

# **The Third Epic: Alternative Ending**

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Submitted: June 21, 2005  
Updated: October 18, 2006

*Just suppose...just suppose that there was a final intervention that may have changed the destinies of the key bearers.*

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**Chapter 1 - The Journey Home**

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# 1 - The Journey Home

## The Journey Home: KH Team Departs

The streets were now quiet in Traverse Town. In the period of time that they had been gone, The Dark Empire's hold on otherworlds had weakened. The Universal Alliance, gaining favor from many inhabitants of different realms, gladly joined the ranks and fought off the Imperial horde. As a result, many of the refugees had already departed for their worlds again. Sora's former allies had also departed, returning to their homes to reconstruct their destroyed worlds. Only a few remained now.

Sora's wounds were treated, with the help of a senzu bean, but despite that, his soul was still filled with a great sorrow. Riku's body was placed in a preservation capsule to prevent deterioration. The capsule itself had a clear top and Sora could gaze at his friend's peaceful face. He only sat there, in the tent where Riku's body was placed. Kairi comforted him as best she could, gently holding the saddened key bearer in her arms.

"I still can't believe that Riku's dead..." Sora uttered, tears running down his face. "I just can't believe it."

"I know." Kairi said, her still teary as well. "Riku was always good to us."

"But I couldn't do anything to help him. I felt so weak and helpless, not being able to help my friend. I could only comfort him as best I could, cradling him in my arms, holding him tightly to keep him warm. I could only watch as he slowly died. I could feel his body growing heavy in my arms, but still I held on to him, never letting go. Those final moments, I witnessed it all and I was the only one there to comfort him. But it was my fault for letting him die. It was all my fault!"-

"No! It wasn't your fault, Sora!" Kairi said. "Riku died knowing that you were there. You were the only comfort for him. You did something that I never was able to do. You stayed by his side till the end of his life. If I had the chance, I would do the same to him as I did to you, when you were facing possible death against Cavendish."

"Kairi..." Sora looked into her eyes.

"It's alright, Sora. Just cry your heart out. It'll be OK..."-

Sora placed his head on Kairi's bosom and began to cry uncontrollably. Tears ran down his face, soaking Kairi's shirt. But Kairi didn't care; she held Sora's tightly, stroking his fine, brown hair. Tears dripped down her face as she thought of those days when she, Sora, and Riku, as children, would spend the entire day together playing about on the sandy beaches and in the shady canopies of the Paopu trees.

At this time, Sneer had finally arrived at Traverse Town. He walked to where the tent was located. Just outside, Mickey, Donald, and Goofy were sitting just outside the tent. Standing next to them were Goten, Lu Xun, Cuchulain, Leon, and Yuffie. A fire upon an iron cauldron belled high flames, keeping them warm. Refugees still wandered about the town, what was left of them.

"Where is Sora?" Sneer asked, approaching the tent.

"They've been in the tent for over an hour." Goten replied.

"I have some news for him..."-

"I think he would rather be alone for a while." Lu Xun instructed.

"This is urgent though." Sneer walked into the tent and witnessed such a sorrowful sight.

"Sora..."

Sora gazed up and wiped the tears from his eyes.

"I'm truly sorry about Riku, Sora." Sneer implied. "This loss must be more than what you can bear."

"Riku's loss is the most devastating to me." Sora uttered. He turned away and gazed at Riku's lifeless body. "He sacrificed so much, even his own life, so that I may live. No one should have to be forced to take their own life."

"But he was trying to save someone who he really cared about. Riku died defending what was most important to him, Sora. His friends were the most important thing to him. Therefore, even when the situation became too intense and it seemed that death was inevitable, Riku took it upon himself to protect what he cherished most, even at the expense of his own life. You should be proud of him, Sora. Both you and Kairi should be proud."

"I...I am proud..." Sora's eyes were still teary, but now there was a smile on his face. "I loved him dearly. More than anyone ever knew. Just as I love Kairi. And for Kairi, I will do the same thing as Riku did if the time ever came."

"And I would do the same for Sora." Kairi added. "Just as Riku did for me and him."

