

Kingdom Hearts I

— **Nomura on the Oblivion Keyblade:** Its development name was the "Riku Keyblade." In early stages we planned to have Riku give you a keychain, just like the lucky charm, which is why the keychain is a different colored version of Sora's necklace. If you look at this Keyblade on its side, it forms the Japanese character for "Darkness."

From: [Kingdom Hearts Ultimania](#)

— **Nomura on Riku's design:** His design was born from balancing with Sora. I drew him as a good old fashioned rival character, without any particular curveballs. He carries the responsibility of playing a more worried protagonist than would suit Sora. In that way, maybe he's more of a classic Square style character? The things Riku does to restore Kairi's heart are perhaps less about his feelings for her and more about his regret over sins he has committed? Or so I think. He's a surprisingly immoral guy.

From: [Kingdom Hearts Ultimania](#)

— **Nomura on Riku's Blue Sky art:** I drew this at the same time as Foreshore. The idea behind this scene is him telling Sora, "You wanted one, didn't you?" In the game that happens at sunset, though.

From: [Kingdom Hearts Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** Even though Riku was the rightful owner of the Keyblade, why did Sora obtain the Keyblade in the beginning?

Nomura: Even though I would like to keep that obscure, there is a scene in Destiny islands where Riku is being swallowed by darkness, a light appears, and Sora first obtains the keyblade. With the setting I created, the darkness that surrounds them is Riku's heart's darkness. At that moment, Sora enters the darkness, and the light he sees inside is Riku's heart's light. Sora, who was squirming in the darkness to save Riku, touched the light and temporarily obtained the Keyblade from Riku.

From: [Kingdom Hearts Ultimania](#), [Secondary Source](#)

— **Q:** By the second half, Riku becomes opposed to Sora and increasingly becomes more serious.

Miyano, Riku's JP VA: Ever since I started recording, I was told, "He becomes more and more dyed in darkness, so I want you to express that feeling." That's why when he was friendly with Sora, I played him as a refreshing kind of person. Even though Riku was a collected person, I still tried to have a friendly vibe. After that, he gradually becomes a darker person. He'd cold to Sora, and while recording I was also cold to Irino. (laugh)

Irino, Sora's JP VA: That's not true. But it was about enough where I thought, "Even though we were so close in the beginning, you're becoming this grim?" (laugh) You're acting became rapidly gloomier... Past midway, even when you were recording I became really scared.

From: [Kingdom Hearts Ultimania](#)

Chain of Memories

— **Nomura on Riku's title screen:** Side Riku needed a title screen, so I made this in a hurry. I made it symmetrical to Sora's, so we could put them together for PR use.

From: [Kingdom Hearts Ultimania](#)

Kingdom Hearts II

— **Q:** The themes of the scenario are "friendship" and "fantasy." What theme is this scenario based on?

Nojima, scenario writer: As you know, there are themes like "light and darkness" and "heart," but in terms of my scenario writing, it is the "friendship" between Sora and Riku. I think I had one like theirs when I was a kid, but that kind of relationship is not easy to have. I wanted to write about that kind of friendship head-on, one that might be a little embarrassing in real life.

From: [KH2 Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** So you performed the same way you did in KHI?

Irino: Yes. I pretty stayed true to Sora's naive and optimistic personality, but there were more times where Sora was worried and doubtful, like whenever he thought about Riku.

From: [KH2 Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** What did Riku think about Naminé and Roxas?

Miyano: Riku realized before anybody else that Roxas was Sora's Nobody. Even though he looked different, he felt Sora's presence.

Irino: In order to save Sora, Riku called upon the power of darkness to defeat Roxas and awaken him.

Miyano: It's always about Sora when it comes to Riku. (laugh) Riku probably just thought that Roxas just was somebody to put back where he belonged. Naminé's important to Riku because she was the one who made clear what Riku had to do.

From: [KH2 Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** Following the previous game, Utada Hikaru also sang the theme song for this game, "Passion."

