[01] Arrival

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/1289.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Hetero (F/M)
Fandoms:	Diabolik Lovers (Otome Games), Criminal Girls 2: Party Favors
Relationships:	Akizuki Shinoa/Sakamaki Laito, Arisugawa Lily/Sakamaki Shuu, Kazato Yurine/Sakamaki Ayato, Kurushima Mizuki/Sakamaki Kanato, Ise Kuroe/Sakamaki Subaru, Yaegashi Tsukasa/Sakamaki Reiji, Shiihara Sui/Kino (Diabolik Lovers)
Characters:	Akizuki Shinoa, Arisugawa Lily, Kazato Yurine, Kurushima Mizuki, Ise Kuroe, Yaegashi Tsukasa, Shiihara Sui, Sakamaki Shuu, Sakamaki Reiji, Sakamaki Ayato, Sakamaki Kanato, Sakamaki Laito, Sakamaki Subaru, Kino (Diabolik Lovers)
Additional Tags:	Vampires, Canon-Typical Violence, Past Abuse, Crossover, Crossover Pairings, Blood Drinking, Mild Gore, Mild Blood, Implied/Referenced Sexual Assault, Abandonment, Angst and Humor, Abuse of Authority, Human/Vampire Relationship, Magic, Banter, femdom, Mild Sexual Content, Brotherly Love, Flirting, Angst, Manipulation, Deal with a Devil, Fear Play, Biting, Anger Issues, Bad Decisions, Alternate Universe - Setting Change, Cross-Posted on AO3
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Diabolik Underworld
Stats:	Published: 2020-09-14 Words: 19,049 Chapters: 1/1

[01] Arrival

by InvertedPhantasmagoria

Summary

Shuu has been snoring for the past three hours. Kanato hasn’t stopped muttering to Teddy for even longer. Laito at least has the decency to be quietly working on a crossword puzzle, but Subaru never really quits smelling sex on him-- even when he knows it shouldn’t be possible. Reiji is also fairly quiet, but the disapproving glares he gives everyone every few seconds give his mood away. Kino, the literal bastard, is playing one of his phone games at *just* high enough volume to be annoying. Ayato has taken to flicking pieces of shredded paper at Subaru’s face. His aim is shit.

The car trip has felt way, way too long. Apparently, their father has sent the seven of them to live with a ‘family friend’ for reasons that he’s in no hurry to tell them. Subaru figures they’re supposed to find out when they get there. Wherever there is. If the car trip ever ends. At this point, Subaru is starting to think that they’re going to be driven off of a cliff or something.

Notes

I am dead. I am dead and this fic killed me. It's 38 pages in my Google docs, and it took me a month. I hate myself for making a stupid idea into something this long. It's seriously the longest chapter of anything I've ever written. -3- Shoot me.

But uhhhh... anyway...

This fic is a crossover between Diabolik Lovers and a game called Criminal Girls 2. It's based on my Human Au, where the boys are the humans and the reader is the vampire, but this time, it's the CG2 girls who are the vampires! :D I'm going to be doing more fics for this in another work, so this is just meant to be an intro thingy that shows off the girls' characters and explains how the boys got to the mansion. Warnings are just typical DL stuff, nothing special... for now. ;3c

Oh, and because it doesn't come up in the fic... the boys are there because Tougou (Karlheinz) made a deal with a vampire and had to pay up. So he handed over his sons as prey/playthings.

dixbolik-lovers.tumblr.com

For brothers, the Sakamaki siblings don’t do too well at getting along. Subaru understands that one damn well. If the fact that sitting in an enclosed vehicle with all six of his siblings makes him actively want to punch something wasn’t a clue, then Subaru wouldn’t know what was.

Shuu has been snoring for the past three hours. Kanato hasn’t stopped muttering to Teddy for even longer. Laito at least has the decency to be quietly working on a crossword puzzle, but Subaru never really quits smelling sex on him-- even when he knows it shouldn’t be possible. Reiji is also fairly quiet, but the disapproving glares he gives everyone every few seconds give his mood away. Kino, the literal bastard, is playing one of his phone games at *just* high enough volume to be annoying. Ayato has taken to flicking pieces of shredded paper at Subaru’s face. His aim is shit.

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But before much longer, the limousine pulls to a sudden stop. It’s not enough to wake Shuu up, but it does make Laito’s pencil skid across the paper in a messy line. Because the windows are blacked out, Subaru has no idea where they’ve stopped... but it’s not like anyone else does, either.

“Oh? Looks like we’re here,” Laito comments, sounding far too chipper for his own good. Leave it to the pervert to have a good attitude about this.

“Wherever *here* is...” Subaru mutters.

“Well,” Ayato cuts in, opening the closest door, “there’s one way to find out!” He all but launches himself out of the limo-- apparently sick of being confined for so long. Ayato does tend to hate sitting still.

“Agreed~” Laito quickly follows.

Subaru sighs.

Reiji has to shake Kino’s shoulder to get him to realize that they’ve stopped. He also manages to wake Shuu up via ‘accidentally’ jabbing him in the ribs with one elbow. Kanato slips out on his own in the midst of that chaos, and Subaru follows. He’s sick of that damn limo too.

Outside... Subaru freezes. They’re pulled up in front of a literal *mansion.* As in, a three-story mansion that covers more ground than any house Subaru has ever seen in person. His *dad’s* house didn’t even look like this. He swallows. Whatever ‘family friend’ they’ve been sent to stay with, this person is probably more in the rich-and-powerful field than his dad.

Ayato is gaping open-mouthed. Laito has a smirk on his face that looks a little too transparent. Kanato and Reiji are both staring silently. Shuu, as usual, looks half-ready to fall asleep while he's standing up.

