

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Getting more information...

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The longer Amadeus watches things progress backstage, the more tempted he is to intervene directly. It's the way he sees every member of K/DA acting around their manager that does it, really. They do their best to hide it of course, but not a single one of them actually likes the man or wants to be anywhere near him.

So yes, its tempting to have Grayfia turn their manager into an ice sculpture and save the girls from whatever is going on here. However, Amadeus isn't an idiot. Reacting as impulsively as that, especially with how Ahri shut down Rumi's questions before the show, would only cause more harm than good.

It couldn't just be the manager, after all. That other man from before the show had also clearly been involved, which meant this was more than just one man upsetting K/DA... more than just two men as well. No, in the end, they can do nothing tonight. But that doesn't mean Amadeus is going to do nothing at all.

Admittedly, he's a little torn though... getting one of K/DA alone to try and grill them for answers seems like the most obvious choice, but which one? He quickly sets aside Akali and Kai'Sa as options, mostly because they both feel like normal humans to his senses. But that just leaves Evelyn and Ahri. The devil and the kitsune.

... In the end, he settles on Ahri. He and Evelyn might share a species, but that was precisely why it was probably better for him to avoid the female devil for the time being. After all, he had enemies among his own species... and he was supposed to be lying low in accordance with the current Leviathan's wishes so that the current Lucifer didn't find out he was still alive.

Meanwhile, Amadeus didn't have any enemies among the Youkai of Japan... at least as far as he knew. Which meant Ahri was probably the better choice. And

so when Amadeus gets the chance, he asks Rumi to set things up for him, something the leader of Huntrix is happy to do.

It does mean that the night ends in a rather dissatisfying manner, once K/DA makes their excuses and breaks away. There's no helping that unfortunately, even if it's obvious to everyone involved that the vibes are off.

But the important thing is that Rumi had secured a 'coffee date' with Ahri in the next few days, whatever that meant. Just the two of them, or so Ahri would think... it would give Amadeus a chance to get to the bottom of things without the watchful eyes of K/DA's manager on the situation.

And so, even though he wishes he could resolve whatever K/DA's situation was in a single night like he'd pretty much done for Huntrix... Amadeus bides his time, waiting for that meeting to arrive.

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Three days later, Ahri steps into the private room in the upscale restaurant for her and Rumi's coffee date, only to find Amadeus waiting for her with Rumi. The Nine-Tailed Fox, currently disguised as a normal human by illusion magic, freezes at the sight of him at first, before shooting Rumi a distinctly unimpressed look.

"You didn't mention bringing a plus one, Rumi."

The leader of Huntrix offers an apologetic smile in response and shrugs.

"You don't mind, I hope? Amadeus is just... getting a feel for things still. Don't worry, he's harmless."

Heh, that was far from true... but when Ahri gives him another look over, she still nods and fully enters the room all the same. Amadeus waits until the door is firmly closed and they have privacy before leaning forward and clearing his throat.

“Apologies for the subterfuge. But we needed an excuse to speak with you alone... to ascertain who is currently harming you.”

Ahri jolts at that, her eyes widening in shock and her entire body going ramrod straight.

“H-Harming me? What... I don’t even know what you’re talking about!”

Rumi sighs.

“Ahri, we all saw that... altercation between you and that man before the show. Who was he? Why were you letting him speak to you and accost you like that? Please... we just want to help.”

Ahri’s eyes flick between the two of them before narrowing.

“... How could you possibly help me?”

Seriously? Huh, had Evelynn not informed her bandmates that Amadeus was a devil? Hell, had she even informed them that she was a devil? Amadeus tilts his head to the side consideringly for a long moment before letting a bit of his power leak out so that even Ahri can feel it. She gasps, staring at him with wide eyes.

“I’m not human, obviously. And neither are you. So I suppose I would ask this... what is a kitsune doing out of Japan, let alone a Nine-Tailed Fox?”

Ahri’s pupils shrink for a moment as she looks exceedingly pale. Finally, she manages to find her voice.

