

The Meeting of a Squire

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It was a snowy day in Ishgard, breath crystallizing instantly upon leaving her mouth. The Viera cursed to herself silently about coming back to this gods forsaken land. Her and hers left this place for the much better Ul'dah clime some while ago and she never looked back. Yet, here stood Ashlyn Ishina, Knight-Captain to Asuka Stiles. The adults recognized her from her public trial, most stared at her as she walked in to the walled city. The Viera could still feel cold steel from some of their gazes. A Templar-Knight approached the Rava. "Halt, what business have you in our city, heretic?" He asked, icy daggers in his tone.

"Look, I'm just here to find a person. That's it. I've been granted my amnesty by the council." She stated softly. Her gunblade, safely stowed upon her back. "You and yours got your closure. Let me be in peace." She sighed heavily. He stood tall. "You slew my brother *wench*. There is no closure for that without your blood. Though, you are right. You were granted amnesty by those who've decided we are to stow our blades. You know the rules, you have eyes on you. Any of your dark arts, and you will have all of Ishgard down on you for your blood." Through his narrow slits, the Viera could see the Elezen narrowing his eyes.

"I gave them my word, did I not? Do you think a Knight becomes a captain by breaking her word?" The Viera held her head up high. "As Knight-Captain to a foreign emissary, I would hate for something to happen to you for stopping in official business." He snarled. Suddenly, a mailed hand presses against his shoulder. "Leave her be Ilmex." Ashlyn snapped back to reality, looking to the one who talked to the one who stepped in. "Forgive him for his outburst Ser Ishina." His voice was low, truly seeking forgiveness.

Ashlyn merely raised her hand. "No, it's fine. I understand his pain. I've seen enough of it in my life that I caused. I can only do my best to try to atone for my sins. I did kill many who did not deserve it, especially among your order who were just doing their jobs. I can never truly ask to be forgiven, but I can only work on doing my best to make things better in the meantime." The other knight nodded. "That's all any of us can do to those we wronged."

Ashlyn solemnly nodded. With that, she began walking away, still able to hear the first Elezen snarling for quite a few foot steps. As the Viera walked through the stone pathways, her mind raced to where best to search for a squire. For that was the real reason the Rava had made her way to this frigid place. Her mind raced back to the talk with her liege after her interrupted duel. She knew she would need to find a squire, even if she no longer feels the need to die to atone. Her path to peace requires her teaching the next generation. The next generation to protect others, to not go after some perverted sense of justice.

Without thinking, the Viera found herself wandering in the slums of The Brume. While the high houses would have likely had good 'stock' for a squire. Most would not dare send a child to be with this Knight. For they all remember the sins of her past. As she looked around at the crumbling buildings, the undercity where many are left to die wallowing in poverty. This is where her eldest daughter was born. Her eldest whom hated her very soul. Ashlyn's mind traveled back to Ashlee, the troubled young adult, seemingly falling to the sins of her mother's past. Ashlyn sighed and shook her head. Maybe if she picked someone fitting from here, she could understand Ashlee better.

Yet, the Rava really didn't even know what to look for in a squire. Hells, she barely knew how to be a 'proper' knight herself. She just went about her life, using her training from back in Bozja on how to be a guard. Yet, instead of a whole family, she is protecting just one. One very precious royal,

her sapphire eyes scanned side to side. Trying to find someone suitable. Every person around her either fled from

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what they remember her doing, or the fact that someone from money was walking through this ghetto. She went to call out and mention that she wasn't a threat or anything when her ears picked up something. Shouting, children fighting it seemed. The Viera wasted not a moment. She began dashing towards the source of the sounds.

As soon as she arrived on the scene, she took in the sight. A young blonde Elezen, no more than thirteen or fourteen summers old, standing with her fists balled up, ready to fight. Behind her was a young boy of about ten summers old it seemed. He looked nothing like the rest, maybe a refugee? Before her stood three other children around her age. It was clear what was going on. "Stand down Istrone, he's not worth getting beat up over." Called the leader of the group. "Just let us teach this refuse where he belongs on the totem pole down here."

Istrone stood firm. "No! I will not stand by and let you and your cronies do as you please Edaux!" It was clear that she did not want to just let them walk all over the other child. Edaux scoffed. "Fine then. Have it your way." What proceeded was nothing short of a brawl. While she was outnumbered, it seemed this girl was not a stranger to fighting. Ashlyn stood back for a moment, wanting to see this outcome naturally.

Folding her arms, the Viera watched it intensely. It went as well as one would expect when someone is outnumbered three to one. Yet, she still fought valiantly. As this Istrone fell to the ground, broken and bruised, Edaux walked up to her. "I told you, you need to learn your *own* place Istrone!" With that, he pulled his leg back to kick her.

In an instant, Ashlyn leapt to the girl's side. "That's enough, you little street rats best scurry back to your little hovels." She states softly. There was a low threat to her words, Ashlyn was not planning on actually harming them, but she was not above scaring them. Sure enough, the sight of the full grown Rava, with a gunblade in hand was enough to cause the small gang to scatter. With them dealt with, Ashlyn leaned down and checked Istrone.

