awesome yourself. C'mon... let's go stop Cheese." Speedy followed his wife back into the battle, which was just about over. Hunter unleashed Muzzle, and the uncontrollable fury of the powerful Rottweiler wreaked carnage on the Ninja Crows. Once Muzzle had been placed back in his cart, the heroes boarded the Stealth Rover, and headed onwards to Fort Knox.

Meanwhile...

Cheese's massive robot blew a huge hole in the gates of the gold depository base, and it stomped a pair of M1A2 Abrams tanks under its left foot. The powerful 120mm cannons on the tanks weren't even making a dent in the robot's armor, nor were the 30mm chain guns and Hellfire missiles of the Apache helicopters...much less the 25mm sniper rounds from the guards' rifles. Cheese said, "Go ahead, little insects...you'll never stop me! HAHAAHA!!" He keyed in the intercom, and said, "Hello, America...my name is Seymour Cheese, the future ruler of Little Tokyo. I'm here to take your gold reserves, and if anybody tries to stop me...Jerry, give em a demonstration of our new toy!" Jerry replied, "You got it, Cheesy...time to light up the town!" Jerry fired the chest mounted beam cannon, along with the beam assault cannons mounted in the weapon pods, and destroyed one of the Apache helicopter hangars. He then smashed the robot's fist through the armored door leading into the building where the gold was kept, and Cheese said, "You see...my machine is invincible, and nobody can stop..me...WHAT THE?!"

The Stealth Rover roared overhead, and Hunter called out, "You were saying, Cheese?" Speedy added, "Your Ninja Crow flunkies are all out of commission, ya lousy rodent. Guess what...YOU'RE NEXT!!" Hunter landed the fighter, and then he and the other Rovers climbed out, followed by the two Pizza Cat teams. Cheese ordered half of his remaining Ninja Crows forward, while the rest of them took off with Cheese and Jerry, headed for the gold vault. The Rovers and their friends squared off and got set to put an end to Cheese's plan, once and for all.

Chapter 7

Seven: Cheese's Last Stand

As the heroes got set to put an end to Cheese's caper, Hunter said, "Speedy, my team can handle the Crows up here. I think it'd be best if you took your group down into the gold depository, and deal with Cheese's robot. We'll handle things up here, and then we'll come and join you." Speedy replied, "Sounds like a great idea to me, Hunter. Good luck!" Hunter replied, "You too, buddy!" The two heroic leaders shook hands, and then Hunter formed up with his team, while Speedy led the way down into the gold vault.

Three Ninja Crows tried a tag-team attack on Kasha from behind, as she was currently involved in punching out another one. Exile said, "Kasha, duck!" She barely dodged the Ninja Crow's blade, and Exile caught it with his armored fists when the crow went for a second slash. Exile said, "You try to hurt my pretty snowflower. . . I kick you all the way to Siberia!!" The powerful Husky drove his fist into the idiotic Ninja Crow's gut, and the force of the punch sent him flying into the fence. He froze the second one, and the last one got his bell rung by an uppercut. Kasha returned the favor in seconds, as she spotted another crow fixing to toss a Shuriken at her husband. She shot the throwing star out of midair with her pistol, and then she said, "You were very bad. . . nobody tries to hurt one I love. . . unless they enjoy painski. . . is time for you to go for napski!!" Kasha bashed the Ninja Crow in the head with her fist, and he dropped like a sack of bricks. Exile said, "Thank you, Kasha. You save my tailski!" She replied, "You save me too, Exile. I am not about to let the dog I love wind up deadski, because of stupid Ninja Crows." Exile hugged her, and replied, "I love you too, my pretty snowflower. . . and I will always love you." Kasha kissed Exile's nose lightly, and then the two of them headed back into the thick of the fight.

Blitz banged his fists against the side of one Ninja Crow's head, and the stupid birdbrain fell over. When he saw another one angle his sword for a flying slash at Samantha's neck from the back, he called out, "SAM, GET DOWN!!" She ducked, just avoiding the razor-sharp katana by an inch. Blitz fired his Desert Eagle, and the big 12.7mm bullet shattered the crow's sword blade into pieces. The Doberman walked up and grabbed the crow by the throat, and pulled him up enough so that he could look him in the eye. He said, "Roses are red, violets are blue. Guess what little girly Ninja boy. . . I'M GOING TO BITE YOU!!" The Ninja Crow tried to run, tripped over his own feet, and then Blitz seized the moment and bit down hard, his powerful fangs making contact with the force of a steel beartrap. The Ninja Crow screamed in agony, and then Blitz whacked him over the head with his fist. He said, "No stupid, mangy Ninja Crows are going to hurt the one I love. . . dimwit!" Sam walked up and hugged Blitz, and she said, "Blitz, thank you. . . I swear to god that I'd probably be dead by now if I hadn't met you. You gave me back the sense of being part of a family again, after my old one was stolen from me. I love you, Blitz. . . forever." Blitz pulled the pretty black and gold-furred female German Shepherd into a hug, and then he kissed her. When they broke off their kiss, Blitz replied, "I love you too, Sam. Without you, I'd still be lost and unsure of where I belong in this world, and I'd still be jealous of Hunter and Colleen. Most of all. . . I'd never know the joy of waking up and spending the day with someone that loves me for who I am, despite my faults." Sam replied, "I'll always be here for you, Blitz, no matter what. Come on. . . there's plenty more Ninja Crows to go around." Blitz smiled, plucked a few feathers

out of his teeth, and then he headed off to join his fellow Road Rovers in battle.

