

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

A/N: Bobby and Celine on scene!

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Strangely enough, beyond the metal doors... is a box? Amadeus furrows his brow, not seeing any other opening or doorway inside of the box from what he can tell. There are two people in the box, however, and they step out into the common area at the same time only to stop dead in their tracks as they take in the sight before them.

As they freeze up, Amadeus takes the opportunity to assess their appearances. One of them is a short, stout man while the other is an older woman with a streak of grey through her hair. The man looks like he's perhaps a bit overfed and could stand to lose a few pounds. The woman looks to have the body of a retired warrior, someone who spent much of her life fighting but has set aside her weapon for quite some time.

Their attitudes upon first entering the space had been downtrodden and despairing, their lips drawn into tight, sad frowns. However, when they see everyone waiting for them and specifically see Rumi is up and moving about, their sadness morphs into surprise.

From there, that surprise morphs into something else for each of them. For the stout man, his eyes light up and his lips pull into a wide, cheery grin as he all but bounces forward.

"Rumi! You're awake! I knew you'd pull through; I just knew it!"

The older woman on the other hand looks wary, her face drawn with worry and her eyes darting between all of them in visible concern. When those eyes settle on Amadeus in particular for longer than a moment, she stiffens up, clearly recognizing him as something not entirely human if the way she takes an involuntary step back is any indication.

This byplay is not missed by anyone in the room... except for the man himself, who has his back turned to the old woman and therefore hasn't seen her reaction.

"I'm awake, Bobby! I'm sorry... I must have worried you and Celine so much. But... I'm better now. I'm on the mend."

Bobby and Celine. Amadeus categorizes the names, even as he watches Celine closely to see how she'll react. Bobby, meanwhile, is over the moon and thrilled as he even does a little jig before glancing back to Celine.

"Celine? Are you alright? Everything is going to be okay!"

Hm. Bobby doesn't know the truth, does he? That becomes exceedingly obvious as Celine, despite clearly being very ill at ease at the moment, takes a step forward while plastering across her face.

"Yes, sorry... I... I'm glad to see you're doing well, Rumi."

In the awkward silence that follows, Rumi shifts from foot to foot before finally nodding.

"Y-Yeah. Me too..."

Bobby either misses the underlying subtext to the exchange or decides to bulldoze right over it as he turns to Amadeus with a bright smile.

"And who's your guest, girls? Sorry, I should let you introduce yourself! I'm Bobby, Huntrix's manager!"

The short, stout man thrusts out his hand in Amadeus' direction and Amadeus has to admit... he likes what he sees of Bobby so far. This is the sort of man who can roll with the punches. Though, what does 'manager' mean? Why would Huntrix need to be 'managed'?

Still, the fond looks that his new peerage members are shooting Bobby are very obviously genuine. So, smiling right back, Amadeus reaches out and takes Bobby's hand in his own.

"Amadeus. Patron of the Arts."

Bobby nods as they shake hands, his smile not wavering but his grip growing a bit firmer. An attempt at intimidation? Or maybe just an attempted warning.

"How mysterious!"

Hah, this Bobby fellow... Amadeus got the impression that he was feeling overprotective of the girls. He was to be commended for that, especially since none of them seemed at all uncomfortable with him in the room. They had a good relationship... and Amadeus had no intentions of getting in the way of it.

"Very mysterious. Especially since neither Bobby nor I were informed by Tower Security that there were guests in the penthouse before we came up here."

Celine, unlike Bobby, definitely invoked feelings of discomfort and anxiety in the members of Huntrix from what Amadeus could see. They weren't sure how to act around her and he thought he saw flashes of anger in Mira's face as she found herself glaring at Celine when she thought nobody was looking.

It's also obvious that Celine would be interrogating him a lot harder right now if Bobby weren't present. She would be demanding answers, starting with exactly what he was given she'd clearly clocked him as non-human.

"Please don't pressure Amadeus, you two. Without him... I wouldn't have recovered."

