

Aftermath - Path into the Light

DeathMask x Shaina

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Kapitel 2: Exploration

As soon as she had entered her hut, Shaina willed the Ophiuchus Cloth to leave her. It assembled and returned magically into the Cloth Box that was adorned with the symbol of Ophiuchus. She hoped that it would have enough time to heal before the the next battle as it had taken quite some damage in the fight with Persephoneia and her minions. With a sigh, she looked down at her normal clothing which was one of her lightly armoured outfits that she used in training, too. She pondered whether she had something in her clothes chest that wasn't armoured and for training. Well, there should be some light normal tunic somewhere at the bottom of the chest, she thought. But first she wanted to take a nice bath after all of the fights in the underworld.

When she was finally dressed again, she felt strangely excited at the thought that she would go to meet DeathMask - no, Angelo. If someone would have told her that before the fight against Persephoneia, she would have laughed right in their faces. But now she was looking forward to seeing him and she had this funny feeling in her stomach again.

Slowly she walked up the stairs towards Cancer Temple, relieved that she got unchallenged through Aries Temple. Kiki, or rather Aries Phrixos now, who was as gifted in psychic powers as his mentor Mu, probably would have seen through her in no time and then teased her from here to Jamir and back. But the little Lemurian Saint probably was either in Jamir studying with Shion or in the Kyoukou's Temple pestering Mu.

At Taurus Temple she wasn't that lucky. Aldebaran hadn't allowed himself any slack after the battle and was still - or more likely again - wearing his Gold Cloth, sitting on the stairs just in front of the entrance where he enjoyed the rays of the evening sun. As he discovered Shaina walking up the stairs, he was astonished to see her dressed in a simple dark blue tunic and lighter blue leggings with her yellow sash around the waist and not clad in her usual light leather armour.

"Good evening, Shaina. What business brings you here?" Politely he stood up and looked at her, marvelling that she appeared surprisingly feminine without her usual leather armour or Silver Cloth.

"I have an...appointment at Cancer Temple." Shaina mumbled.

"An appointment?" Aldebaran couldn't stifle a grin. Considering the fact that she was regarded as the toughest and fiercest of the female Saints, she was looking really cute at the moment with her flushed cheeks.

"Well, yes..."

"Since when is an appointment something to be embarrassed about? Or could it be that you wanted to say you have a date?"

Shaina's blush deepened. "It's not a date. DeathMask invited me for dinner," she defended herself.

Now Aldebaran couldn't contain his mirth any longer and broke into a good-natured laughter. "I see." He was slightly surprised that Shaina would date DeathMask, but they made up a team during the fight against Persephoneia, and maybe they had become somewhat closer then.

Shaina bristled at him. "Don't make fun of me!"

"But I don't, Shaina." He gave her a smile. Maybe she could work the miracle and turn DeathMask into a somewhat more sociable fellow. "You may pass. I don't want you to make him wait after all."

"Aldebaran!" She looked a bit scandalized at the Taurus Gold Saint and wondered if she was that obvious as she continued her way.

"Have fun," he shouted after her.

Shaina sighed and just hoped that neither Kanon nor Saga were at Gemini Temple right now. She definitely didn't feel like dealing with any of the twins right now.

Fortunately fate looked favourably at her this time and she could pass unhindered, but the closer she got to Cancer temple, the more apprehensive she got.

"Damn. I'm visiting Cancer DeathMask - so what?" she muttered aggressively to herself. But when she remembered their passionate kiss, she had the impression her legs turned to jelly.

Nonetheless she continued her way until she stood in front of the building. Only the inner part of the structure was rebuilt so far. The columns that normally adorned the front, back and sides of the temple were only partly restored and the decoration of the roof was missing, too.

Tentatively she entered the temple. The walls were all empty - the agonised faces of the dead that formerly covered them had dissolved after Shiryu killed the Cancer Saint during the battle of the 12 Temples, and obviously he hadn't collected any new

victims since he had been revived by Gaia. Shaina was relieved when she saw this, as DeathMask's temple had creeped her out big time in the past.

As she walked inside, she noticed a very appetizing aroma of herbs and vegetables wafting through the building and she decided to follow her nose. Finally she reached the kitchen. The door was open and her heart beat faster when she saw DeathMask standing in front of a gas cooker, stirring the contents of a pan. He was clad in tight black jeans and a black shirt, and when he turned around she saw that he wore an apron adorned with a cute crab. He looked really striking even when he was not wearing his impressive Gold Cloth.

