

My Love – from Blood and Shadow

The Puppets who found their Soul

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My life is worth nothing, because... I don't even exist in the first place...
I don't have a name, I don't have a family, I don't have someone who I can love nor someone who loves me... I am nobody, nothing.

"Hey! You've got a mission! Go and see the head!"

I nodded, still half asleep and yawning. I stood up from my sleep place on the ground and clothed myself, then bound my black, long hair together in a ponytail and left the room, where everyone else was still sleeping. When I stood in the corridor and turned my head to the left, I saw the one who had woken me up. He gave me a sign with his thumb to follow him, so I did. I saw other people walking past us... People like myself who were living in the shadows of this world, because the light had thrown us out. Now, we spilled the fluid of life without caring or regret...

We stopped before a huge door, that was more than familiar to me. I gave my guide – or more precise, my watchdog – a nod with my head and went inside. The room I was in now was, as usual, dim and a little bit hotter than necessary. The few lights, that one could see, were flickering in the wind, that I created by passing by. I stopped at the end of my path, where a man was sitting in a pompously chair like a throne. And indeed, for me he was like a king. Someone I could not disobey without losing my life. I knelt before him and closed my eyes. I did not need to greet him with my voice. No one was allowed to speak to him. unless he said otherwise or asked something. Until then, everyone was a voiceless doll, doing as the puppeteer wished it.

"So you are here, I see. Good... I have a new mission for you. I want you to sneak into the manor of Kokoni. Once you have entered, I want you to go into the bedroom of the master of the house and kill him, as well as the rest of his family. Means his wife and his children. He has two sons and one daughter. They are triplets, so you cannot miss them. That is all. Once you have finished, come back and report the results to me. I hope you won't disappoint me. Now go!"

I stood up and left without a word... as always. Although we all, who are here, don't have a name, he still remembers us all and selects us for the missions according to our abilities. It's strange, that someone who rarely speaks to us nor knows us, can actually choose us to do his bidding.

I went into the armory to select my weapons. Throw knives, two hidden daggers, which I put into my shoes on both sides and...

I walked to the end of the room and opened a box with a black wolf drawn on it. Inside

was a sword with a black sheath, that had white moons carved into it. The sword clutch was white as well.

This... was my only possession. The only thing that belonged to me. Everything else belonged to "the king."

I secured the sword on my belt and left the armory. I would not need more than this, because the rest was up to myself and my skills.

The manor was guarded heavily and I already understood – I would not get around killing a few of the guards. I jumped, from the wall, that surrounded the manor, onto the roof of a shelter in the garden. From there I jumped down onto a sheltered outside path and slit the throat of a guard from behind. The blood splashed out in an instant and the only sound that could be heard was a quiet gargle. The guard fell on the ground that was colored red by his own blood. I hurried on, without giving the now dead corpse as much as a glance, and drew my sword to kill the next one, which had just passed the corner in front of me. With a swift strike was his head severed, his blood gushed out while I had jumped back. The guard's head rolled towards my feet and stopped its path before me. His empty eyes stared at me in surprise. He had not even understood what had happened to him. Slightly did I touch his cheek, but my fingers immediately flinched back. I shook my head and continued to walk in the direction of the bedroom of the master and hid myself at the end of the way. I glanced around the corner but saw no one.

The door was unguarded? How could this be?

I closed my eyes and sharpened my senses. There! I could feel it! A person was hiding its presence. He was right before the door.

Was it a ninja-technique? It had to be. Probably a wood-hide-technique.

I stepped out of the shadows and directly into the moonlight. Slowly, I approached the door. That ninja was sure to have seen me, that was definite. I hid one of my hands to perform finger signs, not seen by my enemy and combined it with one of my throw knives.

I threw it directly into the wood ground, which immediately caught on fire through a big flame. The person in the ground jumped away at once and dashed in my direction with an unsheathed sword. It was a middle aged man with grey hair and eyes. He was tall and broad shouldered and had his face half hidden with a cloth. Our swords clashed and I could tell, that my opponent was smiling.