“I’m not... I’m not a kitsune. I’m a kumiho... the Korean e-equivalent.”

Amadeus blinks and considers that correction... before shaking his head.

“No, you aren’t. Or at least, not entirely... are you perhaps a half-?”

“D-Don’t say it!”

Ahri's hissed words cut him off from uttering the words 'half-breed', causing Amadeus to pull back as a spike of guilt goes through him from how incensed she now looks. Her eyes are watery and red as she abruptly stands up.

"I did not come here to be ambushed like this!"

Rumi rises too.

"Ahri, wait! Amadeus didn't mean it; we really do want to help! Please don't go!"

But of course, Ahri isn't having it. So... Amadeus does the only thing he can think of. He gets to his feet as well and immediately bows at the waist, head all the way down.

"My sincerest apologies for my inconsiderate words and unthinking, boorish behavior. Please do not go... if you wish for me to leave so that you and Rumi can enjoy your time together, then I will depart immediately."

Obviously, it's the last thing he actually wants to do. Ahri needs his help, he's sure of it... but the whole point of going this route and not calling out the problems that night at the concert had been to avoid forcing anyone to do anything. So yeah, he was willing to back off if need be.

There's a long pregnant pause where Amadeus keeps his head down and his back bent. Until finally...

"... I accept your apology. Fine... I won't... ugh, I'll stay. And you can stay too."

Huh, it worked. Amadeus slowly straightens up and sits back down as Ahri and Rumi do the same. An awkward silence ensues between the three of them... until finally, Ahri huffs and swipes a hand through the air, dispelling her own illusion and revealing her fox features, including the ears atop her head.

"Let me rephrase my previous words... there is nothing either of you can do to help me in my current situation."

Amadeus shares a look with Rumi at that before looking back to Ahri. Choosing his words carefully, he clears his throat.

"Well... we can't know that for sure if you won't tell us anything, right?"

One of Ahri's fox ears flicks as she gives him a deadpan stare.

"I know it for sure. It's hopeless. You're like Evelyn, aren't you?"

Amadeus slowly nods.

"Well, there's nothing she can do about things either. She's just as trapped as me. And so there isn't anything you can do."

Amadeus narrows his eyes at that, putting the dots together.

"... A magical contract of some sort?"

Ahri flinches, stiffens, and then scowls one after the other, gracing him with an annoyed glower.

"You just don't know when to let up, do you?"

Smiling sheepishly, Amadeus shrugs.

"Apologies... you're probably not allowed to talk about it if you're under magical contract anyways."

There's a pause... and then Ahri shakes her head.

"No. I can... we can talk about it."

Wait, what? Amadeus furrows his brow, caught off guard by both the confirmation of a magical contract being at play... and that apparently it was loose enough in its restrictions that Ahri and the others weren't restricted from

discussing it. That seemed like a pretty big oversight to him... but he certainly wasn't complaining.

Neither is Rumi, who leans forward now with eyes filled with concern.

"Ahri... please tell us what's going on? Maybe we really can help!"

Hah, Amadeus could tell Rumi was channeling her inner Zoey with that last bit... or maybe just her inner optimist. Really, they were one in the same. Regardless, Ahri looks trapped for a moment longer before finally slumping in her chair.

"... I doubt it. But whatever. I'll tell you."

Silence falls as Amadeus and Rumi stay quiet, giving her room to talk. Huffing, Ahri looks off to the side before finally beginning to speak.

"It's the label. The people behind it... they're not mundane by any stretch of the imagination. They're human magicians one and all, but none of us knew it before we signed the contracts. Hell, Akali and Kai'Sa didn't even know such things existed... they managed to trick us all, but Evelyn and I should have known something was wrong. We were idiots. So now they own us. Simple as that."

Amadeus frowns deeply at that. He understood the concept of a 'label' at this point, mostly from talking to Rumi and the other girls. It was how music in this Modern Era tended to work. Music groups would be signed by 'record labels' that would in turn support them and help distribute their music to as great an audience as possible.