"Hello - Angelo..." Shaina blushed. It was still a bit odd to use his given name, but it felt better than the idea of calling him 'DeathMask'.

"Shaina." DeathMask smiled. If he was honest, he had feared that she wouldn't appear. But there she was and she was simply breathtakingly beautiful, he thought and marvelled at the fact that she was indeed interested in him when she had turned down every other man before. The idea that he would be the one to possess her pleased him greatly.

Shaina remained standing at the door as she just didn't know what he might expect of her. To her delight, DeathMask went to her, took her face in his hands and kissed her lingeringly, before he wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close. Shaina returned the kiss with passion. This felt just great, she thought, closed her eyes and simply enjoyed the experience. It was exciting to be held that way by his strong arms that could easily crush her - and this time she wasn't getting into conflict with his spiky Cancer Cloth.

Finally he let go of her again, and Shaina was a little disappointed. As he saw her mien, he chuckled. "I promised you a dinner and thus I should make sure it won't get burned. But we can always add some extra dessert." DeathMask hoped that she would decide to stay as he didn't know how he was able to cope with his memories when he tried to sleep. He caressed her cheek before he returned to the cooker and checked the content of the pan. "Um, sorry, it's not finished yet. The involtini need to stew a little longer. Why don't you sit down?"

Shaina just looked at him and wondered what was going on with her. Was this how Marin felt about Aiolia? The only thing she knew was that her current feelings had a totally different quality from what she had felt for Seiya before. She thought about the conviction that had been drilled into her by her teachers. "If a man sees you without your mask you only have two choices: to kill him or to love him!" As she couldn't kill Seiya she had thought she had no other choice but to love him - but these had been just empty words compared to the real thing, she had to admit now.

"Shaina?"

"Uh, yes - what?" she stammered and blushed again.

"A penny for your thoughts," DeathMask grinned.

"Er, better not..." Shaina's tint could easily compete with the colour of the fresh tomatoes in the bowl on the sideboard, especially as she had to admit to herself how much she felt drawn to him. Sit down? She felt more like going to him and touching him, caressing him, feeling him close to her. Shaina forced herself to take place and watched him handle the pots and pans expertly. Somehow she wouldn't have expected this from DeathMask, she thought, but she liked the idea.

Finally he put a tray with bruschetta onto the table, slices of roast Italian white bread with raw chopped tomatoes, basil, garlic and olive oil. "Buon appetito - help yourself!"

Shaina looked at him and smiled when she heard the Italian phrase. "Grazie, Angelo," she thanked him and took a slice of the bruschetta. "Hey that's yummy!" She finished two more of them.

"Just wait until you tried the involtini." DeathMask was a bit surprised that it was actually quite some fun to cook for someone who appreciated it. He took the involtini - roulades of veal filled with mixture of tomatoes, ricotta and sage - and the side dish of diced potatoes with herbs and olive oil out of the oven where he put them only some minutes before and served the meal.

"Wow, you are really good," she said in amazement after she tried the first bite. "I think I shall visit you more often if you always cook such tasty food!"

DeathMask laughed at her exclamation. "I hope you will visit me for other reasons, too."

"Well, I'd love to..." She looked at him, then averted her eyes and blushed again when she caught herself daydreaming about him. This was getting annoying, she thought, angry at herself. "Dammit! What did you do to me?" she said accusingly. DeathMask looked at her in confusion. What did he do?! Suddenly she got up and walked over to him. "Kiss me!" she demanded.

'I don't have to understand that, do I?' DeathMask pondered, but he was more than willing to fulfil her request. Finally they parted and Shaina gave him a dazzling smile before she returned to her place.

"Yes. This is definitely another reason."

'No, I definitely don't have to understand this. But I wouldn't mind an encore,' he thought as he watched her eat. He wondered if she expected some small talk now, but he didn't really know what to talk about. While he still pondered about a topic, he finished his meal and couldn't stop looking at her. The kiss had whetted his appetite for more.

"Why are you so silent?" Shaina wanted to know.

DeathMask sighed as he was ripped out of his reverie. "I fear I'm not really good at small talk."

"Is it because of this attack of Hekate's?"

"A bit, I guess." The memory was indeed painful, and he tried to suppress it forcefully now that it had resurfaced due to her question. He didn't want to deal with it if possible and closed his eyes as if to shut out everything that might remind him of the event.

