

# Nightmares

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*Pre-BbS, twoshot. TerraXAquaXVen Friendship.*

*Who""s to say that dreams and nightmares aren""t as real as the here and now?*

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# 1 - The Nightmare

*Who's to say that dreams and nightmares aren't as real as the here and now?*

## ~o~oOo Nightmares oOo~o~

When Aqua opened her eyes, all she saw was white.

She woke up in that blank space alone, slightly bewildered by the fact that her room had completely vanished, but at the same time, she felt oddly at peace. It was... quiet. Like the library the young apprentice spent so much time in.

The azure-eyed girl looked around, and quickly discovered that there was nothing to discover in the first place. Everything was completely blank. She didn't even cast a shadow; her footsteps made no noise.

But, being the knowledge-thirsty child she was, she decided to take a look around.

Something to break the monotony, she thought to herself as she started walking. She wandered for along time, but she found that, strangely enough, she never grew tired.

After what seemed like hours, a dark speck entered her range of vision. Thrilled by the break in the stark blankness of her environment, she immediately quickened her pace and approached the growing figure in the distance.

Much to the Keyblade apprentice's surprise, the dark shape was that of her master and mentor, Eraqus. As she approached him, she realized that the man was facing away from her, staring off into the blank space beyond.

"Master Eraqus?" she asked hesitantly, unsure if sound even existed in this blank world. To her relief, Eraqus turned to face her, a soft smile on his face. Those kinds of smiles were rare for him, and it made her happy enough to smile in return. Her Master was like a father to her and her companions, practically raising them while training them to become Keyblade Masters.

A flash of gold at the edge of her vision caught her attention, and she turned to see the youngest of the three apprentices, Ventus, running up to meet them. As he reached them, he gave the blue-haired girl an ear-to-ear grin – something he didn't do often either.

When he was brought here by another Master, he had looked so.... dead. It was the only way she would have described his blank stare. He was completely emotionless and almost unresponsive. It took them days to coax a sentence out of him, and even longer for him to crack a smile. Yet, there he stood,

grinning like it was the best day of his life. Aqua found herself laughing at the sight.

Ventus laughed as well, and so did Eraqus.

A tap on her shoulder startled her into turning around, and she came within inches of a pair of cobalt blue eyes. She staggered back, face flushing crimson from the sudden proximity. The brown haired apprentice smiled apologetically, rubbing the back of his head in embarrassment. Terra, Terra, Terra, Aqua thought, smoothing out the fabric of her clothing, attempting to regain her composure, You never change.

As if he could read her mind, Terra grinned and shrugged. Hey, that's just me, he seemed to say.

Amused, Aqua covered her mouth with one hand and giggled. Terra chuckled, the lower note of his laugh reverberating through the air. Aqua hadn't realized how much older Terra sounded until now. Time flies... she thought, feels like it was only yesterday when Ven was brought to us...

It seemed that the younger apprentice could read her mind as well, as he averted his eyes to the floor when she thought this. Concerned, Aqua stepped towards the blonde, but he quickly shook his head, looking back up at her with his impossibly huge grin again. I'm fine, he seemed to say. No need to worry.

Aqua looked back to Terra and her Master for reassurance; Terra just shrugged, and Eraqus merely shook his head.

Don't worry.

Still unconvinced, Aqua nodded. She looked at the circle that had formed around her – the three people who were closest to her: Terra, who was like an older brother to her, always teasing, always trying to show off – and occasionally failing; Ven, who was her little brother, always looking for help, trying so hard to get better; and Eraqus, who was like their father, caring for the three of them ever since they arrived on his doorstep to commence their training; they were like her family – no, they are her family, and she couldn't bear to be apart from them. Their bonds were strong, practically unbreakable. Aqua turned in a circle, taking in the smiling faces of the people she cared about most, until she realized something that made her stop in her tracks.

Eraqus was no longer smiling.

Aqua looked up at her Master in concern, wondering what she had done to displease the older Keywielder. Eraqus stepped toward her, and placed his hands on her shoulders, staring her sternly in the eyes. "Aqua," the Master began, his voice level and deathly quiet, "You must be aware of the danger the darkness poses to you and your fellow apprentices. There is no doubt that it is coming, and you must be ready for it, no matter what form it takes. Am I understood?"