Oops. Rumi has apparently decided to run damage control, but Amadeus isn't sure if that was the right thing to do or not. His eyes dart down to the table where the open case holding the rest of his Evil Pieces should sit... only to find it gone. Blinking, he glances back to see that Grayfia is behind him, holding the now-closed case.

Nobody had even noticed her retrieving it, he's pretty sure. Amadeus certainly hadn't registered her moving to take the case from the table, though it must have happened at some point just before or during Celine and Bobby's arrival.

In the face of Rumi's declaration, Bobby looks surprised... but then gives Amadeus a look of newfound respect.

"Wow, in that case thank you very much for your help! Rumi was in a bad way... not sure what you did exactly, but whatever it was seems to have worked!"

Amadeus smiles awkwardly, not sure how to react to Bobby's praise... especially with Celine's energy growing increasingly hostile. In fact...

"Is it permanent? Or merely temporary?"

Celine's cutting words cause Bobby's brow to furrow in confusion, even as Rumi straightens up and frowns.

"It's permanent, Celine. I'm going to live."

"But that's not poss-!"

Celine cuts herself off, flares her nostrils, and finally takes a deep breath. Then, she looks to Bobby.

"Bobby, I need to speak with the girls privately for a moment. Could you escort their guest out for me?"

It dawns on him then that Grayfia is using her technique on both Bobby and Celine. However... back before, Celine had said guests, as in plural. Bobby had consistently only noticed and mentioned Amadeus, but Celine had gone from noting Grayfia at first to only noticing him now.

Grayfia must have ramped up the use of her ability at some point upon realizing that Celine was more perceptive than your average human. That still proved that Celine had good senses, however.

Of course, Bobby hesitates in the face of Celine's order... and before he can knuckle under and try to get Amadeus to leave with him, Rumi steps in.

"That won't be necessary. Amadeus is fine right where he is. In fact... so is Bobby. Anything you have to say to us... you can say in front of both of them as well."

Zoey and Mira jerk in surprise at this... before quickly falling in with their leader as they both nod decisively. Celine, meanwhile, narrows her eyes and purses her lips as she finds herself stuck with a wide eyed Bobby looking between all of them in confusion.

"... Are you sure that's for the best, Rumi? Specifically, are you sure that it's best for Bobby if he's brought into such things."

Rumi falters briefly at that, but where she falters, Zoey and Mira pick up the slack.

"Keeping secrets has done nothing but hurt us!"

"What Zoey said. Maybe if we'd all been more honest with each other earlier, shit wouldn't have happened the way it did."

Those comments seem to deal non-physical damage to Celine, who rears back and blinks rapidly in the face of the girls' vitriol and certainty. Rumi, meanwhile, nods along in agreement with the others.

"They're right. No more lies. Nothing but the truth now."

Then, not even waiting for Celine to respond, Rumi turns to a confused Bobby with a determined glint in her eyes.

“We’re Demon Hunters, Bobby. Actual, literal demon hunters. We always have been, for as long as we’ve been idols, as long as you’ve known us. All those ‘special effects’ and ‘cosplayers’ we fight at events and concerts that you’re always complaining about not being told about... they’re real. All of it is real.”

Woof. Amadeus thinks he might have eased Bobby into it a little bit more carefully if it was him... but it’s not him and to be fair he doesn’t know Bobby nearly as well as the girls do. Still, the stout man does just stare for a long moment, his mouth opening and closing wordlessly as he processes Rumi’s words.

Finally though... he slams a fist into a palm and nods.

“Everything makes so much more sense now!”

Rumi smiles, Mira smirks, and Zoey giggles... while Celine looks downright flabbergasted.

“Excuse me? You... believe her?”

Blinking, Bobby looks over to Celine.

“I mean... it explains a lot. I’m supposed to be Huntrix’s manager, and let me tell you, I put in the work! I do everything and I have my fingers in all sorts of pies to make sure all goes to plan! And yet, over and over again since the girls have debuted, I’ve been kept out of the loop on their most flashy publicity stunts!”

