

Inuyasha:pain

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This fiction is about pain: physical and mental alike. Not so much gore. Be warned: sexual abuse and angst. Not for sensitive readers. Reposted.

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Chapter 1 - Naruku's trap	2
Chapter 2 - pain	5
Chapter 3 - sexual abuse	8
Chapter 4 - whatever!	13

1 - Naruku's trap

"Naraku!"

Kikyos voice resounded more than had she screamed from the very mountains. Her arrow was already glowing of her miko powers and her eyes were fixed at the spider hanyou before her. Naraku smiled a grim smile. Kikyo fired her arrow and it hit, shredding Narakus flesh apart but not killing him. Kikyo hissed when she was hit by foul miasma and Kagome rushed to her side.

"Look out, Kikyo!"

Kagome purified the miasma by touching it and pulled Kikyo backwards. Naraku had already begun to grow back, just as he had done so many times already. Kagome worried her bottom lip. This couldn't go on, they would soon be out of arrows! But if she and Kikyo did not distract Naraku, he would aid the yokai attacking Sango, Kirara, Miroku and Shippou. At the same time, without her friends keeping the other yokai at bay, Kagome and Kikyo wouldn't even be as close to Naraku as they were.

//And we wouldn't have been in this situation if Inuyasha hadn't believed the fake monk who told him Kikyo was hurt and dying! He told me he wouldn't run to her, and I said he would. How ironic. He would have found her if he had just stayed with me.// Kagome thought, her mind trying to protect her from going insane by fear.

Facing Naraku scared everyone, even the bravest, so it was natural for the mind to flee the situation at hand. But Kagome did not want to think about Inuyasha and whether he would come or not either. It made her waver, and there was no time to waver now.

"Kikyo, we must attack at the same time. Perhaps our powers combined can put him at bay long enough for us to find the Shikon no Tama."

"I do not want to fight alongside you."

Kagome gazed into Kikyos eyes to understand why she would say that. They were going to get killed, didn't Kikyo know? But Kagome understood as her brown eyes met bluegrey ones. They were after all the same soul, even if personality and circumstances had made them so different from one another. Kagome smiled, the sad smile that had become a part of her instead of the big, hearty one she used to have so long ago.

"I wish there was a way for us not to do this, too. But we must defeat Naraku."

Kikyo nodded and pulled away from Kagome. There was too many dark feelings between them for them to ever be able to enjoy each others company. They loved the same man for one, and he seemed to love them both in different ways, making them both envy what the other had. Kagomes precense made it impossible for Kikyo to be with Inuyasha as she wished: the two of them joined in death, locked in the beautiful memories of what once was. Kikyos precense made it impossible for Kagome to ever be with

Inuyasha as more than friend. However, for this moment, for the task at hand, the mikos would lay their dark emotions aside and work together. Naraku. In all emotions they shared or did not share, they were at least completely agreed in hating Naraku.

"You attack from that side. We must try to shatter him as much as possible, striking him from two ways."

Kagome nodded at Kikyos suggestion. Two arrows at the same spot would accomplish nothing. Naraku had almost pulled all of himself together, so Kagome made a run for it. They would still have time if she was fast enough. Kikyo remained where she was. She was to be the target, the distraction so that Kagome would get those last seconds to aim. Kikyo drew her bow, her aim steady.

Inuyasha cursed himself over and over while leaping through the forrest.

// Baka! Bakabakabaka, how could I fall for the same stupid trick again?! //

The group was closing in to Naraku when a passing monk had told them of a strong miko that had been badly injured in a battle. She was now on her death bed, surrounded by silvery spirits with long tails. Inuyasha knew that had to be Kikyo. It couldn't be anyone else but Kikyo. If she was dying, he needed to go to her, but... He hesitated. Kagome didn't.

"Go check on her Inuyasha. You know you have to."

Kagome had been smiling saying that. Feeling relieved, Inuyasha left. It was not until now, several hours later - several hours too late - Inuyasha realised that Kagomes smile had been filled with sadness and resigned acceptance, as if she was saying goodbye with that smile.