"Who are you?" The Elezen girl asked, terrified at the sudden showing up of the gunbreaker. The small refugee child was just as scared. "You need not fear me. I am coming here looking for someone to take under my wing. Someone worthy of it. I think I found it in you, Istrone was it?" The small Elezen nodded. "Y-yeah..." Ashlyn smiled down at her. "I'm looking for someone to be my squire. I'm the Knight-Captain to a princess from a far away land. The way you handled yourself against those bullies. I think you fit the bill perfectly. I'd like to take you and train you. Maybe give you a better life than you would have here."

The Rava looked around, there was a small crowd gathering and whispering. "We should probably go though, do you have any parents?" Istrone nodded. She was starting to fear the Viera less as they talked. "Y-yeah. Both my mom and my dad. Though, I... can't leave them. As nice as that sounds. They need whatever money I can help bring them." Hearing this broke Ashlyn's heart. "Then, it is especially important I talk to them."

Istrone looked pensively towards the refugee child. "Come Alric. We should take you back to your parents as well." It was clear she wasn't sure if she should trust this random adult who wanted to take her away. Her parents had oft warned her of such people. Yet, this promise of a better tomorrow. Could she risk throwing that away? The small Elezen bit her lip.

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Ashlyn walked beside the pair, whispers abound of what it may mean. Delivering the child to his parents, Ashlyn spoke with them and after a bit handed the couple a rather handsome amount of gil to help them momentarily. Help them at least be able to gain some status within the Brume and even offered them positions within her manor, although only the mother seemed willing to accept.

Seeing the Viera display this act of kindness, Istrone fought with herself more and more. Soon enough, she found herself being willing to trust this bunny. At least for some time. Soon enough, they would be off to Istrone's own parents. Once there, they instantly recognized Ashlyn. For they were at her trial. Fear crossed her father's eyes. He ordered Istrone to leave Ashlyn's side immediately. The small Elezen listened to him and went inside their hovel. Yet, she couldn't help but be curious. Peeking out from a hoarfrost coated window, she couldn't make out a single word as the Rava talked with her parents.

Once the small girl was out of earshot, her father asked. "Why were you with our Istrone? Did you not kill enough? Did you not hurt enough of our people? Why are you here?" Ashlyn sighed. "Look, I know I've done many wrongs, you have to believe me. I was not lying when I said in my trial that I want to atone." He interrupted her "Enough with your lies heretic! You may have fooled the Tribunal, but you cannot fool me." Ashlyn just silently stared at him.

"I want to take your daughter as my squire." She simply states. This stunned both parents. "Squire? We aren't highborn. Why would you want her as a squire? She's not proper stock for it." The Viera nodded her head slowly. "I see in her the very same determination, and desire to bring about justice that I had at her age. That I still have. I watched her fight bullies, she lost but she still did the right thing. I want to reward that. That's exactly who I am looking for to be my protege."

The parents looked to each other. Her mother states, "You know Rudix, she might be telling the truth. Istrone does fight a lot and you know I worry about her..." Rudix slams a fist against the side of their hovel. "Damn it Olpine, what if this... *heretic* is lying? What if she means to capture our daughter to kill? Can we trust her?" Olpine looked towards Ashlyn, directly in to the Viera's eyes. After a moment she breaks the contact. "I trust her, I don't know why, but I do trust that she means her words."

"If it helps, I can send you guys a moonly stipend of say a hundred thousand gil. Istrone will live with me in my manor. I will give you both the address so you can visit or send mail whenever you please. She will learn the ways of the court, she will be educated in the arts, maths, and sciences. She will be well taken care of and raised under my care. Not that you two aren't capable parents. She would just thrive much better in my care."

Rudix was clearly fighting with himself. "She's our only child... you're asking me to give you my only daughter..." Ashlyn nodded. "I'm a parent myself. I know what it's like. Like I said, you two can come visit whenever. There are airships that come to Ul'dah daily. I'll give you the stipend once a moon and you can use that to... well live better than you are here."

Olpine tugged on his sleeve. "Think of it Rudix, this is... this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for both her and us. She can get the stuff we could never provide. She can live... a good life." Ashlyn nodded. "I am not only a Knight-Captain, but I am exceptionally wealthy independent of my status. I have connections. I can help her even after she is done training under me. I can help find her a lord or lady to serve." Rudix's knuckles turned white. Then just as suddenly, he went limp. "Fine... you win. You can take her. Just... promise me no harm will come to her." Ashlyn nodded slowly. "I'll

treat her as one of my own kits. She'll be given a caring home to live in. You can visit her, or she can visit you whenever. I will not tie her to me unless my work takes me to far away locales."

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Rudix nodded. "Thank you. I... guess we will say our goodbyes and let her know where she will be going." Ashlyn solemnly nodded. "Just one request. She doesn't appear to recognize me. Please... don't mention to her that I was the dark knight on trial just last year. I'm sure she heard of that... I'd... rather avoid scaring her." Rudix grimaced. "I had no plans on it heretic. I have but one request, do not teach her of your dark arts." Ashlyn nodded. "Of that, we are of one mind. I am planning on teaching her whichever discipline she desires once she learns the fundamentals, but that is one I'd rather avoid..."

Rudix sighed. "Okay... let's go..." A few bells later, and Ashlyn and Istrone were flying out of Ishgard, the Elezen watching the city she has only known her entire life fade in to the distance. Her future, unknown.