"Well, that's certainly impressive," Kino blurts out, irritating anime music still blaring from the phone in his hand.

"No shit," Subaru adds.

They stand there for a moment or two, too intimated to do much more than stare. But after a few moments pass, Subaru feels a couple of fat, frigid drops of rain hit his face. He looks up at the sky on reflex... and promptly gets a raindrop in his eye for the trouble. Rain. *Great.*

"We should get inside quickly," Reiji says, stating the obvious.

There's no luggage to grab. Their father had said that he'd have everything delivered promptly, so there was no need to take anything but what they'd need for the car ride. That seemed strange enough, to begin with, but what *really* sets Subaru on edge is that when he looks over his shoulder, the limo is long gone. He never even heard it move.

Shivering, Subaru follows his brothers, trailing along in the back. They don't get halfway up the driveway before the rain becomes a downpour.

Ayato tears off ahead of the rest of them as soon as the rain starts getting bad. He bolts up the steps leading up the front door, almost slipping twice, then immediately starts banging on the door roughly.

"Ayato! That is *not* appropriate!" Reiji chides. "We haven't even stepped inside yet, and you're already making a nuisance out of yourself." Considering that Reiji's bangs are plastered to his forehead and that his glasses are so wet it'd be a miracle if he could see, his words lack bite.

"Shut up, four-eyes!" Ayato snaps back. "Do *you* want to stand out in this rain, huh? I'm getting their attention so we can get inside already."

Shuu yawns. "He has a point..."

"Indeed," Kanato adds with a dangerous-sounding sniffle in his tone, "I'd much rather get inside than let Teddy get any more soaked..."

Reiji heaves a deep, miserable sigh, shaking his head. He pinches the bridge of his nose, then says, "Very well. Do what you must. But I take no responsibility for the actions of you all. If the owner of this mansion is displeased, the consequences will be yours alone."

"I'm sure we'll deal with it~" Laito trills. "Ayato, knock harder. My crossword book is getting ruined while we all stand here and squabble."

Given permission, Ayato goes right back to pounding on the door. That... goes on for a while. As in, long enough that Subaru starts debating busting the door in on his own just to make Ayato's relentless 'knocking' stop. No one answers, which is even more irritating. Did the

people here not get any warning that they were coming? Or are they just choosing to ignore their unwilling guests? Subaru can't imagine anyone doing the latter, but at this point, he's getting worried that that might turn out to be the case.

"Damn it, knock it off!" Subaru shouts, patience finally running out. He pushes past the rest of them, moving to stand beside Ayato in front of the still-closed door. "Get out of the way already. I'll get it open!"

Without allowing time for any more than a half-shouted protest from Reiji, Subaru grabs the handle, braces his shoulder against the door, and forces it open. Surprisingly, the door is unlocked. It's heavy enough that Subaru doesn't lose his balance, but it *does* open with relative ease.

Inside, the mansion is way, way too dark. Subaru gets himself upright, looks around, and promptly decides that he doesn't like this place at all. The initial room is a large entry hall filled with fancy, old-looking furniture, and there's a funny smell hanging in the air. Subaru feels a little chill run down his spine. There's something bad about this house. He doesn't know what it is, but he's immediately getting a really, really bad feeling about it.

"Wow, this place is fancier than dad's." Kino is the first one to step in behind him. "Looks less... lived-in, though. Wonder if anyone's home?" Despite his casual words, his tone isn't quite so self-assured.

"Teddy," Kanato mumbles, barely loud enough to be audible. "It feels bad in here, doesn't it? Like something could be *waiting*..."

"Kanato, stop that!" Laito squeaks. "That's not funny."

"It might be true, though." Kanato gives a creepy little giggle.

"As if," Shuu deadpans. "It's just a creepy old house. If anything, it's just going to be a pain to figure out where the people we're supposed to be meeting are..." He trails off with a long, almost exaggerated yawn.

"And yet, we need to find those people. Father was not... *kind* enough to inform me of exactly who resides here, so I suppose we'll simply have to take it as it comes." Reiji, Subaru thinks, no matter how hard he's trying to seem calm and in-control, sounds exasperated already.

"Yeah," Subaru says, "and how are we supposed to find them? This mansion's fuckin' huge, and we have no idea who we're looking for, let alone where we're going. And whoever shitty hosts we have, they don't seem to be too interested in making sure we find them." In a way, he's worried. There's something very, very not normal about this whole situation.

"Let's split up!" Ayato suddenly speaks up.

"That's a stupid idea," Kino retorts. "Have you ever *seen* a horror movie? That kind of thing is how you get yourself killed."

“No, he has a point,” Reiji says, sounding extremely reluctant. “It would be much quicker to separate and search on our own. This house is large enough that it may even be a necessity. As much as I dislike the idea... it’s probably for the best. And besides, Kino, this is *not* a horror movie. There’s nothing to worry about... besides, perhaps, getting lost.” He glances at Shuu in a way that suggests he wants exactly that.

“Ugh, fine! But when you all turn up stabbed by a serial killer with a machete, don’t go blaming me.” With anime music still playing-- now quieter-- from his phone, Kino is the first to turn and leave. He heads down the first hallway to the right, vanishing into the darkness.

“Alright! Yours Truly is gonna find them first for sure!” Ayato boasts, immediately tearing off down the next hallway to the right.

“Oh...” Laito hums disappointedly. “I don’t think it’s the best idea to split up, either, but if Reiji insists...” he sighs in a way that’s almost pouting, stuffs his soggy crossword book into his pocket, and also picks a path.

“Teddy and I will follow Laito. We can split off at a later point.” Kanato gives a little giggle. He might be a bit too *happy* about the creepy house.