"Y-Yes, Master," Aqua replied, unsettled by this sudden order. As Eraqus drew away, Aqua averted her eyes to the blank ground, a million thoughts racing through the girl's head. What would cause such worry? What does he mean, "no matter what form it takes"? Are we all in danger? What do we do? How do we prepare for something like this?

When she looked up, Eraqus had returned to his first position, but the smile was nowhere to be found. She looked to her fellow apprentices; Terra and Ven were looking at each other, just as confused, if not more than she was, but not nearly as unsettled. She whirled around to face her Master again, but as she opened her mouth to speak, a black blur sped past her and struck Eraqus squarely in the chest, causing him to stagger back, wide-eyed, a hand over where the attack struck. The Keyblade Master fell to his knees, reached out for the blue-haired apprentice, then fell forward, and faded away without a trace.

Horrified, Aqua turned to face the source of the attack, and found herself completely speechless when she saw Terra with his bronze Keyblade raised, black smoke trailing from the tip like a smoking gun. Ven looked completely terrified, taking slow steps away from the brown-haired Keyweilder towards the blue-haired one.

Terra himself seemed to be in shock, staring at his arm like it had grown scales. He suddenly cried out and let go of his Keyblade, as if it had suddenly begun to burn red-hot, and it fell to the ground with a loud clatter before vanishing in a flash of uncharacteristic black and purple light. Terra hissed at his injured hand, and looked back up at the terrified faces of his friends. Ven had retreated behind Aqua, tears of grief welling up in his eyes. Aqua only gaped at Terra, too confused and hurt and scared to say anything.

How could he?

Terra reached towards them, but they both stepped back, afraid of what he may be intending to do to them. "Aqua... Ven... I didn't..." he began, but he was cut off by his own grief as tears began to form in his eyes. He stared at his hands, as if it was their fault their Master no longer existed. "I didn't—" he began again, looking back up, but Aqua was distracted by something behind him, something that moved towards him—

"TERRA, LOOK OUT!"

He wasn't fast enough. A clawed black hand clamped itself over his mouth and an arm wrapped around his torso, effectively cutting off any chance he had of escaping. No matter how hard he struggled, he could not free himself. The blue haired apprentice could see him opening and closing his hand, trying to summon his keyblade – but it wouldn't come. The beast's golden eyes glinted tauntingly, almost challenging her to try and take him back as it floated up a few feet into the air, bringing Terra with it.

And try she would.

Aqua summoned her own Keyblade, and charged towards the black beast, calling on the magic within her and muttering the beginning of a Blizzard spell, when a cry from behind her broke her concentration.

Ven!

She turned to see the blonde in a similar situation as Terra, only the beast seemed... different. It had the same golden eyes, the same black body, but it was grinning at her... a maniacal, terrifying grin that the other beast didn't have. Ven had managed to summon his Keyblade, but he was unable to reach the beast, even with his reversed grip. The monster gripped the young apprentice tighter, and he cried out,

the sound muffled by the beast's clawed hand. Whether it was a cry of pain or fear, Aqua couldn't tell, but it was enough for her. She was about to run to rescue Ven when she realized the dilemma she was in.

I can't save them both.

Aqua didn't want to choose, and yet, she wasn't about to leave them both.

Seeing that she would be unable to make a decision, the beasts made it for her.

The grinning monster suddenly jerked its arm to the side, and a resounding crrrack echoed through the empty white void.

"NO!" Aqua cried, reaching for her friend, but the beast backed away, keeping just out of her reach. She was forced to watch as Ven's eyes became blank and dull, exactly as they were when she first met him; as his keyblade dropped from his hand and vanished in a flash of golden light; as a thin stream of crimson blood trickled out of the boy's mouth. Tears of frustration ran down her cheeks, and she swung her Keyblade at the monster, trying to free her friend. The blade went right through the beast – it was completely unaffected.

A cry of pain from Terra made her turn around again – the beast had released the eldest apprentice's mouth, but was keeping a tight grip on him all the same. "AQUA!" Terra cried, almost pleading as the creature dug its claws into his skin, "RUN!" It was as if he could sense her hesitation, because he continued, "I'll be fine, just go!! RUN!!!"