Sango once asked Inuyasha if he would go after Kikyo if Kagome sent him off with a smile. Now he knew the answer, and he also knew that had been the wrong thing to do. He had left Kagome alone yet again, abandoned her, even when he knew they were close to Naraku - even when he knew that Naraku wanted to take Kagome away from them - or kill her. And he had left anyway, thinking only of Kikyo. Was Naraku just waiting for him, ready to gloat? Inuyasha could see it, Naraku laughing, Inuyashas dead friends at his feet - a girl with ebony hair and school uniform lifeless on the ground, her eyes never shining again, her lips never smiling...

//Â No, Kagome lives! Kagome must live!Â //

With his heart aching and his body covered in sweat Inuyasha screamed, trying to reach her ears despite the distance.

"DON'T DIE KAGOME! DON'T YOU DARE DIE ON ME!"

"Hiraikotsu!"

Sango yelled and let go of her giant boomerang made of demon bones. It sliced several of the lower

yokai before it returned to her strong grip. Kirara the loyal neko yokai followed the attack up, lessing the number of yokai furthermore. But killing ten only allowed yet another ten to come closer, and it seemed there was no end to them. Miroku was prepared to put up a barrier whenever Sango gave sign. That would be their last resort. In the meantime, he used his holy magic to defeat his enemies, his kazaana worthless here since Narakus poison bees was present. They were everywhere these days. Shippo used his foxfire to keep the yokai on the northern flank at bay. Miroku could see that the small kitsune was very frightened and nearly exhausted, but they had to continue to fight. Kagome and Kikyo were on ahead, facing Naraku. They couldn't allow this swarm to head on there as well. That would be the end of the two mikos.

// Not that it's likely they will survive anyway. But if we're lucky, they might hurt Naraku enough to be defeated by someone else at least! //

Miroku ducked and Sangos hiraikotsu passed over his head, slicing a yokai that had been sneaking up behind him. He tried to focus on the fight again. Shippo ran to his side, too tired to keep the yokai at a distance.

"Inuyasha no baka! Why isn't he here?" Shippo yelled in a high-pitch voice.

// One can wonder. // Miroku thought when he slashed through three demons at once only to face yet another five.

2 - pain

Seeing the mikos he hated and loved the same time whisper to one another made Naraku smile. His smile grew even wider when Kagome left away, her goal way too obvious to ever startle him.

// So the mikos are finally working together... // Naraku thought. // Not that it's going to help them a bit. In fact, this is perfect... //

Unnoticed by the two tired and upbeat mikos, Naraku raised a barrier around Kagome where she stood on his right side. Kagome saw him making a gesture, but nothing seemed to happen. No pain, no glowing red barrier, nothing.

// Good, he's tired! We can take him down! //

"Kikyo!" Kagome yelled.

"I'm ready!"

Naraku saw the mikos aiming at him, not a bit concerned. He felt Inuyasha approaching from behind, and fast. Just as planned.

// The fool! He won't even see Kagome behind my barrier. He'll only see Kikyo! Until I decide otherwise, that is... //

Naraku faced Kikyo, her stern gaze far from the soft one that once had pitied Onigumo, and decided to taunt her to make sure his plan wouldn't be ruined. He was so looking forward for this...

"I'm tired of you and your better half now, dear Kikyo. Die!"

With that, Naraku threw out his miasma-filled tentacles faster than ever before. There was no time for neither miko to dodge or to fire an arrow. They were too close, the aim was off. Naraku saw Kikyos eyes widen and he knew what, or rather who, she saw coming. He chuckled when he heard Inuyashas voice call out:

"KIKYO!"

Inuyasha yelled at the top of his lungs a second before he threw himself at Kikyo and managed to dodge the tentacle, shielding Kikyos body with his own, tracing the movements of the other tentacle the same time. It was heading nowhere or...? In that very second Naraku let go of the barrier he had put up and Inuyasha saw Kagome standing rigid, unable to flee from the deadly threat, doubt and despair and agony in her face. Inuyasha didn't even have time to scream her name before the tentacle pierced through Kagomes right shoulder, making her arch backwards in pain, a shriek escaping her lips. Inuyasha felt his heart skip several beats and all he could see was the blood soaking otherwise white and green clothes. Naraku raised the tentacle up in the air, displaying Kagomes motionless body hanging from it, tearing

her flesh. Inuyasha couldn't speak. He was still laying on top of Kikyo but his mind, his every fiber was focused at the torn girl he had failed to protect, his heart now beating but hurting him as it did. Naraku began to fade away, as if showing off in how easy it was for him to escape had there been any threats to him - not that there were.