Nomura: Many fans seem to have the image Kingdom Hearts = Utada Hikaru so I didn't think of changing that at all. This time I wrote a story explanation for her that's longer than the previous game's. We decided to have it played at the last scene, so for me the theme was "Sora and Riku's reunion." I wrote stuff like "An image of a reunion, a happy moment in a way" and "Like a Hikari 2" in there.

From: [KH2 Ultimania](#)

— **Hikaru on Passion:** It was like when I was making Hikari. I said, "At the moment, the things for the game feel a little...soulless". But last time, when I was making the song, the whole outlook for the game and its entry into the world was so crucial that I got a lot more info on the characters (so that Hikari would mirror the image that they wanted).

Passion is like... It has a feeling that connects together the end of the last game and the sequel. Like, how it showed the characters and how they met and so forth. It was pretty easy to think up an image. It's like...as if Hikari was the dawn, and Passion has a concluding or 'dusk' feeling to it.

From here after, I wanted this song to communicate so many various ideas. While you can see some very ordinary imagery in the song, when you listen the imagery can become very dramatic.

The lyrics of Passion show how phases of the past, present and future of the character in my song relate to each other, and the arrangement builds a peculiar, almost floating feeling.

From: [2005 Hikaru Utada Interview, Secondary Source](#) (untranslated)

358/2 Days

— **Q:** So, let's talk about this new story, which doesn't have Sora as the main character. What sort of story will it be?

Nomura: Well, I need to start with the story depicted in a Birth by Sleep. Aside from that, there's the story of how the King found his keyblade in the world of darkness and other things like that. Myself, one of the things I most want to do is to give Roxas more of a role to play. I think it would be interesting to flesh out more of the year he spent between his birth and disappearance. Or making Riku the main character, and writing about his desperate fight while Sora was asleep, and things like that. You get the impression that Riku summoned Roxas to a place of shadows, and that Riku is a master of shadows, so I would like to give him more exploration in the game.

From: [Kingdom Hearts II Final Mix+ Interview](#)

— **Q:** Namine tells Riku that in order for Sora's memories to be restored, both Sora's Nobody and Xion must no longer exist. So he takes it on himself to defeat them, but when he and Roxas fought, was that the first time he had realized that Roxas was that Nobody?

Nomura: Riku only realizes it when Roxas takes off his hood and he can see his face, and he responds to his call. Until then he only half believed. When he first met Xion, he didn't think that she was Sora or Kairi's Nobody, and it was the same with Roxas. When he first saw Roxas, he had no proof of who he was. So that's why he lost to Roxas, he was surprised at him using a real keyblade rather than an imitation like Xion's, and he called out to him. Part of Riku didn't really want to believe that his best friend really had a Nobody.

From: [358/2 Days Ultimania](#)

Birth by Sleep

— **Q:** So how did you start development on "KH BBS"?

Nomura: Well I usually start by thinking about the gameplay, but for BBS I started by writing out the plot for the scenario. The scenes on Destiny Island with Terra and Riku speaking, and Aqua speaking to both Sora and Riku were ideas I had written down from the first. I wanted to make those scenes a reality so badly that I wrote out a development proposal. I had the plot in mind from way back at the end of development on KHII.

From: [BBS Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** In Aqua's chapter, on the Destiny Islands, was Aqua originally intending to perform the Keyblade rite for Sora or Riku?

Nomura: Yes. When Aqua met Sora and Riku, she was on the point of realising that she may end up having to fight Terra. At that point she was going to perform the rite of succession for Sora, but realised that Terra had already performed the rite for Riku. Not wanting Sora and Riku to end up fighting like she and Terra in the future, she didn't perform the rite for Sora. This is the meaning behind her murmurs that "One must not get too close to a chosen one," and "I must not make them walk the same path." When she tells Sora he must save Riku if he ends up walking the wrong path, she's projecting her own thoughts onto Sora.