The authority behind his command made her turn around without question, but both apprentices gasped at what they saw.

Ventus stood, alone, completely unharmed. His head was lowered, eyes averted to the ground. Almost ecstatic with relief, Aqua ran to the younger boy, stopping in front of him and bending slightly to be at eye level with him. "Ven! Are you okay?" she asked, placing a finger on his chin to make him look at her.

She was horrified by what she saw. Ventus' eyes had gone from a deep sky blue to a glistening gold, and the grin on his face wasn't his – it belonged to the beast that had held him captive, the beast that had supposedly ended him. Aqua barely had time to step back as he lashed out at her, his fingers replaced by the monster's demonic claws. "Ven! Stop this!" she pleaded, only dodging his swipes, unwilling to hurt her friend.

For a second it seemed as if he had heard her, because he stopped his assault and the grin seemed to fall from his face. "Ven?" The possessed boy grinned, eyes glinting with insanity, voice distorted, blended with another, darker voice. "Ven's not here." the demon said using Ventus' mouth, then lunged at Aqua once more. Caught off-guard, the beast was able to knock her off-balance and pin her to the ground, holding her arms down so she was unable to use her weapon. It laughed maniacally, not expecting the beam of light that came from seemingly nowhere. The monster screamed as it was thrown off, landing in a heap a few feet away.

Aqua scrambled back to her feet, and looked over her shoulder at Terra – he had freed one arm and was managing to fend off the monster. He'll be fine for now, she thought, turning back to her possessed friend.

The demon staggered back to its stolen feet, visibly weakened by the blast of light. It grinned at the other apprentice again, but there was something different this time – a hint of blue flashed across the demon's insane golden eyes, and its grin vanished. The claws vanished from its hands, and it closed its eyes as a cloud of darkness lifted from Ventus' body, releasing him from the demon's influence. Aqua stepped to catch the blonde as he staggered forward, and was shocked to see him dissolve into golden light as soon as he fell into her arms.

Ven was gone.

No. No, no, no, NO!

There was barely any time for tears when a pained cry from Terra made her turn around again, and what she saw brought her even more agony –

The monster had thrust its hand right into Terra's chest. Blood escaped from the wound in thick crimson streams that flowed down his torso, staining his shirt and the white floor below his feet, which were still being held off the ground.

The brown haired apprentice gaped down at his chest, then looked back at the beast with murder in his eyes, hating the demon for all the pain it's caused him. The monster looked down at Aqua, seeming almost amused by her horrified and hateful expression. Terra looked down at her as well, but instead of amusement, Aqua saw only pain, and grief, and a silent plea. He shook his head, his eyes begging for her to run.

It was too much. A furious cry escaped her lips, and she rushed to attack the beast, already angry with herself with losing Ven – she wasn't about to lose Terra as well.

She had only taken a few steps when something clamped onto her ankle, effectively stopping her attack and sending her sprawling onto the ground, dropping her Keyblade in the process. The weapon vanished in a brief white flash as she looked over her shoulder to see another demon, emerging from a dark hole in the white ground, holding on to her ankle with both hands. Aqua was ready to shoot another blast of light at the monster, but was startled to find her blade missing. She attempted to summon it, but to no avail. Her Keyblade would not come to her either. The beast's shoulders shook, as if it was laughing at her defenselessness, and began to pull her in. No amount of pitiful pleading, kicking or screaming was going to convince the beast to release her. She was pulled into the dark hole, the beast cackling as she was dragged in.

The last thing she saw was Terra's heart being torn away from his chest, its dying beats still trying to pump out the remaining blood - spraying everywhere.

The dark hole closed above her.

All light was extinguished, and Aqua saw no more.

~o~oOo~o~

## 2 - Just a Dream

Aqua didn't expect herself to wake up screaming, because she hadn't realized she had been asleep in the first place.

She also didn't expect to feel someone's arms tighten around her waist, or find her shoulder wet with tears. "Aqua, please, stop it!"

"V-Ven?" Aqua tentatively reached out, and her hand came into contact with a mess of spiky hair. "W-What are you doing here?"

