

Chance Encounter Chapter 1: Kiko

It was early morning when she was woken by the hard rain against the shutters of her room. Sleepily she threw back the covers and crawled out of bed, walking over to the window she opened one of the shutters to peek outside. The sun hadn't started to rise yet though with the heavy overcast one would probably never know, the heavy rain that had started three days prior was still pouring down in large droplets.

She was starting to feel depressed and lethargic without the warmth of the sun, sighing she closed the shutter and walked over to the table that was in the room, a large basin and pitcher of water was on top. Picking up the pitcher she poured the water into the basin, bending down she cupped some water in her hands and proceeded to wash the sleep from her eyes and face. Feeling a bit refreshed after washing she moved herself in front of the large full body mirror that she had.

Her face a pretty and round with a short muzzle tipped with a button nose, her eyes purple in color and her long thick orange hair was done up into dual ponytails with long bangs on the front. Her ears were large and long similar to that of a rabbit and on her chest hung a pair of large round breasts. She also had a long tail that was tipped with a large tuft of hair that curled into itself and was the same orange color as the hair on her head. Her body was covered in a short tough fur that was brown and beige in coloration with half her face, ears and back being brown and the lower half of her face with her breasts and belly being beige; arms, legs and tail alternated in rings of the two colors.

After looking herself over in the mirror she moved over to a large wardrobe chest that was placed at the foot of her bed. Opening it she pulled out a low cut long white linen dress along with a well-worn corset made of leather that laced up in the front and had a green skirt attached to it that matched the length of the dress but had a space up the front to let the white linen show through. Stepping into the dress through the top she pulled it until it stopped a little higher than mid chest, covering her nipples but leaving the top of her breasts and her shoulders bare. She then picked up the corset and wrapped it around her waist lacing it up nice and tight in the front, pulling her tail through the holes she had cut out for it some time ago. Lastly she pulled out a pair of soft leather boots and slid them on before making her way down to the tavern's common room.

Descending the stairs to the main floor she started to light the candles along the way as it was part of her morning duties. The tavern was a larger older building located near the south end gate and was one of the first buildings that got erected when the crossroads city of Coldstone was founded, but it was well maintained. Its common room was open and spacious with many tables placed throughout, including one large long table in the middle of the room which was where the men from the local garrison took their meals.

She made her way to the kitchen which had been built in a half open style so any staff had a clear view of the common room and had one very large fire pit that supplied the kitchen with heat for cooking, how they managed to get one fire to do that she had no idea all she knew was that it worked.

The owner of the establishment brought in a special item called fire salt, which they used to keep the coals and embers nice and hot throughout the night which made it easier to get the fire going again in the morning.

Tossing a combination of wood and fresh coals onto the embers she used the poker and stoked the fire, feeling more like herself as the warmth from the fire washed over her. No one knew why but any kind of heat source made her feel so alive, when she was new to the city she had scared the tavern owner when she plunged her hands directly into the flames and grabbed hold of the coals and embers. To everyone's surprise even her own, she was completely unharmed.

Picking out a large pan she placed it on the cooking surface to heat up as she made her way to the cellar, where she grabbed a large slab of bacon and a basket of eggs. On her way back she wrapped a knuckle on the side of the ale cask only to get a hollow 'tok tok' sound indicating it was empty, hopefully she could talk the boys into getting her a new cask from the cellar when they arrived for their breakfast.

Placing a small glob of lard on the pan to let it soften and grease the pan, she grabbed a sharp knife and started to slice the bacon slab into thin strips. As the kitchen area continued to warm up she started to smile and even hum a little as she felt her mood picking up. She started to place the bacon strips on the hot pan and inhaled with a smile as they started to cook. Just as she was finishing cooking the bacon the tavern door opened up, looking up she saw five soldiers dressed in plain mail armor which glistened from the rain.

"Morning boys" she called out.

"Morning Kiko" they responded almost in perfect unison.

"Where's the big guy, he's usually with you isn't he?" she asked.

"Lunk? He'll be along shortly, they had something happening at the gate that they needed him for" the highest ranking soldier said.

"Take a seat, I just finished with the bacon" she said as she placed all the cooked bacon and put it near the fire to keep it nice and hot. With that she walked over to where they sat "how would two of you like to earn your breakfast this morning?" she asked with a kind and cute tone. Two of the younger recruits quickly stood their feet "how may we assist you Kiko?" they asked in an awkward unison that made her giggle to herself.

"Well the ale cask is empty and the fresh ones are down in the cellar. They're too heavy for me and Lunk isn't here yet" she barely got to finish the sentence before the two young soldiers were clambering over each other to get to the cellar. Kiko went back to her cooking and started to crack the eggs and plop them into the bacon grease that she had left in the pan, she found it gave them more flavour and the boys seemed to love it.

