

Time's Orphan

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Squall finds himself recalling a dark-haired boy who spent a month at Edea's orphanage with them.

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1 - Chapter 01

FINAL FANTASY VIII

-Time's Orphan-

Squall lay back, trying to remember more of his past. He had remembered so much, but so many things remained unanswered. He pushed aside all the reasons his father might have had for leaving him there. He'd heard all Laguna had to say about it, and that had been far more than he'd wanted to hear. He'd hoped Laguna would say "I didn't love you," or "I never wanted you." Then, he could have hated the man, punched him in the mouth, and had it all behind him. Instead, Laguna had love him. Loved him with such fierce paternal loyalty that he had done all he could to make sure that Squall had as normal a childhood as he could provide him. With Raine having died in childbirth, Laguna had found a woman he felt would be a suitable mother, Edea Kramer.

The orphanage had been an instant family for Squall and his 'big sister' Ellone. He'd met Zell there, along with Quistis and Selphie. Even Seifer had been there. Had Fujin and Raijin been there, too, at some point? He couldn't remember. All he could remember were the people in his group, Matron, and a small dark-haired boy whose name he could not recall.

"Who were you?" he wondered as he drifted off to sleep.

Edea hummed a song that Squall thought sounded familiar. She was sitting down, the boy Squall couldn't remember seated on her lap. Squall himself, the one from that time period at least, didn't seem to like the boy very much.

"Does he have to stay here?"

"Of course," Edea told him. The boy in her lap sneezed and she wiped his nose. "You want him to get better, don't you?"

Squall shrugged.

The boy sneezed again.

"You're going to be all right, my little paradox." Edea told the boy as she wiped his nose again.

The scene changed, and Squall found himself in the door of his room, pouting at Matron.

"He can't sleep there," Squall pouted. "That's Sis's bed. When Sis comes home, she's gonna sleep there."

"But she didn't come home," the older Squall remembered. "She stayed away and I blamed it all on Paradox."

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FINAL FANTASY VIII

-Time's Orphan-

-Chapter 02-

Watching a spider skitter across the ceiling, Squall could not get Little Paradox out of his mind. "You tried to be my best friend, didn't you?" he said to himself as Quistis walked into the room. "But I was so mad at you because Sis didn't come back."

"We all tried to be your best friend, Squall," Quistis said from the doorway, thinking he was speaking to her. "We all still do."

Squall nodded, curtly, in angry embarrassment. He stood up, and headed down the corridor to breakfast with a puzzled Quistis following in his wake.

"I didn't mean you." Squall told Quistis when they joined the others and he finally saw her expression.

"Oh," Quistis replied. She wasn't sure if it made her feel better, but she was, at least, a bit less puzzled.

"I was thinking of that other boy. Do any of you remember him?" He looked at each of them, seeing that they were trying to recall the child he was speaking of.

"A dark-haired boy..." Quistis remembered.

"With an infectiously cheerful attitude..." Irvine added his own recollection. "Even gave Selphie a run for her money in that department."

"He was younger than we were..." Zell put in.

"And he liked to sing." Squall shuddered. "All the time."

"He sounds sweet," Rinoa smiled.

"He was sweet." Quistis recalled, fondly. "Though Squall didn't seem to think so at the time."

~*~

Little Paradox was singing again.

Squall wished the boy would go away. He had been here in Squall and Sis's room all week now. That mean that Sis couldn't come back. She needed her bed to be free. That's how it worked. If her bed was taken up by someone else, she would not be able to come back.

He glared at the singing boy.

Little Paradox beamed at Squall in reply. He didn't like to see Squall frowning and was doing his best to cheer him up.

"Come and play!" Selphie invited cheerfully as she ran through the room.

Little Paradox followed her, laughing and still singing that song that annoyed Squall so very much.

~*~

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FINAL FANTASY VIII

-Time's Orphan-

-Chapter 03-

"He and Selphie had so much fun." The memory was a good one for Quistis and it made her smile. "He was only there for a month, though. Somebody must have adopted him."

"No," Irvine shook his head. "He just vanished. Just as mysteriously as he arrived. Thing is, Matron seemed to expect it. She was sad that he was gone, but not worried."

Squall let out a sigh. "I thought Sis would come back when he left. But she didn't. She never came back."

"And you missed out on being friends with Little Paradox in the meantime," Rinoa shook her head. "Poor Squall."

"So, what's the agenda for today?" Irvine inquired.

"Lunch at the Palace," Squall shrugged.

"An afternoon with Sir Laguna," Selphie sighed as she headed off to the Ragnarok.

"Does she have to do that?" Squall grumbled as he and the others followed.

"Let's just hope you don't have to call her 'Mom' one day," Irvine remarked.

Squall glared at him and they all started to laugh. Even Squall joined in, in spite of himself.

Laguna was putting the finishing touches on lunch when they arrived. Although he was President, he insisted on taking care of the little things himself. If he noticed their arrival he didn't show it. He just darted around the room,

making sure everything was just right, and singing happily to himself.

It was a song that Squall recognized, though at first he couldn't quite think of where he'd heard it.

"Dad."

Laguna smiled. It had taken a while for them to come to terms with each other as father and son.

Squall had hated him at first for not coming to get him, and Laguna had not taken the rejection well at all. It had made him physically ill, and Kiro, concerned for Laguna's health, had forbidden Squall to see him until Squall could be more civilized toward him.

For two months, Squall had ignored Laguna's attempts to reconcile their differences. That had come to an end when Rinoa had chastised him for wasting time being mad instead of making up for the time he and Laguna had lost.

Laguna continued singing, the song hauntingly familiar to Squall. And then it hit him.

It was the song Little Paradox used to sing.

Little Paradox.

A dark-haired little boy with an infectious cheerfulness appeared clearly in Squall's mind. His eyes twinkling as he sang, hair falling across his face as he and Selphie played with the model train. The boy in his memory looked directly at Squall.

And in that moment, Squall knew.

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FINAL FANTASY VIII

-Time's Orphan-

-Chapter 04-

Squall stared at his father. "Little Paradox?"

Laguna's eyes sparkled with tears as he recalled his friends at the orphanage.

With full plates in hand, Squall and Laguna joined the others.

"You're not going to believe this," Squall told the others.

Selphie looked over at them and was about to ask "What?" when she realized what Squall was going to say. "Little Paradox!" she cried out, going over to Laguna and hugging him.

"But... how?" Quistis wondered.

"He must have been pulled there during the Time Compression," Rinoa suggested.

"I tried so hard to be your friend," Laguna told Squall.

"But I blamed you for Ellone not returning."

"Which ironically was my fault," Laguna admitted.

"When I became President, I sent my soldiers out to find her. They didn't know Adel had been overthrown so they thought she was looking for Ellone again. That was why Edea sent her away. Though it would seem that my fear of rejection is all your fault, son."

"So what you're saying," Selphie realized, "is that the reason you never personally went to get Ellone was that you were afraid that Raine would reject you the way Squall had rejected you when you were a little boy."

"But," Quistis joined in, "Squall had rejected you because the adult you was responsible for Ellone leaving the orphanage."

"And the reason for that was because you were afraid Ellone would reject you because Squall had done so when you were a little boy." Irvine finished.

"So it was all Squall's fault." Rinoa stuck her tongue out, playfully, at Squall.

Squall stuck his own tongue out right back at her.

Food forgotten for the moment, the group played as they hadn't played in years.

Selphie and Irvine enjoyed a model train Laguna bought for them. Zell played tag with Quistis and Rinoa.

Laguna and Squall sang together this time.