

RETROFIDDLING II.

COMMISSION STORY

BY CHALDEACHANGE



Rackam had been on a journey with Gran, Djeeta, and Lyria aboard the Grandcypher for about as long as their adventure had been ongoing at this point in time. He was the one who piloted their airship and he was also the one that dealt with its maintenance – with a little help from other crew members anyways – and so you could say that his place in the crew tended to be a little more important than others. Not that *he'd* say that.

Unless Cagliostro tried to argue with him about him being inferior to her or something.

It was only natural then that he would volunteer to take on a job that his captain had chosen to help with then. The Guild summoning them like this was rare and Rackam knew full well that the amount of coin they provided was quite significant. The more of the Grandcypher's crew that agreed to assist them, the more they could fill the airship's coffers with after the job was said and done.

Gran had been led him before him, but eventually Rackam's name was called. **"I'm a little confused about why there's an interview in the first place? Don't they know who we are?"** Not before grumbling about it to himself though. It really *didn't* make much sense. Their crew was probably the best in all of the Skydom, and so he couldn't fathom why they would need to answer questions to see if they were eligible. Even if it was extremely dangerous they were probably more competent than anyone in the Guild itself.

And it wasn't as if they were testing their combat capabilities either, right? Even while *in* the interview he could only wonder just what the

heck the questions were *for*. **“Hah? Of course I’ve been on the water before? Haven’t you heard about our exploits?”** All in all Rackam was much *ruder* when he answered than his captain had been. But he was proud of everything their crew had accomplished! Wasn’t it disrespectful for them to treat them like this? *He really needed a smoke.*

But unfortunately there was no smoking allowed inside the Guild’s headquarters.



“Do these questions have anything to do with what we’re supposed to be doing? Do I have any problems speakin’ like an old timer? No, but I don’t get the point of asking that.” The interviewer simply smiled in response to Rackam’s pushback. He couldn’t imagine what kind of task would require him talking a different way. Some sort of language barrier? Were they going somewhere where people didn’t talk right or something along those lines?

That said, the first two questions were the only ones that had been shared between Rackam’s interview and his captain’s. **“Do I have any problems defendin’ myself if I’m called a kid? Obviously not!”** Because he obviously *wasn’t* a kid! What kind of question *was* that even? How was it at all relevant to whatever job they were supposed to be helping with? The man’s tolerance for this ‘interview’ was reaching his limit, and he’d been hoping that Gran had already stormed out.

Before it *could* reach that point, however? Rackam was told he had passed. **“Huh!?! That easy!?! Was this all some sort of prank!?”** Rising from his seat there was an obvious frown upon his lips. He didn’t like being punked under normal circumstances, much less by some fancy bigwigs that worked for the Guild. Apparently he had to table his misgivings for now, though. Maybe when he was reunited with Gran he could finally blow off that steam?

“What’s up with this room? That some sort of portal?”

Unknowingly tracing the same path that his captain had, the helmsman was eventually brought into a large room with a portal in the center. It didn’t seem particularly ominous, but he had to wonder what the Guild was doing with something like that. Had it been transported inside? Had they built around it? Or had it opened within their building one day?

Rackam was given the same explanation that Gran had. That it led to some other place *covered* with ocean, and that they needed compatible operatives that could traverse the other side. **“So what? You need someone who can drive a boat? You coulda just led with that, you know?”** He was the helmsman of an airship. He could *easily* drive a boat if that was all they had needed. But the Guild staff who had brought him there did not reply. She simply shoved him forward until he was just inches away from the portal itself. **“H-Hey!?”**

He had kept himself upright, but any attempt to turn around and back away from the portal was made in vain. There was a strange energy radiating from it now that there was a compatible subject before him. From his perspective it felt like it was pulling at him, but the opposite was *actually* true. Energy was pouring *into* him.

