

# Rules of the Game

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Submitted: February 14, 2004

Updated: February 14, 2004

*[SubaruxSeishirou, AU of vol. 16] Kakyou discloses some vital information concerning Seishirou, which will alter the events at Rainbow Bridge. Can a yumemi truly alter the rules of the game of fate...or is it just illusion?*

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# 1 - A Bit of Knowledge

[This is only the second fanfiction that I've written for this series, and the first actual long story...so bear with me. No, I -don't- have manga volume 16, and even if I did, I can't read Japanese...so it wouldn't help me. I've gone over scripts, seen the anime version, and pretty much know what goes on and what's said. Pretty much. What I'm saying is, if I get something wrong, don't kill me okay? I'll send Seishirou after you. ^^ Most of this will attempt to go along with the manga's past, of course, but things could get a little tweaky since I've both been watching the anime and reading the manga (what's in english so far).

I've no idea how this will turn out, if it'll be good, or if any eyes other than myself will ever read this. Oh, and this is an AU "what if" scenario of Rainbow Bridge, so there are definite SPOILERS for X manga vol. 16. So...enough of my babbling. ^^ ONWARD!]

SUMMARY: Subaru goes to see Hinoto before he leaves to protect Rainbow Bridge. She brings him into one of her Dreamscapes, intending to further deceive him, when Kakyou breaks into her Dream, much like he did with Kamui once. He wishes to honor Hokuto's purpose in casting her last spell, so Kakyou then tells Subaru of Seishirou's intentions at the Bridge, and thus changes the events there.

In other words, this is Feye's attempt at fixing Rainbow Bridge. Everyone tries it, so why not? ^^ Don't worry, I DO get original ideas. Just check my Escaflowne fanfiction for proof of THAT.

RULES OF THE GAME: PART ONE by Feye Morgan

An Oracle once told the people of Athens that wooden walls would save their city. There was confusion at her words, and no one knew quite what she meant. However, they bowed their heads to her wisdom, and went forth to battle.

The wooden walls did indeed save Athens.

It makes one wonder why yumemi dream at all. If what they see is Fate, then why Foresee it? If the future is predetermined, why bother to know it? The only reason for seeing the future is the chance to change what it shows. If yumemi did not bother to tell what they See in their dreams, would the future change? And what if they did not dream at all? Who knows if it might, just might, be different?

And even if it was, would anyone know the difference?

The shadowy shape of a bridge spanned the mists over water. It was empty: too early for traffic of any kind. Empty until a solitary person leapt down from the high supports above to land on the cold pavement. It was a young man in his mid-twenties. He wore a white trenchcoat over the black pants and turtleneck that covered his too-thin frame. Hospital bandages were wrapped around his head, covering his right eye. He walked over to the railing and leaned on it, looking down into the water. He was waiting for someone.

If a yumemi lies about a future he or she has seen, does that have any effect on what will happen? Especially if the future is one based on misunderstanding. If the players knew beforehand all intentions,

would the rules of the game change?

Subaru heard another person land some distance behind him. He did not need to turn around to know who stood there, but turn around he did.

The two onmyoujis walked towards each other, expressions unreadable. They halted not three feet apart. Seishirou wore his perpetual smile, cold and elegant as always. He reached inside his own black trenchcoat to pull out a cigarette, and held it forth while Subaru lit it for him. The years had changed little where they were concerned...at least on the outside.

Something the yumemi for the Dragons of Earth had said to Subaru had startled him. He had gone to see the Dragon of Heaven yumemi before he had left to defend Rainbow Bridge, to ask some questions. She had taken him into her Dreamscape, but they had been interrupted by a stronger yumemi. The one of the Dragons of Earth. Kakyou. And he had told him something very interesting indeed. He did not know how the subject of the Sakurazukamori had come up, but afterwards, he no longer cared: he just wanted to know -why-.

Seishirou walked past him to stand several feet away, his back towards Subaru's. "It has been a long time, Subaru-kun."

Subaru said nothing, only flipped out his ofuda. The fight had begun.

\*Seishirou-san,\* Subaru thought to himself as he dodged one of the dark onmyouji's attacks, \*I know your Wish now, and it confuses me. Why does it contrast and yet mirror my own so closely?\*

He could have smiled when Seishirou conjured up his maboroshi, and vines of Sakura wrapped around his limbs. He flipped out an ofuda and slit his thumb on one sharp edge. The blood magic banished the illusion.

"You didn't have to do that, you know, Seishirou-san," he commented. "I have been held captive by the Sakura ever since you bound me."

Seishirou looked at Subaru from behind his dark sunglasses. "The Kamui of the Dragons of Earth told me that I am the only one who can grant your Wish." He reached up and pulled off the glasses, revealing one cold amber eye and one blank white. "He also said that your Wish isn't that I think it is."

Subaru said nothing. He stood stoically, watching Seishirou, and waiting for him to continue.

"Isn't your Wish to kill me?" There. It had been asked.

A gust of wind came up from behind Subaru, taking hold the the end of the bandages around his head, which had been loosened in the fight. It pulled and they unwound, fluttering off past Seishirou. Subaru made no move to stop it. Seishirou blinked, looking at the right eye that was now blind and sightless as his own.

"No, it isn't." Subaru paused. Again, what the yumemi had told him ran through his mind. He continued. "My Wish ought to be the same as yours."

Seishirou's eyebrows rose in surprise. "Oh? And what might that be?"

"You tell me, Seishirou-san." Subaru would have walked toward the other, except that there was a rubble-filled chasm between them. They both stood on jutting pieces of concrete on either side.

Seishirou did not reply. The two stood facing each other, waiting for someone to break the silence. Finally, the dark onmyouji frowned slightly and said: "Does that mean that you do not know?"

Subaru smiled a little. "No."

"No, you do not know? Or no, you do know?"

Subaru looked at Seishirou, studying him. Then he sprung onto the air, flipped over the chasm, and landed behind the other. Seishirou half-turned to look at him, waiting. Subaru approached Seishirou, hands open and without ofuda. The Sakurazukamori let him, curiosity escaping his stoic expression. Mild surprise showed on his features once more when Subaru came close to him and placed one hand over his heart.

"I know, Seishirou," he said quietly. "But I will not tell you. I want you to tell me."

Seishirou stared at him for several long moments. "What is your Wish, Subaru-kun?"

"You mean what was it? It has changed since, I think." Subaru looked down briefly, studying the hand over the Sakurazukamori's heart. "It was to die at your hands."

Seishirou placed a hand under Subaru's chin and lifted his gaze. "Why?"

Subaru shrugged. "I tried my best to keep you out of my heart. I tried so hard to hate you, but in the end I couldn't. I figured that the only thing to do was to let you kill me. At least that way, even though I would be only one of countless of your victims...it would be you. I...I love you Seishirou."

There. He had said it. He had said what had lain, secret even from himself, in his heart for nine long years. Now, he waited. There was a long, long pause as Seishirou absorbed this startling information and connected it Subaru's odd behavior.

"Subaru-kun...you don't love me," he started. Subaru felt anger slowly rising in him. He fought it down and let the dark onmyouji continue. "You love the kindly veterinarian who never existed." Seishirou looked down at Subaru as if this explained everything, and that the younger man ought now to just step away and resume trying to kill him.

Instead, Subaru laughed harshly. "No, Seishirou-san, you don't understand." He caught the elder man's eyes with his own. "I didn't love you back then."

Seishirou's eyes widened. This was news indeed.