Samantha spotted movement just off to Blitz's left, and she quickly identified it as a Ninja Crow getting set to hurl an explosive. She said, "BLITZ, WATCH OUT!!" Blitz moved just in time, and the bomb hit the ground just inches away. Small rocks flew up and pinged off Blitz's armor, but he was just fine. As for the Ninja Crow, Samantha intended to give him his just desserts. She charged forward at her maximum speed, and went into a corkscrew kick that flattened the Ninja Crow. She said, "Nobody tries to kill my husband, idiot!!"

Shag unleashed a pair of gas grenades, and six Ninja Crows fell out of the tree they'd been hiding in. He promptly produced handcuffs, and tied them to the fence. Muzzle was then unleashed, and the Rottweiler started having fun with a group of eight Ninja Crows.

Hunter ran three Ninja Crows down, and the first one received an elbow to the head. He took out the second one with a kick in the gut, and the last one got a spinning backhand. Colleen brought her fist around with incredible force, and caught a Ninja Crow right under the chin. She judo flipped another one, and then she created a domino effect by kicking a third one in the gut, which caused him to fly backwards into five of his fellow dimwits. She then spotted another one lining up on Hunter with a dart, and she knew that Ninja darts usually used some type of poison. She called out, "HUNTIE, MOVE!!" The crow launched the dart, and it just barely missed Hunter. Colleen scanned the dart with the chemical analyzer built into her helmet's sensor array, and found it to be laced with a rather deadly blend of toxins. If Hunter had been hit, he would've been dead by now. She grabbed the Ninja Crow before he could throw another dart, and she snapped his wrist. After that, she growled out, "Do you know what I'm about to do, you lousy little coward?" The crow replied, "Awww... I'm sorry. Did I make the little puppy mad? You should thank me for tryin'to put that hideous mutt down... I mean, how can you stand to be his teammate... let alone his wife. Heck, I'm surprised his own MOTHER is willing to admit being related to him." Colleen shouted, "DON'T YOU EVER SAY THOSE THINGS ABOUT MY HUNTIE, YOU LOUSY FREAK!! I DON'T CARE IF HE'S A MIXED BREED, DO YOU HEAR ME?! I LOVE HUNTIE BECAUSE HE'S HONEST, KIND, PURE OF HEART, AND BECAUSE HE RESPECTS ME FOR WHO I AM! AS FOR HIS MOTHER... SHE'S MY ADOPTIVE MOTHER TOO, AND NOBODY INSULTS MY FAMILY, OR TRIES TO KILL MY HUNTIE!!" Colleen jumped into the air, and with a yell of, "HIYA, CY YOUNG!! NOLAN RYAN!! TOM GLAVINE!!", she unloaded a triple kick/punch/reverse bodyslam combo, which left the Ninja Crow looking like a building had fallen on him. Hunter saved her seconds later, by yanking a Ninja Crow right out of the air and beating him to a pulp, since the dumb crow had tried to stab her in the neck. Hunter said, "Thanks, Colleen. My life would be so empty... in fact, I might even be dead by now, without you. You've been my best friend since the day we met, and in my eyes, you're more than just my second-in-command, and much more than just a girl... you're my better half, and the one I love with all my heart and soul." Colleen kissed the handsome Retriever-mix, and replied, "I love you too, Huntie. You've been with me through everything... good times and bad, and I know that I'll always have you at my side." They kissed once more, and after they'd finished mopping up the last of the Ninja Crows on the surface, they made their way down to where the real battle was raging.

Now I've told you this once before
 You can't control me
 If you try to take me down you're gonna break
 Now I feel your every nothing that you're doing for me
 I'm picking you outta me
 you run away
 I stand alone
 Inside
 I stand alone

You're always hiding behind your so called goddess
 So what you don't think that we can see your face

Resurrected back before the final fallen
 now they've arrest until I can make my own way
 I'm not afraid of fading
 I stand alone
 Feeling your sting down inside of me
 I'm not dying for it
 I stand alone
 Everything that I believe is fading
 I stand alone
 Inside
 I stand alone
 And now its my time (now its my time)
 It's my time to dream (my time to dream)
 Dream of the sky (dream of the sky)
 Make me believe that this place is invaded
 By the poison in me
 Help me decide if my fire will burn out
 Before you can breathe
 Breathe into me
 I stand alone
 Inside
 I stand alone

Feeling your sting down inside of me
 I'm not dying for it
 I stand alone
 Everything that I believe is fading
 I stand alone
 Inside
 I stand alone
 Inside
 I stand alone
 Inside
 I stand alone
 Inside!
 Inside!

