

REJECTED: CLAIMED BY THE ALPHA MAFIA

JOSEPHINE

THIRD PERSON POV:

"I just got back after being away for like a year, and boy, everything is changing. There are more cars in the city now, and I can feel the air slowly getting contaminated," the lady said then, and Kiara sucked on the straw, drawing more of the coconut juice into her mouth before setting it down.

"I feel like I get you."

The woman looked at her with her brows wrinkled when she made the statement, then it dawned on her that Kiara was new.

"You are not from here, are you?" she asks, and Kiara glances at Rufus, who is across the street, standing like a statue, with his eyes on her.

She looks away, then faces her drink.

"Not really. I just moved, and I plan to settle here," she says in a low tone, then the woman spread her hands.

"Well, welcome to Efla. The most jolly city on the planet, and probably the healthiest. Being to a big city made me hate my life, but I was away for work," she says as the stall owner places her drink on the counter.

She grabs it and takes a sip.

"That's good to know," Kiara says, sipping from hers to realize it is empty.

"Let me buy you another one," the lady says, and Kiara shakes her head. "I mean you are new, and.."

"Pretty," the man chips in, and Kiara chuckles.

"Actually, I am fine." She says, then she shrugs, sliding her money back into her pocket.

Kiara pushes the empty coconut away, then the man grabs it to discard it.

"I should get going," she says to the lady who grabs her drink off the counter.

"Where are you headed? You are new to the city. Well, we like to think of it as a village or a town, cause of the size yunno, but whatever," the lady says with a hint of nervousness in her tone, which causes Kiara to raise a brow. "Pardon me, my name is Josephine," she puts out her hand, and Kiara takes it, exchanging a brief handshake.

"Kiara," she replies with a smile. "And yes, I would love to get a tour of your town, village, whatever," she says, and Josephine chuckles.

Rufus, who is leaning in a corner, keeps his gaze on Kiara, silently praying she would not do anything to put him in trouble. That is what she is good at doing to him, and it made him scared, because Zane will kill him.

"So, where do we go first?" Kiara asks, and Josephine shoots her a smile.

"Let's walk. I can show you the town's hall. The churches, the market, and many more," she says, and Kiara follows her as she walks up ahead.

She flaps her hand at Rufus, signaling him to take a chill pill, but Rufus is uneasy. He keeps his distance, but he tries to keep his eyes open while Josephine and Kiara walk along with no care in the world.

The duo walk for a long time, and Josephine shows Kiara every part of the city within reach until Kiara is tired.

"Maybe we should take a break," Kiara says, panting heavily. "I do not think I will ever get used to these long walks," she says as they come to the front of the city hall.

She bends slightly, grabbing her knees as she tries to catch a break. Josephine walks to a shop nearby to purchase a bottle of water, which she hands to Kiara.

"Here," she says, and as Kiara is about to reach for it, Rufus rushes towards them, causing the bottle to slip out of Josephine's hand.

Rufus stops midway as Josephine points at him.

"That man," she says, causing Kiara to turn around with her brows drawn down as she stares at Rufus. "He is been following us from the coconut stall," she says, and Kiara waves her hand at Josephine.

"He is my bodyguard."

"Oh," Josephine's face relaxes as she inhales deeply. "Sorry about that," she adds, scooting down to pick the bottle of water, and handing it to Kiara. "I told you the population has grown, and I do not really feel safe around people, especially men." she whispers the ending to Kiara who chuckles as she runs her fingers on the cap of the bottle of water.

Rufus watches, trying to hold himself from knocking the bottle of her hands. When he notices the bottle is sealed, he relaxes.

"It's fine. My fiance doesn't trust me around anyone, so he left his trusted bodyguard," Kiara says as she sips from the bottle of water.

Josephine's face lights up with a smile at once.

"You are engaged?" she asks, and Kiara nods with a wide grin on her face.

"That's great," Josephine replies, then she walks towards the huge flight of stairs that leads to the front of the city hall. "We should have a seat. I think I am tired too."