“So, hanyou. Since you did not want to rescue this one, I'll be taking her with me. I know how to use her properly...”

Inuyasha fought to regain his voice, to make his body move despite his shock. Hearing the spider hanyou's taunting words helped Inuyasha to find his strength, his rage, but Naraku had almost vanished when he did.

“Ma-mate-o! Wait!” Inuyasha jumped up, challenging Naraku by body language. “Come back and fight, teme!!!” Inuyasha charged forward but was only met by a cold chuckle and thin air. Naraku and Kagome had disappeared.

“KAGOME!”

Inuyasha's mind was spinning, he had called out her name without knowing. Had it really been Kagome? No, it must have been an illusion!

// I didn't see her when I came, it must be a trick! Oh Kami, let it be a trick!! //

Inuyasha left to the place Kagome had been standing, finding her scent still lingering in the air, a scent he once had mistaken for Kikyo's but never again since then. Inuyasha let his eyes trail around, searching for something that could tell him his nose was lying. There were red spots on the ground. Blood. Inuyasha reached down to touch it and sniffed it, even if he already knew it really had been Kagome. That scent. That bloodscent he was too familiar with because he had failed in protecting her too many times--- Inuyasha stared at his hand. Kagome's blood was staining it like he was the one who harmed her and, in Inuyasha's mind, it was. HE was the one who failed to protect her. Lost in his own dark thoughts, still in shock, Inuyasha didn't notice when Sango and the others arrived to the scene. The yokai had left when Naraku did, leaving the rest of the group to come to what aid they could. Sango was helping Kikyo up, though not in a mild way.

“Inuyasha, where is Kagome?” Miroku called out his question. Inuyasha didn't answer. He was trying to dry off the blood from his hand on the hard, barren ground.

“Naraku took her.” Kikyo answered in a neutral tone.

“What? How could that happen?”

Sango and Miroku both looked at Kikyo while Shippo was shivering, heartbroken. He had done his best while fighting, his very very best and now he wanted to be in Kagome's warm embrace where no evilness could reach him. She couldn't be GONE!

“Naraku attacked us both. Inuyasha saved me, but Kagome got hit. Then Naraku took her,” Kikyo explained, no emotions whatsoever in her voice.

Shippo whailed. Plunging into Sango's embrace, the next best to Kagome's, he screamed: "INUYASHA HOW COULD YOU? HOW COULD YOU LEAVE KAGOME TO DIE??"

Inuyasha felt his heart make a knot on itself and he flung his head up, his despair too obvious in his amber eyes. Both Miroku and Sango reeled at the sight of them. Kikyo averted her eyes, as if she was seeing something that hurt her.

"I DIDN'T SEE HER, GOTDAMMIT! I..." Inuyasha's voice was cracking, his breath uneven. "I didn't know she was there, I couldn't see her until it was too late!!!"

"Waaah! Kagome is DEAD!" Shippo cried, hiding his face against Sango's neck, making Sango embrace him harder and tears surface in her eyes.

Inuyasha yelled: "SHUT UP!" the same time as Kikyo said: "No, I don't think she is."

This gained everyone's attention as hope despite all logic entered their minds. Kikyo refused to meet anyone's gaze. Looking aside, she said:

"We'll talk later. We must depart from here now, it's not safe."

"But Kagome-" Shippo stated.

"No Shippo, Kikyo's right. We can't stay here. Besides, we can't reach Kagome from here. We must find someplace secure and then decide what to do."

Miroku sounded far more secure than he felt, but Inuyasha and Kagome aside, he was the third to lead the group. Sango never had any desire to do so, she only stepped up during battles or jobs and Shippo was a kid. So with Kagome gone and Inuyasha unable to make a sane decision it was up to Miroku to keep them going, even if he himself more than anything wanted to charge forward and claim back the woman he considered family.

"You're right, Houshi-sama" Sango admitted.

They had to do something, but they couldn't if they were dead. With Shippo safe in her embrace and Kirara padding beside her in small form, the demon slayer left to pad in Kikyo's trace. Miroku followed shortly after, just casting a glance towards Inuyasha to make sure his friend would follow them and not do anything foolish. Inuyasha knew the Houshi's glances by now.

Inuyasha knew they were right, he knew it. Yet it took him several more minutes to be able to part from the spot where Kagome had been injured, to avert his eyes from the stains on the rocks that was Kagome's blood; as if being there long enough if yet too late could change the outcome of what happened

3 - sexual abuse

"Are we safe yet, Miroku?"