“What a pain... I’m just gonna go find somewhere to nap.” With those words and nothing more, Shuu wanders off down the hallway directly to the left. Reiji glares after him, clearly wanting to say something, but eventually seeming to decide that it’s not worth the effort to try to dissuade him.

“Now,” Reiji says, “that leaves us. Since everyone else ran off without thinking, Subaru, I expect you to be at least somewhat sensible. I’ll text you if there’s a problem, so be prepared to meet back here soon.” Reiji, despite his calm attitude, is already starting to seem stressed. Subaru knows that his brother exists in a state of teetering on the verge of a breakdown pretty much always, but seeing him get shaken is always kind of sad.

“Yeah, I get it. Don’t get lost, I know.”

Reiji leaves after that, taking another hallway to the left. Subaru is left standing in the awful, creepy entry room by himself, all of his brothers having headed off into the depths of the mansion.

Somehow, this feels like a really, really stupid idea, Subaru thinks. Even so, it’s not he has much of a choice. On impulse, he takes out his cellphone. No service. Somehow, he was expecting that. None of them are going to be able to contact each other, he thinks with a sigh. It’ll be a freaking miracle if they manage to track each other down anytime soon.

The only thing to do is hope that one of them finds someone. Subaru heads down the hallway to the front, really, really hoping that this isn’t going to end too badly. As if he’s lucky enough for that to come true.

. . .

Before long, Laito is alone. For a while, Kanato tailed him, following a few steps behind. But he went his own way soon enough, and now Laito is deep in the mansion by himself. It's... disconcerting, in a way. Laito isn't the type to admit to feeling things like that very often, but this...

He doesn't like it. There's some strange feeling in the air. Everything is just a little bit too cold. Laito is quickly getting the undeniable worry that something, *something* is about to go horribly wrong.

And yet, Reiji did have a point. This isn't a horror movie. There's no monster in the shadows, no killer standing just behind him. Nothing bad is going to happen aside from maybe struggling to remember his way back to the entry hall. And even then, all he'd have to do to solve that problem would be to get outside and go around the house to the front door.

Their father shipped them off here for some unknown reason. Laito is under no impressions that dear Sakamaki Tougou has no interest in his spawn, but sending them away with no hint as to *where?* That feels excessive, even by his father's horrible standards. Laito knows that he's caused plenty of trouble for the man, but even so... this is extreme. There's something going on here that he doesn't know, some secret just out of reach. And, of course, Laito gets the feeling that he'll find out soon enough.

But, of course, Laito is the happy-go-lucky pervert, and not one of his siblings needs to know how deeply he's thinking about this. They're all better off if they think that he has his mind on nothing but pretty girls and his crossword puzzles. They'll figure things out on their own soon enough.

Laito sighs. The world is a cruel, cruel place. He's not going to miss his 'home', not really, but there's a very real possibility that this place is worse.

He winds up wandering the second floor. The whole mansion is dark, with confusing hallways and endless amounts of expensive-looking furniture. The *weird* part is that there's no sign of anyone living there. Not a single light is on. The air is silent. Even though he's opened a couple of doors in the hopes of finding something, he hasn't run into anyone yet. Despite his best efforts not to, Laito is starting to get nervous. He doesn't like this.

When he pushes open a particular door, instead of yet another empty room, Laito finds a balcony. It's an enclosed little area, made of stone, and overlooking a rose garden down below. The view is beautiful.

For a moment, Laito just stands there. It's... pretty. Still nothing that he needs to find, but it might be a good place to take a break. The rain is still pouring down, filling the chilly air with its familiar scent. The flowers down below are a spectrum of red, pink, and white blooms.

Laito takes the few steps to stand by the railing. He leans against it, looking out at the view of the mansion's gardens. It's peaceful, somehow.

"Who, may I ask, are you?"

A sudden voice makes Laito jolt. He forces himself not to whirl around and face the person, instead turning to meet them with a relaxed grin. He doesn't know who this is. Showing weakness would be foolish.

It's a girl-- probably about his age. She has long, pink hair styled in a wing-like flare and a low braid, soft, brown eyes, and features that look impossibly sweet and kind. She's wearing a school uniform of some sort and a curious smile on her face. The daughter of the owner of this place, perhaps? It would make sense. Laito doesn't know a thing about who lives here, so the owner having a child wouldn't surprise him a bit.

He's lucky. If there's one thing Laito knows how to do, it's put on the charm and have girls like this wrapped around his fingers.

"Well, hello there~ I'm Sakamaki Laito, my dear. My brothers and I were sent to live with you. We were hoping that you might have known ahead of time..." He gives the girl his most *heart-melting* smile-- the kind that's had the girls at school falling all over him for years.

"Oh, so that's who you are." The girl smiles right back. "I'm very sorry. We knew that you were coming, but I'm afraid that you've gotten here a little bit early. No worries, though. I'm just happy that you and your brothers arrived safely. I'm Akizuki Shinoa, by the way. Nice to meet you."

"It's no problem at all, honey. And, of course, it's very nice to meet you as well." Laito steps forward to take Shinoa's hand, placing a kiss on her knuckles. He hears her giggle, and only barely resists a smirk.

"The pleasure is all mine. Now... where are your brothers at? I'd be happy to show you all to where you're staying."

"Ah, about that... We all split up a bit ago. Since we had no idea where anyone was, it was the best we could think to do. I'm very sorry that we let ourselves in without asking, but as you can see, the rain..."

"That's completely understandable! It really is our fault for not greeting you properly. I hope that they haven't gotten lost..." Shinoa trails off, sounding worried. Laito can't help but smile. He's barely spoken to this girl for two minutes, and she's clearly falling for his charm. She's as polite as can be, and so, so cooperative. This is going to be easier than he thought.

"It's alright~ I'm sure we'll find them easily. How about we step back inside and get to searching, hm? Since you know the layout of the house, it'll be much easier with you by my side." He gives her a flirtatious look. It's all downhill from here. He'll have her in his bed by the end of the week.