"I thought I did, back then," Subaru continued. "I thought I loved you, but...it didn't take me long to realize

that I was wrong. I had had a crush on you, yes, and it was my first so it was strong. But it wasn't love." He paused. "I fell in love with you since then. So don't give me that excuse. I know who and what you are...and it still doesn't matter."

Seishirou stared. "Subaru-kun...I don't care for you. You know that."

Subaru shook his head, still smiling slightly. But the smile had a harsh edge to it. "Then explain your Wish to me, Seishirou-san. I, too, have spoken with someone who has seen your Wish, and told me that it is not what I had thought. I know what it is. It is the same as mine was."

Seishirou masked his face into his regular, emotionless mask with the meaningless half-smile. "Don't be so sure of yourself, Subaru-kun." He moved quickly, taking hold of the hair on the back of Subaru's head and pulling down, forcing the younger man's head back, arching his back upwards, and pushing him off balance. The Sakurazukamori's hand on his head kept Subaru from falling backward. He raised his right arm and made his hand into a shuto\* by his cheek. He aimed at his prey's heart. "I would not hesitate to strike."

Subaru's eyes widened. He knew what the other man was truly planning. The yumemi for the Dragons of Earth had told him something else, something very interesting indeed, this time concerning Hokuto.

"Seishirou," Subaru said, trying to keep his voice calm. "I know about Hokuto-chan's last spell. I know what will happen if you strike. It won't be me that dies." Subaru struggled to raise his head to look at the assassin, but the hand gripping his hair held firm. "Please, don't leave me."

A long silence. Subaru prayed Seishirou wouldn't strike, wouldn't kill himself. Prayed that the man had enough sense to see reason.

Finally he spoke. "You can't stop me, you know," Seishirou's voice was calm, but the usual composure seemed to waver a bit.

"I know. But if you leave me, I'll die. I know it sounds selfish...but I live for you."

"You need to live for yourself."

"Why? There's no meaning to life without you, Seishirou-san. All these long years since the bet ended have been spent looking for you. If I haven't found anything else in that time, then I never will."

"You don't know that."

"I DO know that!" Subaru lost his temper and yelled. The other man could be so stubborn and so stupid! "I can guarantee you that if you strike, this kekkai will fall. Don't do that to me, Seishirou-san."

Again there was a long silence. Subaru's neck and back began to ache, but he didn't dare try to break free. It might push Seishirou to do something that Subaru would regret. Finally, he felt the fingers in his hair unclench and draw away, pulling Subaru back upright. The onmyouji looked up at Seishirou. The older man's arms were hanging at his sides.

"What now?" the Sakurazukamori asked simply. He looked expectantly at Subaru.

Subaru locked eyes with his other star. "No lies, Seishirou. Do you feel anything for me? Anything at all?"

Seishirou paused, considering. Or maybe he was debating whether it was any use to lie anyways. "Yes," he said at last.

Subaru never wavered. "What do you feel?" he pressed.

Seishirou frowned slightly, unsure of himself. He searched through his vocabulary for the right words. "An...ache?" he said, half to Subaru and half to himself. He nodded. "An ache. And...something else." He shifted uncomfortably. "I...don't know what it is." He said the last part quietly and quickly, as if embarrassed (was he able to feel embarrassed?) to admit such a thing.

"Do you want to kill me?"

Seishirou blinked at the younger man. "You are my prey."

"That doesn't answer the question."

Seishirou opened his mouth, and then snapped it shut. Once he might have replied that it did indeed answer the question. But now...it seemed that the Sumeragi was right. The problem was that he shouldn't be right. Subaru was his -prey-. It was his purpose to -kill- his prey. But he didn't want to kill Subaru.

But Subaru was his prey.

The younger onmyouji could see the battle waging inside Seishirou's head. "You don't, do you?"

Slowly, Seishirou shook his head. Subaru merely smiled and took hold of the elder man's hand. "Let's go," he said softly. Inside, Subaru felt warm. He had gotten what he had wanted all these years. There was no room to feel resentment towards the man for what he had done in the past. Not yet, anyways. Seishirou was, of all things, fragile and insecure at the moment. The wrong thing said could shatter everything Subaru had just accomplished.

Seishirou simply looked at him. Subaru let go of his hand briefly to draw his kekkai back, leaving the bridge unharmed.

"Go where?" the Sakurazukamori asked.

Subaru shrugged and took hold of Seishirou's hand once more. "Away from here," he replied obviously. Then he added: "home, I suppose."

"Where is home, then?"

Subaru paused again. He had recently moved in with Sorata, Arashi, Kamui, and Yuzuriha. If he walked

in with Seishirou in tow...bad things would happen. Very bad things.

"On second thought, let's skip home. How about some ice cream?"

Seishirou blinked. Ice cream? Apparently the Sakurazukamori wasn't the only one who was acting strange. "Sure," he replied carefully.

Subaru smiled, a little bit of warmth creeping in. It would turn out all right. After all, it was just Destiny. Destiny could change. He would prove it.

A moment later Rainbow Bridge was deserted once more. The sun began to creep over the horizon, illuminating the tops of scyscrapers. The city began to wake, and somewhere in Tokyo, an ice cream shop that had just opened up for the day welcomed its first customers.

~\*~\*~\*~

\*shuto-- "knife-hand". Used often in the Japanese martial art "Taijutsu". Seishirou forms his hand into a shuto whenever he kills someone by striking his hand through his victim's heart.

[Right-o...so I've decided to post this, as you see. Please do tell me whether or not you want me to continue this. I have a vague idea of where it might be going, so if you want me to go further, suggestions are nice. I do have a plan...it just needs, um, fillers. ^^]

## 2 - Ice Cream and Roommates

I hope you all like this next chapter, and please, don't forget to review. Even if it's just a short sentence, let me know what you think!

Disclaimer:

Feye: Hello!

Salivating lawyers: Sue...sue...mine...mine!

Feye: \*blinkblink\* Um...\*holds out college tuition bill\* I am a poor college student. I have no money. I don't own X/1999.

Lawyers: \*wilt\*

Seishirou: That's right. Sod off.

Feye: \*stares at Seishirou\*

Seishirou: ...what?

Feye: \*shakes head\* ONWARD!

RULES OF THE GAME: PART TWO by Feye Morgan

~\*~\*~\*~\*

Seishirou kept coming back to the same dilemma. Outwardly, it looked like a simple paradox, one that the master onmyouji should have had no trouble cracking.

But, as he slowly spooned ice cream into his mouth, he found that he could not. He gazed at the man sitting opposite him.

Sumeragi Subaru was his prey, marked with the inverted pentagrams. This meant that the Sakurazukamori should kill him.

But, Seishirou didn't want to kill Subaru.

But he should want to.

But--

"Seishirou-san?" The dark onmyouji's musings were cut short by the other's question. "You've been



staring at me for quite a while now. Care to divulge your thoughts?"

Seishirou blinked and sighed. He considered refusing, but he knew that Subaru would only pester him even more until he finally broke down.

"I'm..." Seishirou paused. he had been about to say 'confused', but he didn't want to tell his star that. It was difficult enough to admit it to himself. "...unsure," he finished. \*As if that's so much of a better word,\* he thought darkly.

Subaru waited expectantly.

"I'm supposed to want to kill you," Seishirou explained. "But I don't."

Subaru blinked. A small smile tugged at his lips. "And that's confusing you? It's quite simple, Seishirou-san; you have feelings for me."

"But I shouldn't. I'm supposed to be emotionless."

"But you aren't."

Seishirou nodded.

"And this is a bad thing?" Subaru quirked an eyebrow at him.