"As long as you hold on to each other, then there will always be a reason to live." Sneer said. He turned away and said. "Now, it is time that you say farewell to your other friends as well."

"What do you mean?" Sora asked.

"You're going home." Sneer was about to exit out. "Thanks to the efforts of young heroes like you, we were able to fend off the Imperial threat and conceal them within our own realm once again. The Saiyan Confederation forces and the forces of the Universal Alliance managed to destroy all dimensional transport tunnels of the Empire. So once again, the worlds have been separated. I've already sent your summon spells away to return to their homes. Now it's high time that you return home."

"It's over for us then?"

"That it is."

"But what about Cavendish? He has the Mandate under his power right? What if he decides to open up the dimensional realms again? He can do that right?"

"It seemed that he had no weakness due to his grasp on the Mandate's power. However, we were able to find a weapon that could counter even the power of the Mandate. The essence that too originated from the Universal Mandate as well. The two Sacred Flames. They both have been apprehended by Goku and Vegeta. So now that the two greatest flames have been obtained, the odds against us have leveled down."

"That's good then, right?" Kairi asked.

"That's very good indeed." Sneer smiled and turned away again. "Well, you two should get ready. You and the rest of the KH team will depart from here and will soon be on your journey home."

"Home..." Sora uttered. "Yes...home..."

The two walked out of the tent, only to be greeted by Mickey and the others. "So this is where we take our separate ways again." Mickey uttered.

"Yeah..." Sora uttered. "We can finally go home and live in peace..."

"Yeah..."

"We're gonna miss you, Sora..." Goofy said.

"Yeah," Donald added, "We had so much fun together. And we went on many adventures."

"This is the end of our fellowship." Sora uttered.

"Sora," Cuchulain said. He, Goten, Lu Xun, Yuffie, and Leon walked up to him. The Hound stretched out his hand. "It's been a real pleasure standing with you. And an honor fighting alongside the KH team."

"Thank you, Cuchulain." Sora grasped his hand and engaged in a hardy handshake. Goten

came up next.

"We couldn't have done it without you, Sora." He said.

"Thanks Goten." Sora replied. Next came Lu Xun.

"You're a true warrior." He said.

"Thank you for your help, Lu Xun." Sora implied. As Lu Xun passed, Leon came next.

"It's good to fight beside you again." Leon chuckled. "You certainly came through for us. You sure gave them hell at Hollow Bastion."

"Thank you, Leon, for giving us the best support we needed." Sora said. Finally, it was Yuffie's turn. She gripped Sora's hand and smiled.

"See ya later, kiddo." She chuckled. "You make sure that you take care yourselves!"

"I will." Sora uttered. "Thanks Yuffie." The five went up and down, shaking hands with the other four members of the KH team. They waved good bye and headed out to the port in front of the town.

"Well, Sora..." Mickey uttered. "I guess this is good bye."

"Yeah..." Sora uttered.

"Good bye, Sora..." Goofy uttered. "Good bye, Kairi..."

"You two take care of yourselves." Donald added.

Sora looked at Donald and shook his hand.

"I'll miss you, Donald." Sora uttered. He then turned to Goofy. "I'll miss you too Goofy!" They shook hands.

"Gawrsh..." Goofy said. His eyes teary. "I wish we didn't have to say good bye."

"Don't worry. Good bye doesn't mean forever..."-

Sora then turned to Mickey.

"Good bye, Mickey..."-

"May you live your life to the fullest, Sora." Mickey implied.

"I will... I will..." Sora suddenly collapsed to his knees. Mickey grabbed hold of him, holding him tight. Sora began to cry uncontrollably again.

"Aw, Sora..." Kairi said. The group hugged each other, comforting the young key bearer.

"It'll be OK, Sora." Mickey said. "It'll be OK..."

Sora wiped his tears from his eyes and stood up.

"I will be strong..." he uttered. "I will live my life to the fullest. Just as I promised Riku."

"That's the spirit." Mickey, Donald, and Goofy, their eyes still full of tears, began to walk away.

"All you have to do is believe, Sora. And maybe one day, we will meet again."