The blonde boy looked up at her. It was difficult to see his face considering their awkward position and how poorly lit Aqua's room was at that moment, but enough moonlight entered through the window to reflect off his eyes, which were brimming with tears. "I w-woke up... and you were screaming..." he began, but instead of continuing, he buried his head in her shoulder again and began to cry. Unsure of what else to do, Aqua put an arm around him and pushed herself up into a sitting position, bringing the younger apprentice with her. She stroked his hair like a mother would do to her child, trying to calm him down.

"Shhh, Ven... it's okay, it was just a nightmare... Shhh..... there's nothing to be afraid of..." It was at that moment that she caught a glimpse of her faint reflection in the mirror, and saw the moonlight glinting off her own eyes the same way it had reflected off of Ven's. She raised a hand to her cheek and confirmed her suspicions – she had been crying as well. Maybe that's why Ven's so scared... I must have been crying in my sleep...

It was then that it occurred to her. Of course. Why didn't I think of it before...? The azure-eyed apprentice resumed stroking Ven's hair as his sobs began to die down, and when she deemed him calm enough, she asked, "Ven, can you tell me what you dreamt about?"

The youngest apprentice drew a shuddering breath, then released Aqua, sitting back on the bed so they could look at each other in the dim light. "Well," he began, wiping the tears from his eyes with the back of his hand, "I woke up in this place, and everything was all—"

Both apprentices jumped when the door creaked open. Ven ducked behind Aqua while the latter cast a fire spell between her and the door, illuminating the intruder. The flame revealed brown hair and cobalt blue eyes peeking in through the door.

The intruder was none other than Terra.

The nightmare came flooding back to her in an instant, and she remembered her friends' cruel ends at the hands of the black demons, Ventus being snuffed out of existence, and Terra getting his heart torn out—

It was too much for Aqua to bear. She was unable to hold in a sob, and found herself crying



uncontrollably. She barely heard Terra's quick footsteps as he entered the room – barely felt the bed move as he sat down on it – barely felt his strong arms wrap around her and pull her towards him. She turned to jelly in his arms; she didn't even have enough strength left to hug him back, and she was ashamed of this. Terra was always the strong one. Always.

The eldest apprentice rubbed reassuring circles in her back, muttering calming words as he did so. It took her a few minutes to cry herself out; she was completely drained afterwards. After her own sobs died down, she looked up apologetically at her fellow Keywielder, and her face flushed slightly when she saw tears of his own on his cheeks. Aqua cleared her throat. "Thank you," she whispered as she pulled away, to which he responded with a gentle squeeze of her shoulder. She slid away from the two other apprentices so that they formed a triangle on her bed. They were quiet for a while, wrapped in their own thoughts. Aqua waved her hand, and the fire spell vanished, leaving them in the faint moonlight. After a while, Terra broke the silence.

"So... did everyone have a nightmare just now?" he asked. The two other apprentices nodded. Terra looked up at the ceiling, as if the answers to all his questions could be found there, and asked again, "It wouldn't be impossible... for all of us to have had the same dream... right?"

So I'm not the only one who thinks so, Aqua thought. "Ven, you said you woke up somewhere in your dream. What did it look like?"

"Well..." he began again, "at first i thought i was going blind, but then i realized that everything was just all white..."

The elder apprentices glanced at each other, and confirmed their suspicions: they had all been in the same place. "Did you walk around for a while?" Aqua asked.

The young blonde nodded. "Yeah, I did... then I ran into you and the Master—" Ven suddenly cut off, and stared at the other two apprentices with wide eyes. "Wait... so... you guys saw the same thing??"

"I think that's what happened," Terra said, shifting his position on the bed, "Don't know why, but... it happened."

"Well, we won't know for sure until we hear the rest of it," Aqua added. "I ran into Master Eraqus first, then Ven ran up to us. After that, Terra came up and tapped—"

"—You on the shoulder..."

Silence.

"A-and then?" Ven stammered.

"Eraqus came up to me and told me the darkness was coming—"

"So that's what he was saying—"

"And then Terra raised his arm—"

“And a-attacked Master Eraqus...!”

There was a pause as the two younger apprentice looked at the eldest.

