

Cherry Scented Dreams (FFX-2)

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*I don't see many fanfics with this pairing and decided to make my own fanfic.
Rikku/Paine pairing.*

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1 - Coinciding Daydreams

Paine brushed a strand of wet hair from her view as she stared at the ceiling. However, pointless this may seem, she had learned that the ceiling could give good advice if one was willing to listen. She had just gotten out of a bath in which she had been thinking right after she had done endurance training while thinking. Her mentor the ceiling didn't even have advice. She sat up and leaned against the wall, her powdery gray towel slipping just a little on her dry skin. If the ceiling wouldn't help her then maybe the wall would... or the door.

While she was still feeling the breeze of the passing thought, the door knocked at her. It took her a moment to swim back to the surface of her thoughts so she could speak without the density of them hindering her speech.

"What is it?" she called out, maybe just a little bit too loud or annoyed. The quiet reply came a bit later; the door must have been reconsidering knocking at her.

"Um, I brought you food since you didn't come to dinner and all..." The door sounded like Rikku.

When Paine did not answer the door creaked forward and revealed its voice box. Rikku was dressed in tan cargo pants hanging with her usual style of tassels, straps and chains galore. She also wore a light blue and black vest zipped most of the way up, it was made of a stretchy fabric almost like that used in diving suits. She blushed a bit as she noticed what Paine was wearing but shut the door and came over with the food anyway.

It was about then that Paine noticed what Paine was wearing and pulled the towel closer before retreating to the closet to get more suitably dressed. She came out wearing black pants that flared a little and dragged the floor hiding her bare feet. She also wore a slightly loose black tank top. Comfortable clothes. It would be a dog to sleep in any of the outfits she wore while fighting...

Rikku had set the food on Paine's small table and was now doing her best to be cheerful as Paine shot her a glance that said what-the-hell-are-you-doing-here. She even attempted to start a conversation about nothing consequential. Even so, a happy spirit may be dampened if one doesn't respond to the topic of nothing it has so valiantly supported.

Rikku sat in silence before asking the one thing that got through Paine's thoughts. As Paine took the last bite of her dinner Rikku asked in a dampened tone, "Paine, is something wrong? Did I do something? I'm sorry." She looked truly crestfallen and even a heart as stoic as Paine's must move to stretch its limb every once in a while. Her heart fidgeted.

"No, Rikku. You did nothing" She replied, speaking for the first time that evening. Rikku brightened a bit and smiled faintly but, being as she is, persisted, "So what is wrong Paine? Please tell me! I will help!" She smiled brightly, her lips parted to reveal perfect teeth. Paine could smell the cherry of her lip cream from where she sat; it was translucent and glimmered making Rikku even more attractive. She wondered what it tasted like...

Immediately Paine banished the thought and its prerequisites, almost forgetting she had ever had the idea in the first place. Almost.

"Uh..." She said, having forgotten the question for a moment. "No, it's nothing really." She said and stood up using the excuse that it was late and she still had to put the tray up. Rikku gave her a very cute tilt-headed glance before taking the tray herself and bade Paine a good-night and good dreams before heading out the door.

As soon as the door had shut and no longer whispered Rikku's footsteps to her Paine realized what she had thought and where it was leading her mind. She blushed a little. She dismissed it and turned the

lights off before crawling into bed in a tight ball. The nights were chilly on the Airship despite its heating system. After spending an hour or so staring at the dark the lids of her red eyes drooped shut. The last thought before falling asleep which she could neither stop nor be able to remember in the morning was that it would be much easier to fall asleep with a warm body next to her own.

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Rikka trudged down to the kitchen, tray empty in her hands. She didn't like trudging but she also didn't like seeing Paine upset. Well, more upset than usual anyway...

Her thoughts switched from the movement of her feet to the way Paine's beautiful red eyes glittered like rubies when they set their gaze upon her own. She stopped the thought right there as it was turning her cheeks redder than the rubies she had visualized. Her heart beat faster but that was probably just because she had picked up her pace. She had soon discarded the tray in the kitchen and was getting ready for bed in her own room.