Sora and Kairi waved as the trio made their way to the gummi ship. They watched as the three boarded the Kingdom and vanish out of sight. Kairi grasped at Sora's arm. Sora held hand and the two watched as the last of their friends vanished into the evening sky.

"You two get ready too." Sneer said, being the only familiar face amongst the remaining few individuals in the town. "We'll be leaving in fifteen minutes."

"Sneer," Sora implied. "Would it be alright if I just walked about the town before we depart for home?"

"What for?"-

"I would like to take in every detail of this town before I have to leave it forever. Many adventures occurred in this town and it shall forever be a part of my life..."-

"Very well..."-

"But Sora..." Kairi uttered.

"I'll be back." Sora said. "I just need some time to myself."

"Alright." Sora touched her face and then walked away from a temporary period of time. Kairi turned to Sneer.

“What will happen to this town?”-

“It will be just another town again.” Sneer explained. “It’ll be just another quiet town in the countryside with its annual fairs and carnivals. Peace will once again return to this quaint little settlement and threats from either Heartless, or Imperials, or any other force will never threaten it again.”

“I see...”-

Sora took his time, spending walking up and down the three main districts. He enjoyed the sound of crickets intermingling with the sound of quiet music in the air. The stars gleamed brightly in the evening sky and the street lamps illuminated the quaint little streets. Off in the distance, the sound of gatherings and parties could be heard. It was so quiet that Sora could even hear the patter of his own feet on the ground. He visited the back alleyway, the waterway, Merlin’s Island, the Inn, taking in every sight and smell, as his mind filled with the memories of events long passed. He remembered when he first came to this town and he, Donald, and Mickey fought off the power of the Heartless. He remembered that this was where the meetings took place and where he met all his friends. In the second district, there were still scars from when he and Cuchulain engaged in that trial battle a couple of weeks earlier.

A couple of weeks, it didn’t seem like very long time, but when this new ordeal had begun it seemed like an eternity. Now, here Sora stood, alive and well, witnessing the end of another adventure. However, in that period of time, there were some partings that had taken place. Sora’s heart filled with a great sorrow, which conflicted with his happiness. He touched the walls of the second district and with a final glance turned towards the gates, leading to the first district.

Just then, a figure appeared on the walkway above the central court. Sora looked up to find Lu Bu standing there.

“Lu Bu...” Sora uttered.

“Tell me, Sora,” Lu Bu said, “Are the rumors true. Did Riku really die?” Sora lowered his eyes. He then gazed back up at the warrior and hesitantly nodded his head.

“I’m afraid so...” Lu Bu only glared for a second, or two before turning his back. Sora then stopped him.

“Wait a minute! Now that Riku’s gone... are you planning to...?”

“Don’t waste your time, Sora! There’s no use worrying about what I would do. I’ve been hoping to settle the score since that little incident in the ‘Treasure Realm.’ However, it was a score I had to settle with your friend Riku, not you, or any of those other halfwits. It’s the only reason why I followed you around. To make sure that my opponent didn’t die prematurely, before I would ever get a chance to take a swing at him. However, I thought that Riku was too tough for anyone to take down, which is the reason why I turned my sights away from your struggles for a temporary period of time. But I guess I made too light of the situation and I was wrong. Now, Riku is dead and I will never have the opportunity to face him in battle again and settle the score. If you want to view this as a battle for endurance, to see who can outlast the other, then the winner is me, the one who survived. But such a victory to me is a hollow one. I will never again be able to test my true grit and strength against your friend. Then again, it was his fault for dying on me isn’t it. Riku allowing himself to die before we even had a chance to fight again? Such a disappointment now.”

“You’re wrong!!” Sora shouted. “That is... even if you’re right...!”-

“I suppose it’s no longer any of my business. This ordeal, however, is over for you. Go home, Sora. Take care of Kairi and yourself and be happy. Farewell forever...”-

Lu Bu tucked his pike under his arm and walked away. It would be the very last time that he and Sora would ever meet again.

Sora glanced down at his feet. He then took a deep breath and pulled his head back up. He walked through the gates of the second district, entering the first district and rejoined Kairi and Sneer.

