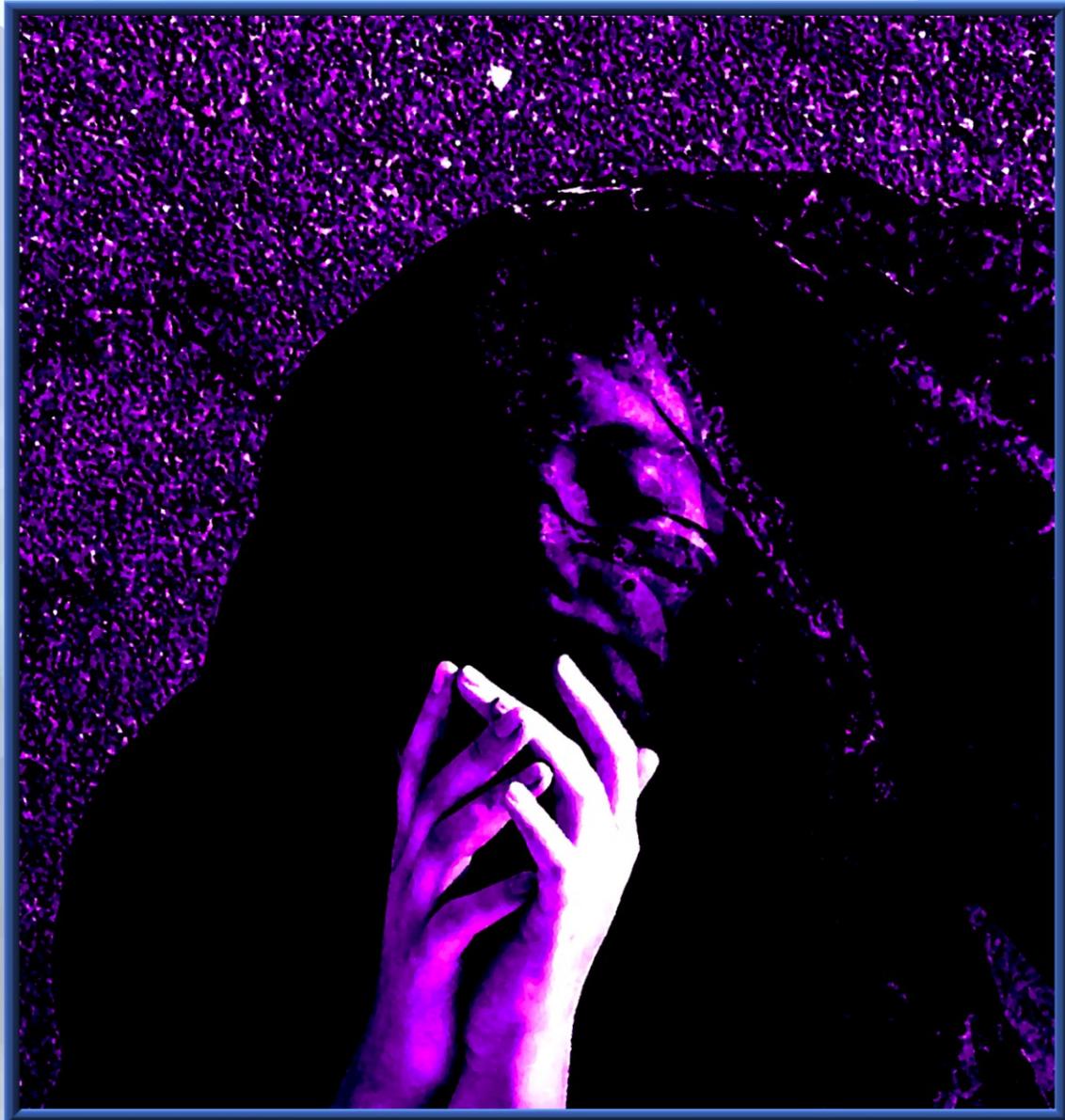


Ardath Rekha's Fan Fiction

Book Editions

Where Silence and Death Meet

Sequel to "Death Row" by LadyElaine



By Ardath Rekha

Where Silence and Death Meet

By Ardath Rekha

Synopsis: Jack attends Riddick's execution.

Notes: This is a companion piece to *Death Row*, by LadyElaine, from Jack's POV. Thank you to LadyElaine for permission to write this. Please read her piece first, before reading this piece. This is heavy subject matter, and very dark. Be warned.

Category: Fan Fiction

Fandom: *Pitch Black*

Series: Death and Silence (2 of 2)

Challenges: None

Rating: M

Orientation: Het (Plot)

Pairing: Riddick/Jack

Warnings: Adult Situations, Controversial Subject Matter (The Death Penalty), Harsh Language, Graphic Violence / Gore, Death, Murder

Number of Chapters: 1

Net Word Count: 2,313

Total Word Count: 2,634

Story Length: Short Story

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Status: Complete

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Where Silence and Death Meet

Today is the day Riddick dies.

I don't know how to feel. Part of me feels like he's been dead for a long time now. The Riddick *I* knew, anyway... or thought I knew.