From: [BBS Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** By the time of "KHI", have Sora, Riku and Kairi forgotten about Terra and Aqua?

Nomura: That's right. In "KHI" Kairi herself says that she's lost all her previous memories, that she "doesn't remember anything before coming to the Destiny Islands", and it would be pretty easy for Sora to forget. After all, I think for a child of 4 or 5 years old to remember a person they met only once and exchanged just a few words with would be quite unnatural. Only Riku, who was told by Terra "Don't tell anything of today to anyone," may simply be keeping quiet.

From: [BBS Ultimania](#)

Dream Drop Distance

— **Nomura on the Twilight cover art alternative:** While drawing Sea of Clouds, I thought it was meaningful that it could be looked at upside down. So, I made another version just in case. The Japanese word "hakumei" can refer to the light of both sunrise and sunset, and since this is a picture where it could be either, I made that the title. It's not a simple reversal of Sea of Clouds: is Riku falling to save Sora, or is Sora rising out of reach? It can be seen both ways. Sea of Clouds actually has the same meaning.

From: [Kingdom Hearts Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** There is another version of the [package] illustration with different colors and the directions switched, can you tell us about that?

Nomura: When you look at this illustration inside the game package. I wanted its composition and look to remind you of the title's catch copy, "Darkness becomes light, light falls into darkness." The two images make a pair; I think it's nice to consider the contrasts between them and how they reflect the storyline.

From: [Famitsu](#)

— **Nomura on the idea behind DDD:** I want to do a "KH" you can touch, a "Sora" that falls, a "Riku" that flies. The theme is "trust".

From: [Degenki](#)

— **Nomura on the title:** The story for this installment takes place in a world submerged in sleep, and from that "Sleep" we derived "Dream". "Drop", from the phrase "Drop off to sleep", is our name for the system in which players alternate between control of Sora and Riku during

gameplay. And since Sora and Riku are progressing through the story on different storylines, we chose "Distance" to express the gulf between them.

From: [Nintendo Power](#)

— **Q:** For the title KH3D, we thought it was very clever how the '3D' doesn't just stand for 'three-dimensional', but also for the first letter of each of the three words in the subtitle.

Nomura: I thought of making it '3D' with three D's early on. However, while I was able to settle on 'Dream' and 'Drop' smoothly, the last one just wouldn't come to me. When we were at the point where we had a scenario, 'Distance' occurred to me from the distance between Sora and Riku, on the verge of meeting but unable to. There's one more unsaid meaning behind deciding on 'Distance', and that is the distance between '3D' and the number 3 itself.

From: [DDD Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** Why did you choose to make both Sora and Riku playable characters this time around?

Nomura: Sora and Riku represent the theme of the Kingdom Hearts series, which is "the light and dark sides of the heart." This story takes place right before the final battle, and so we wanted to go back to the origin of the series and depict the polarity of light and darkness through their respective stories.

From: [Nintendo Power](#)

— **Q:** What was the theme you most wanted to depict in the story of this title?

Masaru Oka, scenario and cutscene director: The bond between Sora and Riku's hearts. Sora and Riku have to be separated at the beginning of the story, but the bond between two hearts that trust each other closes the distance between the two of them and causes them to impact on each other.

From: [DDD Ultimania](#)

— **Gallagher, Riku's ENG VA, on DDD Spoilers:** But I will say that, as a spoiler, that I'd love to give you a spoiler. It's a cool game for Riku. I love that they give me more stuff to do. I really feel like, as the games come out, they really do give me some more time in each game. I know it's not my game; I'm not confused. It's Sora's game. I want to play my part. I want to be the cool other guy that's like the dark, that has the problems with being good and bad. I like all that, and I really love when they say "Oh, in this game, you can play as Riku also." You know what I mean? It's the way I like. I was so stoked when they did the game where you can unlock me and play the whole game again as me! I never got to the point where I could play as me, so I could appreciate all the hard work that I did! But when they do stuff like that, it really makes you feel special and makes you really want to give them extra quality; it makes you want to do stuff like that. So this next game does involve Riku heavily, and I was really excited. I'm really excited about the next game. It's cool.