"I'm the Sakurazukamori," Seishirou said, as if the problem was obvious.

"So?" Subaru still wore the soft smile.

"The Sakurazukamori doesn't -have- feelings!" he said, exasperatedly. His teeth clenched down harder than normal on his spoon as he ate another bite of ice cream.

"Well," Subaru stuck his spoon into his ice cream and laced his fingers together in front of himself, "you're the Sakurazukamori, and you have feelings, so therefore that statement is terminally flawed."

Seishirou shot him a withering look. It bounced harmlessly off of Subaru's sunny expression.

"Honestly, Seishirou. Give me one good, convincing reason -why- having feelings for me is bad." Subaru rested his chin on his still-folded hands, and looked into Seishirou's mismatched eyes. He waited.

The dark onmyouji's mouth opened, and then shut. He stared back at the other man.

Subaru smirked and spooned some ice cream into his mouth. "Take your time."

Seishirou glared again, and stoically took a bite of his own ice cream. It was half-melted by now, as was Subaru's.

"The Dark Kamui will kill me," he came up with eventually.

"He hasn't killed Kusanagi yet," Subaru replied, not missing a beat.

Seishirou blinked. he remained silent for a few moments, processing Subaru's statement. "I didn't know that Kusanagi was seeing a Dragon of Heaven, and I doubt if the Dark Kamui knows either. Besides, he seems set on staying out of the battle in either case. I've been quite active, on the contrary."

"Yes, we all noticed," Subaru remarked dryly.

Seishirou ignored him. "I think "Fuuma" would have a problem with me pulling out of the fight."

Subaru tilted his head at his opposite star. "Would you really?" he asked.

"Would I really what? Pull out of the fight?" At Subaru's continued stare, Seishirou nodded. "I can't hurt you, and I've noticed that you are quite close to the other Dragons of Heaven, especially Kamui. Therefore, if I attacked any of the Ten no Ryu...I would be hurting you."

Subaru pondered this. "Well, you -were- planning on dying, so that wouldn't have been much different that pulling out of the battle," he offered.

Seishirou gave him a -look-. "Subaru. I would have been -dead-. There would have been nothing he could -do- about it. But if I'm -alive- and not fighting out of -choice-, he'll be after my blood. He'd consider it treason." Actually, Seishirou wasn't too certain that this was true. The Dark Kamui was too volatile for him to decipher. But Seishirou wasn't about to take the chance, either, on the probable offhand that "Fuuma" did take objection.

"Hmm..." Subaru frowned, and ate more of his nearly-liquid ice cream as he pondered this. "We could protect you," he said.

Seishirou raised his eyebrows at the choice of words. "Who is 'we'?" he asked dubiously.

"The Dragons of Heaven, of course."

Seishirou's laugh was harsh. "Honestly, Subaru-kun, why would -they- protect me?" The mere idea was ludicrous.

"Because, firstly," Subaru began to tick off reasons on his fingers, "you've sworn not to fight, secondly, you've shown that you aren't as heartless or emotionless as we all thought, and lastly, I love you, and at least some of my feelings are returned."

Seishirou shook his head. "They have no reason to trust me," he protested.

Subaru sighed, and set his spoon down in his now-empty cup. "You're right: they don't. You have to -earn- their trust. In the meantime, they'll protect you for my sake. I know at least Kamui is aware of how much you mean to me."

Seishirou mulled this over, and silently was forced to agree that Subaru's logic was good.

"I really don't know why..." Subaru's voice had changed to be softer and full of a wistful melancholy. Seishirou's head snapped up to look at him, startled by the switch in tone. "They all seem to care about me so much, but I don't know why. I'm so selfish. They all worry about me, but all I think about is myself..." Subaru's green eyes were downcast and cloudy.

"No!" Seishirou found himself protesting. Subaru looked up, startled. "You are very kind, Subaru-kun," he said firmly. "-Very- kind."

He stared at the dark onmyouji in confusion and surprise. "Why should you, of all people, say that?" he asked. "Back at the Bridge, I didn't even think of what you wanted! All I thought of was myself."

Seishirou didn't really understand the reason (if there was one) behind the Sumeragi's mood swing. But he did understand that he needed comforting (an alien concept to Seishirou. Or, at least, heartfelt comforting was). But he owed it to Subaru to at least try.

"Subaru-kun," he began, "my wish is to see you happy." \*At least, I'm pretty sure it is,\* he thought. "I had thought that you wished to kill me. Now that I know for certain otherwise..." he shrugged. "Subaru-kun, you are not selfish. A little self-centered maybe, but you have every right to be. You are the kindest person I know. That is why so many people care about you."

Subaru stared at him in wonder. "Seishirou-san..."

Seishirou looked down and finished the last of his ice cream, his face betraying nothing. It made him extremely uncomfortable to know that the words he had just heard had come out of his own mouth. He felt it was incredibly uncharacteristic of him.

What was it about Subaru that made him act like this? It was unnerving. What were those...emotions...that he felt again? An ache, he had told the younger man.

And something else. Something else he could not identify. \*Of course I can't identify it,\* he thought testily. \*I've never -felt- emotions before. How would I be able to identify what is obviously a complex one?\*" Seishirou would just let it go for now. Maybe in time it would become clear to him. He was, if anything, a very patient man.

He looked back up to find Subaru still watching him. They stared at each other, the silence between them becoming more uncomfortable as the time grew.

"Our ice cream is finished," Seishirou observed after some time.

"Mmm." Subaru pushed his cup around the table with his spoon. "I suppose we should go home, then," he said after a few more moments.

Seishirou stiffened, a barely perceptible reaction. "Your home?"

Subaru nodded. "With the others."

A pause. Then: "I thought you lived alone, in an apartment."

Subaru nodded. "I did. I only moved in with some of the other Seals very recently. Kamui kept asking me to."

Seishirou frowned as yet another tiny emotion surfaced. It felt a little like the ache, only tighter and harsher. After a moment's thought, and perusing through the memory of what he knew of emotions from observation and reading, he identified it as jealousy.

Why on earth would he be feeling jealousy? How confusing.

Seishirou kicked himself mentally, and ordered his brain to return to functioning as normal. Predictably, it didn't listen. He forced himself to concentrate on the conversation.

"That means that explanations will be in order," he concluded.

Subaru nodded, and rubbed his temples in anticipation of the headache soon to come. "Unfortunately." Then a thought seemed to strike him, and he looked up intently at the older man. "Seishirou...I'm being selfish again. I haven't even asked if you want to come with me." There was an apologetic look in the green eyes.

Seishirou blinked, and then thought for a moment. He nodded. "Yes, I want to go with you." He shrugged. "After all, where else can I go?"

Subaru smiled slightly and rose to gather their empty ice cream cups. Seishirou watched him as he disposed of them. The younger man was truly graceful, and quite beautiful. Seishirou had never denied this; he appreciated beautiful things.

But it seemed now that Subaru was more than just a thing.

Subaru took hold of Seishirou's hand once more, and, ignoring the stares they received from the other customers in the shop, left.

Neither of them had money for a taxi, nor did they feel like taking one if they had. They wound up arriving at Subaru's residence in the trademark style of Seals and Angels; landing gracefully from the air onto the sidewalk in front of the apartment.

"I hope I've caught them before they've left," Subaru muttered. At Seishirou's raised eyebrow, he explained. "Our yumemi predicted that another kekkai was due to fall today, so most of them are going to protect that. I was the only one left to protect Rainbow Bridge, but I went earlier than planned today."

Seishirou frowned slightly. "Subaru...you said that your yumemi told you about my Wish?" He had forgotten to ask about that earlier.