Cheese watched with pure joy as the blast from his robot's chest-mounted beam cannon tore right through the armored door to the gold vault like it was tissue paper. When the smoke cleared, he found himself staring at huge, neatly arrayed stacks of gold bars. Cheese said, "Oh Jerry... this is more gold than I ever dreamed of... get the Ninja Crows working on loading it, now! I wanna be outta here in time to pay Princess Vi a little... visit, right when that obnoxious spoiled brat sits down for dinner... that is if she can even sit down that long." Jerry replied, "Gotcha, Cheesy. Ninja Crows... start loading the gold. Get a move on, we don't have all day to..." Jerry was interrupted, when he heard Speedy call out, "IT'S OVER, LIMBURGER BREATH!! GET OUTTA THERE RIGHT NOW, BEFORE I COME UP THERE AND CHOP THAT OVER-SIZED TINKERTOY OF YOURS TO PIECES!!" Cheese shouted, "JERRY!! YOU SAID THE NINJA CROWS WOULD GET RID OF THOSE PESKY FURBALLS!!" Jerry replied, "Look at it this way, Cheesy... those mutts aren't here... maybe the Ninja Crows got them instead." Cheese replied, "You're right... I feel better already. NINJA CROWS, GET THOSE CURSED CATS!!"

Three Ninja Crows went after Sundance, but he shot out their blades, and then he kicked the first one into a wall, bashed the next one with his gun, and the third one got his fist in the beak. Cosmo bodyslammed one of the idiotic fools, and then he rapidly disarmed six more. Dee Dee slapped ten of them with her whip, before proceeding to kick each one in the head.

Meanwhile, Speedy found himself doing battle with four Ninja Crows at once. One of them came in from the side, and Speedy quickly spun towards him, bashing him in the head with the handle of his sword. He backflipped over the second one, and kicked him into the wall. The third one tried to go sword-to-sword, and Speedy quickly disarmed him, before picking him up and launching him headfirst into the hallway outside. The last one went down to a rising crescent kick. He spotted another one trying to hit Polly with a crowbar, and he called out, "POLLY, DUCK!!" She dropped to the ground, and Speedy slammed the crow to the floor. He shouted, "DON'T YOU EVER TRY TO HURT MY WIFE, BIRDBRAIN... OR I'LL PLUCK YA CLEANER THAN THE WALKING THANKSGIVING TURKEY THAT YOU ALREADY ARE!!" He dropkicked the stupid crow, and then he moved over to aid Polly.

Guido blasted eight Ninja Crows with a solar blast from his umbrella, before spotting another one aiming at Speedy with a stolen XM-107 sniper rifle. Polly was currently engaged in battle with five Ninja Crows, and Good Bird was too far away to help, so Guido jumped up to where the Ninja Crow was perched, and then he said, "Excuse me... don't ya know that guns are dangerous... ESPECIALLY IF YA AIM AT MY BEST FRIEND!! I HOPE YOU BROUGHT SOME BUTTER, CUZ YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET FRIED!!" All the Ninja Crow saw, before he was knocked out, was a flash of blue, as Guido's right fist met his skull. Speedy said, "Thanks, buddy... I owe ya one!" Guido replied, "Speedy, I owe you more than I could ever say... my life, being married to Lucille, and especially your forgiveness for all the rotten stuff I ever did to ya. Speedy, there's no other Cat like you, and I'm glad to call ya my friend." Speedy replied, "Thanks, Guido. Go back up Good Bird, and I'll go with Polly and Sayaka." Guido nodded, and then he took off to lend a hand to his feathered friend.

Polly had just dropped two Ninja Crows in less than a second, when another one tried to tackle her. Sayaka met him halfway, and shouted, "DON'T YOU MESS WITH MY SISTER, SCUMBAG!! NO ONE MESSES WITH A MEMBER OF EITHER THE CERVICHE OR ESTHER FAMILIES!!" She crossed her swords in front of her, and called out, "NOVA BURST!!" The fiery red star-shaped blast blew the Ninja Crow clear out of Fort Knox, and sent him flying all the way back to Prisoners' Island.

Speedy joined the two Esther sisters, and he said, "How's it goin' there, Polly?" Polly replied, "Oh... Speedy! We're fine. Cheese's goons have just about had it." Speedy turned, and spotted one more Ninja Crow trying to attack Polly, this one wielding a hand grenade that he'd scooped up. Speedy jumped up, grabbed the crow by the back of his neck, and tossed him clean out of the fort. He called out, "DON'T YOU EVER MESS WITH MY KITTEN, BIRDBRAIN!!"

Just seconds later, Good Bird flattened all but one last Ninja Crow, and that one tried to hurl a bar of gold at Speedy's head in desperation, but Polly caught it in mid-flight. She shouted, "YOU'RE DEAD MEAT, YOU STUPID BUZZARD!! NOBODY TRIES TO HURT SPEEDY WHEN I'M AROUND!!" The crow replied, "Oh... big words from the little hotheaded witch that used to beat him to a pulp every time he was even a minute late... you called him stuff like... imbecile... picklehead... scroll's idea of heaven... and now you're MARRIED to him... he really is desperate if he can't find someone better than you." Polly screamed, "DON'T YOU DARE START WITH ME, BIRDBRAIN!! I NEVER, EVER HIT SPEEDY FOR BEING LATE, AND I APOLOGIZED FOR ALL THE TIMES I CALLED HIM NAMES. HE'S FORGIVEN ME, BECAUSE WE'RE BEST FRIENDS, AND HE LOVES ME BECAUSE HE'S ABLE TO SEE PAST MY TEMPER, DOWN TO WHERE THE REAL ME IS... AND I CAN SEE WHERE HIS REAL SELF IS... THAT'S WHY WE FELL IN LOVE!! SPEEDY'S BEEN MY BEST FRIEND SINCE... FOREVER, AND NOW HE'S MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE!!" IF YOU MESS WITH HIM, I'LL MAKE YOU WISH YOU'D STAYED ON PRISONERS' ISLAND!!"