Bobby nods to himself thoughtfully.

“But if those weren’t publicity stunts, if that wasn’t just flashy special effects or hired actors... well, that explains why I never saw the bills for those things. I mean, the girls technically had the money to go behind my back and pay out of pocket for that sort of stuff, but I’m also up to date on their financials so I know none of them were doing it. It being actual demon attacks makes a lot more sense!”

And then what Bobby is actually saying finally hits him and the blood drains from his face as he gawks at Rumi and the others.

“Oh my god! You three have been fighting actual demons for as long as I’ve known you?!”

Rumi, Mira, and Zoey all exchange bewildered looks before Rumi slowly nods.

“Uh... yes Bobby.”

Bobby promptly bursts into tears, raising his hands to the sky and curling them into fists.

“AND I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW IT! I’m a terrible m-manager! I should have been helping; I should have been doing so much m-more!”

Amadeus just stares as the man, a seemingly completely normal and mundane mortal human man... sobs over not helping his Demon Hunter charges fight demons more effectively. Rumi and the other two immediately crowd around him, trying to tell him how it’s not his fault and how he did everything he could and how much they appreciated his hard work.

Watching this from the sidelines, Amadeus honestly wonders if maybe he has overstayed his welcome. He can always contact Huntrix tomorrow to figure out more stuff, right? He’s just about to quietly ask Grayfia if they should go when the silver-haired maid suddenly steps out in front of him protectively.

Blinking, Amadeus belatedly realizes that Celine had actually been advancing on him while Rumi and the others were busy with Bobby. The older human woman freezes as Grayfia gets in the way, going from being a piece of the background that nobody was paying attention to, to suddenly being very much in the forefront of at least Celine’s mind.

The girls’ mentor (for what else could she possibly be) tenses up and rears back, her eyes shrinking to pinpricks as she registers Grayfia’s sudden

presence. Her hands, empty, nevertheless clench around nothing at all like they're trying to reach for weapons that won't come.

Grayfia, staring Celine down, doesn't mince words as she ever so lightly flares her nostrils.

"Back. Off."

This interaction is not lost on the others and Rumi turns to them, pursing her lips.

"Celine? You need to leave Amadeus alone."

Whipping towards Rumi, Celine grits her teeth.

"Then I would appreciate being told what has happened. Who and what species are these two... and how was the male one able to help you? Rumi, I've been pouring over the records for days now. I've gone up and down the archive. I..."

Here, Celine loses steam... all steam. Her anger dissipates and all of the sudden the broken, despairing woman underneath is revealed as her eyes glisten with unshed tears.

"Rumi... the only answers I found were bad. The ancient texts all said the same thing... that you shouldn't have even been able to survive to adulthood, let alone how to save you. So... so don't get me wrong, I'm ecstatic to see you up and walking and talking... I just need to know how it happened. I need to know you haven't been tricked by this... this creature."

In the background, Bobby is confused but Mira and Zoey are there to quietly explain things to him. Namely, Rumi's half-demon and half-human heritage and how she was an anomaly for living as long as she had. How her demon side had been killing her human side and that was why she was on death's door.

Hm, it sounded as though Celine was quite xenophobic. To be fair, if she was a mentor to demon hunters, it stood to reason that she was probably a demon

hunter herself. But she had yet to call Amadeus a demon so far, which made it seem like she recognized he wasn't a demon... even if she also could clearly tell he wasn't human.

That raised the question though, what did she think was happening here... and what should they tell her? It's obvious despite her caustic attitude that Celine cares for Rumi and the others in her own way. Learning that they've all joined his peerage and left their humanity behind might cause her to... do something unwise.

On the other hand, would trying to lie to her really be much better?

Unfortunately, from the way Rumi is looking to him pleadingly, she's leaving it up to him. His decision to make. His choice to screw up if he picks wrong...

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