Once she had put on clothing more suited for sleeping and was curled around a pillow she decided that there was no use hiding from her thoughts, it is pretty hard to hide from them, after all, when there are so many and you haven't much to hide behind. She thought of the way being around Paine made her feel, made her blood quicken, thought of the way her touch made her skin tingle happily. She also thought of the reaction she should get should anyone find out of her "affection" for their friend. She knew that many of the crew would be uncomfortable with the situation and some might not accept it at all.

There was also the consideration that Yunie would not understand. How could she do something to jeopardize her close friendship with her dearest cousin Yuna? And what of Paine herself?

Rikka sighed deeply and her brow furrowed. She had discovered her attraction for Paine some time back, she herself did not even accept it for a while and would suppress all thought of her to the point of taking sleeping draughts so she would not stay up fighting the conflicting emotions. She blamed her insomnia on over-excitement which nobody found hard to believe. Finally, for her own health, she had accepted her feelings towards another woman and had since been trying to figure out what to do about it.

She frowned into the pillow. Her stomach was swirling with butterflies as she considered the possibility of being with Paine. She crumbled that thought up and tossed it out the window like a discarded tissue. No use in fantasizing about something that will never be, it makes the reality more painful.

She rolled over and pressed her forehead against the cool wall to distract her from the warmth of her own body. She didn't mind so much really, she was quite used to unrequited love and could live with it. She also knew, somewhere in the back of her head, that she was lying.

~

Paine awoke as the early morning beams of light tried furiously to struggle their way through her blinds. All that they accomplished, however, was a weak glow and waking a disgruntled Paine. She thought she may have had a good dream since she woke smiling but she could not remember it.

She breathed deeply, drawing in the cherry smell of the sheets... But the sheets were not cleaned with cherry scented soap. She breathed again, now wider awake, but only succeeded in attaining the faint scent of lavender. A trick of her mind was all it was.

She stretched and ran her fingers through her hair letting it lie where it fell. She had planned on training some more today but it now seemed a better idea to sit and think. She had a lot on her mind.

She didn't bother getting out of bed this morning but instead lay back down and pulled the sheets close to her chin. She could barely see the ceiling but had decided he was a bad conversationalist, she instead thought to herself.

When she had first met Rikku Paine had disliked the girl. She was far too hyper for her own good and most likely had an intelligence to match her small attention span. Rikku had proved Paine very wrong in the next few months. Though gradually, Rikku had worked her way into Paine's list of friends and had climbed up to the very top.

Paine took a deep breath to clear her mind before continuing her train of thought. It had not taken long for Paine to notice that she liked Rikku as more than a friend but had hoped that the feeling would pass. It would be a bad situation if Yuna or Rikku found out, she didn't care what the rest of the crew thought. Yuna was almost as close to her as Rikku was but did not have the same affect that Rikku did on her heart rate. Paine feared that Yuna would distance herself from her if she ever found out, not wishing to be involved with someone like her. Paine could not risk losing a friend she loved so dearly.

And Rikku, dear Rikku. If she ever found out life would end for Paine. She was not sure if she would ever get over Rikku (she doubted it) but it would only make it worse if Rikku could not stand to be around her. The thought brought a deep frown to her lips.

She abandoned her thoughts for the moment and dropped back into sleep, for the first time not blocking out the thoughts of Rikku as she closed her eyes.

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Paine slept soundly, smiling gently until just before noon. The door knocked at her again. She mumbled her ascent for the door to release the intruder into her room which came out more of a barely audible groan. She recognized the whisper of belts as the door was opened and shut again and turned to see her Rikku. No, what was she thinking, not her Rikku...

Rikku walked over with a concerned look on her face, Paine never slept in. Paine sat up and made her sleep-infested eyes grow accustomed to being open again. She looked questioningly at Rikku.

Rikku sat cross-legged on the end of Paine's bed and smiled brightly at her. She smelled of cherries...

"Good morning" The worried look did not leave her eyes. "Are you feeling ok?"

Paine nodded and peered down at her fingers clasped in her lap. She was startled out of her stupor as she heard a stern and unexpected reprimand.