Subaru turned around. Apparently he, too, had forgotten. "No, actually. I went to see our yumemi, but when she took me into her Dreamscape, your yumemi interrupted."

Seishirou blinked, visibly surprised. "Kakyou?" he asked.

Subaru nodded.

Seishirou stood silent in thought. \*Now why would Kakyou do such a thing?\* he thought curiously.

"Apparently he wanted to make certain that Hokuto-chan's last spell wasn't wasted," Subaru explained, sensing the other man's confusion.

Seishirou blinked again. "Kakyou knew Hokuto-chan?"

Subaru nodded. "Apparently he loved her." Subaru said this without emotion, carefully keeping any resentment he still had left against Seishirou concealed.

The Sakurazukamori's eyes widened slightly in realization. \*So she is Kakyou's "special person". That is why he wants to die\* He frowned, wondering if he should feel regret or not...wondering if indeed he did feel regret, and just hadn't recognized it yet. \*Emotions are too confusing. My life was much simpler without them\* Seishirou thought, annoyed.

"You should probably wait out here," Subaru told Seishirou. "They might try to kill you on sight, otherwise."

Seishirou raised an eyebrow. "You think so? Even if you're with me?"

Subaru paused. "Hmm..." The younger man pondered whether or not to risk it. Then again, he doubted if other Seals would attack in such a location unless provoked first by the Sakurazukamori. He motioned for the other man to walk with him. Seishirou complied, after replacing his sunglasses on his nose, and followed a step behind Subaru as he opened the door and strode inside.

"Tadaima!" he called. Seishirou instinctually took survey of the room. A young man he knew from talking to Yuuto to be Sorata sat on a couch in the living room. A cheerful-looking girl walked out of the kitchen holding a tray of tea, while being followed by a spirit-dog. She was accompanied by a more somber girl with long ebony hair. Kamui was nowhere to be seen...at the moment.

Any greetings they had on their lips died as soon as they spotted Seishirou. All three recognized him instantly by his aura. He had, after all, attacked them once before at the Diet building, and he remembered Sorata and the somber girl watching him fight Subaru at their first meeting, before the Dark Kamui had awoken.

Their reaction was instantaneous. The spirit dog stepped in front of the cheerful girl, growling menacingly. Sorata leapt to his feet, tense and ready to spring. The other girl extended her hand, which glowed brightly for a moment before a katana shot out from her palm. A very tense silence followed.

"It's all right," Subaru assured them hastily. "Seishirou-san has no intentions of harm."

Sorata's eyes narrowed. "Sakurazukamori," he confirmed, studying Seishirou calculatingly. He looked at Subaru. "How do you know?" He frowned. "And why are you protecting him? I thought you hated him."

The somber girl drew her katana in front of herself. "What is he doing here?" she asked Subaru.

"Arashi, Sorata, it's okay, really," Subaru said again. They waited for an explanation, never letting their guard down once. Seishirou merely watched passively from behind his dark glasses.

"Where's Kamui?" Subaru asked first. "He should hear this too."

"I'm right here," a voice came from upstairs. Seishirou heard footsteps coming down the stairs, and the slight figure of the leader of the Dragons of Heaven appeared. Violet eyes widened in surprise when they rested on Seishirou. There was another moment of silence. Then: "Subaru? What is he doing here?"

"You'd better sit down. All of you."

Kamui blinked, and Arashi's eyes narrowed suspiciously at Seishirou. However, the four cautiously did as Subaru asked.

"You all know I've been looking for the Sakurazukamori."

Sorata and Kamui nodded. "For nine years," Kamui added, his violet eyes darting back and forth between the two onmyoujis.

Subaru nodded. "You've probably all thought, except maybe you, Kamui, that my intentions were to kill Seishirou-san."

The Seals waited.

Subaru took a deep breath. "Actually my Wish was to be killed by him." He winced, waiting for the inevitable reaction.

There was a pregnant pause in which the Seals stared incredulously at Subaru. Then they all began shouting at once.

"Subaru! Are you mad?!" Sorata protested. "You can't throw your life away like that!"

Arashi's face showed shock. "Why would you want that, Subaru?" she asked.

Yuzuriha looked hurt. "You promised me that you'd call on Inuki and me for help if you were in danger! You simply can't go off and let yourself die after that!"

Kamui was the only one who remained silent, choosing merely to look at Subaru. It was obvious that he hadn't known of Subaru's Wish...but for some reason the boy wasn't as surprised as the others. Perhaps it was because he empathized with Subaru's pain. Seishirou knew that before the Dark Kamui had awoken, he had been one of the Light Kamui's closest friends.

Subaru raised his hands. "Wait a second!" he called loudly over their protests. "I'm still quite alive, if

you've noticed!"

That shut them up.

"Now, let me explain here," Subaru continued in a normal tone of voice. "Late last night I went to see Hinoto-hime. She took me into her Dreamscape, but the yumemi for the Dragons of Earth interrupted." He looked at Kamui and addressed him. "I believe that has happened to you before, Kamui."

The violet-eyed boy nodded. "Kakyou." He spoke the name of the dreamseer.

Subaru nodded. "Apparently Kakyou was in love with my sister, Hokuto, and he wanted to honor her last spell by giving me some...information." The onmyouji paused to collect his thoughts.

Seishirou watched. The other Dragons of Heaven continued to eye him, just in case he decided to make a sudden move. The dark onmyouji kept his hands loosely at his sides and in plain sight.

"Kakyou told me of my sister's last spell, and of Seishirou's Wish." He looked back at Seishirou briefly before continuing. "His Wish, it turned out, was to die by my hands."

Four pairs of eyes blinked at the dark onmyouji. "Why?" Arashi asked.

Seishirou took it upon himself to answer. "I Wished for Subaru to be happy, and I thought that he Wished to kill me." He shrugged.

"Hokuto's last spell was one intended to keep both of us from dying," Subaru explained. "She knew that I could never kill Seishirou of my own accord, but she didn't trust Seishirou-san."

"Smart girl," Sorata muttered beneath his breath.

Subaru didn't seem to have heard the remark. "So, she cast a spell on Seishirou, dictating that if he ever tried to kill me in the way he had killed her, the act would rebound on him instead."

Kamui blinked, and made the connection. "He intended to use you as the suicide weapon," he stated flatly.

Subaru winced slightly. "Thank you, Kamui, for your delicate phrasing," he said, slightly annoyed. "Yes. Kakyou had Seen this, and fortunately told me beforehand. So, I went to Rainbow Bridge early on, and stopped him."

Four pairs of eyes blinked slowly. "And?" Kamui asked.

"And I told him that I love him, which I do," Subaru concluded. Widening eyes greeting this statement. "Once I made it clear that I do not want to kill him, and once I had convinced him of how much he means to me, Seishirou admitted that he doesn't want to kill me either."

"You have no idea how confusing that is, either," Seishirou muttered.

"Oh, you'll live." Subaru elbowed him. Seishirou blinked at him from behind his glasses, eyebrows raised. "Anyway, the bottom line is that he has agreed to stay out of the battle from now on. In his own words: if he fought any of you, he would be inadvertently hurting me."

"Quite unacceptable," Seishirou stated firmly.

"Okaaaay..." Sorata still looked dubious.

"The problem is that Fuuma is going to be out for his blood once he hears." At this point Subaru was beginning to look nervous. "And...er...I was hoping that we could all, um..."

"Keep him safe for you?" Kamui finished for him, a wry expression on his face.

Subaru nodded.

There was silence in the room for several very long moments.