"Sorry I'm late!" Sora shouted.

"It's about time." Sneer uttered. He erected a special ring and activated its energy. The gate to Destiny Island was once again open. "This portal will lead you to the secret place, Sora. I've relayed a message to your friends and family already. I told them everything."

"What about Riku?"-

"I told them about his tragic demise and they plan on throwing a memorial service in his honor." Sneer went to the preservation casket and activated an energy boost that allowed the coffin to hover in the air. He pushed it towards the gate. "Now all you have to do is push the casket and walk right through. Your friends and family should be meeting you there on the other side. I told them so to do."

"What will happen once we're through?"-

"Then, I will dismantle this gate so it can never be used again. As an effect, the door on your side will vanish entirely and your world will be separated from all other worlds forever."

"Is there a chance that I'll ever see any of my friends again?"-

"I don't know. Unless, the portals are rebuilt and opened again, there is no guarantee that of that. But perhaps maybe you will see them again. Oceansburg will maintain one of the portals. Perhaps one day, you will see your friends again."

"Sora..." Kairi uttered. "Let's go home..."

"Yeah..." Sora placed his arm around her. He then turned to Sneer. "Thank you for everything you've done for us." He stretched out his hand. The old frog smiled and shook hands.

"In reality, Sora," he uttered in that wise, old voice, "it should be me thanking you. You've gone beyond the call of duty. Take care and good luck."

Kairi and Sora glanced and smiled. Sneer stepped back and watched as the two moved through bright light of the portal. In an instant, the friends were finally home.

Not long after their arrival back on Destiny Island, the memorial service in honor of Riku was held. Even in the warm sun and the cool breeze, a great shadow of sorrow and sadness covered the island. Riku's body was cleaned and clothed. He was again placed in the same casket. Grand bouquets of flowers and farewell wreaths were set up around his burial. It had been decided to bury Riku in the place where he had always gone to organize his thoughts, upon the little island just off shore. Everyone came to pay their respects.

Through the service, Sora could only gaze at the lifeless face of his dearly departed friend. Kairi stood by his side, holding his hand. They looked on, tears in their eyes, as everyone else passed by. Tidus passed by, placing a rose in the casket. He then placed his hand on Sora's shoulder.

"I'm so sorry about Riku, Sora..." he uttered. "You know he was always there when we needed him..."-

"I know..." Sora uttered, patting his hand. Tidus smiled and walked away. Kairi tightened her grip on Sora's hand and nuzzled closer to him.

"It's so hard to believe that Riku is gone..." she said. "We were so close... And now, it feels as if there's a big hole in my heart..."

"But at least Riku is able to find peace at last..." Sora replied. Though tears still dripped down his face, he smiled. He reached into the casket and stroked the cold forehead of his friend.

"We have to bury him now." The leader of the burial detail implied. Sora could only gaze at Riku's still face.

"Just a little longer. Let me gaze at him for a little longer."

Sora and Kairi were given an extra ten minutes with Riku's body. However, for them, it only seemed a few seconds before the leader told them that it was time to bury him. Sora and Kairi took their last glance and began to walk away.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, there was a bright flash of light. Sora and the others were blinded by the intense illumination. From out of the portal of light, two familiar faces emerged. It was none other than Sneer and Goten.

"Sneer?" Sora uttered. "What... what are you doing here?"

"I just wanted to help you with something." Sneer replied. He then saw the burial detail about to lower Riku's body into the soil. "Well, it's a good thing that we arrived in time. Cease your activity, gentlemen, we are not through here yet."

"I have orders though." The leader replied.

"Your orders can wait! We haven't even paid our respects to Riku yet!" Sneer walked up to Sora.

"There is still hope for you yet?"

"What do you mean there is still hope for us yet?"-

"Tell me, Sora, would you like to see Riku alive again?"-

"What do you mean?"-

"What I mean is would you like to have another chance to take to your best friend again?"-

"Yes."-

"Do you want that more than anything?"-

"I would do anything for that one chance. I want to talk with Riku again, I want to see him sitting at his thinking spot, I would do anything to spar with him again."-

"Then, that is what you shall have."-

"What are you saying?" Sora's eyes filled with a sense of anxiousness. "Please tell me."