“What in the world do *ye* think you’re doing!?” Rackam was quick to turn to face the person who had pushed him closer, only to realize that he was speaking to a ghost. They had already evacuated the room knowing full well that he was in no condition to pursue while within the portal’s proximity. There was no purpose to be served in remaining there as he was exposed to the supernatural phenomenon’s effects short of egging the subject on. Even if he really was more like a *victim*.

With no one to vent to about his circumstances, Rackam ultimately turned his concern and anger *inward*. **“Why did I agree to do this!? And what the hell happened to *Fusou* then!?”** Wait... to *who*? The helmsman had very much meant to refer to his captain *Gran* there, but a name came out that was unfamiliar. It didn’t even sound like it belonged to a language that he knew of? ...Despite the fact he had met people on his skyfaring adventure with names born from the very same language.

“That ain’t right... Why didn’t I say *Fusou*’s name right? Again, huh? But that doesn’t sound like a name for a *woman as pretty as her*.” The issue only sounded to be worsening, with his vocal expression of his captain going so far as to refer to him as a woman despite knowing that he *wasn’t*. ...Right? He *knew* it and yet there was an eking uncertainty deep down that he might have been *wrong*?

Unfortunately the truth of the matter was that the man's issues had begun to multiply *beyond* how his memories perceived his captain – he just had yet to notice anything of this nature despite the fact that it had been put into the motion the exact moment he had been forced close to the portal's influence. Because he was *compatible*. Though the initial changes *had* been minor, such as the stubble upon his face falling out or the taste and smell of cigarettes that normally hung from his breath fading away; lungs growing healthier in kind.

Some of these early changes were still *visually* striking though. The color of Rackam's skin paled in patches for one, lighter spots emerging against his slightly tanner complexion before they grew and merged to paint his complexion entirely in its lighter color. The same could be said of his head of dark silver hair, however. Strand after strand lightened not towards the gray of old age, but instead of a soft white what appeared to bear pinkish hue. This extended not only to the man's eyebrows, but all of the hair upon his body including what was concealed by his clothes.

“*Thine* efforts are doing something to me...!” Not that there was a *thine* there to hear him, but it continued to demonstrate the more old-timey way the helmsman had begun to speak beyond his control. He *noticed* it. He *realized*. But whether or not he did? It didn't affect his ability to stop it. It felt far too ingrained into his brain, and the more it was? The more his eyes began to take on a dark orchid color.

A feeling of vague weakness had been plaguing Rackam for a hot second and it was easy to see just *why* that was. He hadn't worn his armor into the Guild's HQ according to their own policies, and so with his small clothes adorned it was much easier to see how his clothing was becoming *baggier*. The strong muscles that had been developed over the years were deflating. Not only did arms and legs become scrawny as a result, but so did his chest, stomach, and every other aspect upon his body regardless of how big or small.

This should have been quickly recognized by the man himself, and perhaps on some level it *had* been, but his attention was drawn to something else entirely. A stark and sudden drop in his overall stature. **“*E-Eh!?*”** He practically squeaked out his surprise as his height began to plummet at an alarming rate. Whether it was his limbs, his torso, or even the size of his head; everything collapsed at once, his body swallowed whole by the mustard-colored tunic he wore. Pants and boxers slipped easily from his legs and pooled around his feet while tinier tootsies slipped easily out of his boots.

“Mine body has become so small! And mine voice is...? This is so alarmin’!” Said voice was little more than a feminine squeak, try as he might to make that voice sound deeper in the long run. But swimming in his tunic as his body was, that voice actually better suited the look of what had become of his *face*. The rugged handsomeness he had *arguably* possessed before had all but faded, for his shrinkage down to 4’9” had been just as much a product of the man becoming *younger* than anything. He looked like he was just on the cusp of his early teens *if* that.