"I don't trust him." Sorata's voice was flat. "Not one bit."

Seishirou sighed a little. "I don't expect you to," he told them. "All we are asking is for you to make sure Fuuma or any of the other Angels doesn't kill me off."

"For my sake," Subaru added softly. "Please..." His cheeks reddened slightly. Seishirou knew that Subaru felt it presumptuous to be asking this of them. "I know this is a huge favor to ask of you...but I trust him."

Arashi's eyes narrowed slightly. "But you love him. Of course you trust him."

Subaru bit his lip, a twinge of panic beginning to surface in his green eyes.

"I will trust him," Kamui spoke up suddenly. "For Subaru's sake. I..." he paused, violet eyes downcast. "I know what it is like to have faith in something that seems hopeless." Everyone in the room knew he was talking about his Wish to get Fuuma back. "I haven't given up. I never will give up, and I haven't been given a shred of hope." The eyes raised. "But Subaru has, and it's more than a shred. I see no reason to deny him."

Subaru's eyes blazed with gratitude, and he looked hopefully at the rest of the Seals.

Yuzuriha tilted her head curiously. She studied Seishirou. "Inuki?" she called quietly. The dog whined slightly and trotted cautiously over to the dark onmyouji. Seishirou blinked, and knelt down to the spirit's level. Slowly he held out a hand. He was aware of the eyes that watched both him and the dog intently. Inuki sniffed him, whined, and backed up a step. Then, very slowly, the creature's tail began to wag. His hackles settled, and he relaxed before trotting back to the girl. Yuzuriha clapped her hands together and beamed. "Inuki likes him!" she proclaimed. "So I trust him too!"

Arashi sighed and nodded as well. Sorata followed suit, albeit grudgingly.



Subaru's shoulders slumped with relief, and he smiled broadly. "Thank you!" Seishirou also managed a small genuine smile.

Sorata looked at Seishirou. "Where will you be staying?" he asked unexpectedly.

The onmyouji blinked in confusion, though Sorata couldn't see due to the shades. "I have an apartment," he began.

Sorata snorted. "As if that's safe anymore. Look, we promised to keep you alive. I don't have to like it, but I keep my promises. You'll stay here with us." He leaned back and crossed his arms, pointedly giving him a look that plainly said: 'Go on. Refuse. I dare you.'

Seishirou stared and opened his mouth to protest more. He was cut off by a sharp elbow digging into his lower ribs. He shot a look at Subaru.

"Don't you dare argue, Seishirou-san," Subaru told him coolly. "I've gone through too much to have you die by your own stubbornness and stupidity.

Seishirou flushed, but remained silent. Subaru continued to watch him. The younger man frowned. "And for Kami-sama's sake, take those sunglasses off." He reached up and pulled them off before Seishirou could stop him.

The dark onmyouji's eyes widened with surprise in spite of himself. "Subaru-kun..." Seishirou felt exposed without his glasses and in front of people he barely knew.

Subaru ignored him. "We do have an extra room," he noted. "Seishirou could move in there. That is, if no one else minds."

They all shook their heads. "It's fine with us," Arashi said. "You'll want to bring some of your belongings with you, of course." She fixed Seishirou with a cool gaze.

"I don't have many possessions," he said.

Yuzuriha jumped up. "Well, before you do that, we all have to have some tea, and you can tell us more about yourself, Seishirou-san!" she chirped. "Come on everyone! It'll get cold!" She beamed and bounced genkily over to the table, and began to pour out tea.

Subaru smiled, but the older man thought he could detect a hint of wicked glee in his eyes. He stared suspiciously at the Sumeragi, who merely beamed right back at him. His expression reminded Seishirou unnervingly of Hokuto. "Yes, Seishirou, it'll be good for you! Now don't make me drag you over. It's undignified."

Seishirou suppressed a groan. He was pulled reluctantly by Subaru towards the table. It was still only morning, and he already had a headache.

\*This is going to be a very long day\*

~\*~\*~\*~\*

Well, there's chapter two for you! Longer than I had thought it would be, that's for certain. And, wonder of wonders, I actually have an idea of what I'm going to write for chapter three. Amazing, isn't it? ^\_^ Well, please, please -please- do leave or send me some comments. I LOVE constructive criticism, no matter how harsh (just don't flame: it's quite senseless, and it only serves to hurt my feelings). And, if you have praise...I need it. ^^ Thanks for reading!

Would you like to submit a review?

### 3 - Threats from Kamui

Author's Note: Well, here's chapter three! Enjoy it while you have it,. Classes started today, and I already have a splitting headache from the single class I've had so far. And -that- class was one of the more -promising- classes. UG. I'll get up chapters when I can, but with another fanfic to wrap up beside this, AND the copious amounts of lovely homework I'll be doing...don't hold your breath, okay?

Disclaimer:

Feye: Kamui! You have the will of God, right?

Kamui: ...maybe...\*wary stare\*

Feye: \*beams\* Then you can give me the rights to X/1999!!!

Kamui: Uhhhh...\*nervous shifting\*

Feye: Awww, c'mon! I'll have Fuuma like you again and bring Seishirou back to life!

Subaru and Seishirou: COOL!

Fuuma: ...but I -like- being the dark Kamui! \*pouts\*

Kamui: But...aren't I cute?

Fuuma: Yes, but I'm sadistic and I like torturing you. It makes you look even more cute.

Kamui: O\_O;; Okay, Feye. You got a deal.

CLAMP: HEM. And we can make all of you drop dead. \*sweet smile\*

Kamui: ...never mind.

Feye: \*sighs\* Oh well. It was worth a try. There you have it, folks. I don't own X/1999.

Seishirou: And I'm still dead.

Feye: Not in -this- fanfiction! ONWARD!

RULES OF THE GAME: PART THREE by Feye Morgan

Kakyou smiled in his Dreamscape of void and floating spheres as he watched the scene on the bridge unfold.

::So you succeeded, I see::

The blonde yumemi turned. Another yumemi was sitting inside one of Kakyou's spheres, her lovely face framed by long white hair. Blind eyes watched him intently.

"Hinoto," he greeted. "You are still trapped?" It was more of a statement of fact than a question. Nevertheless, she nodded in reply.

::Yes. The darkness in me still has control. I am imprisoned within myself, while she tries to destroy the Seals.::

The yumemi for the Dragons of Heaven had visited Kakyou in his Dreamscape shortly after her bodyguard, Daisuke, had been killed by the Dark Kamui. Her "darkness", as she called her evil side, had taken advantage of her weakened state, and prevailed over their mental battle at last. The "good Hinoto" had been locked away, doomed to See and never to act.

At least, that had been the Evil Hinoto's plan. When she sent her good side into exile, Kakyou had intervened and tied a psychic link link to her. She had accepted it readily.

"She tries, but she does not reckon with me," Kakyou said. "Though you are still bound, your visions can reach me, and I can act upon them."

Hinoto nodded, smiling slightly. She tilted her head. ::Kakyou?:: she asked, a thought striking her. ::You are a Dragon of Earth, one who wishes for the destruction of humanity.::

Kakyou smiled slightly, but it was not a smile of happiness. "Partly true. I am a Dragon of Earth, but it is my indifference to life that has made me so. Kusanagi does not wish for the death of the human race. He wishes for the preservation and health of the earth."

::But you cannot have one without the other::

Kakyou smiled again, this time wistfully. "I would like to believe the words of that girl who possessed the talent for Dreamseeing."

A vision rose up, replaying a scene from Kakyou's Dreamscapes. A blonde girl rose up to sprout beautiful white wings, and feathers filled the air with holy purity.