Laito steps past Shinoa, reaching for the door to go back inside.

When he tries to turn the handle, it doesn't budge.

Abruptly, Laito gets a very bad feeling. He tries the handle again, then once more, each time hoping that he was just doing something wrong. Nothing. The handle doesn't so much as

jiggle under his grip.

“Is it not working?” Shinoa asks from behind him.

“N-No, it doesn’t appear to want to turn...” The air seems to have dropped a few degrees. Laito feels himself shiver. Something is *off.*

“Oh, no. That’s not good at all...”

Even though Shinoa’s words sound concerned, there’s something in her tone that Laito doesn’t like. It’s too cold. Too empty. Shinoa isn’t talking like she’s worried. She’s talking like she’s very, very amused.

“Here, let me try.” Shinoa steps in close. She reaches for the doorknob, her hand coming to rest on top of Laito’s as she does.

Her skin is cold.

There has to be a reason. Laito scrambles to think of one. It *is* cold out here, with the rain coming down like it is. Maybe she’s just been outside for a while? But, no, that doesn’t make sense either. He would have noticed her if she was on the balcony when he first stepped outside.

“You’re thinking hard, aren’t you?” Shinoa giggles. “Well, what conclusion are you coming to? Have I been out in the rain for too long? Or are you thinking of something else? Please, tell me.”

“Wh-What--? What do you mean?” Laito tries to smile, tries to laugh. “C-Come on, sweetie, this isn’t funny. Hurry up and unlock the door.”

“I’m not playing.”

Shinoa turns to face him. She places one hand on his shoulder, pushing with just enough force that Laito gets the message. He’s stunned enough that he moves with her, and the next thing he knows, his back is to the wall. With the sound of rain and a mosaic of flowers behind them, the whole scene really *does* feel like something out of a horror movie.

Narrowing her eyes demurely, Shinoa leans in close. She’s only a little bit shorter than him, which means she can easily look him in the eye. Her bangs cut an ominous shadow across her face. This close, there’s a sharp, coppery smell on her-- one that Laito can’t quite place.

“Come on, n-now,” Laito cajoles, trying to pretend like he’s not halfway tripping over his words. “This isn’t cute anymore. You’ve had your fun. I’m really scared, see? You can stop now, and we can both go inside where it’s warm.” Laito’s well-used to smiling when he wants to do exactly the opposite, but this time, it seems a little harder than usual. He should be looking for an escape route, but all that he can focus on is *her.*

“Aren’t you wondering what I am?” Shinoa asks, one of her frigid hands coming up to cup Laito’s cheek. “I know you are. You’re scared of me, and that’s okay. You’re just a human, so it’s really only natural.”

She called him a *human.*

“It’s okay. I’ll make it easy and tell you. I’m a vampire, understand?”

Shinoa smiles with what Laito can clearly see are *fangs.* She gives him a pitying look, like she really does feel bad for having to spell it out for him.

“V-Vampire...?”

Under any other circumstances, Laito wouldn’t have believed it. But right now, cornered by a girl that smells like what Laito is quickly realizing is *blood,* he doesn’t have much of a choice. Reality is crashing down hard. He can’t flirt his way out of this. He’s cornered. He played right into her hands, and for once, it’s his back up against the wall in more ways than one.

“Yes, exactly. See, you’re catching on in no time. And... well, you know what vampires do, don’t you?” Shinoa’s fingers slide down and brush against Laito’s lips, probing lightly at his mouth. “I want you to stay nice and still for me. I don’t want to hurt you, so please, be good.”

Despite the kind words, Laito *knows* that she’s mocking him. Suddenly, Shinoa’s sweet atmosphere feels cloying. Laito’s nails scrape against the wall behind him. He wants to get away. He wants to run.

She leans in, using the hand still on Laito’s face to tip his head to the side. Laito’s heart pounds in his chest. *Vampire.* Vampires bite people. And that’s exactly what’s going to happen to him. If Laito had any less control over himself, he thinks he would have struggled. But he knows better. He’s helpless, but that doesn’t mean that he has to give her anything genuine.

“A-Are you going to bite me, sweetheart?” he asks, forcing the same tone of voice he’d use if a girl was offering to blow him. “Go ahead. I don’t mind. I’d love to feel the fangs of a girl as pretty as you. Just be gentle with me, okay? You know it’s my first time...”

Shinoa giggles softly. “Silly thing. You know exactly what I intend to do to you. So please, be quiet and take it properly.”

With those words, she leans in. A cold tongue licks over the exposed skin of Laito’s upper throat. She tugs the collar of his shirt down to make room, Laito feels something *sharp* make contact with his skin, and then--

Her fangs sink into tender skin.

Laito moans. He tries to make it sound like more pleasure than pain, but-- it really does *hurt.* There’s only so much he can do to make it sound otherwise. He feels blood well up from the wound, some of it escaping around the place where Shinoa’s mouth is at his skin. Her soft, cool lips brush against his throat in a mockery of a kiss. Her tongue laps at the wound she’s made. The pain is incredible-- the fear even more so.

Quickly, Laito begins to feel lightheaded. He's being *drained.* There's blood running in little rivulets down to his chest. He whines, helpless.

He knows better than to struggle. Laito allows himself to cling to her back, burying his fingers in her uniform jacket as even a small means of grounding himself. He can't get enough air past the pain of her teeth in his neck. The sounds he's making are obscene. Not all of it is intentional.

Shinoa pulls away just when he starts to feel like he's going to collapse. The cold air hits the fresh wound she left, and Laito whimpers at the feeling. It's only his impeccable self-control that's keeping him from cowering in a sobbing, panicking mess. He certainly wants to. But-- showing weakness is how you get hurt. And this person already wants to hurt him.