By the time she was done loading up trenchers with the eggs and bacon, the two young men had managed to get the cask up from the cellar and have even tapped it and put it on the stand for her. Hoisting herself up on her toes she gave them each a peck on the cheek. "Thanks boys, I appreciate it" she said sweetly. They even helped her carry the five trenchers over to the table. All of the soldiers dug into their nice hot breakfast, giving nods and grunts in approval.

As she started to fill tankards with ale for them she heard the door open again, looking up she smiled at who she saw. "Morning Lunk, glad you could make it" Lunk responded with a friendly smile and wave before making his way to the others.

Lunk was a mountain of a man with limbs as big as tree trunks and hands the size of hams. His face was handsome in a rugged sort of way and his jaw looked as if it was chiselled from stone, all topped with a head of long unruly black curls. It was rumoured that there was giant blood in his veins, which certainly would account for his size. All Kiko knew was that he had a heart of gold and she was crazy about it, out of all the men in town he was the only one that she'd ever allow in her bed, too bad he was already spoken for.

Quickly frying up five large eggs she piled them along with the last of the cooked bacon on a trencher and even placed a heel of the black bread that he liked so much beside it all. Filling the largest tankard she had with ale she then brought the large man his breakfast.

It was then that she saw them, she wasn't sure then they entered the tavern as she never saw nor heard them arrive. There were five figures over at one of the far tables close to a wall. They were all wearing black hooded cloaks with the hoods pulled so far forward that they obstructed their faces, something about them made her very uneasy and nervous.

After getting the rest of the garrison soldiers their ale, she made her way over to their table trying to keep herself calm and composed. "What can I get for you this morning" it felt like an eternity before they answered her, though in truth it was only a minute at maximum. The figure closest to the wall spoke up "enough of those small fish for the table along with some fried bread and ale.....please."

Kiko nodded and headed back to the kitchen area only to go back down to the cellar. Opening a barrel that was laced with seaweed and sea water she pulled out a dozen small frying fish, closing the barrel she grabbed a loaf of bread and headed back up to the kitchen. Pulling out a large pan she placed on top of the cooking surface to heat up as she scaled and gutted the fish and prepared the bread for frying.

As she was preparing the food for the five one of the Captain of the garrison soldiers came up to her with their empty trenchers "I'll just go put these by the wash bin for you Kiko" he said with a smile "Thanks I appreciate the help" she replied. "It's the least I can do, that breakfast was delicious as always" he continued as he made his way back to the father area of the kitchen.

Oh his way back he placed a hand on her shoulder and spoke softly "I don't like the look of those five in the corner but it could be nothing, still you be careful and if you need help you come get us ok?"

“I will, thank you Captain” she had hoped that maybe he would have left one of the boys with her, preferably Lunk but she wasn’t going to openly complain. With that he placed a small bag of coins on the back counter to pay for their meal and left the tavern with the other soldiers in toe, Lunk waving bye as he left. Kiko then turned her attention back to the fish and bread she was currently frying.

Once she finished she placed the fish and fried bread on their table “Hope it’s to your liking, I’ll get you your ale now” she said as calmly and sweetly as she could, the five hooded figured made her even more uneasy now that the garrison men were gone.

They nursed their food and ale well into the midmorning. They spoke to each other in whispers and rarely left the table, when they did it was only two at a time maximum. She could feel their eyes upon her whenever her back was turned, not the usual feeling of a man undressing her with his eyes. This felt eerie and malicious. It didn’t help that the tavern was dead that day due to the heavy rain that had been persisting for the past three days. She tried to keep to her mind occupied by starting up a pot of stew for the day.

Suddenly the tavern door opened once more, breaking the silence and causing her to almost jump out of her skin. In the threshold stood a tall figure about six feet tall clad in a black coat that was as long as he was tall and was hooded as well. She wondered if he was friends with the other five, to her relief he moved to the other side of the tavern while shaking off some rain and sat at a table almost exactly opposite of the others; his back to wall the as well.

As she approached him he pulled his hood back to reveal that he was a half-elf and a handsome one at that, with blue eyes and blonde hair along with a thick five o’clock shadow that added some ruggedness to his handsome features. Upon a closer look at his gear she realized that his jacket was made of black dragon hide, and while simple in design was clearly made by a master leatherworker. On his right wrist she glimpsed an odd looking device that was shaped similarly to a bracer but had a rather vicious looking spear head attached to it. On each hip was a black sword each with a length of equally black chain coming off the pommel.