"...And also, that the future has yet to be determined..." The girl sighed and dispersed into shards of brilliant light as the vision ended.

Hinoto's blind eyes closed. ::I, too, would like to believe::

"That is why you are here," Kakyou finished for her.

::To alter that future we both have seen...::

"...And had thought was unalterable." Kakyou remembered his special person. She, too, had once given

him much the same message as the young girl had.

::I wonder...:: Hinoto began, a thoughtful expression on her serene face.

Kakyou's eyes widened slightly, and then narrowed with amusement. "...If perhaps that girl Saw even father than we did..."

::...If she went beyond us, and we were merely a variable in her Dream...::

The yumemis looked at one another.

"The events at Rainbow Bridge were altered from what we had Seen."

::We altered them. I gave you the vision and distracted my darkness::

"And I gave the message to the Sumeragi."

They both turned their heads to gaze into a sphere as mist coalesced inside of it. They watched as Subaru and Seishirou took their seats inside a small ice cream shoppe.

::The Sakurazukamori begins to understand::

"The understanding will be long in the coming."

But both smiled as they watched the scene inside the sphere unfold. The future unfolded into branches of possibilities, and possibilities unfolded into infinity. The yumemi's eyes brightened as one scene in particular took the forefront and played out an unexpected turn of events.

::Shall we try to push this future to reality?:: Hinoto placed a slender finger to her upturned lips thoughtfully.

Kakyou's golden eyes held a spark of life that they had not borne in a long time. "Yes, we shall," he answered distantly. "We shall."

\*You'll smile, Hokuto-chan,\* he thought. \*I promise.\*

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

Seishirou began to seriously ponder the possibility that Hokuto had possessed Yuzuriha's body.

"I -love- animals SO much, which is probably why I have Inuki, he's a spirit dog you know. Oh of -course- you would know, you're an onmyouji! You know, until I came to Tokyo I didn't know -anyone- who could see Inuki, aside from my obaasan, and I was -so- happy when Kusanagi-- I mean, when I met the other Seals and -everyone- I stay around can see him! Subaru-san told me you used to be a veterinarian! Do you like animals too?"

The tirade stopped, and Yuzuriha looked expectantly at Seishirou, eyes bright and curious.

Seishirou stared, and tried to pull his expression into a semblance of composure. He thought back to the year he had spent with Hokuto, enduring her own formidable rants. The only problem was that back then, it had been permissible to look blown away. He had, after all, been pretending to have emotions. Only, now that he actually -had- them, he wasn't sure how to conceal them. Not when every word that came out of the girl's mouth reminded him of a bouncy Sumeragi twin. \*I wonder if Subaru thinks the same thing...\* he thought suddenly. \*Does he still hate me for what I did? He never did say if he forgave me or not\*

He would have to ask Subaru about it later.

"Seishirou? You're staring."

The dark onmyouji glanced over at the object of his thoughts. Subaru was smirking amusedly. The older man blinked at him before schooling his features into a calm mask. He bit back the sudden urge to snap: 'I was -not-.' Instead he smiled. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said smoothly. He turned back to Yuzuriha. "Yes, I used to be a veterinarian," he replied. "I still have my license, in fact, though I haven't practiced for years. My mother insisted that I try attending a college of some sort, and that field seemed the most interesting."

Sorata and Arashi blinked. It seemed as if they hadn't thought of or expected Seishirou to have had a mother. Certainly, he had to have...but none of them had ever thought about it.

"What was your mother like?" Arashi asked cautiously. She paused. "If it's not too personal of a matter, that is," she added.

Seishirou shrugged and took a sip of his tea. He set the cup back on its plate, and stared down into it while he answered. "My mother was the Sakurazukamori, a master assassin," he said, describing her completely in that one sentence. "She raised me to be just like herself, and succeeded rather well, I think."

A thick silence followed for the next few moments, before being shattered by Subaru's calm voice.

"She failed miserably."

Seishirou looked at him. "And what makes you say that, Subaru-kun?"

Subaru smiled at him. "We both know you have emotions."

"Whoever said that my mother didn't?" he asked, trying to appear amused, when in fact he was almost disturbed.

"Your mother would never have made the bet that you made with me."

Seishirou didn't have an answer to that one. Nor was he prepared for Subaru to continue.

"Nor would she have lost."

It took an enormous amount of will for Seishirou to keep himself from sputtering. Instead, he stared at the younger man with a surprised and mildly offended look. He opened his mouth--

"And don't you even -think- of denying that you lost, Seishirou-san." Subaru was grinning by now.

Seishirou blinked, and maintained composure. "Do you intend on robbing me of every semblance of dignity I have left?"

Subaru smiled cheerfully and sipped his tea. "No. I never rob."

The dark onmyouji waited.

"Rob is too harsh of a word, really. I mean, whatever would Hokuto-chan think? I prefer 'relieve you of the burden' much better, thank you."

Seishirou stared a moment longer and then looked back down at his tea.

Around the table, the other Seals were having various reactions to this odd exchange. Kamui was trying hard not to snicker, as he knew Subaru better than any of the other Seals. The young Dragon was delighted to see a bright spark of life lighting up those emerald eyes that had been so very empty before. Sorata and Arashi were watching Seishirou intently, obviously confused by and still suspicious of his behavior. Yuzuriha was beaming. She seemed to be the only one outside of the conversation who was fully enjoying it.

Seishirou felt all of these reactions, and was distinctly disconcerted by them. He changed the subject neatly, keeping his voice steady and emotionless. "You know, now would be a good time for me to deal with my old apartment," he commented. "The sooner, the better--"

Seishirou was cut off by a snort of laughter from Subaru. The elder man look at him, mild annoyance crossing his features. Subaru looked back at him. The corners of his mouth twitched.

"Amused by something, Subaru-kun?" he asked, completely stoic once more.

This only snapped the onmyouji's self control. Laughter bubbled from his throat in torrents. "You're flustered!" he gasped at last.

Seishirou raised an eyebrow. "I am -never- 'flustered'."

The younger man continued to laugh. "Oh yes...you are!" he gasped between laughs. "You have...emotions now...and you don't know...what to make of them!"

Seishirou gave up and simply glared at the Sumeragi until he had resided to snickers. "Are you quite finished?" he asked coolly.

Subaru suppressed his laughter and smiled at Seishirou. The younger man's cheeks were flushed from lack of oxygen, and his bright green eyes sparkled. Seishirou was suddenly and strongly reminded of the

innocent sixteen-year old from nine years ago. He shook the picture from his mind. Subaru was no longer innocent. Seishirou had caused him too much pain.

And once again, the Sakurazukamori felt a twinge of...something...at that thought. As if he wished he had not hurt Subaru at the end of the bet. \*Regret,\* he concluded. \*I am feeling regret.\*

"I don't know," Subaru replied, bringing the dark onmyouji out of his thoughts. "Teasing you is fun."

Seishirou sighed. "Subaru-kun...there are people here. -Other- people." He stared pointedly at the smiling Sumeragi. He ignored Kamui's stifled snicker.

"So?"

Seishirou truly gave up this time. He couldn't handle all of this at once. He finished the last little bit of tea in his cup and set it back in the saucer with an audible clink. "Thank you for the tea," he told the other Seals. "I really must be attending to my apartment." He rose up to his knees before Subaru placed a hand on his arm.

"I'll help," Subaru offered.

Seishirou shook his head. "I can get it on my own, Subaru-kun."