"What does a youngster like you have from killing my master? Who sent you, young man?"

I did not reply, I did not need to do so. The dead do not need to know the reason for their death nor the person who killed them.

Plants were trying to capture me, to slow down my movements, but I burned them with my instant-body-flame-technique. I rushed forward towards my enemy, threw a few knives, which he parried and could inflict a wound on his body. The blood soaked into his clothing and was colored red around the wound. He moved a few steps back and looked at me, admiring.

"You are skilled, young man. Until now, I never met someone so young who could match me. Who are you?"

" ... "

"So, you do not even want to tell me your name. Would you do so, if I defeat you?"

"I cannot tell you my name, if I was not even given one."

"You do not call a name your own? Then how can you live with others without being

called?"

"I do not live, because I do not exist. I am nothing..."

The grey man shook his head, sadness was reflected in his eyes.

"Who raised a poor soul such as you? You have my pity..."

Pity... I often heard it from those I fought. But I never understood why they pitied me? After all, was I but a puppet. A thing that could disappear any moment. Something that did not even get noticed, when it vanished!

"You do not need to pity me. I am merely a shadow called a puppet, maybe even just a mirage, lingering in darkness. So no one needs to weep for me, even if I disappear. Your pity is something that I do not need. It is unnecessary."

"I see... A shadow, is it? Very well then! I shall let a shadow perish, which I have given my pity to."

Pillars of wood surrounded me. I was caged in. Fast did I use an earth-technique and threw the pillars into the air. After that I just went through the created rocks with another technique. My opponent split a rock and almost split me together with it, but I stopped his sword with my own. He was pushing me down steadily, because he was stronger than me. Then, when I almost knelt, did I use one of my hidden daggers and stabbed him very fast in his chest, near his heart, while holding my sword up. He coughed and a rivulet of blood ran down his chin, then it dripped down on my face and ran down my cheek like a tear. He staggered backwards and fell on his knees. Then, he looked up to me pained and smiled.

"A shadow... which kills...", he coughed again, whereupon more blood its way out of his lungs cleared.

The man fell over and did not move after that again. Silently I went to the door and opened it. I stepped into the house and stood in a corridor. That corridor led to the bedrooms. To the right were the two boys, left was the daughter and up ahead were the master and mistress. First I went into the boys room and killed them through decapitation. Then I killed the girl with a single stab in the heart. When I was on my way to the parents bedroom a person appeared behind me. I turned around and drew my sword. I got wounded, but at least not killed in an instant. My side pained me, where she had struck me with her sword. It was a woman, who had wounded me. Angry she looked at me, tears glittering in her eyes.

I held my hand on the wound and focused on her movements.

"How dare you kill my husband!"

I blinked, expressionless. What did she expect from me? To beg for forgiveness? I did not even understand the bond called marriage, so how could I comprehend her feelings?

"I will kill you! Here and now!"

She ran towards me, a short sword in her hands. I evaded her attack, but she was more agile than me and inflicted another wound on me. This time on my shoulder. My blood was dripping on the floor and my breath became more difficult and rapidly. The wound at my side was more severe than I had thought and blood was constantly leaving my body. I would soon lose my consciousness.

The master and mistress, woken up by the noise, came out of their room and looked perplex at the scene that was brought before their eyes. I approached them as fast as I could, used a water-technique to hinder my enemy and beheaded both of them in one strike. I got even more soaked in blood, because I could not evade it within this small space. The corridor was painted red. I averted my eyes and concentrated on the woman, which I could still not see, because of the darkness. She screamed and was

blind with anger. In the moment of her too rash action, did I strike her in the chest and had thus cut open her torso. She fell on the ground, but I did not care. My vision was blurring and I was staggering. As fast as I could did I leave the manor and hid from the soon approaching guards. In the commotion I sneaked completely out and fainted on a path, which I could no longer see...

It was warm and I felt secure. So that was it like to be dead? How comforting and nice...

