

Prelude: Securing the Brat

The first hints of tension between a Xaela warrior and a bratty Miqu'te...

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Limsa Upper Decks

Morning

On a cold and misty morning in the city of Limsa, the streets are abandoned as its citizens are yet to rise from their slumber. A white-haired Miqu'te walks towards the Drunken Wench, her heels clicking against the wet cobble floor, her legs wrapped in silky tights and her body adorned in a crimson red haori. Her name is Kira Bevelle.

Kira walks into the alehouse dragging her feet, rubbing her tired eyes while looking for a table. She had just finished her shift working all night at a new mafia-run casino. Finally arriving at a free chair she slumps down into it, loudly exclaiming "I NEED COFFEE, NOW!" as she throws her satchel down and rests her head on the cold table.

One of the barmaids turns around quickly and glares at the annoying Miqu'te.

"By the stars! Do you have to be so damn loud?"

Kira raises her head, glaring daggers as she quickly sizes her up. Standing before her was a white-haired Au Ra with midnight scales stark against pale white skin. She wore the alehouse's uniform with the name tag 'Ruby' in bold letters. Kira could tell she was taller and more muscular than herself. Kira turns her head away, pouting.

"A black coffee... please."

Ruby throws the bar towel she was using over her shoulder.

"That's more like it. Coming right up, princess". The Xaela woman walks away and goes behind the bar. It takes her a few minutes but she returns with a steaming cup on her tray and places it in front of the Miqu'te.

"That's fifteen gil."

Kira glances at the coffee then, with a shit-eating grin on her face, looks directly at Ruby as she knocks the coffee off the table, smashing it on the floor.

"HOW DARE YOU GIVE ME COLD COFFEE?!" Kira grabs her satchel and tries to leave quickly before being stopped by the proprietor.

"Excuse me, miss, what seems to be the problem?"

"Everything!" Kira replies. "Not only did I have to deal with your rude barmaid, she dared to serve me cold coffee! I shan't be back again!"

Ruby is left stunned at the sheer brattiness and entitlement she had just witnessed, snapping out of it to see her boss angrily approaching.

Fortuna (Two weeks later)

Morning

"Thanks, I can't wait to start!" Ruby says, leaving the office with a wave. Less than a second later, she stumbles as someone runs into her and falls backwards onto their butt.

"By the twelve, watch where you're going!" they exclaim.

"Ah, I'm sorry..." Ruby holds out her hand to help them up. As the person takes hold, she finally gets a clearer look at them, recognising white ears tipped with black and a fluffy tail.

"You! You're that brat that got me fired!" She lets go of the Miko'te's hand, letting her fall back to her butt.

Kira, flustered but remembering where she was, places a hand on one of her daggers

"You! What are you doing here? ...you have no idea who you're messing with".

Ruby looks down at Kira with disdain

"Is that so? Pretty sure I'm messing with a pretty kitty princess" she said as she arrogantly steps over Kira and left.

Kyo looks out of the office to investigate the noise and finds the stunned cat girl still on the ground.

"For fuck's sake Kira, I don't pay you to mop the floors, get back to work."

Kira points after Ruby.

"What was that Au Ra bitch doing here?!"

"Who? Ruby? She's part of your team now. I don't know what history you two have but you better get along, I like her". Kyo folds his arms and leaves Kira fuming on the floor.

Afternoon

Jale looks over to Kira and Ruby.

"Oi, you two! Take the contraband we've confiscated tonight and lock it up" he orders, pointing to two large crates behind him.

Ruby enthusiastically moves towards the crates with a sour-faced Kira in tow. She picks up her crate with ease after years of swinging a heavy axe. Kira, on the other hand, struggles with the weight but puts on a stubbornly brave face as they carry the club's loot to the storeroom. Ruby opens the door, holding her crate with one arm as she does so.

"Come on now princess, it's not that heavy. Here, after you!"

Kira walks into the storeroom and slumps forward to drop her crate into the corner. Ruby sighs as she follows her in.

“Use your knees Kira, I wouldn’t want you to get hurt”.

Kira, feeling pitied and talked down to, sticks her foot in Ruby’s path. The Au Ra stumbles but manages to regain her balance. Ruby throws down her crate, trembling with anger, and turns to Kira.

“I’ve had just about enough of your shit! We’ve been working together a month now and you’ve given me nothing but grief! It’s about time someone taught you a lesson!”

Ruby grabs the back of Kira’s neck, causing her to panic. She forces the protesting Miko’te across the room and pushes her over the nearest table, her face landing in a small pile of recently cut coke. Ruby pins her down with one arm.

“What the fuck are you doing?!?” Kira exclaims, unintentionally breathing in some of the white powder.

“I’m doing what someone should have done a long time ago” Ruby replies, proceeding to lift the back of her haori and rip down her shorts, tights and underwear.

SMACK “Ah! Stop you crazy bitch!”

SMACK “Ah! I’ll fucking kill you!”

SMACK “Just wait till you turn your back whore!”

SMACK “Ah! ...stop, no more!”

SMACK “Please... stop...” she cries “I’m sorry, okay?!”

Ruby looks down at Kira’s rear admiring her handiwork, the bright red glowing handprint and the heat given off by her blows. She grabs Kira by her hair and pulls her up to talk into her ear “You’re going to show me a lot more respect from now on, you hear?”