Kiara nods, following her to the flight of stairs. They climb two steps, then they sit on the third with their legs on the second stairs.

"So.. I do not know if it is in my place to ask, but are you.. married, or?"

"Married," Josephine says with a nod, bringing her knees together and clasping her hands around it.

"Well, that is great." Kiara says, then she faces Josephine.

She stares at Josephine, who doesn't look so much older than her, but she recalls how Zane said the man she met two days ago was over forty. They really age backwards, she says to herself.

"What?" Josephine asks, and Kiara shakes her head, looking down at her feet briefly.

"I was wondering if you have any advice for someone like me? You know, since you have been married for a while," she says, and Josephine lets out a sigh.

"My husband is dead, Kiara."

Kiara feels her heart drop when Josephine says this, and she immediately regrets opening her mouth. She feels cursed instantly. Zane got to meet a happy family man, and all she does is open the wound of a poor window.

'Way to go, Kiara,' she says to herself.

"I am so.. sorry," she says to Josephine, who sniffs looking at Kiara with her reddened eyes.

"It's fine. You didn't know, and I can tell you that marriage is beautiful. When you meet your partner, and you know that this is your person. That is beautiful. Being with Za.. Zade made me happy," she says, and Kiara's eyes widen.

"What?"

"Nothing," Kiara shakes her head. She doesn't want to sound an ass by telling Josephine her dead husband's name is almost the same as her fiance.

"I left Efla because it reminded me so much about him, but I had to return because I missed him so much, and.." she paused, then breaks into tears. Kiara moves to hold her, but she pushes her away, getting to her feet. "Kiara, I.. I am sorry I cannot do this," she says, then she walks away while Kiara gets up to go after her.

Josephine stops the first taxi she sees, then she gets into it. Kiara stands there feeling worse than ever, and Rufus walks to her.

"I am officially the worst person in the world," she says to Rufus, then she walks away.

Rufus comes after her as she stands in front of the road.

"Can you believe I had to remind her of her dead husband? I hate myself so much." When she says this, she glances at Rufus, who has his gaze on her with the corner of his lips curving slightly. "You are enjoying this, right? You like the fact that I am losing it?" she asks and he shrugs.

"Maybe just a little," he admits, and she scoffs, curling her hands in a fist.

A taxi comes around, and Kiara flags it down, then she gets into it with Rufus, who sits in front, giving the taxi driver their address while she sulks at the back.

Soon they got back home, and Kiara gets down from the car. Rufus pays the driver, then he lets out a groan, going after her. When they get into the house, she slumps onto the couch with her arms crossed. She sits there in silence.

"You are overworking yourself, and maybe if you try to catch a break, then life will be better." She tilts her head, squinting at Rufus.

"And what are you blabbing about?" she asks, her brows creasing more.

"You cannot possibly know everything in the world. It is sad that you brought up her past, but hating yourself for something that isn't totally your fault is crazy."

Her brows straighten when he says this.

"There, fewer wrinkles," he says, and she rolls her eyes.

Rufus' phone rings, and he picks it, handing it to Kiara.

"How are you, love?" Zane asks, and Kiara let loose, telling him about her unlucky life and how she may have potentially pushed a poor widow to depression.

"You are overreacting." When Zane says this, she shakes her head.

"No, you and Rufus are trying to gang up against me," she protests, and Zane laughs. "I think we were meant to be friends. Can you believe her husband's name is Zade? That sounds like Zane." When she says this, Zane stops laughing.

"What do you say?" he asks in a serious tone.

"I know! He is Zade. It is weird," Kiara says, and Zane goes mute again.

"This woman, what does she look like?" Kiara rolls her eyes when he asks. "I am being serious here."

"Gorgeous brown eyes. Good dentition..."

"And her hair? Is it short?" Kiara's heart skips a beat when he asks.

"You are making me scared right now, Zane. Stop," Kiara says.

"Her hair, Kiara?"

"She wore a face cap, but yeah, she has short brown hair," she says to him, and she hears him swallow hard.

"That is no married woman, Kiara. You met Mindy, and she played you. Give the phone to Rufus right now!"