"Don't pass out, now," Shinoa sighs. "I didn't take that much. I know that it *is* your first time, so I was considerate. Oh, and I know that you're the slut of your family or something, but you can at least act a little less shameless. Everyone can hear you moaning, I'm sure."

She smiles at him, still perfectly calm. Laito thinks that he might be going into some form of shock. The world feels a little too far away, a little too fuzzy. He has to keep it together. He can't fall apart now.

"A-Ah... That was incredible... Your f-fangs really did hurt. Do I look good covered in blood, hm? Is this what you wanted?" Laito forces a smile, even as he knows that it's way too transparent. He's *scared.* He's way, way too scared, and he doesn't know how else he's supposed to respond.

"That's enough of that, I think. Look at me, Laito. Right into my eyes, please. You're going to have a little rest."

Laito obeys. Looking at them this close, her eyes are so, so cold. There's not a hint of sympathy to be found-- not even pity. He started to feel dizzy. The falling rain becomes an unbearable echo pounding at his ears. His own blood is smeared around Shinoa's mouth like a sick imitation of lipstick. So this is what his father sent him to, Laito thinks. This is his fate.

The world goes black.

. . .

As always, Shuu is tired. The permanent sense of exhaustion that weighs him down is hanging over his head just as usual. He napped for what was probably about three hours on the car ride here, but it's not enough. Shuu knows from experience that he can sleep for over eighteen hours a day if he tries. Or if it's a bad day. Those two things seem to go together.

The mansion that they've wound up in is creepy as fuck. Shuu doesn't like it. It's cold, dusty, and there's a funny smell in the air. The only real upside is that everything is dark enough that sleeping will be easy.

Wandering around quickly gets old. Shuu knows that he's supposed to be trying to find someone who lives in the place, but the mansion is huge, and walking for this long already has Shuu feeling worn out. The only reason he can think of for needing to find those people in the first place is that they'd at least be able to show him to his bedroom. That said, Shuu can happily sleep on a couch and be just fine. He knows that much.

He's all alone. No loud, annoying brothers to get on his nerves and keep him awake. No Reiji to nag and tell him what to do.

Shuu would have thought that he'd like the peace and quiet, but in these dark, closed-in halls, he's finding that he doesn't really enjoy it. Kino had a point in this place feeling like some kind of horror movie.

Being afraid is stupid. All he should do is find somewhere good to nap and sleep until someone comes for him. That would be the easy way of doing things, and everyone knows that Shuu is all for easy. If he can go to sleep for a few hours, he certainly wouldn't mind blocking out the world.

Eventually, he gives up on wandering around aimlessly. There's really no point to this. Reiji is going to chew him out for sitting around instead of helping everyone else look, but who fucking cares? Taking a nap would be well worth the lecture he'll get when someone eventually tracks him down.

Shuu finds a nice-looking couch against the wall in the hallway. It doesn't matter if he's in plain sight. Whatever happens, will happen.

He flops down onto it with a sigh, not bothering to take his shoes off. If the owner of the house has a problem with him taking a nap where he pleases, then they should have done something about it instead of leaving the seven of them to find their way around on their own. It'll be a while before anyone comes looking for him anyway, Shuu thinks, so it's not like he needs to worry about anyone bothering him anytime soon.

Once he's down, Shuu closes his eyes. His earbuds are dead, so music isn't an option, but he should be able to sleep anyway. Honestly... he's kind of bitter. Being sent away like this feels ridiculous. Yeah, the seven of them are more trouble than anyone would want to deal with, but does that really warrant their dad punting them off to somewhere unknown because of it?

Apparently, in Sakamaki Tougou's mind, it does. Unless there's something going on behind the scenes that Shuu doesn't know about.

Either way, this whole situation is bound to be a massive drag.

At some point, Shuu manages to drift off. It's not a deep sleep by any means, as he slips in and out of waking every few minutes, but it does do something to numb the frustration he's feeling about it all.

"Excuse me. Who, exactly, are *you?*"

A sharp voice drags Shuu back to the waking world. For a moment, he keeps his eyes closed. That voice, despite being female, had the exact same tone that Reiji uses with him when he's particularly annoyed. Shuu's still drowsy enough that he doesn't snap to attention like he probably should.

"I'm speaking to you!" The voice says again, even more irritated. Shuu sighs. He probably should deal with this... even though he doesn't want to.

Shuu cracks open his eyes. There's a girl standing above him. She has hip-length golden hair worn with an elaborate braid around her head and her eyes are a rich shade of blue. She's wearing a sort of school uniform that looks a little too proper for Shuu's taste. However... the skirt is short enough that from his angle on the couch... yeah, her panties are pretty cute.

"Sakamaki Shuu..." He yawns, glancing up to meet her gaze. Her expression is *also* one that Shuu can see Reiji making-- disturbingly accurate, really. "And if you can't tell, I'm trying to take a nap here."

"You're one of the boys who's meant to be living here, I assume? Or are you some freeloader who just happened to wander inside?" Her tone is sharp and grating. Shuu *really* wishes that he had his music right now.

"Yeah, I'm meant to be here. No one bothered to answer the door when we got here, so my brothers let themselves in."

"And how exactly does this end in you taking a nap in a hallway far away from the entrance room?" At this point, it sounds like she's scolding him. Shuu bristles a bit. He already gets more than enough of this.

"Well, it's not like you or whoever else showed up to tell us what to do. We split up to look for whoever owns the place, and I got tired. So, obviously, I was trying to get some sleep. If you're going to nag about it, then maybe you should have shown me to my room earlier." Shuu gives the girl a lazy smirk. Yeah, he's being a little shit. Does he care? Nope, not a bit.