From: [David Gallagher Interview](#)

— **Yasue, co-director, on the playing style '80s nerd':** Event Planner M.M. is the only person I know who tries to clear the game without changing the Keyblade once. According to him, he gets goosebumps and wants to throw up just from seeing the words in the camp menu... At first glance it seems a fatal condition for a game developer, but M.M. flourishes drawing storyboard

sketches and making elaborate camera shots and angles. M.M. is a nerd for dramas and idols and anime from the 80s, and his pictures have an 80s anime style. He is captivated by the pure situations in pure love dramas, and is head over heels for the bond between Riku and Sora's hearts in KH. He thinks it is heresy to compare the attack powers of Keyblades and alter the equipment in small ways. I am the type who enjoys the feeling of defeating formidable enemies by tampering with small things in the camp menu, but I also think clean and earnest play styles like M.M.'s are lovely.

From: [Message from the Kingdom](#)

— **Yasue on the Drop system:** Yeah, that's right. And as for me, what I wanted to do was I wanted to have a cooperative gameplay. For the Drop system, when you play, for example, Sora, you'd get a certain amount of points when you drop, you could buy bonuses for Riku, so there's cooperation between Sora and Riku.

From: [Square Enix Members Interview](#)

— **Q:** How did the idea for the drop system come about? And what do you think the idea of forcing players to switch between characters adds to the experience?

Yasue: Well, on our previous Kingdom Hearts, Birth by Sleep, it centered around Aqua, Ventus, and Terra. You had to actually finish the story before starting a new one. It sort of felt like they were separate stories, in a way. This time, Nomura I think wanted us to make it into a sort of united story. There are two characters, but it's a united experience. We wanted to add a particular thrill, I think, the thrill of... if you drop during a boss battle, for example, you have to switch characters. So there's a little bit of a time limit. I think it was a little bit more thrilling. Another thing we wanted to add was the bonus relay system, we wanted Sora and Riku to cooperate. For example, by playing Sora and gaining points, you could give bonuses to your next character, Riku. There was a strategic depth to it, I think. I thought that made it interesting as well.

From: [IGN](#)

— **Q:** Please tell us about the concept for the version of 'Dearly Beloved' that plays during the title screen in this title.

Shimomura: As you'd think, 'triple metre'. Is that too simple? (laughs) I was like, I want to put in a little taste of a merry-go-round sparkling twirling in a dream, at night.

From: [DDD Ultimania](#)

Kingdom Hearts III

— **Shinji Hashimoto, series producer, on KH3:** The fact is that the main focus of the series is Sora and Riku; how their friendship develops, but also how they grow up.

From: [IGN](#)

— **Q:** Kairi appeared in the most recent trailer, so now we have the full set of Sora, Riku and Kairi. Please tell us about their new designs.

Nomura: Sora has less decorations. So far his chains and big belted pockets and such have been one of his main features, but accents like that have been pared down. That's because in this title Sora pulls off quite dynamic action, so I wanted him to have a more 'active' design.

Q: What about Riku and Kairi's outfits?

Nomura: The tastes are partially made to align with Sora. Since Sora's main colors are red and black, I went with a blue base for Riku, with a yellow accent on his shoulder, and Kairi is mainly pink. These color schemes follow their usual designs.

From: [Famitsu](#)

— **Nomura on the mark between 'Re' and 'Mind':** I think the meaning changes whether you connect or disconnect between them. In the past I have often used "Re", but I wanted to cut the background with a more meaningful symbol, and when I decided to convey something with one symbol, I thought that the musical symbols "vide" and "coda" were appropriate. Based on those meanings, I hope you all will think about it in various ways.