I heard the songs of birds and felt sunrays on my skin. Everything was so calm... Slowly, I opened my eyes and blinked. The sun was blending me, so I raised my hand to cover my face. I was not dead? I heard the rustle of clothes and tried to sit up, but jolted when the pain from my wounds hit me and sank back into the pillows.

"You should not get up yet. Your wounds are quite deep, you know?"

I looked to my right and saw a young man about my age, smiling at me and filling water into a glass. He was one head taller than me and had very long, blond hair that was tight together and braided. His stature was broader than mine and his skin was tanned. His eyes had a very light color, so I could not tell what kind of a color they really were, but I think one could call it mist-grey. Still smiling, he held the glass of water before me.

"Can you drink on your own?"

I nodded and slowly drank. Surely the risk of being killed by poison after being just nursed back was low. I sighed relieved and gave him the glass back.

"How about you sleep a little more? I will come back later with something to eat."

He left towards the exit of the room, but turned around once he had reached the door.

"By the way, my name is Hikari, so if you need something just call me. Good night."

Steadily I fell back into the land of dreams and closed my eyes.

When I woke up again he, Hikari, was standing beside my bed.

"Oh, did I wake you up? My apologies! I brought you a soup. Would you like to eat it now or later?"

I sat slowly up and took the tablet with the soup from him. While I ate I glanced towards him. He just watched me and smiled, nothing else.

Who was he anyway? And why did he help me? I am sure I passed out in the middle of a road and who is so stupid as to take some stranger in? Not to mention that he must be loaded with money, if one looked at this room. And if it is not his than it is his parents wealth. None the less, this is the place of a rich person and those are normally against taking in a nobody like me.

I had finished my soup while thinking and he put the tablet away. Then he sat down on a chair and looked into my eyes.

"So then, would you tell me who you are?"

"I am no one."

"I see... Well, like I said before I am Hikari, the son of Lord Taka and I picked you up from the road, while I was returning from a travel."

"I see. Then I guess, I must thank you, but why did you help me? I am but a stranger."

"True, but you seemed interesting to me, so I picked you up."

Like picking up a stray dog, because he's cute?

"Well, I am no one who could be of interest to you. If you like I will pay you back for your trouble, but otherwise I will be going now."

"In that condition?"

I nodded and he chuckled.

"Fine, but I think that you are quite intriguing, actually. So, why don't you stay a little longer with me?"

"I cannot do that. I have somewhere to go."

"Back to your ninja-base, so you can report back?"

I glared at him warningly.

"Scary! Sorry, but it is quite obvious what your job is, you know. I could tell after a glance, that you are a ninja. Don't worry, I am not one of your enemies, I won't sell you out. But even if I am not one of your enemies, I want you to stay. Otherwise I will have you decapitated. How about it, do we have a deal, mister ninja?"

Sweetly he smiled at me and rested his head on his hands. I sighed annoyed.

"What do you have from having me stay with you?"

"Entertainment and someone to talk to naturally. I always have to act sweet and caring and polite towards others, although that's not at all my personality. The fate of a future Lord, I guess. It is annoying and tiring, so I will use you as compensation. Oh, but don't worry, I will still let you work. For my ambitions, of course."

His eyes were sparkling like that of a child, that had received a new toy. But in his eyes were lingering a darkness, I could not find words for. This man was dangerous. And somehow I knew, he could easily rival "the king."

"Alright, I will stay. But don't blame me, if you regret it later on."

"Of course not! Well, now... How about you finally tell me your name, hm?"

I shook my head.

"I do not have one. I am but a puppet."

He looked at me, the first time without a smile.

"You do not have a name?"

I nodded. The young master looked down and was deeply in thought. After a while he looked up again.

"Well then, I have decided! Your name from today onwards will be Kutsuo! Set together by the letters from black, moon and wolf! Kutsuo!"

I think that was the first time in my life that I looked surprised.

"Say what?!"

He snickered.

"What? You do not like it? I thought it was quite the good name. Black because of your hair, moon because of your golden eyes and wolf because you resemble one. See? It is not even a random one, but a well thought up one."