"No, Paine, what is wrong? You have been acting odd for a while now! What is bothering you?" Although her voice was demanding, her eyes gave away her concern. Paine quieted the butterflies that burst in her stomach.

"I... have a lot on my mind." She said truthfully, her voice straining a bit. She could not be sarcastic or cynical in this situation, nor did she want to be.

Rikku made a sound of sympathy and crawled up to lean her head on Paine's shoulder. She cursed herself as she did it thinking I am totally giving myself away! What am I doing?...

Paine repressed a gasp as Rikku wrapped her arms around her muscular waist and laid her cheek on her collarbone, it felt like silk on the skin above her shirt. Her heart began to beat faster but she controlled the blush and tried to act normal. Rikku is just being a friend... Don't scare her away...

But, to her extreme surprise, she could feel Rikku's blush as it warmed her hands and face. She looked down a little to see Rikku turning a bit pink as she sat against her with her eyes closed. Paine got the silliest idea in her head and did not have the heart to discard it. Hope; such a new thing, but she would just revel in Rikku's touch for now.

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Rikku could feel her self blushing as she listened to Paine's heart beat faster. Rikku knew then that she could not live the rest of her life in uncertainty; if nothing more she just wanted closure. She sat with her

head against Paine's collar bone for another moment before she felt the other girl's head turn slightly down to look at her.

Rikku turned her face and softly nuzzled Paine's neck. She heard and felt Paine intake her breath a little but she did not resist. Rikku gently kissed Paine's neck, pressing her lips against the smooth skin. She felt utter happiness as Paine began to breathe deeper but still did not resist. Rikku turned a bit more, kissing Paine a little higher up as she moved so she faced her. Paine arched her neck in pleasure as Rikku laid gentle warm kisses all the way up her neck.

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There was nothing more blissful than the feeling Paine got as Rikku began to turn her face to her neck. Tingles ran all the way up her body as the girl nuzzled the tender skin just above her collar. The feeling that followed next was pure pleasure when Rikku's soft lips pressed onto her neck. She could feel the kiss warm her whole body and she began to breathe deeply, overtaken with the sensation of the girl's lips.

The sensation only got better as Rikku continued to kiss her neck. When Rikku had finally reached her jaw line, she thought she could faint from her relief and joy. Rikku faltered, breathing gently on Paine's neck. Paine could not take it, her feelings had been too long suppressed. She turned her head and looked right into Rikku's eyes. In them she could see her own happiness reflected with the same hint of uncertainty.

Paine leaned her head forward, her eyes closed slightly as she hesitated. She fought the uncertainty into submission and closed the few remaining inches between her face and Rikku's.

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Rikku's heart shot forward as she felt Paine's head turn and she opened her eyes to peer directly into the rubies across from her. They glistened with happiness and slight uncertainty. Paine leaned forward, closing her eyes a bit as she neared Rikku's face. She closed her eyes and leaned in as well.

Rikku felt Paine's lips close around hers and she slowly began to work her lips against Paine's. Their kiss grew deeper as it lasted longer. Paine's lips separated as she ran her tongue along Rikku's lips, tasting the cherry flavored lip cream she was wearing. Rikku giggled and Paine broke the kiss. She turned bright red as she realized that her hand had been tracing along Rikku's back under the vest. She removed it quickly and grasped her hands in her lap.

"I'm so sorry Rikku, I didn't mean to..." She managed out.

Rikku looked slightly hurt. "You didn't like it then?"

Paine looked back at Rikku, "No, I did but... I didn't mean to..." She stopped and blushed even redder.

Rikku giggled again "Do you like the cherry? I think it's not a very strong flavor, maybe you should try it again before you decide."

Rikku grasped each of Paine's hands and placed them on her sides, sliding her fingers ever so slightly under the edge of her vest. Paine looked at Rikku for a few moments before breaking out in a smile. She leaned forward and kissed Rikku again, relishing every moment. This time she noticed as her hands slid under Rikku's vest.

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By the first two people to read this (two good friends) it was suggested that I continue it with another chapter. Tell me what you think about adding to the story!

Also, please comment! I am going to minor in creative writing in college...

