

HUNT FROM SCRATCH

COMMISSION STORY

BY CHALDEACHANGE



Silvia Kuroi had been *exceptionally* busy as of late.

The ruby haired Miqu'te woman didn't mind this one bit. In fact, it was completely by design. She fancied herself to be a studious scholar, an active archaeologist; and those two things alone would surely keep her plate more than a little full. But then? Adventuring tended to go hand-in-hand with these interests of hers, and the world that she lived in wasn't exactly free of dangers. If an adventurer didn't have monsters to worry about, there was always the risk of being attacked by bandits, pirates, or countless other cowards who could not find a way forward in life without resorting to murder.

Because of that? She liked to keep her combat skills sharp. She didn't always have the time to practice against live targets though, so at times... she would decide to get involved with outings that would provide her with the 'optimal' opportunity to help keep herself in fighting shape. One such opportunity had been presented to her the next time she had visited the Azim Steppe.

The Steppe was a wide-open space of rolling fields where the Xaela Au Ra were split into over *fifty* tribes. They all lived in relative peace with each other; each one's history and culture different from the other. There could be overlapping beliefs of course, but they were often so unique that they didn't typically gather together unless it was for sport or out of necessity. Of course, members of the tribes still befriended and even fell in love with those from differing backgrounds.

It just so happened that there had been a gathering of *necessity*. The monster populations on the Steppe had surged over the past season, so

the tribe leaders had organized a culling in the form of a hunting expedition. The tribes would travel together to where the monsters were most prevalent and cut down what they could, eventually bringing back what they had hunted to *Reunion* to split amongst the participating tribes in terms of resources.



“Whew. Back at Reunion for the night. I could really use a *bath*...” Silvia, *clearly*, was not a Xaela Au Ra. Even so, she was close enough with some of the archaeologists within them that she had been allowed to join in. It had been a long, tiring day of flying on her mount and cutting down beasts alongside the noble warriors of the Steppe, but now? She was just happy to return to the hut she had been provided to sleep in.

Unfortunately, she also had a bad habit of getting *sidetracked*. Reunion was the Azim Steppe’s marketing hub. It was a neutral ground where all of the tribes were forced to keep their hands off of each other despite whatever tensions might have been between them. It was a peaceful place, and the light of the setting sun casting a golden glow upon it gave it a quiet, homely vibe regardless of how busy it was now that the hunting party had returned.

Silv had first stopped at a hut to grab some jerky. She was *starving*, but she didn’t want to grab a proper meal until after she’d taken a bath in one of the tubs they had set up. But even as she walked back with some of that jerky dangling from her mouth? Her attention ended up wandering elsewhere, and before she knew it she was hanging out on the market outskirts.

“Huh. I guess it doesn’t matter *where* in the world you are. Kids still *love* playing catch.” There was about four Xaela children dressed in different robes (implying they were from different tribes) all tossing a ball that had crudely been stitched together back and forth. They were screaming and laughing at each other as kids often did, and it reminded the Miqu’te of simpler times... as she scarfed down her last piece of jerky.

She tried to make a game of it herself at first. What they were playing *wasn’t* conventional ‘catch’, and she’d studied enough cultures that she thought she might be able to figure out the rules on her own. It didn’t take long for it to occur to her that it wasn’t going to be that easy. Could she ask them? Well, how would a child react to a stranger from another land asking them about their game all of a sudden?

There was also the *participation* avenue. Could she just join in? In fact, there was a part of her that *really* wanted to do that. **“I’m definitely a little too old to just start playing, though. Their parents would ask questions!”** That acceptance *should* have been enough. She *should* have just turned around and left in that moment, especially when she could have just asked one of the adults in the market about it instead.

But wanting to learn about the game wasn’t *really* her motive anymore. She had still convinced herself of that fact because it made the most rational sense, and the scholar’s interest had certainly *begun* with curiosity alone. Yet, the more she watched them? The more her desires twisted; *simplified*. **“I really want to try playing it…”** Even after muttering as much under her breath, Silvia didn’t even bother to ponder if maybe that was perhaps a little *strange*.