Polly clobbered the last Ninja Crow, and then it was just down to them, and Cheese's robot. The Rovers came in, and Colleen said, "Blimey... you Cats really know how to handle yourselves. What are we gonna do about that monstrosity?" Speedy said, "Hey, Sundance... you're a good shot. Shoot the camera lens on its head, and then Polly. I want ya to go rip the thing's head off. After that, we'll finish it off Pizza Cat style." Hunter said, "He's probably gonna try and shoot Sundance if he gets a chance. Sam, Colleen... we'll run interference. With the speed that Sam and I have, and Colleen's agility, we should be able to keep him occupied for a while."

The three Rovers dashed in, and Jerry immediately tried to center the gunsights on Colleen. Each time he got her centered, she'd move, and Hunter would zip in and start running in random patterns. Samantha was currently using flash grenades to blind the villains to the approach of Sundance.

When the gold-armored marksman was in position, he fired a single armor-piercing round from his revolver that blew out Cheese's camera, blinding the robot. Cheese screamed, "JERRY!! THE MAIN CAMERA'S GONE!! HOW ARE WE GONNA FIGHT IF WE CAN'T SEE?!" Jerry replied, "Calm down, Cheesy... I'm trying to get the backup camera online."

Just then, there was an ear-splitting sound of shrieking metal, as Polly ripped the robot's head clean off, and tossed it onto the ground. Cheese screamed, "JERRY!! SHE TORE THE HEAD OFF!! GET THAT CAMERA WORKING NOW, AND THEN I WANT THAT RED-HAIRED PSYCHOTIC TABBY TURNED INTO PASTE!!"

Jerry replied, "Yes, Cheesy... there we go!" Before he could aim the weapons again, Jerry saw the sight that he dreaded just as much as Cheese flaring up for an explosion... the Pizza Cats, and Good Bird... all of them going into the stances for their finishing moves. Speedy called out, "PIZZA CAT POWER... YAH!!" Guido jumped up onto his umbrella, and fiery blue energy engulfed his sword. He slashed downward, releasing the powerful attack to the cry of "AZURE DRAGON FIRE!!" Polly's body was surrounded by a pink flame of energy, which turned to a blazing red once it collected into her flute and kodachi. She made the shape of a heart in front of her, and called out "HEARTBREAKER!!" Good Bird pointed his sword at Cheese's bot, and once the blazing swirl of yellow energy had reached its peak, he called out "THUNDERBIRD!!" Sayaka held out both of her blades, and electric blue energy started arcing back and forth between the two blades, eventually turning red and forming the shape of a star. She called out "NOVA BURST!!" The combined blast tore through layers of armor, and Jerry said, "Cheesy... I think we should EJECT!!" The two of them yanked their eject handles, and once they landed, they turned around in time to see the robot explode. Cheese shouted, "JERRY... THIS IS ANOTHER FINE PLAN THAT YOU MANAGED TO GOOF UP!! CAN YOU DO ANYTHING RIGHT?!" The elderly crow muttered, "We would've been able to pull this caper off, if it weren't for your endless stupidity... oops..." Cheese screamed, "WHO ARE YOU CALLING STUPID?! JERRY... YOU MAKE ME SO MAD... AAARRRGGGHHH!!" Cheese exploded, and when the Rovers and Pizza Cats found him and Jerry, Colleen kicked Jerry in the head, hogtied him, and tossed him into the Stealth Rover. Speedy sliced the tree branch that Cheese was hanging on, and when he landed, Polly beat him up, and then he soon found himself stuffed in the same spot as Jerry.

With the gold reserves saved, the heroes all shook hands with the commanding officer at Fort Knox, and then they departed. The Pizza Cats would take Cheese and Jerry back to Little Tokyo with them tomorrow, and drop them off as a present to Princess Vi on their way back to the Pizza Parlor. Having accomplished their mission, the heroes all headed back to Road Rover HQ to get some well-deserved rest.

Chapter 8

Eight: A Fond Farewell

As the Stealth Rover reached the hollowed-out mountain that served as the hidden entrance to their base, Colleen punched up the radio. She said, Road Rover HQ, come in. We stopped that limburger-breathed blighter's plot, and he's currently hogtied in the back. We'd like clearance to land, if that's alright.'