"How rude!" she huffs. "And here I was expecting Sakamaki Tougou's son to have better manners. You're disappointing me already."

"Rude, huh? Nice to hear that from someone who hasn't even told me her name yet."

"My name," the girl says, "is Arisugawa Lily. And you should show some more respect. As one of your hosts, I expect politeness from someone who is to be staying here on our good graces alone."

What a pain, Shuu thinks. This Lily is turning out to be as bad as Reiji. What does she expect from people who never even wanted to be here? It's not like she's doing any of them a favor by keeping them here. Shuu is half-tempted to shut his eyes and tune her out. He can only imagine how much it would piss her off for his 'disrespectful' self to start ignoring her completely. But still, playing the taunting game might be more fun.

Shuu makes himself yawn again, just to make her angry. He doesn't give a shit what she thinks of his attitude. If he irritates her enough, she might even decide to leave him alone and let him sleep. One of his brothers can wake him up later, when Reiji's second coming is long gone.

"Hard to respect someone who's wearing such frilly panties."

"Y-You--!" Lily promptly takes a step back from the couch.

"What? You're the one walking around in that tiny skirt. And anyway, what's someone as proper as you doing in slut clothes like those? Or are you just that easy underneath the whole 'little miss' act you're putting on?"

Lily's face turns an amusing shade of red. He sees her perfectly-manicured hands clench into fists at her sides and he has to resist the urge to snicker. This is almost too easy. Even Reiji isn't this easy to fluster. Some bratty princess like this is simple to toy with. He's already gotten under her skin like nothing-- and now, she'll get sick of him.

"Stand up, *now,*" Lily commands, her voice suddenly cold.

"Why should I? You're not in charge of me. Run along and go bother someone else. You know, someone who *cares.*" With those words, Shuu closes his eyes and rolls over, tuning her out entirely.

"Stand up," Lily repeats, "or you will be forced."

Shuu doesn't dignify her with any kind of response. She'll get the message soon enough. He's pissed her off enough that this'll be the end.

But the next thing Shuu knows, a small, *cold* hand is closing around his collar, just barely brushing against his neck. He's hauled to his feet by nothing more than one hand gripping his shirt, quickly and roughly enough that he can barely catch his balance once he's upright.

Despite having to look up to meet his eye, the look that Lily is giving him is truly ferocious. There's only traces of embarrassment left in her gaze, and instead, she's looking at him like she wants to skin him alive. Shuu's eyes go wide. How the *fuck* is she strong enough to do that? She's built like a twig with hips-- it doesn't make sense that she could yank him to his feet.

"I told you," she says, "that if you didn't obey, I would use force. Don't gape at me with that mindless expression. Honestly, I knew you were a fool-- you don't have to reinforce that opinion with such a reaction."

"L-Let go of me!" Shuu tries to grab her wrist and pry her hand away from him. She doesn't budge. Something in Shuu's gut *sinks.*

"I will not. Now, think clearly for a moment. Look at me. Do you really think that a meager human such as yourself has any right to disrespect my kind?" Lily levels him a proud glare up through her lashes.

What she said doesn't make *sense.* Shuu stands there for a moment, trying to understand what she means. She's a human too, isn't she? Or more accurately, how could she be anything else? Either she's bluffing to an insane degree, or there's something very, very bad going on here. The wrist under Shuu's grasp is as cold as a corpse. Her eyes seem to be just a bit too bright--- almost glowing. The strength in her one hand is incredible.

What the *fuck* is going on here?

"Y-You-- I said, let go--!" Shuu's voice comes out as something dangerously close to a yelp. He was just supposed to get a nap, not--

"Fine. Since I apparently have to spell it out for you; I'm a vampire. And a high-ranking one at that. And you, a helpless little human, are my prey. You may bluster all that you see fit, but in the end, there's nothing you can do to *make* me let go of you." She's still scowling, eyes cold enough to freeze someone solid, Shuu thinks. "Now, you're going to pay for that attitude of yours. I intend to make you suffer."

Vampire. This crazy girl is really claiming to be a *vampire.* Shuu would laugh if she didn't still have an iron grip on his shirt. He doesn't want to believe it. And yet, it's seeming more and more like fighting back is just going to get him hurt. A spike of sharp panic hits Shuu in the chest.

If what she's saying is true, he's *fucked.* From the sound of it, he wouldn't be surprised if she wants to kill him by this point.

And yeah, Shuu's debated that one on his own a few times, but taking a bottle of sleeping pills and never waking up is a lot different than being strangled or sliced open by a living, breathing *monster.*

He got himself into this mess. Unknowingly, yeah, but he was the one to poke the sleeping beast. Shuu once again tries to dislodge the grip she has on him. It doesn't work. Lily doesn't budge a bit. It's sinking in deeper and deeper that he's well and truly fucked-- no matter what he does.

So Shuu goes limp.

At this point, does he really care if she kills him? It's not like there's shit he can do about it. He lets go of her wrist, drops his hands by his sides, and decides that struggling isn't worth the effort-- not if it's all true.

"Oh? I see that you're finally getting the message. You're correct that fighting me would only make things worse. I suppose that you can be given some credit for that." Lily gives a small, self-satisfied smirk. "Now... let's see how you taste. Since I smelled you, I was wondering if your blood would be of acceptable quality. This close... I think that I might have been correct."

Lily uses the hand on his shirt to yank Shuu down to her level, putting his throat within reach of her mouth. He's got a whole five inches on her, probably, but she moves him like he's as helpless as a newborn. Lily leans in close. Her cold breath tickles Shuu's neck. She inhales,

licks a short, uncomfortable stripe up one of the stand-out tendons there, then lines her mouth up with the soft part in the meat between throat and shoulder.