“I-I swear, I didn’t mean to!” Terra began, “My arm just moved on its own! I would never—“

“Terra, we know you’d never do something like that,” Aqua interrupted, “especially not to Eraqus.”

Terra was silent again.

“Then... Master disappeared...”

“And that giant black monster appeared and grabbed me—“

“And another showed up and grabbed ME!”

“And.... I couldn’t decide who to save first...”

“And... it.... killed me...”

Another pause.

“Did you wake up?”

“....No.”

“No?!”

“But... it killed you... in your dream... isn’t that when one usually wakes up??”

“I-I didn’t... I saw everything.”

The two elder apprentices looked at each other, then back at the youngest. “Everything?”

Ventus nodded. “EVERYTHING. I saw – no, I felt myself attack Aqua, but I... I couldn’t do anything!! It was horrible, I couldn’t even breathe on my own, I’m so sorry, Aqua!!”

The girl sensed he was about to break down again, so she quickly responded with “No, no, no, it’s okay, Ven!! It wasn’t your fault, it was the monster’s...”

This seemed to calm the younger boy down; he nodded and mumbled an “okay,” keeping his eyes glued to the sheets in front of him.

Satisfied, Aqua continued: “So... after that, I hit the beast back... and when it left you, you vanished...”

“That’s when I woke up...” Ventus looked up, eyes brimming with curiosity, and asked, “What...”

happened afterward?”

It was Aqua’s turn to look down at the sheets. “I don’t think—“

“Aqua tried to come and save me,” Terra interrupted, “But... the monster had already... caused serious damage...”

Aqua sighed in relief, appreciating Terra’s careful wording of the gruesome event. “I ran to him, but,” she continued, “another black monster came out of this dark hole in the ground and grabbed my leg... it wouldn’t let go, and i couldn’t summon my Keyblade anymore...”

“And it pulled you in right when my heart—“ Terra cut off abruptly as he remembered that horrible, painful event. His hand shot up to his chest, as if to make sure his heart was still in the right place. He glanced up at Aqua, then dropped his gaze to the bed and said, almost in a whisper, “right when my heart was torn out.”

Ventus’ eyes widened in horror as a mental image of Terra’s horrible death began to form in his mind. “D-Did you wake up then?” he stammered.

Terra slowly shook his head as he said, “No... it crushed it first... then dropped me to the floor, laughing the entire time...” Terra looked up at the other two apprentices, eyes unreadable. “I woke up when I hit the ground.”

Aqua was shocked. She couldn’t even begin to imagine the pain her friend had felt, and she was still amazed he hadn’t woken up earlier. She glanced at Ven – he was gaping at Terra, and Terra was staring back. Some unspoken message must have passed between them, because the younger boy suddenly looked away, eyes still wide.

A few minutes passed as the three Keyblade apprentices tried to process all that they had just seen and heard – the pain and terror the three of them went through. The silence was again broken by Terra, as he collapsed back on the bed with a groan. “Why us?” he sighed.

“What do you mean?” Aqua asked, Ven still staring at the bed, deep in thought.

“I mean, why should we have to suffer like that? We’ve never done anything wrong, why should we deserve that?”

Both apprentices’ heads turned when Ven spoke. “What if...” he began, eyes still glued to the sheets, his voice barely a whisper, “What if it’s a warning?”

Terra sat up, his wistful expression gone, replaced by concern. “What do you mean?”

“What if...” he continued, lifting his eyes from the bed and fixing them on Terra, “What if it... really happens? What if we all get hurt like that?” Ven’s voice rose in volume with every word, and kept rising as he continued, “What if something like that happens to us, and we can’t help each other??” The blonde seemed to be on the verge of tears, and he was clutching the sheets below him as if they were the only thing holding him down. “What if we all have to watch each other die and not be able to do

anything at all?!" he practically screamed. "What if —"

Aqua assumed she and Terra must have had the same idea at the same time, for they both almost literally lunged towards the blonde and embraced him, cutting off his panicked screams. His cries turned into sobs, and he threw his arms around both of them, eternally grateful simply for the fact that the dream had been exactly that.

*Just a dream.*

((too exhausted to put the italics back in. use your imagination until i fix it XDDD;;))