It had been hours since the abduction of Kagome. The group had been travelling south and was now in the mids of the woods, a clearing not far away. Miroku used his eyes and senses to determinate wether it was safe or not. Contended, he nodded.

"Yes Shippou. We may as well set camp here." With a glance towards the dejected hanyou, Mirkou added: "We have a lot to discuss."

The group sat down in the clearing. Nightfall came sneaking upon them, colouring the sky in a beautiful way that seemed out of place concerning the group's mood. Miroku, Sango, Kirara and Shippou sat close together, Kikyo was opposite them. They didn't mean to single her out, but she simply didn't belong with anyone but Inuyasha. And, perhaps, in a twisted way, Kagome. Inuyasha sat on his hunches a bit away, back partly turned towards the group. Sango and Miroku left him be and ordered Shippou not to call out for him. This would not be easy for Inuyasha After a few minutes of silence while tending a cook fire, Sango spoke up.

"Kikyo-sama... would you please tell us what you ment with your earlier remark? You said that Kagome-chan likely isn't dead."

Kikyo nodded and faced the demon slayer. She was glad it had been the woman who had asked her and not the houshi, although she didn't know why.

"Naraku used a barrier to hide Kagome from Inuyasha. There's no other explanation as to why Inuyasha couldn't see her - unless he was focusing entirely at me." Kikyo smiled a meek smile. "I wouldn't mind if it had been so..."

Inuyasha refused to comment that. It only hurt. He turned his head, gazing out somewhere no one else could see, clearly frustrated with mixed emotions. Just before Kikyo was going to continue, Miroku cut in.

"Why would Naraku use a barrier? There was no way Inuyasha could have saved you both anyway, was it? So he could just have killed one of you off without hiding it." Inuyasha winced and snapped his head to glare at Mirkou. Miroku saw that and added: "I know it's harsh, but that's the truth."

Kikyo averted her eyes. Now she knew why she didn't want to face the houshi; his eyes reflected the same self-loathing she had felt before her death. Someone tainted, different from anyone else. Someone who couldn't rejoice as everyone else. He had the same look like Inuyasha. Kikyo refused to linger on to those thoughts. Birds were chirping good night as night approached, a strange sound in all the sadness.

"To try to kill us both would only show who Inuyasha would instinctivly would try save. That is not in Narakus interest to know. The more strings a spiderweb has, the stronger it is."

Kikyo paused and Inuyasha glanced at her. She was sad, he could see that, and he recognised her expression.

// She and Kagome looks the same when they're hurt. No... when I have hurt them .//

"The more the strings tangle, the stronger the web." Kikyo finished, causing Inuyasha away from his selfloathing for a moment to ponder the question.

"So you're saying that Naraku won't to anything that could solve the conflicts between the three of you?" Sango asked.

Kikyo nodded.

"If anything he'll increase them. That's why I think Kagome is alive. The same goes for your little brother."

Sango went pale. She suddenly understood how right Kikyo was. As long as she was chasing after Kohaku, Naraku could play her as he wanted, using her to entwine more threads in his spiderweb. And she could do nothing but play along, bound by love. At his side, Miroku knew he and his family was in the same trap. Generation after generation on a wild hunt that they deep down knew they couldn't win. And still...

Miroku glanced at Sango. He knew he wouldn't stop, even if he was being manipulated by Naraku. Because if he did, he would end up dead - and never have the life he dreamed to have, never have the wife he wanted, never have the wild kids that would probably drive him insane. Miroku looked down and saw Shippou sitting with a finger in his mouth.

// If we don't defeat Naraku, there's no future for Shippou or the ones like him either. The small, friendly ones will be killed. //

It simply had to be done.

Kikyo turned to Inuyasha, knowing he was both watching and listening even with his back turned away. She knew he too understood what his friends now knew, but she also knew he needed help to see Naraku's new trap. Kikyo raised her voice.

"Inuyasha. There's a risk that girl wasn't aware of the barrier, just as we weren't."

"So?"

The answer was short and pointless and dumb, truly showing how upset Inuyasha was. Obviously Inuyasha realised that himself, and he turned his head to meet Kikyo's gaze. Kikyo continued.