Moments later, Professor Hubert's voice came back on the line. He said, A job well done, Colleen. I'm opening the hangar doors now, and you have clearance. Welcome home.'Colleen turned off the radio, and then she turned to face Hunter. She said, "We're all set, Huntie...let's take it on home."Hunter smiled at her, and then he gently flew the large fighter into the hangar, touching down with hardly any shaking. Blitz grabbed Cheese and Jerry, while Exile carried the net full of Ninja Crows. Once the Rovers had filed out, the Pizza Cats followed suit. Sundance and the other New York Pizza Cats bid their friends farewell, before setting off for their home base in Manhattan. In the meantime, Polly said, "I'm sure glad that's over with...thanks for helping me out back there, Speedy."The white-armored cat replied, "Polly, I love you. No matter what, I'm always gonna be there to defend you, even if I have to lay down my life for you."Polly pulled him close to her, and she whispered into his ear, "I love you too, Speedy."The two felines stood there for a few seconds, looking into each other's eyes. Finally, Polly felt Speedy's lips meet hers, and she let herself melt against him. She purred softly, as he gently caressed the back of her neck. Hunter and Colleen were caught up in the moment as well, until they all heard the sound of the hangar doors opening. Starlight stood there with the kids, along with Carla, Francine, and Lucille.

Guido spotted the pretty ram that he loved, and gently embraced her, while making sure to rub her back so her missiles didn't go off. Good Bird pulled Carla into a hug, and Starlight walked over to congratulate her son and daughter. She said, "I'm so proud of you both. Not only did you save one of our country's greatest treasures, you also saved each other from serious bodily harm, and you've shown that no matter what, you'll never allow anyone to come between the two of you, and the pure, undying love that burns in both of your hearts. I couldn't possibly ask for a better pair of children than you two. I love you both, and I hope that you never forget that."Hunter put an arm around his mother's shoulders, as did Colleen. Hunter said, "Thanks, mom. I love you too."Colleen said, "Mom, I don't know how I could ever thank you enough for all you've done for me. I love you, just like I do Huntie..and I'll always be thankful for your golden heart."Starlight replied, "You became my son's soulmate on the day you met him, Colleen. When I met you, I knew that you were the one that belonged at his side...and so I couldn't help but add you to my family. Remember this Colleen...you may not be my daughter by birth, but I love you just the same."The two female cano-sapiens hugged, until Professor Hubert said, "When you're ready, I believe The Master is waiting upstairs."

Hunter and the other Rovers stowed their gear in the armory, while the Pizza Cats waited outside. Once they were ready, they all strode into the Mission Control Center. The Master turned to face them, and he said, "Congratulations to all of you. That was a remarkable example of teamwork, along with love, trust, and loyalty. Rovers, you've all exceeded my expectations yet

again. You're good dogs...good, good dogs." Hunter turned to face his friends, and called out "TO THE POWER OF THE PACK!!" The other Rovers all chorused their customary "AAAHHHRRROOO!!" The Master turned to face the Pizza Cats, and he said, "Speedy, you and your teammates Guido, Polly, Good Bird, and Sayaka...I want to express my deepest gratitude for your assistance, and I hope that you've enjoyed your vacation over here. From this day forward, you will always be welcome here."

Speedy replied, "Thank you, Professor. We've really had a great time here, and I wish we could stay longer, but we've gotta drop that rotten rat and his birdbrain brigade in Princess Vi's lap...and then we've got a Pizza Parlor back home that needs us. We do have time for one last dinner though."

Hunter smiled, and then he said, "I know just the place...let's go." They all climbed into the Stealth Rover again, and while they were on their way, Speedy turned to Colleen. He asked, "Where are we headin' out to?" The pretty British Collie replied, "To Belissima's...the best Italian restaurant in the area. It's nice and romantic...and I go with Huntie for every anniversary." Speedy and Polly both smiled as they looked at one another, and for the rest of the flight, Speedy gently held Polly in his arms while she took a quick nap.

One hour later, at Belissima's...

Hunter had called in to reserve an outdoor table for his group, and upon their arrival, their waiter walked them out to the patio. Speedy and Polly both gasped at the sight, as did Guido and Lucille. The group sat down and began looking over the menu. Polly leaned over and said, "See anything ya like yet, Pussycat?" Speedy smiled, and replied, "Yes, but I'll have to wait until we get home for that." Polly knew what he meant, and she said, "Speedy, you're bad...but I love you so much." Speedy kissed her, and replied, "I love you too, Kitten." Their waiter arrived and set down a bowl of salad, some baskets of breadsticks, and he then took down their beverage orders. Once they'd gotten their drinks, Speedy and Polly both ordered stuffed shells, while Guido and Lucille ordered manicotti. Francine ordered Spaghetti and Meatballs, while Good Bird and Carla ordered rigatoni. Hunter and Colleen both ordered a cheese/beef ravioli combo plate, while Blitz and Sam ordered Perogi. Exile and Kasha ordered lasagna, as did Shag. Once they all had their meals in front of them, they began chowing down. After they finished eating, they ordered Tiramisu for dessert, and Hunter paid using his diner's club card. A shooting star blazed across the sky, and everyone made a wish. As the hour was getting late, Hunter said, "Let's go, everyone. We've gotta fly the Pizza Cats back home, and then return to HQ." The group all headed for the Stealth Rover, and Hunter took off, bound for Little Tokyo.

