

## When Hope is Darkness

Drops fall slowly on the floor of the great hall, their sound as they shatter on the ground is filling my mind. They echo within me, feeding the icy void that reaches out to claim my soul. They keep echoing, devouring my heart, endlessly.

Blood...

A life has faded, Death has claimed it.

Time freezes.

Death...

I...

The beautiful lyre is lying on the ground beside its wielder, its strings broken. With him, the music is gone as well. The pure crystal sounds of his melodies will never again allow peace to engulf the heart of darkness. It is a pity, this death, a waste... Why did he do this? Why did he try to fight, knowing he was rushing to his death, knowing I wouldn't...

Now Eurydice will be alone for all eternity, waiting for his return.

Waiting...

All this is my fault, his blood staining the great hall... I want to shake my head, I want to scream my pain and my refusal to the gods, but I do not move. I do not cry. Grief and fury vanish, washed away by the terrible wind of knowledge.

By truth.

I do not feel... I cannot allow myself to. Not anymore. Distantly, I watch the perfect tableau of Death in front of me. I am stone upon which all the emotions shattering my heart crash and slide away. I close the mantle of ice around myself, letting the cold smother the bright flames of the feelings burning within me. I must not let the light shine, I must be the mirror image I saw when the dark curtains lifted. I must be shadow.

The great clock starts ticking again, blindly, mercilessly stretching the seconds. The abrupt shock of life torn and stolen is fading, freeing one of the two men in front of me. Before he can move, and disrupt the harmony of what must be, I say softly :

"Rhadamanthis, wait. Let him mourn for the dead..."

Both Seiya and he look at me sharply.

Surprise on their faces, stunned recognition on Radhamanthis'.

Awe...

Good. I feel a smile coming to my lips.

Seiya stares at me questioningly, and eventually whispers :

"Shun ?"

Suddenly, doubts cloud Rhadamanthis' expression and he starts walking towards the Pegasus Saint, who is still holding Orpheus' body close.

This will not do.

This is not my Will. So I allow the smallest part of myself to show through as I repeat :

"Rhadamanthis, wait."

This time, he obeys.

This time, he knows...

"Shun ?..."

I turn towards Seiya, and a sudden fear flashes in his eyes. The plea in his voice turns to tightly controlled dread as he adds :

"You are not Shun..."

I let my gaze slip away from him. He matters not.

What matters...

If I could smile, I suppose I would. He doesn't understand, but then it is unlikely anyone could ever understand.

Or...

No, I must not let this memory shine too brightly.

This... Hope...

I quietly hush the feeling in my heart.

It is easy... Easy...

I still am... I still think... I still feel... Somewhere, so faraway...

I look at the palm of my hand and watch a grain of sand falling down towards the floor, ever so slowly.

I do not have much time, but it is enough.

It is my fault for not understanding sooner.

I saw Charon's reaction, I saw Lune's... One saw the pendant, the other saw me, and... I walked on, ignoring what should have been obvious. It is only when the curtains lifted a few seconds ago, when I saw the illusion of Him...

Wearing my face.

My pendant...

The pendant I had taught a gift from my mother...

Should I laugh, or cry ?

I am a pathetic fool.

If I had been able to see beyond the veil, none of this would have happened.

Nobody would have died...

This war would never have begun.

Why ?

Is it because deep inside of me I knew and was too afraid to face the truth ?

I do not know...

It matters not.

Yours Ever...

Oh yes...

Yes...

I am Yours, for as long as I live.

Such is my Destiny.

But my Fate...

I have a choice, a very simple choice in truth. Fight, or yield... But it will not change the outcome.

Not *that* outcome...

But if I...

Is this thought cowardly ?

All my life I have faced that which hurt me so.

All my life I have been forced to be an instrument of death.

All my life I have been a pawn of war.

All my life I have gathered pain in my heart.

All my life it has grown, tearing me apart.

All my life I have seen hope turn into despair.

All my life I have seen dreams shatter and fade, myriads of shining crystal fragments drowned in darkness.

Now, it has a chance to end.

No, now it *will* end.

I look at the limp body of Orpheus in Seiya's arms, and smile. If I chose to fight now, perhaps I could hold Him back for a time.

Perhaps...

I know my strength, I know my power.

Cosmo has no limits...

Yes, I remember the lessons I was taught on Andromeda Island...

How I wish...

I stare steadily at the blood painting the floor, crushing the futile thought.

I must make a decision now.

I look into Seiya's brown eyes and see fear, despair, sorrow and pain.

I look up and see grey eyes watching me.

Wings of fire, bird of flames...

Yes, you will come for me Ikki-niisan. You will come, and you will refuse to believe...

Because you love me...

And I love you.

Even if I lose myself, you will bring me back, and I will do what must be done. And then, at last, I will be allowed to rest.

Forever.

With this single choice, I will put an end to this war and make my wish into reality.

My wish... Oh I had others, before... But all dreams eventually turn into dust, all hopes are betrayed in the end.

This wish is the only one I can have.

The only one that will not lie to me.

Fleetingly, I wonder if She knew. Is this the true reason why She forbade us to come back to the Sanctuary upon penalty of Death ?

Athena...

Saori-san, did you...?

I...

My eyes burn, hurting me, but the tears won't come.

Why do I feel sorrow ?

I should be happy to know I have the power to act.

I should be happy to know it will be over soon.

My choice is just, this is the only way.

Even if it is selfish, still...

Is it fear that casts a shadow on my heart ?

Doubts ?

I am not allowed doubts. Not in this.

I look back at Seiya and Rhadamanthis.

I am Athena's Saint, I fight to protect peace and justice, freedom.

Love.

I am Andromeda...

The grain of sand silently hits the ground, and cold slowly seeps within me. Power fills me, and a Self that is not mine invades my being, ready to crush anything that might be resistance, but there is nothing of the sort.

I welcome Him.

I close my eyes and open my heart.

I give my soul.

I am His.

I remember the day of the Sacrifice, I remember Andromeda's Chains binding me to the rock when, at high tide, the ocean engulfed me.

Drowned me.

My pain is nothing.

He is wiping me like one would insignificant writings on a sheet of paper, but it is all right.

When the time comes, I will wake, I have enough power for that.

Come then, Hades...

You are my Destiny.

And I embrace...

You.

End.