Huntrix was under the Sunlight Entertainment record label, which was run by their mentor Celine. But every music group worth anything had a record label of some sort, so of course K/DA would have one as well.

However, to hear Huntrix talk about it, record labels were supposed to support their musicians. Not... not whatever *this* was. Rumi, of course, is in full agreement.

“That’s not right! Your label can’t just... own you. You’re not chattel! Surely there must be a way out of the contract, magical or otherwise!”

Ahri gives Rumi a lidded stare for a moment before sweeping her gaze over to Amadeus.

“There isn’t, no. The magical part is doing a lot of the heavy lifting here, as I’m sure your friend here knows full well. Human contract law, no matter what the country or jurisdiction, doesn’t apply here. It’s not a matter of breaking contract and being penalized monetarily or something like that... contract breaks come with much more *real* consequences when the contract is magical in nature.”

Amadeus leans forward.

“Rumi is still right though... record labels are supposed to help you, not control you like this, right? They’re clearly doing something wrong here...”

Blinking at them, Ahri lets out a little startled laugh.

“You’re incredibly naïve for one of your kind, aren’t you? Let me guess, Huntrix is the only source of information you have of our industry so far, isn’t it?”

Well... yes. But Amadeus doesn’t know why that should matter. He furrows his brow and glances over to Rumi... who actually looks a little sheepish and guilty as she sighs.

“... We haven’t had time to tell Amadeus everything.”

Turning to him, she explains.

“Our relationship with our record label is the gold standard in the industry. Most other organizations... don’t reach those standards. There are... lots of horror stories about musicians, especially K-Pop Idols, being abused by their labels and treated like shit.”

Turning back to Ahri, Rumi bites her lower lip.

“I’ll confess, I thought that was what the issue here would be. I didn’t think it would go beyond those sorts of normal excesses, but I also didn’t understand how you and Evelynn, being what Amadeus said you were, could somehow get treated like that by normal humans. Them being... magical in nature does explain a lot... but also leaves me with a lot more questions than answers.”

Ahri hums, sitting back a bit in her chair as she eyes Rumi carefully.

“Well... join the club. Because I’ve got questions of my own at this point. Like what the heck is up with you all? Evelynn has always said you girls were actually secretly Demon Hunters... I thought she was joking but...”

Rumi looks surprised. Amadeus has to admit; he’s caught off guard too. Evelynn knew all along about Huntrix’s true nature?

“W-Well... no, she’s right. Me and the girls... we are Demon Hunters. Or rather, were. We were charged with guarding and strengthening the Honmoon and keeping Gwi-Ma at bay...”

Ahri’s eyes widen at that, her fox ears standing fully upright.

“That’s you guys? Huh... I... probably should have been able to guess that. Though... what do you mean *were*?”

Interesting. Did that have to do with the clearly taboo subject of Ahri either being a Japanese Kitsune hiding as a Korean Kumiho, or potentially a half-breed of both? She knew about the Honmoon and Gwi-Ma, but somehow didn’t know that Huntrix were the ones responsible for all of it?

Rumi squirms for a moment... before sighing and explaining the whole sordid tale behind her origins as a half-demon and what happened between Huntrix and Gwi-Ma after the destruction of the Honmoon. Ahri listens the entire time, looking floored by the end of the tale.

“I... I see...”

She looks to Amadeus in a new light, now knowing him to be the devil who reincarnated Huntrix and saved Rumi’s life. Pursing her lips together, Ahri finally flares her nostrils... and shakes her head.

“It’s not worth it. You two... should just back off and leave us to our fates. Don’t risk yourselves for our sake... we did this to ourselves.”

Amadeus shares a look with Rumi at that and just from that look, he knows neither of them is willing to let this go. The question is... do they let Ahri think they’ll let it go so she has plausible deniability? Or do they make it clear to the Nine-Tailed Fox that no matter what, they’re going to keep pursuing this?

On the one hand, the first will allow them to act without her giving away anything with her worry. On the other hand, the second option could give them access to the other members of K/DA, especially Evelyn, who might know more about these magical contracts and what’s going on...

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!