Shuu grits his teeth. This is going to hurt. He can't do a fucking thing to fight back, so all he can do is hold still and accept the pain.

Lily sinks her fangs into his skin.

Instantly, Shuu hisses with pain. It *hurts.* Her fangs are small, but the feeling of them puncturing his skin and sinking down into the meat of him is more pain than anything Shuu's been through yet.

He stiffens. His hands clench uselessly in the air by his sides. Stay still, he reminds himself. Stay still and hope that he doesn't piss her off more.

Lily drinks from him for what feels like an eternity. Shuu *feels* the blood draining out of him. It's nauseating. He's going lightheaded much too quickly, and still, she hasn't shown any signs of stopping. Shuu is forced to stand there, awkwardly bent over her shorter frame, trying to both keep his balance and not show any more weakness than he already has.

The sharp, pained noises he hears are way too embarrassing to be coming from him, Shuu thinks almost hysterically. He wants to cling to her just to give himself something to ground with, but there's no way that that wouldn't just make her hurt him more.

Shuu sways on his feet. The world feels like it's about to rush up to meet him. He's going to fall, going to pass out, *something*--

Shuu, at last, crumbles to his knees. The motion tears Lily's fangs out of his neck, leaving an open, bloody wound behind. There's blood all over his neck, dripping down his chest, staining his shirt, and more. He's so dizzy that he can barely see, and for all he knows, she still intends to kill him. Fear is a cold, visceral thing, sinking its claws deep into Shuu's windpipe.

"This a human's place," Lily says cruelly, blood painting her mouth a rich red. "Surely even someone as simple as you can understand. When I tell you to do something, you will comply or face the consequences."

It's impossible to focus. The room is spinning. Shuu doesn't know if he can stay upright much longer. She's taken too much blood. Even though he has no idea what she'll do to him while he's out, Shuu doubts that he can stay conscious for much longer. Everything is too *blurry.*

With the sound of Lily's voice ringing in his ears like it's ten feet away, Shuu eyes close. He feels himself hit the floor, everything going dark.

. . .

At first, Ayato thinks that splitting up was a great idea. He gets to be away from all of his irritating brothers, *and* he might win at finding the people who live here first. However, the

longer he’s alone in the creepy-ass mansion without the endless chatter of the other six, the more he starts to realize that he’s not so fond of going it by himself.

The rain is still coming down outside. *Loudly.* There’s a permanent echo of raindrops hitting the side of the house-- interjected only with the occasional clap of thunder or flash of lightning from outside.

And yeah, Ayato might have been a little bit scared of storms like this when he was a kid. But he’s not a kid anymore, and he’s just fine. Even though there’s no one and nothing there to distract him, he’s fine. Flinching a little bit at every sudden noise just means that he’s properly on his guard!

The mansion is huge and dark. Ayato wanders the halls on the first floor for a while before finding a staircase that leads up. Climbing it ends in a lot of ominous creaking noises from the ancient wood, which leaves Ayato shivering. The longer he’s in here, the more it’s starting to feel exactly how Kino described it. And thanks to his stupid brother commenting about the serial killer with a machete, Ayato can’t let go of the idea that someone’s watching him. Which is stupid and childish and just plain pathetic.

The great Ayato isn’t afraid of anything! He’s grown up tough, and he *will* find the people who live here before any of the others get a chance.

When he gets upstairs, Ayato starts opening doors and looking at the rooms inside. He finds quite a few sitting rooms, what looks like a library, a number of uninteresting, generic bedrooms, and a couple of bathrooms.

Nothing special. Nothing that’s going to get him anywhere. And, of course, not a soul who might be able to tell him what’s going on.

But eventually, Ayato opens a particular door.

Inside is a bedroom that definitely belongs to a girl. It’s decorated with rich, pretty furniture and shades of mahogany, gold, and teal. There’s a canopy bed, a desk to one side with pretty stationery, and a few pieces of women’s clothing strewn about various places. It even smells like perfume.

Jackpot, Ayato thinks. Someone *definitely* lives here. There isn’t any dust around, which means that someone’s been here recently, and that’s good news for him. Maybe if he waits here, the owner of the room will come back soon. It does feel a little bit creepy to wait around in some strange girl’s room, but it’s not like he has much of a choice at this point. And, of course, the great Ayato does whatever he wants.

Ayato sits down on the dark blue, ridiculously plush couch. He sinks into it a good inch or two. It’s... comfortable. The smell of women’s perfume is strong here too, which sets him on edge a bit. It’s a little too close to *hers* for comfort. Ayato shivers. He reminds himself that there’s a good chance he’ll never have to see that woman again. He lives here now. Not with her.

He leans black, closing his eyes. Stay calm. There's no reason to get all creeped out when that woman is at least a three-hour car trip away.

But then, just when Ayato's started to relax a bit...

"Um... excuse me. What are you doing in my room?"

Ayato nearly jumps out of his skin. His eyes fly open, he scrambles back until he hits the couch behind him, and he tenses, ready for a fight.

However, the person in front of him almost makes his jaw drop. It's a girl maybe a little bit older than him. She has soft-looking, mint-green hair worn in a complicated updo and long, curly side ponytail, deep, teal-blue eyes, and quite a bit of flattering makeup. She's wearing a mockery of a school uniform complete with a skirt slit up to her hip, a corset, and a shirt tucked into that which shows her cleavage down to her sternum.

Even more striking is the fact that she's built like a freaking wet dream. She's curvier than a pornstar, with wide hips, soft thighs, and tits so big that it's a miracle they haven't fallen out of her shirt yet.

Ayato *knows* he's staring bug-eyed and slack-jawed. How could he not? This girl looks like every fantasy he's ever had standing right in front of him with a sweet little smile and clasped hands. He swallows, looking her up and down all over again without a hint of shame. This is too much.