I blinked. My head was empty. I was given a name? Me? I did not know why, but to have a name kind of embarrassed me. My face turned red.

He chuckled and lifted up my face.

"See? I knew you would be interesting..."

He kissed me, just like that. Not just a peck or mouth on mouth but a genuine one with tongue. My face became a nuance darker red. He was a very good kisser. It was not my first one nor was I a virgin. After all was it not uncommon to sleep with a target to be able to kill it better. Be it man or woman did not matter. Still...

"I will be going then, for now. And you!" he pointed a finger at me. "You better get healthy soon or I will get mad at you! Well, see you later then, Kutsuo."

He left the room and myself speechless.

A few days later could I leave the bed and explored the mansion, I was now living in. It

was huge and I got a few times lost. The mansion had several guest rooms and reception rooms. The rooms of the family were lying separately, from the reception and guest rooms, in a different house. If you entered the mansion you would first get in to the reception rooms, from that complex you would be able to enter a gigantic garden and through that garden could you reach the main house for the family. And in that main house was I staying. On top of that, directly beside the room of the young master was my room. And if that was not bad enough, the young master had even the servants forbidden to go near me, because I was his exclusive property.

I sighed resigned. And such a person was now my master, I could not believe it. The others from the base probably found out by now, that I had finished my mission successfully.

I wonder what they are thinking now? That I was running away from them?

While I had wandered around the mansion and was thinking, it had become dark. I looked up at the sky and gazed at the moon. It was a full moon night. I truly liked the night. This was the time when I was most active. I could hide myself, enveloped in darkness with just a glim of light. I inhaled the cold night air and closed my eyes, shivering from the cool.

"Kutsuo! Here is where you were! I was looking for you!"

Hikari hugged me from behind.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing, master."

"Hmm... Are you enjoying the cold full moon night? I like these nights, you know. They are like you..."

He turned my face towards his and kissed me passionately.

"I know something we can do, that is far more enjoyable in such a night. Come with me..."

He took me by hand and dragged me along. We stopped before his room and he turned around.

"Is that alright with you?"

"I am yours, of course it is."

He shook his head and sighed.

"Fine. I at least will make you enjoy it. I don't think most of your targets got the chance for that."

I looked at the floor, thought about it and nodded.

"True. Most of the time I had already killed them at that point."

"I knew it. Well, come in. It is cold after all..."

He pushed the door open, pulled me into his arms and kissed me again. While our lips were merged together, we entered the room and he pushed the door with his foot, to close it...

The next day I woke up being tickled. I slapped the annoying object away, which I later on identified as a strand of long hair from my master. I yawned and looked at him. He was smiling and let his hand tender slide along my body lines. A shiver ran through my body. Hikari chuckled.

"You know, I didn't think that you would be so sensitive. I thought so yesterday, too."

"Why should I not be sensitive? Just because I am quite expressionless does not rule something like that out, does it?"

"True, I guess. Before I forget it again. Would you do a job for me?"

I looked into his eyes. He was still smiling, coldly.

"It is a simple task. The governor of Toho will arrive here tomorrow and then stay for the night. My father has a friendship towards him, but as sorry as I am, he is unfortunately in the way."

"What is it that you want anyway? Being the Emperor or ruler of the world?"

"You must be joking! That is an absolute stupid goal! No, thank you. But you could say that I want to be like an emperor. Lets just say my goal is to be the shadow of the Emperor. That is something one can accomplish without being of royal blood or liked by peasants."

"An underground emperor."

"Exactly! My father thinks that people in the shadows are useless and should not be approached, but I think that's quite the opposite. Who knows better how to kill someone than someone who did it already. Means such a person could far better protect me from someone who wants to kill me than anybody else. That is why I want to rule the underground of this world and make the human shadows serve me."

An ominous light was glowing in his eyes.

"Anyways! Can you kill the governor in a natural seeming way? After all I cannot have a blood bath in my own house. Even though I would not mind the cost-free painting."

He smirked and was lying on top of me now, looking deep into my eyes.