"So to that girl, it must have looked like you ran to save me, completely ignoring her. You didn't even call out to her." Kikyo's voice sounded almost accusing to her own surprise. But then again, who if not her could understand how the other girl felt?

Inuyasha felt his heart sink in his chest and he turned around angrily.

"IT WASN'T LIKE THAT!"

Kikyo rose, refusing to meet the fuming hanyou's gaze any longer.

"I'm only telling you how that girl must have seen it."

"I understand," Mirkou said, "Naraku will keep Kagome-sama alive and use the darkness in her heart to make her his puppet!"

"What?" Inuyasha snapped his head towards his friends.

"Don't you see?" Sango asked. "Kagome-chans weak point is your feelings for Kikyo-sama, that's no secret to Naraku. He set this up to break her spirit."

"Once done, he can use her powers to find all shards... and to fight us." Miroku added bitterly.

Inuyasha made a sound in his throat. He didn't know what to say.

"So Kagome will be Naraku's slave?" Shippou yelled.

Kikyo straightened her back, preparing to leave. She had said and done all for this time. Now with the new information, she had to make her own scheme to achieve all of her goals...no matter how hard or hurting. Kikyo looked straight into the wood, her back at the group when she declared:

"It's all up to that girl to win this battle. All I can say is that, if she still is as pure as she was when she healed me... then perhaps she has a chance."

With that, Kikyo headed for the woods, her soul collectors following her. Inuyasha didn't watch her leave. For the moment, he didn't care what Kikyo did. She was safe. Kagome wasn't. And there were too many thoughts and emotions in his head, all fighting and causing a blur, making him angry. Suddenly, an uninvited image of Kagome hanging bleeding from Narakus deformed limb came to Inuyashas mind.

// "You didn't even call out to her." //

Kikyos voice rang in his head and Inuyasha shut his eyes closed, fising his hand and slamming it into the ground, cursing loud and growling as he did.

// I didn't see her! Kagome, I didn't see you! If I had, I'd have come for you, you know I would! //

Suddenly stopping his beating of the ground, Inuyasha hid his face beneath the shadow cast by his hair.

// You must know that, Kagome... //

But still, Kagome's face as she was hit by the tentacle haunted his mind. Agony, doubt... but no surprise.

She hadn't been surprised in seeing him saving Kikyo, neglecting her. No... she had looked like that was something she knew would happen and yet refused to believe in as it did. A sudden burst of anger made Inuyasha slam his fist in the ground once again, harder this time. The one hit made a hole in the ground and Inuyasha felt his knuckles start to bleed.

// Kagome...if that's what you believe, Naraku will use you. He'll fill you with evil miasma, toying with your heart and mind until you are no longer you. You know better than that, dammit, you do! You must...! //

Her lifeless body hanging like a fruit from the tree of Death...

"KAGOME!!!!" Inuyasha screamed in agony towards the starfilled skies.

Â Â

Kagome felt nothing but pain. Her world was pain. Not only did her aching, broken body hurt, but her heart, her guts, her mind and soul. Everything was hurting from inside out and there was nothing, not ever, that could heal her.

"It hurts so much, doesn't it..."

That sneaky voice. Kagome knew it by now, knew it was Naraku. When she woke up the first time, she had hoped despite all logic that it would be Inuyasha. She had listened with ears only wanting to hear that one voice, and so she had - until the pale, dark-haired, red-eyed man appeared. Now she knew where she was everytime she woke, and she knew she was alone.Â

"Completely alone..." Naraku agreed with her thought. "And why is that?"

Kagome glared at the disgusting being in front of her. She knew what he was trying to do, and she wouldn't let him. Still, her mind betrayed her.

// I'm alone because Inuyasha chose to save Kikyo. He chose Kikyo! //

"That hanyou chose his beloved after all, didn't he? Well, I shouldn't ask, I was there..."

Kagome felt hatred and despair fight within her, both trying to break free.

// No!!! Until I hear those words from him, it's not true! As long as he hasn't told me, it's not true! And even if it was, he wouldn't have left me unshielded like that. It cannot have been Inuyasha! //

Kagome tried to break free from the tentacles nailing her to the wall, sacrificing her body to try to save her mind. It hurt, it hurt a lot but it was, as always, an useless effort. Naraku stepped forward, leaning in. Kagome could feel his breath on her skin and she felt sick. She couldn't move. She couldn't talk. She could hardly breathe, and this disgusting beast was forcing himself upon her mind and body, making Kagome feel tainted even if she knew it was all him, not her. She made a face when Naraku let his right hand caress her left breast. That was all she could do.