"What I mean is we will be able to revive Riku back to life."-

"You can do that?"-

"Yes, we can."-

"But how?"-

Sneer glanced at Goten. Goten came forward with an elongated box in his hands. He then opened the box and revealed seven orange spheres that glowed brightly with light. Upon the surface were a series of stars.

"What are these?" Sora asked.

"They are what will be able to revive Riku." Sneer replied. "These are dragon balls. They will be able to grant any two wishes you desire. However, we can only allow you to make one wish."

"Only one?"-

"Yes. If too many wishes are made, then the dark essence within the dragon balls will become unstable. And to have that unleashed into the universe is that last thing that we want. That is why we can only permit one. However, you should be honored that you are given this privilege. It was decided that because of your efforts to fight the Cavendish Shinobis and put an end to the Dark Empire's progress to spread its power to other worlds, you have earned the right to have one wish granted, but only one. After that, if the life of a loved one is lost, you will not have this same privilege again."-

"Well, one will be enough. If it's enough to bring back Riku, that's good enough for me."-

"Then, so be it. Goten, bring forth the dragon balls and deploy the shield to prevent them from scattering after the wish is made."-

"I gotcha!" Goten replied. He placed the dragon balls down and unleashed a dome-like shield around the area where the wish would be made. The dragon balls pulsed, glowing intensely.

"Look at that, Sora." Kaiji uttered. "They're so beautiful."

"Yes, they are." Sora replied.

"Goten," Sneer said, "do us the honor and summon Shenron!"

"I will." Goten stood before the dragon balls. "Shenron, I summon you forth to hear my request!"

Suddenly, the blue skies over Destiny Island began to grow dark. Then, as the dragon balls began to

glow permanently, a powerful force began to accumulate in the air. The winds picked up and blew hard into the faces of those surrounding the dragon balls. Suddenly, a grand pillar of light belled forth from the dragon balls and the form of a great serpent emerged.

"Is that...a dragon?" Sora uttered.

Shenron emerged from the light and his scaly body encircled all of Destiny Island. The inhabitants of Destiny Island were astounded, surprised, and even shocked at the sight of this remarkably large dragon.

"You see that?" Wakka said.

"I can't believe what I'm seeing." Selphie added.

"A...a dragon..." Tidus uttered.

Then in a big booming voice, Shenron began to speak.

"You who have summoned me," the dragon roared, "I will grant you any two wishes, which you so long desire!"

"OK, Sora," Goten said, placing his hand on Sora's shoulder, "It's up to you now to make the wish."

"Uh...OK..." Sora hesitated. He walked up to Shenron and gazed up at the great dragon.

"Speak!!" Shenron roared again.

"Shenron!" Sora shouted. His mind was filled with the memories of the people whom he had encountered during this venture and how many had suffered and died under the ruthlessness of the empire. He thought to himself that only wishing back Riku would be selfish and rather heartless. So, at the last minute, Sora changed his wish. "I wish for you to bring all those who were slain by the Empire, from the beginning of our venture to this very moment, back to life!"

"It shall be done!!"-

Just then, Shenron's eyes began to glow a bright red. Suddenly, Riku's casket began to glow. Sora and Kairi turned to see this sight.

"Is it happening?" Kairi uttered. "Is it really happening?"

"Go and see for yourselves." Sneer uttered. The two ran to the coffin and gazed at Riku. He was glowing in a bright blue light now. Sora could only watch as his friend's body began to illuminate brightly. The light eventually faded from Riku's body. Sora placed his hand on Riku's body. It was warm.

"Riku...?" he uttered. He lifted Riku's head up. "Riku...?"-

Just then, Riku slowly opened his eyes. He gazed about and then laid his eyes upon Sora and Kairi.

"S...Sora?" he uttered. "K...Kairi?"

"Riku!" Kairi said.

"You're alive again!" Sora shouted, happily.

Riku stood up in the casket and gazed about.

"What's going on?" He then looked at Sneer and Goten. "Sneer? Goten?"