"Well?"

"I can do it, if I have a specific poison. It gives the victim a natural heart attack and I heard the governor of Toho has a predisposition for a lifestyle, that makes him quite susceptible for it. And to disguise myself as a servant is easy enough."

"Alright. I will get the ingredients for the poison for you. I knew I could count on you, my little, black moon wolf. Kutsuo..."

He blew a kiss on my neck and began to embrace me a second time...

The day when the governor would come had arrived and I was more than prepared. I had done a little research on him and as it seems would it be even more easy to kill him, than I had thought. Governor Toho liked males. Means, I would easily get him to drink the poison.

After the dinner with the Lord and my master, the governor sat alone in one of the guest rooms and drank a little alcohol. Disguised as a servant, I entered the room to serve more of the supposedly alcohol. When I was near enough I purposely slipped and spilled a bottle of real alcohol.

"I am so sorry, sire! Please, forgive me!"

While I had said that, I had stepped on the band of my yukata and had half stripped myself and on top of that fell on the governor. I made an embarrassed expression and looked up with innocent eyes. The governors face had turned red and I could feel an erection through the yukata. I looked to the side pretending to begin to panic.

"I am so sorry! Oh no! I don't know what I should do! If the master finds out! I...!"

With tears in my eyes I looked again to the governor.

"Please, don't tell it the master, my lord! Please!"

He swallowed and smirked.

"Well, Lord Taka does not have to know of this. How about you serve me a little and I forget about this?"

He caressed my face and I nodded.

"Then... Should I let you drink a little more of the alcohol first, my Lord? I brought a second bottle with me."

"I did not mean that kind of serving, my beautiful one."

"I-I know! Please,... just let me do it."

I took the bottle with the poison, took a sip without swallowing it and gave it to the governor through a kiss. He swallowed it obediently and smiled. The poison would take a little time to work.

"I see... Not bad! How about another one of those?"

I gave him another poisoned kiss. And one more. After that it finally worked. He was holding onto his chest, catching his breath. I looked at him for a short while as he was creeping on the floor, suffocating, reaching out his hand towards me. Then I just left the room. A few minutes after that a scream was echoing through the mansion. As it seems, had the female servant with the real prepared alcohol arrived.

"I call that a successful mission. Nicely done, Kutsuo."

"Thank you, Master. Is there anything else you need?"

"Of course. I need you."

He smiled at me and I got a little embarrassed. It was strange. Normally I disliked having sex, but it was different with my master. Since I had returned to his room I sat on his lap, because he had requested it. It was surprisingly comfortable.

"Well, can I take you?"

I looked at him and nodded slightly. But before he could even kiss me, someone knocked at the door.

"Excuse me, young master Hikari, but could we come in? Your father is with me. We would like to talk to you about something."

"Sure, please enter."

I looked at him and tried to get off his lap, but he held me back and shook his head.

"It is alright. Stay like that. This is my room and here I can do as I please."

An armed servant together with the Lord, entered the room. The Lord looked like an older version of my master, the servant had short, red hair and sharp, green eyes. He was tanned and broad build. Both of them looked at us quite shocked.

"Hikari! What is the meaning of this?!"

"I think that is obvious, father. He is my lover, apparently."

"Your...! I only allowed this scum to come into my house, because you would not stop to get on my nerves with it! But this! Was this your intention from the start?! And since when are you so cheeky towards me?! I am your father!"

"First of all: Kutsuo is no scum and he is definitely far better than those ladies you chose for me. Next is: Yes, I kind of had that intention from the start, because he intrigues me and last but not least: I know that you are my father, but that does not make you to a god. So, sometimes I will be cheeky. Please forgive me, no?"

Hikari smiled at the Lord and I was surprised. What was going on? Normally, my master would be submissive towards the lord, but he was so outgoing all of a sudden, that it was shocking.

"Insolent! How dare you?! Rulus, take my son into custody and teach him a lesson!"