I haven't seen him since the sentencing. My face was still healing at that point. I could feel him staring at me the whole time. What did he want? He was probably hating me for having gotten him into this mess, the bastard. Like it was my fault. I didn't look at him. I couldn't. Every time I tried to, I remembered seeing him above me, snarling like a hideous beast as he called me a whore and cocked his fist back for the blow that would finally knock me out.

Benny died that day. I often found myself wishing I had, too. I settled, at last, for wishing Riddick would. And now, today, I'm going to get that wish.

So why can't I feel anything?

Benny's parents still don't know the truth. I think they're happier believing their son had finally blossomed and was getting female attention. They're happy thinking I was his first girlfriend, even if things went horribly wrong. He hadn't been ready to come out to them yet. Now he never will.

There we were in my room, working on Trig. Benny never could keep sines and cosines straight. So I was trying to explain them to him again, in between our discussions about whether or not Gorgeous Gordon in the senior class might be gay and might go out with him. And whether I should sleep with Riddick.

That's right. Riddick doesn't know it and he never will, but Benny was in his cheering section. It was only two nights since Riddick had caught me alone in the kitchen and kissed me. Pressed me up against the wall, actually. I thought at the time he was going to devour me alive on the spot. It was intense — maybe a little *too* intense. I'd pulled away and we hadn't spoken about it since. But I could feel him watching me, every time he was near, after that.

Benny told me I should go for it. I think *he* had the hots for Riddick himself. He'd made a joke about wanting those big arms wrapped around him... only a few minutes before Riddick came storming into my room and snapped his neck.

I tried to make him stop. I tried to tell him that Benny was just a friend. But there wasn't anything human in there to talk to. He was just a killing machine... a monster. He was exactly what Johns had said he was. And then Benny was dead, and he turned around and looked at me like he hated me more than anything.

The first punch was a complete shock. He'd never lifted a finger against me in anger before then. He hit me again before I even started to feel the pain from that first blow. And hit me again. And again. Things began to break. Knick-knacks. Furniture. My bones. Everything went red. Then it all went black.

When I woke up, Riddick was in jail, Benny was already in the ground, and I was so completely disfigured that it would be half a year before I could look in a mirror without having hysterics.

I remember I was in the hospital for a long time. Most of the time was fuzzy. I was heavily drugged. When they needed me to be deposed, I couldn't have any of the *really* good drugs. They would ask me questions and I would write out my answers through a haze of pain. It took forever. I couldn't talk, of course. My jaw was still wired shut.

I'd be the one who *looked* like a monster if my grandmother hadn't crawled out of the woodwork. My parents still don't know where I am, but *she* figured it out. She paid for the reconstructive surgery. I don't know how much it cost but it *had* to be a lot. It took months, and months more to heal, but I look like me again. I can't smile too widely or the nerve damage on my left cheek shows and I look like a stroke victim, but otherwise there's no sign.

Except at night, when I take my dentures out. I'm eighteen and I have to wear dentures because all of my teeth — except for my molars — got knocked out by a jack-hammering fist.

Except inside. Inside, I'm still a bruised, bloody mess. Inside, I'm still lying on the floor of my bedroom, staring into Benny's empty, dead gaze, while Riddick bellows horrible things at me. I'll never stop hearing them.

I'll never forget the things he called me. Slut. Bitch. Whore. Cunt. I'll never be able to. Now, whenever I hear the word "slut," I can feel my jaw breaking. When I hear the word "cunt," I feel my cheekbone crack

again. The repair work is done and the scars are gone, but the bruises are still inside me. They blossom again whenever I hear those hideous words.

Today, maybe, it'll end.

I'm dressed and ready. I look in the mirror and realize why my grandmother recognized me. I'm a spitting image of her when she was my age. We've talked a few times, now. She still hasn't told my parents that she knows where I am, but she wants me to come home sometime, just for a visit. Maybe once this is all behind me, I will.

I always thought my grandma was beautiful. Does that mean I am? I guess. She brought me back in her image after Riddick tried to make me over in his. I imagine, sometimes, that the hideous, broken visage I had to live with at first is what *his* true face looks like. The face of the monster.

And today he will see me and know that I will never, ever be a reflection of what he is. Once upon a time I wanted to be. Before I saw what that reflection would really be.

Imam knocks on my door. "Are you ready, child?"

I turn, smoothing my dress, and nod. His face is very sad. I pretend I don't know why.

He's tried many times to get me to see Riddick. Hell, he talks about him sometimes like there's still a man in there, someone to care about. He says I should make my peace with him. Hear his apology. Forgive.

I can't. The man who'd deserve forgiving is already dead.

"Tell 'em Riddick's dead. He died somewhere on that planet." I believed. I thought the monster was dead. But the whole time it was lying in wait. It was the *man* who was a lie. Just a mask he was wearing to fool us. We lied for him. Told everybody that Richard B. Riddick had died in the crash...