Though, that wasn’t even the strangest thing about it. Silvia’s attention was totally fixed on the game and the children playing it. She was utterly *captivated* by it, and as a result wasn’t paying very much attention to herself. Would she have noticed something as slight as her body *shrinking*? At first it was only an inch or two, compromising her fairly average height of 5’5” in a big way. She didn’t *stop* shrinking either, but there was more that needed to be addressed. She wasn’t *just* shrinking, after all.

Clumps of ruby fur soon fell from her ears and tail, beginning a slow process that would span the next minute or so as her body’s stature continued its sluggish decline. While the hair loss *was* one thing, what was probably just as concerning was what the shed fur *revealed* – that the skin underneath appeared... dry? Was that even the right word? It seemed *harder* on all accounts, but it differed a little between her ears and tail. The skin under her ears, while blackish blue, seemed *harder*, while there was a scaliness to what was revealed covering her tail.

“Maybe there is some way I can participate...?” While subtle, the Miko’te’s voice sounded a little *lighter*, which was likely a side effect of her body’s continuous regression. It would get higher and higher the smaller she became, but there were also various ways that she was becoming smaller *aside* from just her height – but it wasn’t all handled with the same consistency. It wasn’t all as creepingly slow as the inches shaving off of her vertical height – which, by the way, she had now shrunk down as low as 5’1”.

It was at the point where her tunic was beginning to sit much looser on her shoulders. There was more space within her outfit because there was just less of *her*. It was certainly dramatic enough that Silvia herself probably *would* have noticed under normal circumstances, but these

clearly *weren't* normal circumstances. She might have been able to pinpoint that some type of magic was at play, but despite her expertise in that area? That was no longer knowledge she possessed. Her thoughts were simpler – as were her passions. She could hardly even wield a bow, but she was great at mending clothes and cooking meals?

...Both skills that were simple and not exactly skills the scholar had prided herself in much before.

As for the mention of her losses not being handled with consistency? Her undergarments served as the best indicators that this was the case. “**Huh...?**” Speaking in a *much* higher pitch than earlier now that she’d slipped down to 4’11”, she made a face that appeared to suggest that she was at least *subconsciously* aware that something had gone awry. She was tugging idly at the front of her tunic in an attempt to reposition the bra underneath. It just... didn’t fit properly?

Perhaps that wasn’t *too* surprising. Her breasts had certainly suffered the most in terms of losses. They had been plenty large and perky for a woman of her height, race, and build, but the inches had eventually peeled off of their overall heft, the weight that had once supported them seemingly emptying into the void. They were one of the parts of her body that shrunk faster than the rest, with even her nipples condensing until there was no puffiness to them at all. Eventually? Her chest was almost *entirely* flat aside from the subtle promise of what could one day grow, and her bra just sort of *hung there* beneath her tunic.

Silvia gave up on adjusting her top. The tunic’s base just barely reached past her pelvis before, but now? It reached the center of her thighs, somewhat concealing that her leggings were beginning to bunch up because there was less leg *to* cover, although this wasn’t technically isolated to their *length* so much as it was a broader loss of mass. Just like her breasts, her thighs and butt cheeks tightened at a pace quicker than her height declined. Their mature shapeliness eroded until they were thin and flat respectively, decorated only with a girlish promise not unlike her chest.

“I really want to play, but could I even do that dressed like this? ...Wh-Why are my clothes this big, anyways!?” For the first time since the process had begun, the woman *finally* looked down at herself. Not that there was much she could really see when her tunic was so, so large against a body that was now 4’8” and *still* shrinking. And yet her *clothes* were the problem from her perspective? *Not* the fact that she was smaller in the first place?

If that was the case, then it was no wonder that it hadn’t clicked to her that all of her losses all led to a singular conclusion. One that facial

features that were softer *and* rounder was *also* suggesting. She just didn't look like an adult anymore. She looked like she'd slipped back into her teens – nay, she was sliding back even *further* in age, closing in on the thirteen range and continuing to regress. That explained why she was so interested in the children's game, and why her talents had seemingly been erased from her minds. In fact, she couldn't remember living longer than she appeared at any given moment.

The fur had almost been completely shed from her ears and tail now, though by the time they had balded they both revealed dramatically different *shapes*. It was far more dramatic when it came to her ears. Not only did they look *incredibly* hard, more like they were made of keratin than flesh, but they accompanied her ear holes down the side of her head and slowly folded... in a sense. “**H-Huh? I can't hear...?**” They *did* curve at first, seemingly with the intention of mending both sides together around her ear holes like cones, but more of this bluish black keratin grew on what had already been established, eventually forming two forward pointing *horns* on the sides of her head.