“What can I get you love” she asked kindly, oddly she felt at ease with this stranger in the tavern. The half-elf looked up at her for a moment before answering “just some mead please”. His voice a strong and clear and he was well spoken, Kiko had a feeling that this traveller was no ordinary man. “Sure thing Hun” with that she was back off to the kitchen, picked up the large goat skin that they used to hold the mead she poured some into a tall thin tankard. She then grabbed a bowl and ladled up some of the stew she had just made and then returned to him. He looked up at her a bit confused as to why he got food as well “you looked like you could use something hot to eat, on the house handsome” she responded with a smile and wink. The half-elf didn’t complain at the free food and ate as he drank his mead; he seemed to enjoy the stew as well.

Kiko went over to collect his bowl and tankard once he had finished. “That was delicious, my compliments to the chef” he said with a smile and a full belly. “Thanks, I’m glad you liked it” she replied with a kind smile. He then placed a small bag of coins on the table as payment and began to rise to his feet.

“You’re leaving already” she asked almost frantically, afraid to be left alone. “Afraid so, I still have things to do and need to find an Inn as well. Are there any that you’d recommend?” Kiko thought about the question longer than she needed to in a small attempt to get this man to stay a bit longer “well Rosie has a nice little Inn down the street and to the right called the Sleepy Duck”. The half-elf smiled and thanked her kindly pressing a small gold coin into one of her palms before starting to leave, glancing ever so slightly at the other group as he left.

Kiko took his dishes back to the wash area, trembling slightly as she walked. Upon making her way back to the common room she found that the five figures had gone, she couldn’t help but feel relieved. While it didn’t look like they had left any currency for their meal she was glad it was just a dine and dash was all that became of them.

“Well with that out of the way I might as well get some dishes done” she said to herself with a sigh of relief. Making her way back to the wash area again she filled a large wooden basin from a well pump that had been built into the floor. The rest of the back area was set up for food preparation with tables for needing bread dough and the like as well as stations for the cutting of meats. Rolling up her sleeves and grabbing some soap and a scrub brush she set to work on the task ahead of her. She wasn’t sure just how long she had spent at the wash basin but she had been able to get all the dirty trenchers and tankards clean thanks to the slow day that heavy rain had created.

Stacking up the trenchers one on top of the other she picked them and turned to take them to the front of the kitchen, when she faced forward she was startled and let out a frightened shriek as one of the hooded figures from before was standing in her way; the trenchers crashing to the floor as she dropped them. “Y-you startled me” she stammered “I thought you and your friends had left, is there anything else I can get you?” she finished while trying to remain professional.

The hooded figure didn’t answer, except for drawing something from its belt. The steel of a crude sharp dirk flashed in the kitchen’s dim lighting, Kiko’s eyes when wide in fear and she started to back away. Suddenly she was grabbed from behind around the waist “NO” she shrieked as tried to pull away, but their grasp was too tight and the first figure started to advance on her. Frantic she brought a leg up fast; managing to catch her would be assaulter between the legs, causing him to double over.

Bringing that same leg back she stomped down hard and heard a crunch as her heel found the toes of the figured behind her, they let out a pained grunt and causing their grip to loosen. Breaking free Kiko grabbed hold of a nearby pan and spun bringing the iron instrument against the side of the figure’s head with a hideously sounding CRACK!

Dropping the pan to the floor she bolted past the other figure kneeling down whom lunged for her as she ran, managing to grab a hold of the back of her dress above her corset. There was a loud ripping and tearing as Kiko wrenched herself free, her large breasts falling free as the top of her dress fell down due to a sudden lack on fabric. Grabbing a hold of the loose fabric in one hand she feebly tried to cover herself as she ran.

Wrenching the front door open in a flurry she ran through the threshold into the rain, colliding with another of the hooded men. The figure tried to grab her as they both recoiled from the impact, managing to grab hold of one of her arms tightly. Kiko started to shriek again and flailed wildly in fear as he wrenched her violently close. Bringing a knee up through her dress she connected with the figure's stomach only to find they were wearing a hard leather jerkin. She felt a sharp pain as he back handed her hard enough to cause her to fall to the ground, though not before she grabbed their hood which tore away as she fell.

As she sat in the mud with the down pour of rain still happening she looked up and saw the face of one of her attackers. He had a slender face with long ears and a dark complexion. Her eyes went wide as saucers as she realised what was before her, DROW. She felt her thighs get warmer as her bladder emptied itself.

Scrambling to her feet she started to run through the rain to get away from the dark elf, her limbs and joints were starting to ache without the warmth of the tavern's fire and she could hear her attacker running after her. "There is no way I'm going to make it to the garrison" she thought tearfully, and then she remembered the half-elf stranger was staying at an Inn nearby "maybe he'll help me".

