

An Affair of the Heart and Soul
By Meriko

Chapter 39: Hell Hath No Fury

Cid stared slack-jawed and wide-eyed at the spectacle before him. After two weeks of bed-rest during which she had alternated between irritable boredom, depression at the frailty of life, and thankfulness for the miracle that was Marion, Shera had suddenly launched herself into what could only be described as an all-out volcanic rage.

All because of a few simple words spoken at her bedside this morning by yours truly.

The admittedly weak tea brewed by Cid had spilled all over her coverlet as she shoved the breakfast tray away from her with a violent shove. The teacup, saucer, and toast all crashed to the ground, but a slender hand saved the teapot, only to send it flying through the air towards his head. Luckily for him, he had ducked. No luck for the teapot, however, or the window it had shattered.

Cid glanced hopefully out the aforementioned window, but the inn across the way remained silent and still. No help from the cavalry. He returned his attention back to Shera, who had ripped the covers back from the bed and struggled to her feet, the better to tear him a new one, it seemed.

A fleeting thought crossed his mind as he watched her plant her bare feet on the plank floor, hands clenched in the sides of her night-shirt, singed hair cut short around her face into a shaggy fringe and eyes blazing bright above sheet-white cheeks. Shera had been more recognizable as a burn victim than as this magnificent fury.

"Don't you dare," she shrieked, "don't you dare say that to me ever again!"

Cid managed to blurt out a "Wha..." before the pillow cut him off. "Bff!" He grabbed the down-filled sack from her and tried once more. "Shera, what..."

"No! You don't even get to say my name anymore, you...you..." Failing to find a suitably filthy epithet to call him, Shera turned and fired a small vase-full of flowers at him, which also went flying out the window.

Cid attempted to converse with her again, but was interrupted once more, this time by a barrage of sharp blows to the head and shoulders. Having run out of ammunition in the sparsely decorated room, Shera used her fists to good effect. Hands and arms used to handling heavy tools and machinery were also quite useful as weapons.

After a few moments of trying to ward off the blows, Cid took matters into his own hands - quite literally. He managed to grab her wrists and then turned her and wrapped his arms around her, pinning her own arms to her chest.

"Hey, calm down," he said, as he tried to subdue the woman struggling vainly in his arms. Something strangely like a snarl greeted this request, in addition to several heel-kicks to the shins. Wincing, Cid forcibly dragged the violently protesting Shera back to her bed, sitting himself and his captive down on the edge. After a few moments - which would have been quite hilarious to any bystander, he managed to pin her ankles to the side of the bed with his right leg, and settled down to wait for her to return to rationality.

The futility of her situation soon impressed itself upon her and she settled down to an indignant heavy breathing. Cid loosened his grip slightly, and when she made no immediate attempt to fly out of his arms and kill him he released her completely and scooted back self-consciously. He bit his lip as he considered her reaction to his words. He'd been expecting some measure of disbelief, but nothing like the screaming anger of a few minutes ago.

"I mean it, you know," he said quietly to the stiff, outraged back turned against him. Her head turned slightly so that he caught her profile, and the coldness in her eyes caused his heart to jerk in his chest.

"You meant what you said just now?" she asked, sliding off the bed and turning to face him. "And didn't you also mean it

when you told me that I was the worst excuse for an engineer this planet had ever seen? And you meant it when you said that I'd destroyed all your dreams and turned all your years of hard work into nothing but a big fat waste of time!" Her brown eyes were hard as agate, drilling into his soul and paralyzing him where he sat. He fought to break away from that icy glare, shaking his head in denial of the words she spat out at him.

Shera raised a sarcastic eyebrow at his silent protest. "No? Of course you meant it. You also meant it all those times you said I was stupid and lazy and worthless, and you know what? I didn't believe you then, and I don't believe you now! I've always known and I know right now that I am smart, I am a hard worker, and I am also the best engineer in your entire crew! I devoted my entire life to you and your dreams, I risked my very life for your chance to go to outer space, and all you ever gave me were lessons in creative swearing! And now, now you drop this bombshell on me?! You really do think I'm stupid, don't you?!"

Cid shook his head once more, heart bruising under her tirade. "No," he said weakly, "no...God, you're breaking my heart..."

A flush swept up Shera's neck and face as suddenly as a brush fire. "Breaking your heart?! Breaking your heart?! Well, good! You deserve it! I deserve it! You've hurt me more than you'll ever know; I deserve to break your heart at least once, don't you think?!"

Cid looked up at her helplessly. Everything that she had screamed in her rage was actually nothing more than the awful truth. He had abused her with countless lies, and she was everything that she had said she was...and more. His mind reeled with the painful realization that she was so right. She deserved her revenge. And what was more, he didn't deserve her.

I deserve to break your heart at least once, don't you think?!

"Yes," he whispered brokenly, and fled the room.