

Assassination of Shinta

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Just a quick one-shot of Kenshin dealing with his first assassination... and starting to realize (if not understand) the consequences of his choice. Please Review!

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1 - Assassination of Shinta

Disclaimer: I own nothing Ruroken. Wish I did... but then I wouldn't have Watsuki-san's great stories... just mine... what fun would that be...?

Assassination of Shinta

The sun was setting, reds fading to lavender in the expansive sky. It was a beautiful sight. But darkness was coming, and shadows were spreading across the earth. If there were to be demons, this was when they would come out and play.

A small, red haired youth sat underneath a cherry tree, nearly invisible, waiting for the right moment to leave his sanctuary. He fingered the cherry blossoms on the ground beside him. Beautiful and fragile. Kenshin smiled a little, thinking back to his shishou. Cherry blossoms were one of the few small, beautiful things that Hiko Seijuro seemed to like. It was because they were so small and fragile, but at the same time... The scent... the beauty... it was overwhelming. They had a strength within them. Kenshin had once asked Hiko if this is what he saw in the cherry blossoms, but the only answer he had received was laughter.

Kenshin fingered the small, pink blossoms, a familiar ache in his chest. He missed his shishou. He wouldn't admit that, but the harsh, powerful man had been like a father to him. And there were rare moments that Kenshin had even seen a streak of kindness in him, hiding inside all of that cynicism and coldness. The boy closed his eyes. But those were memories of a dead past. He would never see Hiko Seijuro again. Would never drink sake with him.

After tonight, the boy, Shinta, would never exist again. Because Shinta had been innocent. Shinta had never killed. Nor had Kenshin really... until now...

Kenshin's eyes lowered to the petals in his hand. *Try not to think about tonight...*

But tonight was only a few short minutes away...

He shook his head, grimacing. This had to stop. He had made his choice. It wasn't his fault that Hiko wouldn't understand. It wasn't his fault that there was a revolution. People died in revolutions. It wasn't his fault that he had to kill them.

But it was his choice.

I have to stop thinking like this.

A breeze tugged at his hair, caressing his face and causing him to look back up at the first stars appearing in the darkening sky. The golden disk of the sun had finally slipped beyond the horizon, leaving the boy in near darkness.

There was a sound. People talking as they walked from the temple. The boy tensed and slowly stood, peering around the tree and watching two men as they walked down the steps. The cherry blossoms fell from his hands.

The older one. That was him. The man Katsura-san had described.

Kenshin stepped out of the shadows, quietly assessing the men. "You are Takahasho Jiro?" he asked softly.

The older man froze as the youth beside him demanded, "Who are you? What do you want with Takahasho-san?"

Kenshin ignored him, his eyes remaining on Takahasho. "You are to be punished for crimes against this country."

Why did the words taste foul?

The older man backed up a step as his companion drew a katana and attacked.

He lay dead on the ground in seconds.

Kenshin didn't stop his momentum, swinging his blade around and using the force of his own movement to cut the old man down as well.

Then all was silent. Kenshin stood alone in the shadows. The only sound was that of his own breath. Blood was all around. That was what his words had tasted of.

Blood.

He wiped his blade and finally sheathed it, turning from the sight, and facing the cherry tree again.

There was a figure under it. A small boy, wide-eyed boy watching him. He was stained crimson.

Kenshin closed his eyes to block out the vision.

Innocence painted in blood.

When he opened his eyes, the boy was gone.

Shinta was no more.

It's not my fault.

But he knew.

It had been his choice.

"Will you kill for me?" —Katsura Kogoro

"I will murder." —Himura Kenshin

Author's Note: Just an idea that popped into my mind. Because in a way... Kenshin's agreement to assassinate did kill the innocent boy. That's not something he buried. He couldn't bring that back, which is why later he seems to have reformed a lot of his original personality. He's very similar to how he was as a youth... but he's different. Anyway, that's how it felt. So, this is what you get. I hope you liked it. Thank you for reading. Please review.