“Yes,” a sheepish Kira mutters in response. Ruby placed her hand under Kira’s chin to lift her head.

“What was that, princess?”

Kira’s face flushed red with embarrassment.

“Yes... Miss Ruby.”

“Good, I see you’ve learned your lesson quickly.” Ruby lets go of Kira, allowing her to fall to the floor, turns and walks out of the room. She gets around the corner and stops, bringing her hands up to her deeply blushing face.

“Gods... why did I go that far?” She glanced over her shoulder back towards the storeroom, hesitating a moment before taking a deep breath and quickly heading back to her duties.

The Goblet

Evening

Ruby walked through the streets of the Goblet shortly after midnight. When she left Fortuna, the party was still going, but her work, thankfully, was over for the night. Most women might have been worried about walking through this district alone, in the dark. Most women didn't carry large axes though. Ruby's axe had traveled across half the world with her.

Still, she was grateful that the room she was renting wasn't too far away. It had been a long night working security at a busy club, plus avoiding a certain Miko'te. Her pale face reddened at the memory from a few weeks ago, the girl bent over a table, poofy tail in the air and shorts and underwear around her ankles. She was still a little shocked that it didn't seem like she had been reported, but maybe mafia bosses didn't care too much about a little assault between employees, as long as they did what they were paid for. It was good money, and regular money, after working countless odd jobs to scrape together the cash for a meal and a roof for the night. She could finally settle down a bit and decide what to do with her life.

There was a small smile on her face as she turned the last corner onto the street where she lived, but it quickly faded when she spotted someone standing at the gateway. It was the last person she wanted to see. Too late to hide though; Kira's ears twitched at the sound of her footsteps and the Miko'te turned to look at her.

"Well, it took you long enough to get here." Kira spoke as she approached. "I talked Jale into telling me where you lived, and..."

Ruby sighed and brushed past her, fumbling in her pocket for the key to the front door.

"You've been avoiding me." Kira followed her to the door.

"So what if I have?" Ruby replied shortly, her tail twitching tensely. "You're not entitled to my attention." She felt a little smug as she saw Kira bristle with annoyance.

"Hey! It's... it's not like I'm after your attention or anything!" Kira replied, her hands clenched into fists. "I just... well everyone's saying you're not yourself lately, so I wanted to find out why. But not because I care."

"So just because you're a nosy brat then." Ruby unlocked the door and stepped inside. "It's none of your business. Now, I'm tired and going to bed." She pushed the door to close it and walked across the hall inside, but Kira slipped in and followed her.

"Fine! I care a bit." Kira caught up to the Au Ra and reached out to place her hand on her shoulder. Ruby turned quickly and seized her hand by the wrist, squeezing it tightly.

"Don't lie to me, princess! You don't give a shit about anything but yourself."

"If that was true, I'd have got you fired weeks ago!" Kira replied, trying to tug her hand free. "You left me there, high as a fucking kite! I barely got my knickers before the bar staff came in to lock up the good booze!"

Ruby released Kira's hand abruptly and turned away, hiding her face as she unlocked the door of her room.

"At least you'd have had a good reason to get me fired this time." She shook her head. "I crossed a line. And I should have apologised to you much sooner."

Kira rubbed her sore wrist and placed her hand on Ruby's shoulder.

"Don't get me wrong. I was going to tell them the next day, but I changed my mind when I saw you turn up for your pay." She spoke quietly. "I expected you to look arrogant or proud of yourself... but you just looked like you were hurting." Kira felt Ruby tense under her hand, before she silently pushed the door open and walked in. The door was left open behind her, so Kira followed.

The room inside was mostly bare. There was a bed in the corner under the slanted ceiling, partly hidden by a screen. A small pile of cushions on the floor, a pot plant, and a few outfits hung on pegs on the wall. Ruby unslung her axe and placed it carefully in the corner.

"Seven hells, you've been robbed!" Kira exclaimed, looking around. Her ears perked up as she heard the Au Ra laugh.

"If you hadn't noticed, princess, I'm not from round here." Ruby spoke, exaggerating her rough Xaela accent. "I came here from Othard not that long ago. That axe was pretty much all I brought with me. And my lifestyle since then hasn't really allowed me to collect much 'stuff'."

"So... Why'd you come here?" Kira asked, watching Ruby removing the outer layers of her clothing, turning a little pink without realising it.

"I was looking for some friends of mine. But they're all gone." Ruby replied, stepping behind the screen by the bed to remove her corset.

"And... Why did you stay?"

"Because everyone at home is gone now too." The Au Ra's voice cracked slightly. "Whether I stay or I go, I have no one."

Kira's sensitive ears twitched, catching the sound of Ruby's deep breaths as she tried to keep herself from breaking down in front of the Miqu'te. Now that her time and thoughts weren't taken up with constantly searching for work, the reality of her loss had sunken in deep, leaving her angry and depressed by turns, barely able to keep her usually energetic, perky attitude going even at work. She closed her eyes, determined not to start crying...

...and jumped as she felt Kira's arms wrap around her waist, the Miqu'te's cheek resting on her bare breast.

"You idiot! You have people who care for you ...like me." Kira said. "If you want. Doesn't bother me either way."

Ruby sighed and let her tears fall as she put her arms around Kira's shoulders.

"Stupid brat..." she whispered into Kira's hair, sniffing.

"Not 'princess'?..."