

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

A/N: Talking things through

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Grayfia looks a heartbeat away from stepping in. The Huntrix girls also look like they might protest Celine's questions. But Amadeus just holds up a hand, maintaining eye contact with the older human woman even as he shuts them all down.

Silence reigns for a long moment as Amadeus looks Celine in the eye. He doesn't think that she means it as an accusation or judgment. And it's a fair question, in the end. So... he answers her honestly.

"I intend to give K/DA their freedom back. These contracts... I'll hand them off to each of those girls directly once we get them out from under Millennium's thumb. They can decide what to do with them after that. I assume they'll destroy them..."

Celine just nods, as though that was exactly what she expected to hear.

"I imagine they will as well. However, that will leave them somewhat adrift. Once they're broken free of Millennium, they'll still need somewhere else to go... especially if they want to continue making music."

Amadeus blinks, a little caught off guard. Where was Celine going with this, exactly?

"We could sign them on to Sunlight Entertainment. The same company that helps Huntrix succeed. They would have just as much freedom as the girls do... they would own themselves for once but still have the backing to create whatever they might want to create."

Huh, that didn't sound like a half-bad idea. Obviously Amadeus would let K/DA make that choice, but he finds himself nodding along... right up until he sees the looks on Rumi, Zoey, and Mira's faces. Rumi and Zoey are sharing uncertain glances, while Mira...

"That implies we'll be staying under Sunlight Entertainment, Celine."

The older human woman startles at that, looking at Mira with wide eyes. In response, Mira crosses her arms over her chest and arches an unimpressed brow.

"Look, what that Satan chick did to you was fucked up, don't get me wrong... but it doesn't change anything. Long before all of that, you still made Rumi lie to us... you made her lie about a huge part of herself, hiding it away. It let Gwi-Ma and his demons get closer to winning than ever before."

Celine looks stricken, sitting there on the couch. She doesn't try to deny a single thing Mira has said... and even more tellingly, neither Rumi nor Zoey are trying to rein in their more abrasive friend either. They're just letting Mira speak... and in doing so, making it clear she speaks for all of them.

"You treated us better than most of this industry treats its talent. We owe you something for that. But you also fucked up and Rumi almost died because of it. Because we didn't know. Because the Honmoon broke down thanks to our disunity."

Celine slowly nods.

"I... I understand."

Then, she looks to Zoey and finally Rumi.

"And you girls... all feel that the best way forward is to separate Huntrix from Sunlight Entertainment?"

Zoey averts her gaze back to the ancient magical tome in front of her, giving a half-hearted shrug in response. Rumi, meanwhile, grimaces and stays silent for a moment before finally speaking.

“It might be for the best, yes. We’ve been discussing options. We just... didn’t want to fight you.”

Celine’s breath hitches. She’d been doing a good job of keeping her composure until now, but now Amadeus sees the glistening in her eyes.

“I have failed you girls.”

Its telling that nobody tries to protest her words. Mira just grunts, Rumi grimaces harder, and Zoey buries herself further in the tome. Finally, Celine shakes her head.

“It would be better for me to step down and leave things to all of you, rather than forcing you to go through the messiness of breaking away.”

That gets a reaction from Rumi.

“What? Step down?! But Sunlight Entertainment... that’s your baby!”

Celine lets out a broken little laugh at that, before turning to Rumi and lifting up a hand to rest on her cheek.

“No, Rumi. You were my baby. And as Mira said, I nearly got you killed.”

Now Rumi looks like she’s about to cry. Truth be told, Amadeus also feels like he’s going to cry, his heart is in his throat and his eyes are burning as he watches the interaction. It feels a bit perverse... a bit voyeuristic really. But he doesn’t excuse himself, knowing they still have important decisions to make.

Celine, as seems to be her standard way of operating, moves decisively and with purpose.

"I will set to transferring ownership of Sunlight Entertainment to you, Rumi. After the transfer is complete, I will step down as CEO... Bobby or someone else you choose can take my place. From there, I will have no more control over your lives... and you can continue to use Sunlight Entertainment for good, as it was always meant to be. Including giving those girls in K/DA a proper home to continue creating art from."

Rumi doesn't seem to know what to say. Mira though... Mira lets out a low whistle.

"Alright. Damn. That's a good start."

"Mira!"

Rumi does finally cry out then, sounding shocked. When Mira just arches her brow in the half-demon's direction, Rumi flushes.

"I mean... isn't she doing enough with all of this? Why only call it a good start?"

Huffing, Mira looks back to Celine.

"And what are you going to do once we own Sunlight Entertainment and you're no longer CEO?"

Celine blinks.

"I will... return to Jeju and interfere no longer."

Rumi looks stricken by this idea, while Mira just nods as if that's what she expected.

"Yeah, fuck that. How are you going to make up for your mistakes all the way on Jeju? I might not want anything to do with you after all of this, but do you really think Rumi wants you to go no-contact like that?"

Celine looks taken aback, while Rumi moves to sit right beside the older woman.

“I don’t! Celine, I...”

It seems like Rumi doesn’t know what else to say. In the end, she doesn’t say anything at all. She just presses her forehead to Celine’s and while the human woman is initially startled, she ultimately presses back. Amadeus smiles at the sight, happy to see the quiet reconciliation.