Rulus was the red haired man, who had entered together with the lord. He bowed, looked with a glance to my master and drew his sword. Before the Lord even understood what had happened, was he beheaded.

"Well, I'd say that was nice and clean. Good work, Rulus."

"Not at all, master Hikari. Then we will clean this mess up. Would you change rooms for a while, please?"

"Sure, thank you very much."

I stood up and followed my master into another room, where he sat down again.

"I guess you are surprised, Kutsuo."

"Quite so, master."

"I thought so. Since I was young, I was not of much worth to my family. I was just the child that would carry on the name of the family and had to act accordingly. I knew back then already, that I wanted to be my own master, not just a puppet. Already in my young years did I begin to take over the household. Almost all servants and guards are by now under my control. Of course, my father and mother do not know of this. I also have political links. Links that are far more high ranking and powerful than those of my father. I have already set the cornerstones for my own Empire, Kutsuo. And you are one of those. One, I am very proud of and I admit it gladly, am deeply in love with too."

He looked at me gently and reached out his hand towards me. I took it and sat down on his lap again.

"What about you? Are you willing to follow me?"

I looked into his mist-like eyes and kissed him. I did not know a lot of emotions, but what I knew was, that I had fallen for this, oh so dangerous man, who had captured my everything, since the first time he had laid his eyes on me.

"I will follow you, even into hell, if that is where you are going. I said so already: I am yours..."

Over the years my master had truly build an underground empire and was like the kings shadow. But the more power he got, the less he was the man I knew and loved. He had given me feelings and an existence, he had made me human. For me he was like a god, but because of his cruelty towards me, did I fall apart, bit by bit.

Because I was human again, I disliked it more and more to kill and although he had promised me, that I could stop killing in the future, was I more bloodied than ever. I was a wolf that was hunting for him... He forgot me, my feelings and most important... his own feelings for me...

Then one day, when I was completely shattered into pieces, I entered his room, where he was having fun with several ladies and men alike. When he noticed me, he looked at me surprised.

"What's wrong, Kutsuo? Is something the matter?"

I nodded and gripped my sword, that I had brought along, tightly. My master raised his eyebrows, asking, but send everybody else out.

"Now, what is wrong? Did something happen on your mission?"

I shook my head.

"Then what is it?"

He stood up and walked towards me, his arms wide open. In seconds was I near him and stabbed him. He staggered back and fell on his knees.

My sword stuck in his chest, dripping blood on the floor and he looked disbelieving into my eyes.

"Why...? Kutsuo...?"

He coughed blood up and it ran down his chin. I sank down to him, put his face between my hands and smiled sadly at him.

"I am sorry, master... But I could not take it anymore. I was killing and evermore killing for you, although I could not bear it any longer. I was falling apart and today I shattered, but you did not even care or notice. And you... You, who once picked me up, gave me a name and gave me my emotions back, only saw me as a tool by now... I am sorry! I love you master, I do! But I could no longer be used as a tool, because you

made me human. I cannot return to being a puppet... And I wanted you to realize how much you have changed. That was the only way I knew of... Please, forgive me...!"

Hikari looked at me with sudden realization. As if death was showing him what he had done to me and to himself. His expression became sad, but he understood and regretted. How could he have done something so cruel to his one and only beloved? The only one, who would not betray him, nor ever see him as an object? He nodded and held on to me, whispering in my ear.

"Will you... come with... me...?"

"Yes... Yes, I will... I said so a long time ago, did I not? I will go where ever you are going. Even, if it is into hell..."

We kissed each other a last time, before his lips grew completely cold and he fell lifeless into my arms, his eyes closed and a slight smile on his lips. The usual smile, he always had, while looking at me.

I pulled my sword out of his body and let him sink slowly on the floor. A last time did I look at him, gently, tears silently running down my face. I took my sword and stabbed myself, falling down on his already cold body. Like this, we looked like two lovers who were floating in a red river, merely sleeping. But this sleep was eternal, a love embedded in blood and shadows... The puppets had become humans and the humans had become forever intertwined souls...

My love – from blood and shadow...

Ende