"No, you don't, Sakurazuka-san," Sorata said. "At least one of us is going with you, and I'm sure you would rather it be Sumeragi-san than anyone else here."

Seishirou stared. "I assure you that I am more than capable of protecting myself for a couple of hours."

Sorata gave the onmyouji a glare.

"Against Fuuma?" Kamui asked, his tone deceptively light. "I'm not even a match for him yet, and I'm "Kamui". He also has a habit of showing up unexpectedly, when you least want him to. I suggest you bring Subaru-san with you." Kamui was smiling, but his violet eyes were hard.

Seishirou blinked. He looked from Kamui to Subaru, and back.

"Seishirou," Subaru began. The elder man looked back at Subaru once more. His light-hearted manner was now replaced with cool logic. "I've gone through hell because of you. Now that I finally have you beginning to understand, I will -not- lose you." Subaru's green eyes were icy with determination, and Seishirou thought he could see some of the long-burdened sorrow well up within them.

He nodded at the younger onmyouji. "Fine, then."

Kamui tilted his head thoughtfully. "You might need reinforcements, actually. Fuuma doesn't always travel alone." Kamui was thinking of the day Subaru lost his eye; Fuuma had been accompanied by Nataka then.

Subaru spent a moment in thought. "But don't you need strength in numbers to protect the kekkai



Hinoto-hime predicted would fall today?"

"We can call Karen-san and Aoki-san to help us," Arashi said. "They won't mind."

Subaru nodded slowly. "Who will be going with us, then?" he asked, looking at his comrades.

"I'll go!" Yuzuriha waved her hand exuberantly. "I'm stronger than I look, and Inuki and I can help Sakurazuka-san carry his belongings too!" She beamed.

Kamui smiled. "Well, that's settled, then!" He looked at Seishirou expectantly.

Seishirou suppressed a groan. He had hoped to get some time to himself. His head was spinning faster than he could ever remember. In a few short hours, he had gone from expecting to die to appease the hatred of someone he had found he actually cared for, to being hit with the confession that that someone actually -loved- him, -and- knew about Seishirou's Wish. And, on top of that, he was being practically forced to move in with his former enemies.

\*A very confusing day overall indeed,\* he thought as he stood to his feet, accompanied by Subaru and Yuzuriha.

Although, he wasn't particularly complaining about the turn of events. In fact, he found he rather liked them. At least, those concerning Subaru. He still was leery of living with people who he was certain hated him.

"We should be back before you are," Subaru told the other Seals. "So do you want us to join you at the kekkai?"

Kamui considered briefly. "No," he shook his head. "Yuzuriha, you can come if you like, but Subaru-san, you'd better stick with Seishirou-san."

Subaru nodded. He turned to Seishirou and smiled. "Lead the way."

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

The Dreaming Princess shook with fury. On the surface, she appeared calm and composed with just the right touch of sadness gracing her features.

She seethed.

\*How -dare- they\* she thought to herself. Images of the Dreamseer of Earth and of the reflection she had locked away rose into her mind. She focused on them with hatred. \*How -dare- they break my plans\*

She fell into her Dreamscape, and watched as a vision rose in the rippling water beneath her.

The thirteenth Sakurazukamori was eating ice cream with the thirteenth head of the Sumeragi Clan. The former was staring contemplatively at the latter, who, in turn, was smiling warmly.

The two showed no signs of wanting to kill or be killed by the other.

The dark Hinoto glared balefully at the two figures for a moment longer before banishing the vision and the Dreamscape away.

\*I would have thought the Dreamseer of Earth to have aided me, instead of allying with my reflection. And now Rainbow Bridge still stands, and both Dragons live.\*

Hinoto brooded in darkness.

\*Kamui and the Seals!\* she thought suddenly. \*They will want an explanation when they find that no kekkai will fall today...\* Her brow creased marginally with thought. \*I will just tell them that my Dreams were misled by the other yumemi. The Sumeragi can vouch for this...Kakyou broke in to speak with him.\*

She froze.

\*But what else did he tell him? What else might the onmyouji suspect?\*

Her blind eyes darkened. The Sakurazukamori and the Sumeragi Clan Head must both be eliminated. They were an even greater threat now.

"Hinoto-hime?" The voice of Sohi and Hein stole her attention. "Are you all right?" They were concerned, completely devoted to her. Thank goodness that that fact made them as blind as she herself.

::Yes, I am fine. Thank you:: she reassured them.

\*Yes, I will be fine. I will find a way to destroy them\*

She smiled.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

"You weren't joking when you said you didn't have many belongings, Seishirou-san," Subaru commented. "Your apartment looked bare even before we packed up what you wanted."

Seishirou shrugged. "I never had much of a need for personal amenities."

It was true; Seishirou's apartment was quite sterile. He owned some furniture: a tea-table, a couple cushions, the necessary kitchen utilities for cooking, a television (most likely for keeping up with the news), and a couch. The dark onmyouji bypassed all of this and had headed straight for his bedroom, where apparently he kept all of his more personal belongings.

That room, at least, had held some warmth in it. One look around told the even the most casual viewer that Seishirou loved to read. Two bookshelves held veterinary journals, volumes of stories of all kinds, history texts and historical fiction and non fiction. There were even some books covering onmyouji, both

dark and light. Subaru had raised his eyebrow at that. Apparently he hadn't thought that Seishirou needed books on that subject. After all, he was the "leader" of dark onmyouji.

Seishirou had quickly filled a medium-sized box with his favourite books, assuring the others that he would be carrying it. One book alone may not weigh much, but a stack of them together accumulates weight very quickly. The extra space on the shelves allowed him to clear off the books that had somehow migrated onto his writing desk and his futon.

In another smaller box, he had packed a little lamp, some writing paper and utensils, a calendar, an alarm clock, and a small photo album. He had avoided Subaru's curious stare. The last box housed his necessary clothing.

"So, is that all, Seishirou-san?" Subaru asked. He had opted to carry the box of clothing, leaving Yuzuriha with the lightest one.

Seishirou thought. \*I have clothes, books, a calendar, and my photos.\* His eyes shot open wide. "I forgot one thing, Subaru-kun. I'll be right back," he said. \*It should still be in my desk drawer\*

Subaru gave him a puzzled look before the dark onmyouji disappeared into his bedroom. Seishirou walked over to his writing desk and pulled open one of the compartments. He smiled.

Inside was a framed photograph of Subaru, taken when he was sixteen, still full of vibrant enthusiasm for life. For the nine years that he had kept it, he never was able to discern why he held onto it. He dismissed it as a reminder of the bet that still needed closure. Now he knew better, of course.

Seishirou took the picture and turned to leave.

He froze.

"Going somewhere?" The Dark Kamui asked dryly.

The leader of the Dragons of Earth was leaning against the door, arms crossed, a smirk on his lips, and his posture disarmingly relaxed. The dangerous glint in his eyes warned Seishirou otherwise, however.

The Sakurazukamori's instincts prepared him for a possible battle. The Dark Kamui most likely knew that there were two Seals on the other side of the door, so he doubted the Angel would try anything. But...if he really wanted to kill Seishirou with one quick blow, he would succeed if Seishirou didn't keep on guard.

"I don't see how that is any of your concern," he answered calmly, making sure to hide himself in a mask of indifference.

The Dark Kamui smiled and took a step towards Seishirou. "Oh, but I think it is. I am the leader of the Chi no Ryu, and therefore it is very much my business if one of my Dragons decides to leave me."

"Who told you I was leaving?"

'Fuuma's' smile hardened. "Don't be coy, Seishirou. It hardly suits you."