## 2 - Approval

Paine sathappily on her bed, the beams of the early noon sun squirmed their way past her blinds to give the room an ambiance of early morning. She wore a smile painted on her lips like the cherry lip cream she could still taste in her mouth. A small bundle was curled up by her side, warm and breathing gently. The bundle resembled an able bodied young girl as well as Paine's love. Paine brushed a braided lock of hair away from Rikku's face revealing spiraling green eyes and smiling lips. Only an hour ago had they shared their first kiss and already it seemed they had been together forever.

Rikku sat upon her elbow from where her head had been resting on Paine's shoulder and leaned forward to kiss her lips gently. She leaned back and smiled at Paine who grinned back.

"You just can't get enough on me, can you?" She asked in false arrogance.

Rikku widened her eyes in mock sadness, "Oh no, Miss Paine! But do you want me to?" She finished the statement with a mischievous smile and a deep kiss. Needless to say, Paine was practically unconscious by the time Rikku's kiss had ended. She composed herself and grinned fiercely at Rikku.

"You're going to have to pay for that one, dear heart!" She sat up quickly and pinned Rikku to the bed under her. Rikku was taken aback but nonetheless enjoying her 'punishment'. The door took this very inopportune moment to knock at them and call out in a voice sounding very much like Yuna's, "Paine? Are you feeling okay?" The traitorous hunk of metal then slid open, revealing a first worried and then confused and shocked Yuna. She gaped for a split second before entering quickly and shutting the door behind her.

By this time Rikku and Paine had resumed normal sitting positions next to each other on the bed. Both were looking guiltily at Yuna, eyes slightly downcast, faces directed towards the unbiased floor. Yuna stood in front of the door, her hands clasped before her anxiously. She wore an expression on her face that was hard to read. After a few moments of silence she spoke up, "Although I probably don't need to ask, what exactly is going on between you two?"

Rikku twisted her hands fiercely together like she was trying to tie her fingers into square knots. Paine was blushing slightly but looked up and replied so that her precious and anxious little Rikku would be spared the torture. "Well, Yuna, I suppose it would be of no use to lie to you, as you have just put in so many words. Rikku and I are... Well, we are together, I suppose." The last part of the sentence sounded slightly uncertain as she had not actually talked to Rikku about the matter. But she had decided that, hopefully, she didn't really have to.

Yuna still stood in the same place in front of the door. She didn't reply to the statement but instead asked another question. "And how long, exactly, has this been going on?"

Paine looked over at her love who was practically in tears and looked back to Yuna, beginning to get angry. She replied sarcastically, "I would say about one hour and ten minutes to be 'exact', sir." She glared at Yuna and rested an arm across Rikku's shoulders. Rikku leaned into Paine's side and looked over at Yuna, her dearest cousin.

"Yunie" Rikku whispered, barely audible, "are you... mad at me... at us?"

Yuna sat down heavily in a chair and sighed, the tenseness draining from her figure. "No, I don't suppose I am." Rikku sighed in relief quietly and clutched Paine around the waist tightly, not wanting to ever let go. Paine held the girl, still in awe of how wonderful her embrace felt, her stomach still twisting with the possibility of rejection. She looked at Yuna over the locks of golden hair. Yuna looked back serenely, her features as unreadable as they ever were. If it was a plus; Paine didn't think she saw a

trace of disgust in the pristine features. She did, however, see quite a bit of annoyance and... something else...

Paine wondered what was wrong with Yuna if she truly wasn't unhappy with the situation. She did not have to wonder very long, though, for Yuna answered the question as if she could read Paine's thoughts. That was alright though; Paine had suspected her thoughts as traitors for a while now.

"But, Rikku, what are you going to tell Cid and Brother? Have you even considered what they or the rest of the crew is going to think about this? Certainly not everyone will accept you being, uh... together" She chose her words carefully so as not to strike some hidden cord.

Rikku emerged her head ever so slightly so she could speak without Paine's torso getting in the way.

"Well, I suppose I had thought... to keep it quiet for awhile, you know? Just let things work out... But I know what you are going to say to that. You are gonna' say how it will make things worse aren't you?"