Tentatively, Shaina stood up, went to him and ran her hand gently through his hair. When he felt the caress, DeathMask opened his eyes again and just looked at her while he enjoyed the sensation. Finally he pulled her onto his lap and held her close as her warm presence seemed to chase away the painful memories.

"Stay with me tonight."

"Don't you think that's a little fast?" Shaina rested her head against his shoulder and had to admit she was sorely tempted.

"Fast? There could be a new battle tomorrow and who knows if we would survive that. Shouldn't we just enjoy ourselves while we can?" He stroked her back.

His touch sent shivers down her spine and she wondered how it would feel if he would explore all of her body. She put her arms around his neck and looked into his deep blue eyes. Somehow he had a point there, she thought and couldn't resist kissing him again.

"Was that a 'yes'?"

"It was an *I'm thinking about it.*" Shaina couldn't understand herself. It had been only a couple of hours since she admitted to herself she had fallen in love with him and now she already burned to spend the night with him? "You should realise that this is a once in a lifetime gift for me..."

"I do realise this." His lips met hers again. "But I don't want to sleep alone tonight."

"I told you that I want you to prove to me that you love me." But she felt her resistance crumble.

"You are pretty demanding."

"You'll get me if you can convince me, so you have to make a proper effort." As little incentive she kissed him again.

"Well, I can promise you that I'll keep on trying to make you give in to me. Wouldn't that count as some effort, too?" He grinned and continued to caress her. Playfully he nibbled at her earlobe and worked his way along the side of her neck to her shoulder. When she sighed contentedly, he began to tug at her sash.

"Hey, what are you doing there?"

"Trying to unpack this nice present here that doesn't cease to tease me."

"Angelo..." Yet she didn't resist when he unknotted the sash, slid his hands under her tunic and explored her soft curves. On the contrary, she caught herself moving towards his caresses.

"So what do you say now?" He buried his face in her hair. She smelled good, he thought, and she felt good, too.

"Dammit, don't stop," she whispered and cursed herself for her weakness. But then, she had to admit she was curious, too, and so she tugged at his shirt to do some exploration of her own. DeathMask chuckled and helped her strip it off. Shaina marvelled at his perfectly formed muscles and traced them with her fingers. Gods, she wanted him, too!

"Let's make ourselves a bit more comfortable," he suggested, his hands disappearing under her tunic again and stroking her back.

"Okay." Shaina knew that there was no way back then, but she had made her decision now. DeathMask smiled and kissed her again, before he got up, effortlessly lifting her onto his arms. She rested her head against his shoulder and gently stroked his bare chest while he carried her deeper into the living space of his temple.

Finally they arrived at his bedroom, and Shaina was surprised that it looked pretty comfy. It was definitely more luxurious than her hut with a thick black carpet and a comfortable looking bed with dark blue bedding.

"You really have it nice here in your temple," she commented. The dark colours suited him.

"Well, there should be some advantages to being a Gold Saint," DeathMask said cheerfully, put her down and sat down next to her, appraising her lithe and very shapely figure that was still covered with too much cloth. He untied the lacings of her shoes and removed them, running his hands slowly along her legs and body until he reached her face. "You are beautiful."

Shaina smiled at him. "You don't look too bad either." She sat up and admired his powerful physique, tracing the contours of the muscles on his chest and abdomen with her fingertips.

"You have an unfair advantage," he grinned and slowly pushed up her tunic. Shaina blushed when he bared her bosom and cupped her breasts with his hands. DeathMask found her reaction cute and kissed her, before he assisted her to strip off the tunic completely. He was delighted that she had given in after all - and so far she seemed to enjoy the intimacy.

To his surprise he discovered that this was the first time he really cared for someone again since he had become a Gold Saint. It was a somewhat confusing realisation -

until now it had been his greatest joy to see people cower in fear, to cause bloodshed, kill and fight. And now he felt deeply content to hold this woman in his arms and bring her pleasure, not pain? A bit worried, he listened to his feelings, but when he found that he still couldn't stand Shiryu and would like to see him suffer some miserable fate and die preferably sooner than later, he was relieved. He could tolerate being nice to one person, but more would effectively ruin his reputation.

However, he wanted Shaina to have a pleasurable experience, so that she would desire to stay with him. The drawback of causing people pain was that it usually didn't incite them to return - unless they were masochists which would be boring. But he wanted that Shaina longed to be with him.

"Angelo? What are you thinking about?" Shaina looked curiously at him.

