

Written in the Stars

2 November, 1981

She was vaguely aware that she was dreaming, and knew this was the first step to waking up. But there was no point in waking up. Waking up would mean having to face the truth.

The truth was that James and Lily Potter were dead, and that Sirius Black had betrayed them. Two of her best friends in the world, gone forever – and the man she loved was responsible.

So there was no real reason for Aletha Freeman to wake up.

She was wearing something flowing and red. It covered the piano bench she sat on and caressed her arms as she played. She didn't even really know what she was playing – only that it was sweet and longing and terribly sad. Her dark fingers covered the white and black keys in a symphony of images.

"Hello, beautiful," said a voice. She looked up.

Sirius was leaning on the top of the piano. "Why so sad?" he asked, reaching out to caress her face.

She flinched away. "You're not real," she said sharply.

"Well, neither are you. That's the point of dreams." Sirius smiled suggestively. "They let you do things you can't do in reality."

"That's not what I mean. This part of you isn't real. The part that loved my music. The part that loved me. It was never real, any of it, was it?"

"Of course it was real," Sirius said soothingly. "Why would it not be?"

"Traitor," Aletha spat, though her heart was screaming *No!* "You sold us out, Sirius. You sold out Lily and James. And you killed Peter and twelve innocent people. How can you expect me to believe you ever really loved me?"

Sirius winced and looked away. "I suppose there's no point in telling you I'm innocent," he said quietly.

"No. No point at all."

"You're not likely to be bothered with me in real life," he said sadly. "With me in Azkaban and all. But I had kind of hoped I could still dream of you." He looked back at her. "I guess not?"

Instead of answering, Aletha played a chord with her left hand, then a series in her right. She lifted her hands from the piano, which repeated the sequence on its own, stood up, and began to sing.

I am here to tell you

We can never meet again

Simple really, isn't it

A word or two and then

A lifetime of not knowing

Where or how or why or when

You think of me

Or speak of me

And wonder what befell

That someone you once loved

So long ago, so well

She had moved around the piano and was standing in front of him. Now he reached out and took her hand. "One last time," he said before she could pull away, and took over the song.

Never wonder what I'll feel

As living shuffles by

You don't have to ask me

And I need not reply

Every moment of my life

From now until I die

I will think

Or dream of you

And fail to understand

How a perfect love can be confounded

Out of hand

He pulled her against him and held her close. She could feel his voice vibrating his whole body, and it felt so *good...*

Is it written in the stars

Are we paying for some crime

Is that all that we are good for

Just a stretch of mortal time

Or some god's experiment

In which we have no say

In which we're given paradise

But only for a day

"You are a criminal," Aletha said, tearing herself from him. "And I can't love you any more." *No matter how much I want to.* She took a breath.

Nothing can be altered

There is nothing to decide

No escape, no change of heart

Nor any place to hide

Sirius looked at her with passion in his eyes, the same passion she'd always loved in him.

Oh, you are all I ever want

But this I am denied

Sometimes in my darkest thoughts

I wish I'd never learned

Oh, how I wish it... They sang it together.

What it is to be in love

And have that love returned

Aletha's breath almost failed her as she took the last chorus.

Is it written in the stars

Are we paying for some crime

Is that all that we are good for

Just some stretch of mortal time

Sirius joined her, for, she thought ironically, probably the last thing they'd ever do together.

Or some god's experiment

In which we have no say

In which we're given paradise

But only for a day...

She couldn't stand it any more. His eyes. They begged her to believe. And she wanted to, so much...

Sobbing, Aletha fled the dream.

But his voice followed her. "Remember this, Letha. I love you. Forever."

"NO!" She woke herself screaming. Shaking, she ran to the bathroom and collapsed on the floor, crying uncontrollably.

Damn you, Sirius Black.

I don't want to love you any more.

But I can't help it.

I can't help it...