(Note: "vide" denotes a skipped part of a musical piece, and "coda" is a concluding musical section that is distinct from the main piece. A coda is typically represented as a circle with two intersecting lines. It also means "something that serves to round out, conclude, or summarize")

From: [Famitsu](#)

— **Q:** We also thought the scene where Riku and the Riku Replica talk on the beach at Destiny Islands had a lot of impact.

Miyano: I love that scene too. Riku understands the Riku Replica's personality. so when he tells him, "Take all the time you need," those words are full of warmth. Since he has been fighting his own darkness this entire time, he was often looking inward as he spoke. But this Riku is being positive, looking forward, and I felt like he was speaking proper "words of light." The reasons Riku fell to the darkness in the first place were things like yearning for and jealousy towards his friends, and the desire to protect those important to him... so it all began from the kinds of things everyone feels, right? It's hard for us humans to get rid of the darkness born in our hearts as we go on living our lives. But as we build experiences and grow, we take those things in and become able to face forward with positivity. Riku isn't fighting against the Riku Replica as a manifestation of darkness, he has melded with him as a part of himself, having made up his mind that even if he carries darkness he is a being of light. I think that is a personal strength of Riku's.

From: [KH3 Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** The Riku Tsum has also appeared alongside Sora. Do you and his voice actor, Miyano-san, ever have discussions about the relationship between the two?

Irino: Recently we don't really meet up much but we know about what each other is currently working on, and we go to see each other's performances occasionally and keep in contact. Isn't it sort of the same with Riku and Sora? Although we don't talk in depth about things like the voice acting, the performances, and the work in all different genres that we do, somewhere inside we can feel each other at work.

From: [Tsum Tsum](#)

— **Q:** Speaking of Kairi, she and Sora sharing a paopu fruit before the final battle was another memorable scene.

Uchida, Kairi's JP VA: I love that scene a lot and I think it's so important, and at the same time, I thought, what a heavy scene...

Irino: We recorded two versions of that scene: one where she had him eat one, and one where she didn't. At the time we recorded, it hadn't been decided which way it would develop. It looks like in the end they went with her having him eat one. I'm sure Mr Nomura was unsure how far he should go in depicting their feelings for each other.

Miyano: I'm sure that's because it definitely is a delicate scene, one where Sora and Kairi's pure thoughts and feelings are made apparent. My heart leapt watching that exchange. Although they didn't confess to each other, if there wasn't love there then that scene wouldn't have felt as romantic as it did (laughs).

Irino: I don't think sharing a paopu is an official declaration of love though?

From: [KH3 Ultimania](#)

— **Miyano:** And in KHI you secretly tried to have the two of you leave the island without me, right?

Irino: Maybe it's Kairi who made Riku turn to the darkness. Seeing her so friendly with Sora probably made him feel lonely, right?

Uchida: ...I see, so it was my fault, was it? (laughs)

From: [KH3 Ultimania](#)

— **Uchida:** If the three of them did go on a journey, I think Sora would be the one to decide where to go next, don't you?

Miyano: I will.

Irino: Yeah. I can see Sora saying, "I'm happy with whatever Riku decides!" It sounds like the journey would go well with Riku there. Sora, Donald and Goofy are always like, "Where do we go?" "I dunno." "Use your brain!" "Shut up!" and then end up going nowhere (laughs).

From: [KH3 Ultimania](#)

— **Q:** What were your impressions upon hearing the completed [intro] song?

Nomura: "Hikari," for example, was a straightforward song, but "Chikai" isn't strong in a way that smacks you from the beginning. Instead, thanks to the complexity of its composition, it has a strength that pierces deeper and deeper into you the more you listen to it. I think it's a beautiful song.

From: [Famitsu](#)

Kingdom Hearts IV

— **Q:** Did you expect characters from games like Birth By Sleep and Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days to become so popular? Do you feel like their stories are complete, or we can expect more of these characters to pop up in Kingdom Hearts IV?

Nomura: I really didn't think that the characters from these two titles would become this popular. I had thought that players wanted to see more of characters like Sora or Riku.

From: [Game Informer](#)

Misc.