"I'm surprised Inuyasha didn't even try to save you, though... you are a part of Kikyo after all."

Enjoying the pain and hurt from the girl, Naraku leaned in even more and licked Kagomes cheek while his left hand squeezed her right shoulder, making the wound, now filled with miasma, to bleed again. Kagome tried to scream but she was gagged, and she came short of air trying. Biting together, Kagome focused on one thought, the one though she wouldn't let be stained, her last hope and her one sorrow contained in one name

4 - whatever!

Naraku was touching her again. Kagome felt sour bile rise in her throat and did her best to swallow. Previous experiences told her very well Naraku wouldn't remove the gag, not if he was certain she could swallow it. And Naraku was certain Kagome could swallow anything rising in her throat. So Kagome did her best to stop it from coming into her mouth; once there it would be harder. It was a wonder she still had anything in her stomach as it was. How many days had it been? Three? Four?

As if on cue, Naraku let go of her naked breasts and responded to her thoughts.

"Five days, little miko... Tell me, how long do you think your body will hold up?"

Naraku's voice. Kagome really hated it, hated him, hated his touch, his very being. It was the first time she ever truly hated someone and she didn't like it a bit. Even in her worn out state Kagome didn't want to be someone hateful. Prying her eyes open, Kagome found Naraku standing close to her, undressed again. He had not taken her virginity as of yet...

//Maybe he can't?//

"Why's that, miko? Because I haven't?"

Kagome shut her eyes tight when Naraku pushed two fingers in between her legs. She was dry and it hurt like hell; the only comfort being that she was too exhausted to be devoured by the pain. Kagome didn't even try to scream anymore. There was no energy left for that. She just let her body relax as much as possible, trying not to think of the assaults, but Naraku's hated voice forced her to.

"If I can penetrate you with one part of my body, then why not another?"

By now Kagome was so utterly pained, spent and tired that she didn't even care.

//So he can take me, good for him. I just want to rest. I want to be with Inuyasha!//

Naraku forcefully grabbed Kagome's hair and banged her head against the wall while pushing his fingers violetly up inside her.

"Haven't you learned, miko? HE WON'T COME! He chose Kikyo, not you!"

Kagome felt her tears fall again. The pain of his hands was too much and she almost welcomed the scenery that took display on her inner sight yet again: Inuyasha screaming, shielding Kikyo, covering her body to safety, leaving Kagome herself to be stabbed, kidnapped, tortured...

//NO!! I won't fall for that again!//

Kagome flung her eyes open and glared darkly at Naraku, hating that disgusting smile of his.

//You dispecable person! That wasn't Inuyasha!// Kagome thought, trying to pierce Naraku with eyes and words.

Naraku snickered.

"What makes you think it wasn't him? You know he'd pick Kikyo over you any day."

//Even so, Inuyasha would never let me suffer like this! This is all your doing, not his!//

"Ah, that beautiful hate of yours..." Naraku pulled back, his fingers still within her.

"Tell me, do you think Inuyasha and Kikyo are in a similar position right now?"

Kagome felt all of her emotions, all her sense of feeling go numb for the longest second in her life, before returning in shape of flaming, scorching FURY! It wasn't, as Naraku certainly intended, because of the thought of Inuyasha and Kikyo together like that, but the [^]NERVE of Naraku to suggest that Inuyasha would such a thing! To suggest that he was some kind of selfish being, prioritizing lust before life, enjoyment to responsibility. To let what he craved go before DUTY --- To say such a thing about INUYASHA; who was willing to go to hell because that was the right thing to do! Kagome could hear herself make a blunt human growl even through the gag.

//How DARE you think so low of him?! How DARE you??//

Naraku snickered and began:

"Why, Kagome, miko..."

//Don't say my frackING name!// Kagome thought-screamed, sounding almost like Inuyasha talking to Kouga.

Naraku was to continue when his eyes suddenly widened in realisation. They were surrounded by a faint, pink glow despite the miasma in Kagome's wound, despite Naraku's foul presence. Kagome used her inner muscles and held onto Naraku's fingers inside of her not letting him go during those two fragments of a second she needed before her whole world became purifying pink.