They were indisputably the horns of an *Au Ra* of the *Xaela* clan and complimented a face that had pulled a little longer as lips thinner and her eyes narrowed.

“**Phew...**” The girl, who was now nearing her destined height of 4'5”, let out a sigh of relief when her hearing returned. You probably could have chalked it up to the fact that she looked more and more like a *child*, but she didn't think critically about why that had happened at *all* and instead gave a little shrug to herself. Dark scales begin to emerge against the pale of complexion. On her forehead, the bridge of her nose, her arms, thighs, and ankles; all places that *Au Ra* tended to grow scales on their bodies.

At this point it was *probably* fairly obvious what had been happening to her tail. The very same scales were what had pushed the clumps of red off of its skin, but the shape of that tail was altered in the process so that the base was much fatter, the tip was much sharper, and it wasn't quite as flexible as a *Miqo'te's* tail – more like a *lizard's*, naturally. “**Should I ask to play...?**” Despite her height now bottoming out and her age now being fixed at *eleven*, her gaze was still cast waywardly out towards the kids laughing and playing with a fondness in her eyes.

Which... led into the final adjustments that were left to be made. Members of the *Xaela* clan had varied skin tones, and Silvia's own began to *cool* at the transformation's end. Her pigmentation took a bluish hue that complimented her darker scales, and a lighter shade of the same color both swept through hereye red hair and brows, and saw her hairstyle altered so that it was full and thick on top, but thinner in the

back as its straighter lengths were pulled over the fronts of her shoulders.

The child had given up on fighting with her clothing, but it wasn't really much of a fight anymore anyways. Her tunic tightened against her smaller figure as blacks were dyed with bright reds instead. Its ornate patterns and accessories became as common as any other robe you could find worn by a resident living upon the Steppe, with layered clothing hugging her small body underneath. It eventually fit her snugly while also looking comfortably loose. It was cozy! It was her favorite set of robes (and matching sandals)!

Her mother had made them for her, after all!

Terbish of the Mol nervously pulled at the sleeves over one arm with the small, bluish grey fingers of the other. Playing with the other kids looked fun, and considering the day she'd had? She really *needed* to have some fun. She had come to Reunion with her mother – a woman that she believed she was *nothing* like. Her mother had a strong will, and she was an even stronger hunter. No one's skill with the bow rivaled hers *anywhere* on the Azim Steppe.



But Terbish? She was shy and meek, something she lamented even though she was but a child herself. She wanted to be a hunter as powerful as her mom, but she didn't have the training. She'd have to learn to hunt from scratch, and only once she was of age. She had been brought to Reunion to observe what happened *after* a hunt but hadn't been permitted to join them on the actual expedition. And so, she had spent the day waiting around in the care of a family friend.

“You just gotta be brave, Terbish! L-Like mom...” The girl tried to psych herself up, but her legs wouldn't move. Why did she have to be such an anxious mess? Maybe she could ask big sis Cirina about it later? She'd been spending a lot of time with Sadu Heavensflame of the Dotharl, so maybe she had some words of wisdom? Because Sadu was so cool! Even her mother looked up to the Dotharl's Khatun!

She hadn't been able to approach the other kids, but Terbish was suddenly placed in a situation where she could no longer shy away. Because the ball? It landed a few inches from her feet. Had they thrown it too hard? No... One of the girls in the group was smiling at her. W-Was that a wink? Was she trying to help her out? **“Heya! Do you wanna bring the ball over? You can play with us!”** Oh... She was *really* nice... **“Do you want us to explain the rules?”**

The girl wasn't sure why, but somehow nothing would have made her *happier* than to hear the rules at that moment. “**Y-Yeah, if it's okay...?**” Oh! That girl was from the Dorthal Tribe, wasn't she? She looked a lot stronger than herself, but... if she was nice? Maybe they could be good friends? “**Do you guys really not mind...? I might be a nuisance...**” Even so, she picked the ball up slowly.

**“Of course we don't! You're a warrior of the Mol, right?
What's your name, cutie?”**

C-CUTIE!?

“T-Terbish...!”