— **Shimomura on writing Dearly Beloved:** Of course, this is the track I wanted to begin with. I composed this melody in the image of waves lapping in and out on the shore. I made it just thinking it would be nice to use for some kind of scene someday, and then it went and ended up with the huge position of title song! I decided on the name 'Dearly Beloved' in a flash, I was really happy with it.

From: [KINGDOM HEARTS 10th Anniversary Fan Selection](#)

— **Shimomura on Passion:** My first impression on hearing this song was, "this song is quite difficult to grasp..." There's a reverse-playback phrase with profound hidden meaning running in the opposite direction to the catch. For some reason it really stays with you... it's an incredible song. Ms Utada is definitely a genius.

From: [KINGDOM HEARTS 10th Anniversary Fan Selection Update](#)

— **Shimomura on Riku (theme):** Actually, Riku's theme has a pretty subdued impression, haha. It doesn't seem to be talked about much, see (sweatmark!), but I'm very happy that there are people who like it more than I realised. This is from the image of Riku that comes unhesitatingly to mind. That is, "while quiet, having a hidden passion."

From: [KINGDOM HEARTS 10th Anniversary Fan Selection Update](#)

Worthwhile note: Shimomura's favorite character is Riku ([source](#))

— **Q: In your mind, which song is the KINGDOM HEARTS song?**

Nomura: "Dearly Beloved" is used often; it's a great song. But the title is hard to remember. What does it mean?

Shimomura: Someone precious to you.

From: [Joint Interview for KH Orchestra](#)

— **Nomura on Sora:** In KHI, I tried to keep an emphasis on roundness in my designs to have them fit with the Disney universe style, but in KH2 I took it upon myself to try incorporating some sharper elements. Also as Mickey himself made quite a few appearances, I had to re-think the balance of the color schemes. Sora, personality-wise, is a nice, honest kid. He simply doesn't sweat the details. He just goes, 'whatever,' and makes things work (laughs). When he gave everyone a smile before thrusting the Keyblade into his chest in KHI, and when he cried upon seeing Riku again in KHII are scenes that left a deep impression on me. I think one of his charms is how straight he is in showing his emotions.

From: [Character's Report Vol. 1](#)

— **Q:** Would you be able to say something as Riku?

Gallagher: What?

Q: Anything.

Gallagher: Well, you know. Give me something. I don't know. It'd going to sound like me. It's attitude, right? So if I came in and I sat down and did all Riku all the time, you guys would think I was a jerk. I don't know, jeez. But if you guys give me a line, I guess I'll say it.

Q: What about the most famous line from the first game that set the story before Riku...?

Gallagher: Are you quizzing me? Are you quizzing me? I don't know. Which one? If you guys don't remember, I'm excited.

Audience: Is that the paopu legend? Is that what you're talking about?

Audience: Eh, no.

Gallagher: You know what I saw by the way? Just a random thing I saw. There's paopu fruits in the merch area! I almost got one!

Panelist: Someone buy him one! Someone buy him one!

Gallagher: It's not a cry for help. Someone was like "Hey, that's a paopu fruit." I was like "What? Where?" I didn't even realize it that, I don't know, they would be making it. It was cool.

Q: Just say something with "Sora". Say "Will you share a paopu fruit with me?"

Gallagher: I'm sorry, but you know, I'm in this position a lot where I have to be like "Sora!" (in Riku's voice) Right? It's always like "What?" Someone else is always getting into shit. I'm supposed to watch my mouth.

From: [Anime Conji](#)

— **Q:** When you are voice acting Riku, do you take into consideration the character development Riku undergoes with each title?

Miyano: There are many scenes in KINGDOM HEARTS such as Riku being curious of the outside world and envy and jealousy being exploited from the darkness of his heart. I directly considered his dark and painful thoughts and he would gradually go down into darkness. There were feelings of "redemption" when Riku saved Sora. That was his way of saying sorry to Sora.

From: [D23 Expo Japan](#)