Four hours later...

Once the Stealth Rover had touched down at Tokyo Airport, the Rovers and Pizza Cats climbed out, and they found Al Dente waiting for them. Francine ran up and hugged her boyfriend Ryuho, and while Cheese and Jerry were handed over to the guards, Al turned to Speedy. He said, "Well then...how was your trip?" Speedy replied, "Great, Al...we saw the Golden Gate Bridge, the Presidio, and we did a walking tour of Los Angeles and San Francisco. There's so much history down there...oh by the way, here's a little gift we picked up for ya!" Al opened the package, and he smiled when he saw the American Cuisine cookbook. Al said, "Thank you...the wife loves to cook new foods, so I'm sure this'll be right up her alley." Francine handed her boyfriend a new evening coat that she'd bought for him, and then Al said, "Let's get these goons over to the Palace. Princess Vi's expecting them." The Rovers waved goodbye to their friends, and then they took off, headed for home. The Pizza Cats began dragging Cheese off to his appointment with Princess Vi.

Thirty Minutes Later...

Al and his guards led the way into the palace, while Speedy brought Cheese in to face the music. Princess Vi said, "Speedy...how nice to see you back...SEYMOUR?! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO EXILE YOU TO PRISONERS' ISLAND?! In a moment of utter stupidity, Cheese replied "Oh pipe down, you obnoxious little hyperactive brat! Does your mother know that you haven't been drinking decaf like you're supposed to...or are you always this whiny?" Jerry said, "Cheesy...we're already in enough trouble. Don't irritate the Princess any further?" Cheese replied, "Oh please...as much as she fusses and complains, someone should put her back in diapers and give her a pacifier. That might shut her up." Princess Vi looked like she was about

to blow a fuse, and she shouted, "SEYMOUR!! WHEN I GET DONE WITH YOU, THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF YOU TO PUT ON A MICROSCOPE SLIDE!!" Princess Vi pulled her Naginata out from behind her throne, and started running after Cheese, swinging it at him repeatedly. She shouted, "GET BACK HERE, YOU LOUSY RODENT!! I'LL TEACH YOU WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE CALL ME AN OBNOXIOUS BRAT!!"

As he ran along with Cheese, Jerry gasped, "I t-told you it would have b-been better for you to... keep your... big mouth shut... but no... you-you HAD to push her... buttons... I swear, Seymour... you're going to be the death of us someday... if she doesn't kill us first!" Cheese ducked a close swing from the blade of Vi's weapon, totally unaware that Empress Frieda was sighting on him with her bazooka. Once she'd gotten her target set up, she called out, "VIOLET... MOVE!!" The Princess jumped to the side, and Frieda let the missile loose. It hit the ground right behind Cheese, and along with Jerry, the stupid rodent went sailing at least six hundred feet. Once he picked himself up, he ran until he was out of breath. Not knowing where they were, Cheese and Jerry sat down, and then they saw Speedy come up, along with Polly. Speedy said, "I'd tell ya Bon Voyage, limburger breath, but in your case, I think the proper phrase is... GOOD RIDDANCE!!" Cheese looked down, and saw that he and Jerry were on a raft. Speedy's katana sliced through the ropes, and Polly kicked the raft with all her strength, sending it out to sea. Cheese immediately started screaming in rage. "THOSE BLASTED CATS RUINED MY PLAN AGAIN... NOT TO MENTION THOSE MISERABLE MUTTS!! I WAS SO CLOSE TO BEING THE RULER OF LITTLE TOYKO... AND THEY WENT AND STOPPED MY PERFECT SCHEME!! NO FAIR!! NO FAIR!! NO FAIR!!"

Jerry replied, "I'll tell you what else isn't fair... me being stuck on a raft with an idiot who wouldn't know how to shut up if his life depended on it... oops..." Cheese screamed, "ET TU, OLD BIRD?!" Cheese began jumping up and down, making the raft tilt and rock. Jerry said, "Please calm down, Seymour... this raft can't take much more of... uh-oh!!" Cheese screamed, "I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF YOUR BIG MOUTH... AAARRRGGGHHH!!" The stupid rodent exploded, blasting himself and Jerry clear across the ocean and back to Prisoners' Island.

Speedy put his arm around Polly's shoulders, and she turned to face him. He said, "Let's head on home, Kitten. I'm itching to get back to our own bed." Polly smiled, and then she replied, "I know what you mean by that, Pussycat... and I like it." Speedy kissed her, and then the two of them caught up with their friends. Polly said, "Hey Guido, where'd Francine go?" Guido replied, "Last time I saw her, she and Capt. Kiryu were talking about something. I'm sure she'll be back in a bit." Right at that moment, Francine came around the corner, with a smile gracing her face. Polly and Lucille walked up to join her, and Lucille asked, "What happened, Francine... anything you'd like to share?" The blonde-haired cat smiled even more, as she replied, "I was just talking about setting up a wedding date... and we've decided to do it on my birthday, November 6th."