Kiko tried to make a hard right turn at the needed corner but her feet slid out from under her in the mud and she crashed into an empty street merchant stall. She tried to rise back to her feet but found she had not the strength and fell back into the debris and mud that was once the stand. Next thing she knew the dark elf was on top of her. Reaching down he grabbed a fist full of her hair and wrenched her to her feet, though she was so weak that she was more of a giant rag doll. "You've caused us more trouble than we thought you'd be capable of" he said to her with a sneer, looking at her with content in his eyes.

That's when she saw the glimmer of steel in the dim light of the overcast day; he had drawn a dirk much like the first man in the kitchen of the tavern. Tears started to flow from her eyes as she pissed herself for the second time "why me" she asked through quivering lips "I haven't done anything to you" she continued teary eyed.

Suddenly there was a dark flash and the dark elf released her hair as he recoiled in a sharp fit of pain. Kiko slumped to the ground and saw the forearm which had been severed at the elbow, hand still grasping the dirk. The half-elf from earlier stood over her with one of his swords in hand, the blade so dark it drank up even the slightest amount of light.

He shrugged off his long jacket and let it fall on top of her "cover yourself, those things are distracting" he said with a flat serious tone. Kiko held the jacket close to her bare chest, a little embarrassed that she forgot they had been in full view. Before she knew it the half-elf's body began to change and grow, his arms and legs becoming longer and thicker and alongside of the rest of his body increased in muscle mass. A layer of fur started to cover his body in the coloration of a white tiger, his face elongating into a short muzzle. By this time the last three hooded Drow had converged on them, joining their wounded companion.

“Cover your eyes!” he said to her in a gravelly voice that demanded listening to, Kiko quickly used his jacket to cover her eyes. “Lighting!” suddenly there was an explosion of bright light that almost whited out the area. Kiko lowered the jacket to see that the four Drow were rubbing at their eyes and flailing about unable to see.

Kiko saw something suddenly fly from her savior’s right wrist as he stuck his arm out quick as a cat, he then suddenly yanked his arm back with a fluid powerful motion and the Drow that had lost half an arm flew at him like an arrow; followed by a SHUNK as he landed impaled by the half-elf/were tiger’s sword. Letting his sword fall to his side the dark elf slid off and onto the ground in a lifeless heap, the blade now red with his life’s blood. At the same time his other sword which was a clear twin to the already in hand and launched himself towards the remaining three, while chanting something she couldn’t make out.

With a double slash his swords cut down another of the foe, the blades cutting through flesh bone and leather as if they were butter. The remaining two had since gathered themselves and had drawn their own weapons, with a dirk in one hand each they both started to chant and their free hands started to glow with an eerie purple light. The transformed half-elf then stabbed the ground with the points of his swords and yelled “RAMPAGE!”

Suddenly the ground started to shake and out of nowhere from behind her savior came a stampede of what looks like to be stone rhinos that barrelled through and trampled the last two Drow. She started to worry a bit when she didn’t see him, and tried once more to get to her feet afraid that he himself got trampled. That’s when she heard a kind voice “here let me help you up”. Looking up she saw him offering her an outstretched hand, looking the way he had before he transformed; though his arms were bare and she could see the clear muscle definition in his arms along with an odd looking tattoo that looked like white tiger markings that spanned his upper right arm and shoulder. Taking it his hand she was pulled quickly to her feet only to have her knees buckle causing her to fall into his arms.

“Sorry but for some reason I get weak without heat, and with the long rain we’ve had I haven’t been able to get much of it” though she had to admit the warmth coming off his body, his bare arms in particular was very nice. “Hey don’t worry about it, I’m just glad you aren’t hurt” he responded warmly “may I ask you what your name is?”

“My name is Kiko, and who are you good sir?”

“My name is Julian Delphiki, and I have been sent here to protect you Kiko.”

Kiko looked up at him puzzled “Protect me? But from who and why?” she asked bewildered.

“Honestly I don’t know all the details myself, all I know is that I was sent here to GAHHH!” suddenly he yelled out in pain and staggered, pulling her close and tight in a protective embrace. Kiko’s hand slipped and touched his side where she felt something, looking down she saw a crossbow bolt sticking out of his side.

Julian looked around quickly to see where the bolt came from, not seeing anyone on the ground he turned his gaze to the roof tops. That's where he spotted them, about roughly twenty more cloaked figures that he assumed were more Drow. He cursed and picked up the tavern wench in his arms and steadied himself.

"Wait what are you going to do?" Kiko asked him, once again getting frantic. She looked up at his face to see him transform once again into what she assumed was a were tiger. Not looking down at her, simply responded with one quiet word "RUN!"

~Chapter 1 Fin~