Rackam couldn’t remember how he looked at that age, but this *wasn’t* it. His face hadn’t been this androgynous. No, it was leaning far to in the feminine with how rounded his cheeks had become and how plump his lips were *despite* this age. But more than perceived gender, there was also the matter of perceived *race*. His eyes were brighter and more expressive like this, but they were also shaped unlike how they had been before. Eye lids were pinched in to give them a look more like those of Shura or Shitori. *Japanese*, as it would have been referred to in another world.

Changes extended to his white hair, too. Its spiky style had flattened as he had shrunk, most of it settling around his head in a gentle if not girlish bob. Bangs were parted to either side to show off his forehead, and it looked as if there was a pronounced tuft in the center of his head that was accustomed to being tied up based on how it sat. What was strangest atop the boy’s head wasn’t actually *any* of this, however...

But the two triangular ears that popped out of the sides of his head’s peak.

They looked as if they belonged to an animal of some manner, but his human ears remained even as they twitched all their own. **“Is somethin’ odd about mine body bein’ so small, though? I kinda like it...”** Well, *she* wouldn’t have liked being treated like a child, but her energy levels had rocketed through the roof! And she very much *was* a girl now.

Her biological sex had been swapped, though the oversized garment she wore did its utmost to conceal that. Despite the absence of a key feature between her legs that would have made her a man however, her body had been steadily becoming more effeminate leaning. Her chest, once absent of any weight, puffed up oh so slightly, and the same could have been said of her thighs and butt – hips nudged but an inch wider because of this. Her body as a whole had a girlish arch that suited the rest of her. **“I’m a girl... Huh!”** She didn’t care!?

Rather, she could pull herself away from the portal now? The girl took her first step as its influence waned, only to find herself stepping *up* because a pair of raised, geta sandals had appeared on her feet ovetop white thigh high socks. Her tunic tightened in fit and lightened in weight, while a purplish pink erased its uglier colors. The tunic tore into four parts: a sleeveless kimono, a pleated skirt, and detached kimono sleeves that had butterfly embroidery designed into them. That tuft of hair atop her head was raised up by a pink ribbon as well.

“To think ye would alter me to such an extent...?” She was still a little unsteady on her shrunken feet, not helped by her raised sandals of course, but this did not stop *Shouhou* from shooting a glare at the Guild member who had pushed her in the portal’s direction in the first place, seeing as they had stepped back into the room. Her transformation was completed, that pull was gone, but while she was physically and mentally a different person altogether now... a part of Rackam *did* still remain. **“Ye are fortunate that this form suits mine fancy!”**



...But it wasn’t enough for her to take issue with this new, compact, feminine form of hers. The *contrary* was true, in fact, with the girl humming childishly to herself with giddiness as she examined different parts of her new body under the bright light of the portal room. A paper fan was pulled out of one of the detached kimono sleeves she was wearing and she fanned her own face. It was evident she was attempting to *look* mature even despite the fact that she looked to be about twelve or thirteen physically.

Were anyone to call her young she would *certainly* retort. There was nothing Shouhou loathed more than being treated like a child. Even though she very much *appeared to be* and *acted* like one. Considering the work that Ship Girls did, however? It was wholly understandable that one might not want to be treated like a child when she was destined to spend her life in dangerous situations.

The pair of animal ears twitched atop her head while she began to run around. **“So this form is one that might persist beyond that void, mm? Ah, but ye must’ve also brought *Fusou* here, yes? Where can I meet her?”** She had been thinking of Gran and had even

meant to say his name, but her rewired brain automatically filled in the blanks with Gran's new name – even though she hadn't been told. She could even picture what Fusou looked like!

Shouhou was correct, it had seemed! And when the Guild member praised her for knowing already she puffed out her small chest with a smug expression upon her face. **“Tis only natural that I would know! Y'all would do well to praise me more!”** Maybe a head pat? A scratch upon one of her ears? Shouhou certainly wasn't at all picky about it!

“So where is Fusou? Let us get goin' so I can see her! We have much to talk about before our expedition, but I suppose we're gonna be needin' more of us before we travel the rift, ye?”