Polly and Lucille both hugged Francine, and then Sayaka joined in, along with Carla. Speedy walked over to where Princess Vi was chatting with her mother, and knelt down on one knee, as a sign of respect. She turned to face him, and he said, "With your permission, Princess... my friends and I are gonna head home now. We'll be in touch if ya need anything." Princess Vi smiled, and she replied, "Goodnight, Speedy." He bowed before her, and replied, "Goodnight, Princess." Speedy and the other Pizza Cats repeated the process with Empress Frieda, and then Francine gave Ryuho a goodbye kiss, before hurrying off to join her friends for the trip back to the pizza parlor.

Twenty minutes later...

Miyaka was finishing wiping down the tables, after another busy day. Her twin sister Setsuna entered the lobby, and said, "Hey sis... Polly just called up on her cell. She and the others are on their way home now, and..." Kiyone called out, "They're back!" Right at that moment, Speedy came in with Polly right behind him, closely followed by Guido and Lucille, Francine, and then Good Bird and Carla.

Speedy walked up to Kazuki, and he said, "So, how'd it go around here while we were away?" Kazuki replied, "Just great. Busy, but then again, I'm sure you Cats expected that." Francine checked the cash register, and then the safe. She smiled, and said, "Nicely done... I'm proud of you, just like I'm proud to be friends with the four best Cats in Little Tokyo... and the two finest Crows, along with a wonderful young ram. I'm going upstairs to bed, everyone. Goodnight."

After Francine had gone up, Kazuki and the others said their goodbyes, before heading back on their way to Yokohama. After their friends had departed, Speedy and Polly looked at one another, and before long, Polly found her lips melded against Speedy's. She said, "Speedy... I think we should... take this upstairs." With a smile on his face, Speedy replied, "Good idea, Kitten. C'mon, Aiko. Time for bed." The young kitten replied, "I'm coming, dad."

A few minutes later, Aiko had gotten herself comfortable in her bed, and Speedy was holding Polly in his lap, gently running his hands through her fiery red hair. She purred softly, as he began to run his hands down her neck, shoulders, and back. She said, "Speedy... I love you so... and I always will." Leaning down, Speedy kissed the beautiful blue-eyed angel in his arms, before replying, "I love you too, Polly... with all my heart. I'd like to sing this song for you, called *The Wonder of You*, by Elvis Presley. I saw the song on a CD that I bought while we were visiting the Rovers. Polly replied, "Any song that you sing for me, Speedy... it's always special, since it comes right from the heart of the Cat I love." After a quick kiss to Polly's nose, Speedy cleared his throat and began singing to the love of his life.

When no-one else can understand me
 When everything I do is wrong
 You give me hope and consolation
 You give me strength to carry on
 And you're always there to lend a hand
 In everything I do
 That's the wonder
 The wonder of you!
 And when you smile the world is brighter
 You touch my hand and I'm a king
 Your kiss to me is worth a fortune
 Your love for me is everything
 I guess I'll never know the reason why
 You love me like you do
 That's the wonder
 The wonder of you!

Polly had tears of joy in her eyes at the end of Speedy's song, and she said, "Speedy, ever since you came into my life, I've felt as though I could do anything, as long as we were together. I'll never leave your side, Speedy... and I want to tell you just how special you are to me with this song, called *I Only Want To Be With You*, by Dusty Springfield." Polly began singing to the only one that would ever have her love, until the end of time itself.

I don't know what it is that makes me love you so
 I only know I never want to let you go
 cause you've started something
 Oh, can't you see?
 That ever since we met
 You've had a hold on me
 It happens to be true
 I only want to be with you

It doesn't matter where you go or what you do
 I want to spend each moment of the day with you

Oh, look what has happened with just one kiss
 I never knew that I could be in love like this
 It's crazy but it's true
 I only want to be with you

You stopped and smiled at me
 And asked if I'd care to dance
 I fell into your open arms
 And I didn't stand a chance
 Now listen honey
 I just want to be beside you everywhere
 As long as we're together, honey, I don't care
 cause you've started something
 Oh, can't you see?
 That ever since we met
 You've had a hold on me
 No matter what you do
 I only want to be with you

Oh, oh, you stopped and you smiled at me
 And asked if I'd care to dance
 I fell into your open arms
 And I didn't stand a chance
 Now hear me tell you
 I just want to be beside you everywhere
 As long as we're together, honey, I don't care
 cause you've started something
 Oh, can't you see?
 That ever since we met
 You've had a hold on me
 No matter what you do
 I only want to be with you
 I said no matter, no matter what you do
 I only want to be with you!

Speedy wrapped his arms around Polly when she made her way back over to their bed, and she started purring, as their kisses grew deeper and more intense by the minute. Before long, the two of them sank down onto their mattress, and were soon lost in the intense heat of their unending love for one another.

After an hour or so, the two Cats headed into their bathroom, took a shower to wash up, and then they removed the bedsheets, and applied fresh ones. A few minutes later, Polly got herself comfortable on the mattress next to Speedy, and she said, "Goodnight, Speedy. I love you." He kissed her, and replied, "I love you too, Polly. Sweet dreams." The two lovers soon drifted off to sleep, knowing that they would always be together.

Over in America, at Road Rover HQ...