Rikku smiled sadly at Yuna. Her expression would have stopped Sin in its' tracks or even made a heartless fiend rethink its' actions.

The face even seemed to have an effect on Yuna whose heart seemed to have softened enough to come over and pat Rikku's head. "You know me too well, cousin." She attempted a cheerful smile but it refused to lighten the mood. Yuna sighed gently, peering fondly at her young (and quite adorable) cousin. She backed away a little and spoke to both of them.

"Look, I know I am supposed to be the leader and give advice in all situations and things of that nature, but, in this case, I have no say. This entire matter is between you two and you alone. I shouldn't have even thought of trying to butt in on the matter. I want you to decide between the two of you what to do."

She sighed. "I want you to know that you can come to me for advice on what to do and also that I think the best thing is to tell Cid soon... together. But I will respect whatever it is you end up doing." She came over and smiled, grabbing both of the girls in a friendly hug. The two hugged back warmly, relieved that they need not worry about losing their dearest friend.

Yuna walked away slowly and smiled once more, she stepped gracefully to the door, hesitated and turned around. A bright smile lit her face. "Also, I think you need to remember to lock your door." With that she exited the room closing (and locking) the door behind her. She left a rather agape Rikku and Paine in her wake. Shortly after the door was closed Paine and Rikku broke into a fit of giggles and both girls collapse next to each other on the bed.

Both of them were stretched out and staring at the ceiling. Well, Paine was glaring at it because she had decided not to speak with her anymore and Rikku was looking past it with a wry smile. Paine turned her face to the younger girl and raised an eyebrow. She turned back to the ceiling and stated resolutely, "don't believe anything she says, she doesn't give good advice." She kept a straight face and continued giving the ceiling the evil eye as Rikku looked at her bewildered for a moment or two. She again broke into a fit of laughter and sat up.

It didn't take long for the bemused smile to leave her face as she continued her thoughts on the problem at hand. Paine could hardly resist the girl as she looked towards the bathroom door with an appearance of frustrated concentration, there seemed to be no emotion that Rikku could not make cute. Paine turned her head and did not think at all, her brain deserved a break from its strenuous activity. Several minutes later she heard Rikku let out a very frustrated sigh and felt the girl collapse onto her, nuzzling into her chest.

Paine traced her hand along Rikku's back and neck, trying to ease her frustration. Paine felt almost guilty for being the bringer of her love's pain. Well, her name would hold true after all she supposed. When Rikku spoke her voice was muffled by Paine's chest and shirt, Paine almost didn't hear her anyway because with every word and movement of the thief's mouth a ripple of pleasure cascaded over her body.

"What do you think we should do? I don't think daddy is going to take this very well. Brother wouldn't understand either." She chuckled, "not like he understands much anyway..." Thankfully with the last



word Rikku moved her head so that she was no longer speaking into the rather sensitive area. She sent her sparkling emerald gaze from over Paine's collarbone, her inquisitive expression begging for an answer.

Paine made a dismissive grunt as she growled out the words, "Well if Cid and Brother disapprove they can go pleasure a Shoopuf for all I care."

Rikku sat up next to Paine with a hurt expression. "But, Cid and Brother are the only family I have! I couldn't stand it if they were mad at me... or if you were mad at them. Oh what did I do to deserve this?" She then proceeded to turn around and beat her head against the metal wall of the Celsius. Paine found this rather irritating as she did not see the reason that the wall would need to punish Rikku or vice versa. She quickly grabbed a hold of Rikku's head and placed it on her shoulder. Rikku began weeping silently, letting the tears fall in tickling trails along Paine's shoulder. Paine furrowed her brow in worry and kissed Rikku's forehead where it was still a bit red from the walls' violent outburst. She leaned back and let Rikku sit curled in her lap, her head draped across one shoulder and tears now streaming down Paine's neck. Paine whispered quietly to Rikku to calm her. She kissed Rikku's cheeks softly to dry them of the salty tears that were turning them red and sore. After a while Rikku calmed down and was just sniffing and wrapped around Paine's neck. Paine ran her fingers through the unbraided portions of the blonde down and held her as she would a child awoken from a nightmare.