Imam is waiting for me. Still with that sad and worried look on his face. He wishes I would talk more. I kind of got out of the habit and never got back into it. Funny how having your jaw wired shut for more than a month can do that to you. But then, he doesn't *really* want to hear what I have to say. We both know that.

We walk down to the waiting car. Maybe one day this silence between us will be the comfortable kind.

On the ride to the prison I think about the sentencing. How the courtroom erupted when the death sentence was announced. How the journalists went wild for weeks afterward. They all wanted to interview me. "Beauty and the Beast," they said, showing pictures of me from before Riddick's fists made their marks. I didn't leave the house except to see my doctors. Imam dug up an old-time Burkha for me to wear when I had to go out, bless him. Nobody could tell whether it was me under there, or just some reactionary sectarian he worked with.

The tabloids speculated that Riddick and I had been lovers. The "Beauty and the Beast" references disappeared, replaced by new ones: "Bride of the Monster." But Riddick didn't give them interviews either. Finally the speculation died down.

He never tried to escape once.

And now, today, he's going to die.

Benny's parents are at the entryway to the prison when we arrive, along with the Planetary Governor, some kind of cousin of theirs. I wonder, suddenly, and for the first time, if it's the Governor's doing that Riddick got a death sentence instead of life in prison. Oh well, justice *is* being done, right?

Of course it is.

Benny's mother gives me a hug. His father does the same. They've treated me like some kind of precious saint since the killing. Like I'm the only touchstone left to their son. I don't see them much, though. That's a hard burden to take on. They cling. And they *have* to talk about Riddick, about how much they hate him. Every time.

Maybe after today they'll leave me alone, too.

We enter the observation room, and I get my first look at the room in which Richard B. Riddick, the man I once thought was my dearest friend and hoped would be the Love Of My Life, is going to die.

The room is sterile and pristine, and all the more frightening for it. I find myself imagining what it would be like to be strapped down on the gurney in the center, knowing that you're never going to open your eyes again when they close. I shiver, and feel Imam's gentle hand on my shoulder.

"Do you want to see him?" he asks me yet again. I shake my head. I'm going to see him in the room in just a moment. It's as close as I want to come.

The door opens and my heart plunges. This is it.

He enters flanked by two guards. He's chained, wearing handcuffs and leg irons, and one of those awful orange jumpsuits. His face is set, determined. A little anger shows through. I wonder if that's all he is these days. A thing of hate and rage. I wonder if he feels any fear at all. He looks over at us. I watch as his eyes sweep over the people in the observation room.

Sarcasm on his face as he looks at his lawyers. No recognition at all as his eyes slide over the Planetary Governor... the representatives from Amnesty Interplanetary... Benny's parents... Respect appears on his face as his gaze moves to Imam. And then his eyes reach me.

Oh god...

I thought I would come here and see a monster. I thought I'd watch it die. I didn't realize I'd end up face to face with the man I'd been in love with. I told myself *he* was already dead. But there he is. His face has softened. He's looking at me the way he used to, back when I thought maybe we were falling in love. The way I always hoped a man would look at me one day. The way I always hoped *he* would.

Why? Why is *he* still alive? I told myself that the monster killed him too, but there he is, alive...

...and oh God, about to die along with the monster!

The handcuffs and leg irons are removed. The guards tense, in case he fights them, but Riddick climbs onto the gurney and lies down without any assistance. Defiance is back in his face now. I watch, my throat, chest and stomach twisting, as the guards strap him down.

The warden asks him if he has any final words. For a moment, I think he's going to say something obscene.

Then the defiance melts away and his mouth opens. "I'm sorry, Jack."

Oh god. Oh god...

I don't even realize I've stood up. My hands are pressed against the glass. He doesn't see. He's closed his eyes. The IVs are being hooked up now.

No... no...

He looks scared, now. Lost and alone. About to die, surrounded by strangers and people who hate him, and he thinks I'm one of them—

I was. I know it now. It's why I hid away from him and wouldn't come face him, so I could hold onto my hate, so I wouldn't have to see the truth.

Imam stops me when I try to pound on the glass. Hushes me when I try to scream at the technicians to stop, that they're *killing* him. Behind me Benny's father swears. He probably thinks I really *was* whoring myself around, now, the way the tabloids claimed. One of the defense attorneys swears behind me, too. Probably wishing *they'd* made that claim in court.

I don't care. All I know is Riddick's dying. And I can't make them *stop!*

Imam's arms are around me tightly now. We watch, silent, as the moments drag by. The prison doctor steps up and puts his stethoscope to Riddick's now-still chest. He listens for a long moment, and then begins to speak.

"Today, May 10, 2473, at 11:37 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Richard B. Riddick died of lethal injection..."

My legs give out. Imam helps me back into one of the seats.

Dead. He's dead. *They're* dead.

Two beings lived within Richard B. Riddick. A man... and a monster. I loved one and hated the other. But they were shackled together, and that was the one set of chains he could never escape from. If the man was free, so was the monster. And if the monster was caged... so was the man.

And when the monster died, so did the man. And I was chained to *him*, too. Imam was right. I should have come sooner.

Today was the day Riddick died. And a large piece of me, too.