After a long moment, Mira speaks again.

“So then if that’s the plan, we just need to get K/DA out of that building and free from Millennium. How are we going to do that, exactly?”

That was a good question. Amadeus looks over to Grayfia, who straightens up and immediately begins to give her report without any prompting. He’d known it was a smart idea to leave her behind like he did. With Millennium’s magic users not having the capacity to detect Grayfia when she was using her technique, it meant she could directly spy on their meeting once they uncovered the robbery and tell them exactly how it went.

Everyone is soon frowning though, Amadeus included. Unfortunately, it sounded like while they did have a little bit of time... they didn’t have much of it. If they weren’t swift enough, then Millennium would just trick K/DA into signing new contracts.

Fortunately, taking everything all at once seemed to have been a good idea, because their enemies didn’t currently think it was specifically about K/DA. They were willing to spend a little while longer hunting for the thieves first so they could potentially retrieve the original contracts.

Obviously, that wasn’t going to happen. But it then became a question of... how were they going to get K/DA out of Millennium’s clutches? It wasn’t like they could invite them on another brunch, not if Millennium was basically putting them under house arrest...

Silence falls as Grayfia finishes her report, everyone contemplating the circumstances together. Mira, as one might expect, is the first to just scoff.

“I don’t see why we need to rely on subterfuge anymore. Why don’t we just break in and steal them like we stole their contracts? We could have Rumi suck us all into a portal to the Demon Realm, them included, and just go from there.”

That would be the simplest option, yes. But it did have a lot of risk associated with it. Not just to them, but also to K/DA. It would be easier if they could find a way to extract K/DA from Millennium’s security first and foremost. Even if said security had proven to be woefully lacking so far, they would almost certainly be on high alert after the first heist.

“Or we could offer a collab.”

Zoey’s voice causes all eyes to turn towards her. She shrinks a little bit before offering a shrug.

“I mean, sure they’re on lockdown at the moment. But is Millennium really going to pass up the opportunity to have K/DA collaborate with *us*? It would be a huge boost for them... the sort of boost that might let them finally overtake us properly. If we offer it as a sort of ‘limited time’ thing where it can only happen because of our current hiatus, then they’d be stuck, wouldn’t they?”

That was also a possibility. It would still involve some risk, but it would let them get close to K/DA without any violence... so long as Millennium agreed.

Honestly though, Amadeus wasn’t sure he liked either idea. Frowning, he crosses his arms over his chest consideringly.

“I don’t know if we should have any of you girls risking yourselves. Grayfia and I could probably sneak in there alone again and handle it ourselves I’m pretty sure.”

That gets immediate denials from all three members of Huntrix, of course.

“What?! No way!”

“You can’t just sideline us again!”

“We want to help!”

In the face of their protests, Amadeus sighs, scratching the back of his neck. Celine, meanwhile, peers at him for a moment.

“... If you don’t want Huntrix involved, why didn’t you just snag K/DA when you grabbed their contracts?”

It was a good question. One that Amadeus didn’t want to answer with the truth on account of it being rather incriminating. Because the truth was, he hadn’t wanted to leave anything behind in the Millennium Safe. He’d wanted to steal everything, both to show he could and bloody their noses. Basically, it was an ego thing more than anything else.

In the end, Amadeus goes with a little white lie and shrugs.

“We didn’t have time to check to make sure their contracts were among the things we were stealing. We had to take everything and go.”

Not true, of course. They had gone completely undetected and could have taken the extra bit of time to uncover things. But Celine just nods slowly, accepting the fib all the same. The girls, on the other hand...

“We want to help, Amadeus.”

Rumi gives him this cute, determined look that makes it so very hard to say no to her. And Mira and Zoey are both nodding along with her.

“Don’t bench us, we can’t just sit around doing nothing.”

“Yeah, those girls deserve to know we’re in their corner!”

Amadeus sighs.

“I had hoped to avoid painting any targets on your backs...”

Rumi just shrugs.

“If all goes to plan, we’ll be signing K/DA to Sunlight Entertainment afterwards anyways, right? So there’s no point in trying to protect us, Millennium Enterprises will know we played some role in all of this at that point anyways. And they might try to come after us. But if they do... they’ll regret it.”

“Damn straight they will!”

“Yeah! We’ll turn them all into rabbits!”

Everyone looks at Zoey, who suddenly perks up.

“Oh! Or wait, what if we could change the spell so it turned them into turtles instead! We could get rid of a bunch of abusive rich suits and make a bunch of new turtles!”

That... was so Zoey that Amadeus wasn’t even fazed at this point. Nor was anyone else. Instead, Rumi and Mira just look back at him, serious as ever.

“So? How are we going to do this? What do you want us to do?”

They were determined. And Amadeus had to admit; he didn’t want to ‘sideline’ them anymore either. Still, what was the best way to go and break K/DA out? Break in and have Rumi teleport them all to the Demon Realm, simple as that? Or try and be sneaky and subversive with it by arranging a ‘collab’ between Huntrix and K/DA before Millennium got around to having K/DA sign new contracts?

And of course, it was all up to Amadeus again...

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