"We need to tell them" she said very quietly, her voice almost cracking from the lump that was lodged in her throat. "Just, let's wait a while, okay? I want to enjoy this as long as I can without threat of Brother or Daddy being unhappy. I just want to be... happ..." she didn't finish the sentence and her voice broke off like a tiny sapling in a hurricane.

Paine leaned Rikku back and looked into her swollen pinkish eyes. She smiled faintly and said "Alright, love. You should know, right now, that I will do whatever it takes to make you happy."

Rikku got a little of that spunk back in her and buried her semi-sad smile into Paine's neck. Paine's face went through a paradoxical series of emotions and ended up being a confused mixture between joy, fatigue, sadness and anticipation. It would seem that her facial muscles were having trouble deciding what her brain felt and her brain was having trouble deciding what she felt.

Paine sat with a dozing Rikku collapsed on top of her, content with no train of thought except for tracking each butterfly that fluttered across her chest and stomach. It would be several hours before either moved.

Several hours came far too soon...

### 3 - Waltz Through a Dream

Pain walked slowly to the dining hall. Her eyes still hurt when the glare of the mocking hall lights sparkled on her placid red irises. She had spent the last few hours staring into the dark, waiting for the slight girl atop her to wake. Rikku had woken with puffy eyes and a faint smile; the emotion in her spiraling pupils had not matched the façade of calm she had worn about her features. She had made the excuse of needing to wash up before dinner, smiled, and kissed Pain gently on the mouth before leaving with a slight bounce back in her boots, er, socks. Pain could not help but smile at the memory.

At that moment, one of the more bold Al Bhed crew members came up to her and smiled toothily, asking for her arm to walk her to dinner. She, as she always had before, gave him a look of disgust and walked faster, leaving him to keep the awkward pace and try again to woo her.

"Tyshed (damnit), would you just listen to me? Lusa uh (come on)!" He gave her a winning smile and expected her to bend to his will as she slowed and stopped.

Pain returned and glared at her victim, the sights were almost visible narrowing on his forehead. "If I wanted the affections of one who does not even have the brain power to speak one language at a time then I would seek out the assistance of a fiend. Goodbye. Oh, if you can't understand that here's a translation: ku yfyo oui cyt aqlica vun y syh (go away you sad excuse for aman)" She turned away, her glaring expression having borne a bullet through the man's shocked expression and into his minute brain. He took a different route to dinner that night and followed it every day after that.

Pain smiled happily, her mission accomplished, and almost ran directly into her little Rikku. She barely managed to stay on her feet as Rikku grasped her around the waist protectively, already over balanced by the sudden stop.

"Ha! Showed him, didn't you Pain? I have been angry with him for the longest time. I always had the lingering worry that you would accept his offer one day..." She giggled when Paine gave her a look that clearly said are-you-kidding-me-I-would-rather-have-a-fork-stuck-in-my-eye.

Rikku grasped Paine's hand and happily proceeded to tow her to the dining hall. Paine put on her usual unreadable expression as they neared other people and glared callously at all who would question her current situation. She merely held her head up and took her place at Rikku's side, one glance enough to deter any curious or lingering looks.

Dinner seemed to take far too long with all of those people chewing quietly, not asking pent up questions. Was it so obvious, she and her Rikku? Please, Yevon, let it be just her imagination run wild...

After dinner Rikku and Paine walked together back to Rikku's room. They made sure no one followed and Paine slipped into the cherry scented room. They stayed up and just talked for hours about nothing in particular, Pain did not once have to glance towards the door or ceiling for inspiration, Rikku was her muse, her one and only.

Paine leaned back and flipped on the radio at a point of silence and guided it through the placid static to a classical station.

"Care to dance, m'lady?" She asked with a funny smile. Rikku blushed and stood up, giving her hands to Paine who gently pulled herself up with her love's arms. They put their arms around each other and placed their foreheads together, eyes locking and not letting go. They stepped in slow circles around the room, lost in the timeless limbo of each other. The alarm clock spun around them reading 12:34 and then again 12:50, an unnoticed onlooker.