//NO! This can't happen when she's filled with miasma... she should be dying!//

That was Naraku's last thought before pure, piercing and burning miko energy engulfed him and his whole castle, leaving only barren ground where the illusion of a castle once were. There were no minions, no low yokai, no other of Naraku's servants there. If there had been, they were definitely gone now. A naked, staggering and blood-stained figure could be seen in the spoiled soil, the one visible survivor. Kagome managed to let her eyes graze around briefly, searching for her foe. Finding nothing, she whispered hoarsely:

"Haha, I purified your @\$\$. "

That was all she could do before giving in to the pain. Kagome didn't even feel the impact when she fell.

Miles away, Sesshoumaru turned towards the sudden stir in the air. There was a rapid change in the wind's scent twice, and the first change brought the hated stench of -

"Naraku".

Sesshoumaru uttered his enemy's name in a low voice before he headed on towards the source. Naraku had created Kagura and many other yokai. He was strong; therefore he would be defeated. But worse, he had ordered for Rin to be kidnapped. If it was something Sesshoumaru didn't like it was when people took liberty with what concerned HIM. He had not been very happy to hear about the shattering of Tetsusaiga either. The imp Jaken and Rin, who sat securely upon Ah-Un, simply stared after him before they snapped out of it.

"Matte, Sesshoumaru-sama!"

"Matte, Sesshoumaru-sama!"

Since they hadn't been strictly forbidden to follow and they could still see him, Sesshoumaru's loyal companions were soon on his heels.

Even further away, Miroku suddenly harkened to some kind of silent signal with a "Huh!" and stopped in his tracks. Inuyasha and Shippo didn't notice; both of them were about to worry sick over Kagome and their focus were astray. Sango, however, rarely let Houshi-sama slide out of her focus completely and she was quickly by his side.

"Houshi-sama, what is it?"

"A great burst of spiritual power, just now, straight ahead of us. I've never felt it's like before!"

Sango squinted her eyes as if trying to see what Miroku could feel.

"Can it be Kikyo-sama?"

Miroku seemed uncertain.

"It doesn't feel like-"

Miroku abruptly silenced himself when Inuyasha let out a low growl, sniffing the breeze drifting their way almost violently.

"Naraku! I smell Naraku's foul stench in the wind!" Inuyasha let out through gritted teeth.

Inuyasha snapped his gaze ahead, same direction from where the miko energy came.

"It's there! He's there!"

“Is he close, Inuyasha?” Shippo eagerly asked while jumping onto Inuyasha's shoulder, trying to get a whiff off or see their opponement. Sango and Miroku dashed to their side. Sango let out a quick:

“Houshi-sama...!”

“Yes. Inuyasha, I felt a miko's power coming from there only seconds ago!”

“But now the scent's gone! It was only there for a second or so!”

Miroku knew Inuyasha was afraid of being sidetracked and by scent, he could be. But that miko power...

“We have no time to hesitate, Inuyasha! Someone linked to Naraku is there along with a powerful miko. Let's hurry there before they disappear!”

Inuyasha stood frozen for a moment while Miroku and Sango jumped up on the now transformed Kirara, Sango with hiraikotsu on her back and Miroku with Kagome's yellow bag on his back.

//What if it's a trap? What if Kagome's the other way?//

Fear nestled its way into Inuyasha's mind, but in the end, it was the thought of Kagome dying because he couldn't make a descision that made it. Making sure Shippo was securely clutched to his shoulder, Inuyasha leapt ahead.

“Keh, standing here won't get us anywhere!” he shouted over his shoulder, trying to pretend to still be leader of the pack.

However, Inuyasha knew better himself. He was less of a fighter without Kagome, everyone knew that. But it was more than that. He felt insecure without her nearby, especially so when he knew she might be in danger. And this time she most certainly was in danger. So who could blame him for not being able to be the leader? KAGOME WAS MISSING, so who could expect him to pull his shoot together anyway?

//Kagome could...// A small piece of Inuyasha's mind answered that.

Inuyasha made a sound in his throat and fixed his gaze far on ahead. That was true. Kagome expected him to function anyway. Kagome needed him to pull this through, so Inuyasha fell back on an old trick of his.

He spoke to Kagome in his mind.

//Five days... five frackng days, Kagome! Are you still alive? Keh,' course you are! You just wait there for me, you hear that? Just wait. I'll kill him for hurting you!//