They stood for a moment in silence, studying each other. Seishirou's fingers itched for a cigarette.

"What exactly did you come here to accomplish?" the dark onmyouji asked finally.

The Angel kept up his false smile. "Oh, just to warn you, that's all."

"Warn me?"

"I can't say I'm too happy with one of my best Dragons leaving, but if you're determined to stay out of the battle completely, then I suppose I can't force you otherwise." He took another step forward. "However, your closeness to the Sumeragi is troubling. And it looks as if you're moving in with him, too. I can't help but think that you might be intending to aid him and the other Seals."

Seishirou said nothing.

The Angel took in his silence, weighing it contemplatively.

"Seishirou-san?" Subaru's voice came through the door.

Seishirou cursed inwardly. He had been hoping that the Dark Kamui would leave quietly before the two Seals became worried.

"Fuuma" turned slightly to eye the door with an amused expression. "Well, well. It seems your little friends finally noticed how long you were taking." The Angel's voice was easily audible through the door.

Seishirou waited for the explosion.

"SEISHIROU-SAN!" The door flew open and Subaru burst in, white ofuda ready in his hands. He was followed by Yuzuriha and a growling Inuki. The Seals glared at the Dark Kamui.

"Leave Seishirou-san alone," Subaru hissed.

Seishirou smiled pleasantly. He knew the Angel was outnumbered and well aware of it. "If you don't mind," he joined in. "I have things to do."

Golden eyes flashed briefly with anger. The Dark Kamui composed himself. "Leave, if you like, Seishirou. But," and he smiled cheerfully, "if you intend on betraying me, I'll kill you."

Subaru growled, and raised his ofuda, but the Angel was already gone: out the window, which, Seishirou noticed now, had been open. The dark onmyouji sighed and turned to look back at Subaru and Yuzuriha.

"Well...that went better than I thought," Seishirou offered.

Subaru stared at him flatly. "Seishirou? Is this an attempt at humor?"

Seishirou blinked at him. "Actually, I was being serious."

The onmyouji gave a sigh of disgust and replaced his ofuda. "Let's go."

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

"You WHAT?!?" Kamui shouted.

Subaru's eyes closed briefly. "Kamui, calm down. Nothing happened."

Sorata eyed Seishirou. "See? I knew it was a good idea for someone to go with you."

Kamui was still staring expectantly at Subaru. "Something must have happened," he said. "Fuuma doesn't just drop by for tea and friendly chats anymore."

Seishirou sighed. "He pretty much told me that if I intended to stay completely out of the battle, that would be fine. But, if I was going to help any of you, he'd kill me."

Kamui blinked and thought this over. "Well that's not so bad," he said after a moment. "You don't intend on helping us."

Seishirou smiled grimly. "Define 'help'. I will not stand idly by if I see Subaru-kun in danger."

Another silence fell as those in the room sorted out what all of this meant.

"Well," Arashi spoke up. "This is what we had been provisioning for in the first place. It's not as if the situation has gotten any worse."

Sorata nodded. "This apartment is strongly warded as a refuge for the Seals. That, and with the fact that we're on CLAMP campus should guarantee Sakurazuka-san's safety here."

"Have you gotten your things set up?" Kamui inquired.

Seishirou nodded. "Thank you," he added, aiming his words at all of the Seals. "For letting me stay here." He felt...uncomfortable...at uttering those words, but he knew that it was the polite thing to say.

Various Seals nodded in acknowledgment.

"We'll be visiting Hinoto-hime tomorrow, Subaru-san," Kamui said after a moment's silence.

"Because there was no attack on the kekkai?" Subaru asked.

Kamui nodded. "I think she may still be having trouble with Kakyou-san, but we need to find out for sure."

"Will Seishirou-san be safe here alone?" Yuzuriha asked, sending a concerned glance at the onmyouji.

Sorata frowned. "I don't see why not. Then again, it might be wise not to take any chances."

Arashi spoke. "It would be a good idea to inform Hinoto-hime of the situation, if she doesn't already know. And Karen-san and Aoki-san should meet you in person, Sakurazuka-san."

Seishirou nodded. "All right." He stifled a yawn that came out of nowhere.

Subaru looked closely at him. "You look exhausted, Seishirou-san," he concluded after a couple seconds of study. Yuzuriha perked up and peered at him as well.

"Sumeragi-san is right," she agreed. The girl looked earnestly at him. "You should get some rest."

Seishirou looked startled at first. \*Am I tired?\* he asked himself. He performed a quick mental analysis. \*They're right. I -am- exhausted\* he realized with some surprise. The excitement of the day so far had taken its toll on Seishirou. He nodded to the two anxious faces. He managed a smile. "I'll take a nap then." he looked at Subaru. "Don't let me sleep too late, Subaru-kun."

Subaru just smiled back.

His room was on the first floor, right across the hallway from Subaru's. It was small, but Seishirou had no need for much space. An American-style bed, a desk, a bookshelf, and a closet were already in place before he had moved in. Seishirou's collection of books took up a modest two shelves. He considered maybe going back to his apartment later on at some point to bring more volumes over.

Seishirou had carefully placed the picture of Subaru on the desk (next to his alarm clock), facing away from the door. He wasn't sure if he wanted anyone to see it yet...although he knew it was time he had stopped hiding it in a drawer.

The tired onmyouji took off his black trenchcoat and folded it neatly over the desk chair. His tie came off as well. He'd learned long ago that it was unwise to sleep with those things around one's neck.

The bed was a bit too soft for his tastes, but as soon as his head touched the pillow, he no longer cared. He had just reached the boundaries of sleep when a knock sounded at the door. Seishirou frowned and bit back a groan. He forced himself to get up, hoping he didn't look as tired as he felt.

He opened the door to a pair of bright violet eyes. "Kamui?"

"May I speak with you for a moment, Seishirou-san?" he asked.

Seishirou paused, and nodded. He beckoned the young Dragon inside. "Would you like to sit?" he offered politely.

Kamui shook his head. "I'll be brief. It's about Subaru-san."

Seishirou blinked and gave the boy his full attention.

"I like Subaru-san very much. He's one of the few friends I have, and one I very much would hate to see get hurt."

He paused, and eyed Seishirou. The dark onmyouji noticed that the brightness in those violet orbs drew from determination and suspicion. Seishirou blinked again.

"Subaru-san professes to love you," Kamui continued. "I don't doubt him at all. I can see it in his eyes. But you," the eyes narrowed, "I am not so certain of."

Seishirou shrugged. "I am not familiar with emotions, so I honestly couldn't tell you what I feel for Subaru-kun. I know I feel something strong, but I cannot identify it."

Kamui watched him carefully, taking in every word and scrutinizing his face. Seishirou felt as if his defenses were being peeled away, slowly but inexorably, under the boy's gaze. It unnerved him.

"I just want you to know," Kamui told him, slowly and deliberately, "that if you harm him, I will make sure you die a very painful death."

Seishirou blinked again.

"Am I clear?"

A nod.

"Good. Now, have a nice nap." Suddenly the boy was all smiles again. He even patted the Sakurazukamori's arm before letting himself out of the room.

Seishirou remained standing motionless for several seconds after the Seal had left.

\*Wonderful. Now I have two Kamuis looking for my blood. All in one day, too. I really need this nap\*

Seishirou let himself collapse onto the bed, and willed himself to sleep as quickly as he was able.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

AN: Reviews are not only constructive, but I -really- need morale boosting right now. PLEASE, just a few seconds of your time is all. I love feedback, and school is being very painful to me. I'm sure all you other college sufferers can sympathize with me. ^^;;