The song ended far too quickly and the girls listened to the others breathing as the rumbling bass of the announcer proclaimed the coming of another song by Gustav Holst. The orchestra started up, bows

quivering above glistening instruments, lips trembled above sparkling silver metal. The specter of a conductor raised his thin willow rod and time stood still.

The girls took advantage of this and leaned forward slowly. An explosion of sound and music marked the kiss, setting it in stone and in memory. They stood like that, gently kissing one another straight through the first movement of the song before breaking apart ever so slowly, ever so quietly.

Paine leaned forward and whispered to Rikku, tickling her cheek with her mouth, "I love you, my little muse...". Rikku squeezed her eyes shut and a tear dripped from her eye down Paine's cheek.

"And I love you, my gentle rose." She smiled with Paine as they enjoyed the metaphor of a rose, the perfect semblance to Paine. So gentle and soft was a rose, a beautiful thing, but only once one has gotten past the thorns.

Paine held Rikku for a long moment longer before taking her leave, stealing one last kiss to hold her until morning.

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And so bliss went on for several days, it was like a dream had sat up from its slumber and stumbled its way haphazardly into their lives. I bet if I bit it, Paine thought, it would taste of cherries. She giggled at this thought, disturbing Rikku who had been laying with her head resting on Paine's chest.

"What's so funny?" she mumbled sleepily. Paine smiled and said "Nothing, dear heart, nothing at all."

Rikku didn't seem to believe this and looked at Paine in hunched suspicion before leaning forward and kissing Paine's cheek and then her mouth. "It is far past your bedtime, my rose." She said softly and blushed, "Unless you wanted to stay..."

Her words trailed off uncertainly but Paine cut the awkward silence before it began with a kiss. She sat up and proceeded to pin Rikku under her on the bed, kissing her ever more passionately. Rikku moaned her submission but Paine broke the kiss. She placed her forehead on Rikku's and said, "I'm afraid not, love. I would rather our relationship be stronger first." She pecked Rikku quickly on the lips and got up.

"Goodnight, dearest." And she walked towards the door, glancing at the red numbers scrawled across the clock. 2: 34. Wow, it was pretty late, maybe tomorrow she would keep track of the...

She never finished the thought because the door slid open in front of her framing the hulking form of Cid, the Airships' captain and Rikku's father. He looked at her angrily and pushed her back inside the room.

Rikku sat up and smoothed her hair before skipping over to her father and giving him one of her big happy hugs, "Daddy!" she said, looking a bit worried "It's really late, what are you doing here?" she then asked shakily.

He hugged her back distractedly as he gave Paine the evil eye; it was a true work of art, that evil eye, he must have been working on it for days.

"I'm here because she is." He nodded accusingly at Paine, "Alone with my daughter at two thirty in the morning corrupting her." Paine just about shot a stream of acid at the old man but Rikku beat her to it. Barely.

"Daddy! How can you say that?! Paine is one of my best friends!" She spewed, face turning red in anger or embarrassment. She edged over to Paine and stood in front of and a bit to the side of her protectively. Cid crossed his arms and looked at the glaring couple with spite.

"Sure she's one of your best friends, one that you might call, say, a girlfriend?!" Rikku opened her mouth to say something, a lost expression on her face, but closed it and stood stark still, waiting for the next blow. Paine stepped forward and placed her arms around the stoic girl and rasped at Cid before he could get another word from his mouth, "So what if I am? Did it ever occur to you that this is your daughter's life? Hell, did it ever occur to you that what we're doing isn't wrong or disgusting or anything?! No, I'm sure it couldn't get through your thick skull!"

Tears spattered from Rikku's face onto Paine's hands and fell in sparkling rivulets down Paine's cheeks. Rikku put her arms up and clutched at Paine's hands for support.

"Daddy" she choked out, "This is my choice. Won't you please just accept it?" She broke off into sobs after the last word and bent her head down over Paine's fingers in acquiescence, laying her lips on the cool skin of Paine's knuckles.