Exile and Kasha finished reading, and once they'd turned out the lights, Kasha rolled onto her side, and rested her head on Exile's chest. She said, "Is wonderful night, Exile... we stop dimwit rodent from stealing gold, and we all come home safe and soundski. I want to be thanking you for saving me, Exile... I never knew any dog like you before. I love you, Exile, and I want to be with you always." Exile said, "I love you too, my little flower... and we will always be together." Before long, the two Huskies began a fiery bout of passion. After they'd cleaned up, the two of them quickly fell into a peaceful sleep.

Blitz and Samantha were just finishing up a bowl of popcorn, and when Blitz returned from putting the bowl away, Sam kissed him, long and deep. She said, "Until I met you, Blitz, I never knew what love was. . . at least not in the sense of the love that I have for you. My heart was broken when I lost my old family to that arsonist, but now that I have you and Karina. . . I've got a new family to start over with. I love you, and I always will." Blitz replied, "Sam, without you. . . I'd never have gotten a chance at the friendship that Hunter and Colleen have both given me. You're the best thing to ever happen in my life, and I'll never let you go. I love you, Samantha. . . forever." In just a few short seconds, Blitz and Sam began holding each other very close. Once they finished, they took a shower, cleaned up the room, and they were soon fast asleep on the fresh, warm sheets.

Hunter and Colleen were up in their bedroom, watching a movie together. The twins were fast asleep, and so was Kayla. Colleen had her head on Hunter's muscled chest, and she gently rubbed her husband's cheek. Hunter looked down into his wife's blue eyes, and he said, "Colleen, I don't think I could ever tell you how much you mean to me. You're not only my best friend in the world, you're also the one I love most, and I promise you this, Colleen. . . as long as my heart beats, my love will belong to you, and only you." Colleen replied, "Huntie, I couldn't imagine living without you. No matter how sad I get when I remember my mom's death, or if I wake up in a cold sweat over nightmares about our run-in with the werewolves, you always know how to make me feel better. You truly are the most incredible dog in the world, Huntie. . . and I love you, with all my heart."

The two of them shared a long, deep kiss, and then Hunter said, "Colleen, I'd like to sing for you. The song's called 'Unchained Melody', by the Righteous Brothers." Colleen kissed Hunter gently on the lips, and then he began singing his love for Colleen through the wonderfully romantic tune.

Oh my love
 My darling
 I've hungered for your touch
 A long lonely time
 As time goes by so slowly
 And time can do so much
 Are you still mine?
 I need your love
 I need your love
 God speed your love
 To me
 Lonely rivers flow
 To the sea
 To the sea
 To the open arms
 Of the sea
 Lonely rivers sigh
 "Wait for me, wait for me"
 I'll be coming home
 Wait for me.

Oh my love
 My darling
 I've hungered for your touch
 A long lonely time
 And I know that time goes by so slowly
 And time can do so much
 Are you still mine?
 I need your love
 I need your love

God speed your love
 To me
 To...
 Ooooooooooh.'

Colleen kissed Hunter with every bit of the fiery passion that she had for him, never wanting to let go of him. She said, "Oh Huntie... that was so beautiful! I've got one for you too, called Heaven Is A Place On Earth', by Belinda Carlisle." Colleen gave Hunter a quick hug, before she started singing to the only one that she would ever love.

When the night falls down
 I wait for you
 And you come around
 And the world's alive
 With the sound of kids
 On the street outside

When you walk into the room
 You pull me close and we start to move
 And we're spinning with the stars above
 And you lift me up in a wave of love...

Ooh, baby, do you know what that's worth ?
 Ooh heaven is a place on earth
 They say in heaven love comes first
 We'll make heaven a place on earth
 Ooh heaven is a place on earth

When I feel alone
 I reach for you
 And you bring me home
 When I'm lost at sea
 I hear your voice
 And it carries me

In this world we're just beginning
 To understand the miracle of living
 Baby I was afraid before
 But I'm not afraid anymore

Ooh, baby, do you know what that's worth ?
 Ooh heaven is a place on earth
 They say in heaven love comes first
 We'll make heaven a place on earth
 Ooh heaven is a place on earth!

Hunter pulled Colleen into his arms, and she immediately let herself melt against him. His right hand started to gently trace its way up her spine, while the other hand began to caress her soft, flowing hair. Colleen had her arms around Hunter's shoulders, and as they sank down onto the mattress together, Colleen said, "Huntie-Wuntie... there's no other dog on Earth that I could ever love... you've been in my heart since I first laid eyes on you, and I promise that I'll always be

right here by your side.” Hunter kissed Colleen again, and the two of them were soon engulfed in the raging heat of their fiery passion.

An hour later, Hunter and Colleen stripped the bed, and then they put on new sheets, before going in to clean up. After they finished washing and rinsing, they dried off their fur, and made their way back to the bed. Colleen said, “Sleep tight, Huntie. I love you.” Hunter kissed the lovely blue-eyed Collie, and then he replied, “I love you too, Colleen. Goodnight.” Hunter pulled Colleen close, and she snuggled herself against him. After a final goodnight kiss, the two destined soulmates fell into a peaceful slumber. Hunter and Colleen both knew that their love was surely destined to last until the end of time.

The End.