"Welcome back to the world of the living." Sneer chuckled. Sora and Kairi helped their weary friend out of the casket. The burial detail was dumbfounded by what they had just witnessed.

"Did you see that?" the leader said. "You never see anything like that."

Riku then looked up at the grand dragon that stared him in the face.

"A...a dragon?" he uttered.

"Your first wish has been granted!!" Shenron roared. "Tell me your second wish!"

"There will be no need for that!" Sneer shouted. "Thank you for your time, Shenron!"

Shenron suddenly illuminated himself and receded back into the seven glowing spheres. The dragon balls then lifted into the sky and attempted to scatter. However, the shield, which Goten set up, prevented the balls from scattering and they only looped around and rolled back onto the beach. Goten then picked up the seven spheres and placed them in the bow. The sky turned back to its bright blue once again.

"The deed is done." Goten said.

"Excellent." Sneer replied. He then turned to the three friends. "Our task is done, so we take our



leave.”-

“Wait!” Riku shouted. He stretched out his hand. “Thank you...”

Sneer grasped at Riku’s hand and shook.

“You have your life again, Riku... Take care of it...”-

“I will.”-

Sneer then turned to Sora.

“Thank you for everything.” Sora uttered.

“It should be us that must show our gratitude. Not only have you restored the life of your best friend, but you have restored the lives of all the other friends you made in other worlds. That is true generosity.”

Sneer and Sora shook hands. “Farewell and thank you.” Sneer then turned to Kairi. “Farewell my dear. Make sure to keep these two out of trouble.”

“Thank you, Sneer.” She kissed him upon his head. Sneer blushed and then cleared his throat.

“Well... I’m speechless.” He cleared his throat again, turned and headed back to the portal. “Let us be off, Goten.”

“Right.” Goten replied. He glanced back for a second time and winked. “You three take care and stay out of trouble, OK?”

“You too.” Sora said. They waved goodbye as Goten disappeared into the light. The portal then vanished leaving the three standing on the beach. Sora and Kairi turned towards Riku.

“Well,” Riku uttered, “It looks like I’ll be staying for a little while longer.”

“Riku!” Sora shouted, tackling his best friend to the sand. Sora laid his head on Riku’s chest and cried. His tears of joy dripped down his cheeks. Sora raised his head, to gaze at Riku, to find a comforting smile on his friend’s face. “I’m so glad that you’re alive!”

Riku only caught Sora in a headlock and began to give him noogies on the head. After a short tussle, they both stood up.

“I’m glad that you’re back, Riku!” Kairi cried. Tears running down her face. Riku wrapped his arms around his two friends and hugged them tightly. Their eyes were filled with tears of joy.

“It’s great to be back!” Riku said. “It’s great to be alive!”

After the ordeal, life once again returned back to normal. After three weeks, things had mellowed down. But now there was a new aspect on life and friendship. Riku’s ordeal had opened his eyes and he now began to write his memoirs about all the adventures he had. Writing them in a book, he jotted down the events that took place, from when the Heartless first came five years earlier, to when he was consumed by the darkness, to when he found the light again, and to the grand confrontation against the Cavendish Shinobis and the Dark Empire. He sat on the beach, writing his scripture. Sora passed by and sat next to him.

“Another day going by, eh Riku?” Sora chuckled.

“Yes...” Riku replied. “It’s good to be alive.”

“Hey! You’ve done enough mental work, writing all afternoon! What do you say about exercising your physical skills for a while?!” Sora stood up and walked away. He then turned with a sinister look on his face, trying to impersonate the expression of Lord Drako Arakis. “I, Lord Drako Arakis, challenge you to a duel!”

Riku smiled. He picked up a piece of twine and tied his hair back into a ponytail. He then tried to impersonate General Kai. “Very well, then I, General Kai, accept your challenge!”

Sora threw him a wooden sword and the two began to spar as they did for so many years. Life was once again as it once was. However, there was now a greater bond of friendship and the respect of their lives and the lives of their friends. From that point on, no threat of Heartless, or Imperial attack would ever come to Destiny Island from that day forth.

Or so they thought...

End