Cid stood in pure fury, carving angry wounds into the girls' hearts for several minutes, a deep growl could be heard every once in a while deep in his chest. He threw his hands in the air and stalked out of the room with a howl of rage. The door shut thankfully behind him and Paine dove for and locked it as quickly as she could. She went back to Rikku and led her to the bed.

Paine picked her up like a child and slid her under the covers, tucking the girl in as a mother would her daughter. She kissed her on the forehead and sat down in a chair next to her. She sang any tune that came to her head and stroked Rikku's hands until she fell asleep, sniffing a little but exhausted and in need of rest.

"Well" Paine thought to herself, "I guess I won't be sleeping in my room after all..."

She flopped down on the couch across from the bed after turning out the lights and fell to sleep looking in the direction of her muse. Her dreams were a product of the muse, much better than anything the ceiling had ever inspired.

They both awoke sometime after noon and talked about what to do. They finally decided the best thing to do was give Cid a day to cool down. They would stay in Rikku's room and sneak food in after dinner until the next day.

It was harder than they had first thought to avoid Cid. He knocked on their door at a little past seven o'clock that day when the girls were just starting to get really hungry. Well, pounded may be a better word. He shouted through the door after they would not answer "You can't stay in there forever!" True. But they could try.

It seemed like forever until he left, the whole time spent in each other's arms. Rikku spoke out once they were sure he was gone. "What are we gonna' do, Paine?" she said quietly. Paine shook her head showing that she didn't know. They were silent until it was time to go get food that night.

They snuck out quietly through the door. The hallway was quiet and sung of air leaks and darkness. Little glints of metal from invisible light kept both of them alert. Unfortunately, not alert enough. Cid crept up on both of them and laid a hand on either of their shoulders.

They turned around slowly; ready to fend off more of the needles and daggers that would imminently shoot from his tongue. Instead of insults he handed Rikku a bag holding what was left of dinner in little containers. "I... thought you might be hungry..." he stammered. He motioned for them to go back into the room, they complied warily.

They ate dinner in silence, their chewing seeming to echo through the room like gunshots ringing out on a foggy night. Paine could hardly stand the loudness of her own teeth clicking quietly together as she chewed a piece of bread or the noise of her throat as she swallowed some of the water she had poured herself.

All through dinner Cid watched them in contemplation, neither malicious nor supportive, a truly neutral expression on his face. The mood permeated the room with its contagious nature, a smoke bomb without the smoke but retaining the choking nature.

Finally it was time to talk. Cid began. "I realize you must be very put off by what I said yesterday..." He stopped uncertainly.

"He noticed." Paine said to Rikku, rolling her eyes at the man and smiling hopefully. He attempted a quick grin but failed, instead he grimaced.

"I realized," He said slowly, "That I cannot control what you do, Rikku, and that I was... wrong to accuse you" he struggled over the word wrong as if he had just inhaled campfire smoke and was having trouble

speaking. He even coughed a bit after the last sentence.

"Thank you, Daddy; it's good to have your support." Rikku said in a quiet and relieved tone. He looked up at her and nodded. He sat there a bit before turning to Paine.

"I expect you to take better care of my Rikku than anything, to put her before yourself even. If I see her look sad, I'll blame you first." He began in that irritating arrogant voice but his tone softened and he added, "Please take good care of my littlest one." He looked sadly at the two before standing up. He had circles under his eyes like he was very tired. "I expect to see you out and about tomorrow. I also expect you to not sneak around anymore; anyone who opposes this for long won't be on my airship long afterwards. Including Brother." He finished dramatically by stepping out of the door, the hiss and metallic click following him down the hall as it closed behind him.

"Well, he sure seemed happy about all of this." Paine mused sarcastically, a cheerless expression on her face.

Rikku smiled broadly. "He will be fine, and did you see? He accepted it! Oh Paine, he accepted us!" She could hardly contain herself with this knowledge.

Paine put her hands on her hips and looked at the door. "True, he even sort of supported us, how odd." She smiled faintly.

Rikku squealed with glee and flung her arms around Paine's neck, swinging around her in happiness. The airship continued its course, slicing through the moon splashed clouds, sailing on an ocean of glimmering silver. The moon hung low and full above the world, the ship, and the happiest couple to grace Spira that night.