"You." He kicked off his shoes and laid down next to her, pulling her into his embrace. Absently he stroked her back and relished her warmth. Somehow this was a completely different experience than the one-night stands he'd had with girls from the surrounding villages. Those hadn't known anything about him and if they would have learned that he was the assassin of Sanctuary who had killed countless victims and even delighted in doing so, they would have run away in horror. Shaina on the other hand knew that he was the Cancer Gold Saint and she also knew what he had done in the past and would continue to do. And still she wanted to be with him.

Shaina looked at him and was surprised how relaxed and even gentle he appeared right now. She smiled and caressed his cheek. She would have been content just to lie there, listening to his heartbeat and feeling his arms around her, but obviously he wanted more as his hands wandered downwards and followed the contours of her body.

"You have quite some tantalising curves," he commented, and Shaina couldn't help blushing again, especially when he slowly pushed down her leggings, caressing her legs in the process. Even though she felt unaccustomedly exposed, she helped him strip off the garment, internally torn between apprehension and curiosity. Unfortunately her curiosity became the better of her and she started to tug at his trousers.

"Now it's your turn, too!" she demanded. DeathMask chuckled and placed her next to him. He really liked what he saw and kissed her once more before he undressed. Shaina observed him with great interest. He was indeed nicely built in all respects. "So this is supposed to fit into me?" she asked, somewhat sceptically.

"Well, yes, that's the general idea." DeathMask couldn't stifle a grin and began to gently stroke her again. It pleased him how she reacted to his fondling. Shaina shivered in anticipation, but suddenly something else came to her mind.

"Angelo, before you go on, let me warn you... If you think you can sleep with me just to brag around that you spent the night with me, then I will see to it that you will not be able to stick *this* anywhere else again. If you sleep with me now, this means a serious long-term commitment for you. Did I make myself clear?" Shaina smiled

sweetly and dug her fingernails with slight pressure into his flesh.

"Um, absolutely clear..." DeathMask was taken aback how much he desired her. He wanted her. He wanted her because she was the strongest of the female Saints and because she dared to stand up to him. And yet she had a surprisingly soft and passionate side, too, what she proved by kissing him when she heard his answer. "But I hope you don't mind if I brag around when I stay with you?" he said with a grin.

"You evil man!"

"Caught," he said cheerfully and ran his hands over her soft skin, touching her most sensitive spots. It was amazing, he thought, she didn't just return his caresses with her body, but also her mind. Her Cosmo - strong for a Silver Saint - flared up and merged with his, supported by his powerful empathic ability, and their thoughts mingled as well, giving him the perfect feedback what she liked best and what he had to do to make her give in to him completely. DeathMask smiled when he saw himself reflected in her eyes - and her thoughts were really flattering. He couldn't remember when he last felt so relaxed and he realised that he truly liked the idea of staying with her, feeling her close to him.

But this mental connection wasn't a one way street and so she also got glimpses of his thought-world which currently were centered very much on her and what he intended to do with her right now. Shaina flushed, but it would have been a lie to say that the images didn't turn her on. And it wasn't just his imagination, but also what he did with his hands and mouth. When he finally entered her, she was so aroused that the short pain was immediately smothered by this incredible sensation of him moving inside of her. It didn't take long and they climaxed together, their minds still joined just like their bodies.

For a while they just relished their closeness and DeathMask pondered about the unexpected sharing of their thoughts and emotions. He had never experienced something like this before - but then, the women with whom he slept before hadn't been Saints who had access to their Cosmo. Somewhat unexpectedly he felt a sharp pain in his back as Shaina's fingernails dug deeply into his flesh.

"Ouch!"

"Hey! I wanted to tell you that this was just wonderful, but now you are thinking about your exploits with other women?" she said poutily.

He looked apologetically at her and discovered that it had some disadvantages, too, that they were still linked with their minds. But the advantages outweighed them by far as the mind-shared love-making had been amazing. "I just pondered that I have never experienced something like this before - and I have to admit I would love to repeat it. So you don't have to worry about any former 'exploits' - you are the only one for me from now on!" He was a bit surprised at himself when he realised that he really meant it, but he would be a fool if he would let her go again.

Shaina smiled. The emotions that accompanied his words through the still upheld

mind link assured her that he was sincere, at least for now. "Very well. I guess I can let you get away with this." She still had her legs wrapped around his hips and didn't want to release him yet. "After all, this was just wonderful." She kissed him passionately. The rest of the night was spent likewise enjoyable until they decided to finally replenish their energies and sleep.