"You're staring," the girl giggles. "My face is up here."

Ayato flushes. He's been caught. He immediately looks back up at her face, but the girl seems more amused than pissed like he would have expected. She's still smiling... but she *does* look more than a little ditzy.

"Oh, uh, sorry?" Ayato gets out, still struggling not to look right back down at the exposed skin of her chest. Fuck, this is incredible.

"No worries~ I know that a boy like you probably can't help it." The girl gives a coy little grin. "Now... who are you? And why are you in my room? I wasn't expecting to come back here to find you, you know?"

"Sakamaki Ayato. And Yours Truly was waiting for somebody to show up, 'cause no one bothered to answer the door when he got here." Ayato smirks. At least he has a good reason. "And anyway, who are you? Isn't it polite to introduce yourself first when you ask someone who they are?"

"Oh, I'm Kazato Yurine! I live here... wait, you probably knew that, huh?" She giggles. "I didn't know that anyone was coming today, though... I wonder if the others didn't tell me. Or maybe I just forgot? Either way, I'm sooo sorry that no one was there to greet you. It must have been scary outside, what with all of this gloomy, awful rain that's coming down."

As she talks, Yurine crosses her arms... which happens to push her chest up and forward. Ayato swallows. It's tough not to stare.

"Yeah, I guess that's okay. It's not like I was scared or anything. It was just an annoyance to have to track you down through this creepy place." Ayato wrinkles his nose. The trek was *not* fun. "But anyway, there are seven of us here. Me and my six brothers. They're all idiots, though, so you only have to worry about Yours Truly."

"Seven of you? That's a perfect match!" Yurine giggles.

She then proceeds to plop down on the couch right next to him. The motion makes her tits jiggle and her skirt part dangerously, almost revealing things that it shouldn't. She smoothes it out just in time.

Of all the people that Ayato could have run into, he got *her.* It's almost too much good luck to be true. Yeah, Yurine seems like she's a little stupid, but she's also one of the sexiest girls Ayato's ever seen, so he can put up with it. If anything, her being a ditz might make it easier to get his way. He wouldn't mind making someone like her his girlfriend, especially 'cause that means he'd get free access to her body whenever he sees fit.

"But umm... you know, Ayato-kun, you're kinda cute! Your eyes are such a pretty color. Here, let me see..."

Ayato, jerked out of his thoughts, freezes. Yurine is now leaning forward, right into his space. She gets maybe two inches away from him, chest straining in her blouse, then pushes his bangs up with one surprisingly cold hand. She gets even closer to his face, looking him right in the eyes with an expression of curiosity and interest. Ayato tries not to tense up.

"Th-Thanks..." Yeah, Ayato's no blushing virgin, but this is a *lot* faster than any girl has ever come onto him before. He's never had a girl so ready to get in his space. "It only makes sense that Yours Truly is as handsome as it gets!" He gives her a self-satisfied smirk. The praise is pretty nice.

"Mmm, yeah~ You are handsome!" Yurine coos.

She wiggles and scoots even closer-- close enough that her thigh is pressing right up against his. From this distance, Ayato can smell every note of her perfume, see the shine of her lipstick, and... notice that when she smiles, her teeth are weirdly sharp. Her canines are weirdly pointed.

Come to think of it, how did she get into the room without him noticing? She was in front of him before he even heard footsteps.

"Can I kiss you?" Yurine asks, her eyes lidded.

Ayato's brain shorts out for a second.

"Go for it."

Yurine gets two cold fingers under his chin. She tilts his face up to meet hers, leans in, and tips her head into a kiss.

Her lips are cold. Ayato feels her red lipstick smear against his own lips. She moves her mouth like she wants to devour him-- her cold tongue dragging against his, licking at his lips. The kiss is as wet and passionate as it gets, like something out of a movie instead of the half-hearted pecks he's had before. When he momentarily pulls back to breathe, a thin trail of saliva hangs between their mouths. He's panting like he's run a marathon.

She's on top of him again in an instant. This time, Yurine pushes him back to the couch so that she's on top of him, her tits pressing appealingly against his chest. This time, she's rougher. She kisses him so hard that Ayato feels himself go breathless. His hands go to her back almost nervously. He dares to dig his fingers into the back of her jacket.

It's at that point that Yurine *bites.* And it's not a love nip. Ayato feels his skin break, feels blood gush out between them. He yelps sharply-- tries to pull away, but she's got him pinned way, way too well.

"What the *fuck!?"* he demands as soon as he can get away to breathe, his voice sounding desperate even to himself. "What was that for?"

"Mmm, you taste good," Yurine *moans.* She licks her lips. Ayato's blood is dripping down her chin. There's something way too weird about this. "Why wouldn't I bite you? With what I am, a sweet boy like you is just irresistible! I could barely help myself..."

Ayato freezes. With *what* she is? What's that supposed to mean? He wants to hope that it's just some stupid joke or just a weird way of phrasing things, but the more he thinks about it there's way too much wrong with this whole situation. There's way too much that's making his insides run cold.

"Oh yeah," Yurine gasps, "you don't know yet! Well, I'll explain it really simple for your little human head. I'm a vampire. The bitey kind."

As she giggles, Ayato feels his throat go tight. That *can't* be real. There's no such thing as vampires, right? It doesn't make sense. And yet, he's stuck in a dark, creepy-ass house with a girl who appeared out of nowhere and didn't object to him being in her bedroom. A girl who climbed on top of him, kissed him, and bit his lip open just to the taste the blood. A girl with teeth that Ayato is quickly realizing are *fangs.*

"What the fuck!?" he shouts, trying to shove Yurine off of him. All he succeeds in doing is overbalancing from the couch and hitting the floor. "V-Vampires aren't *real.* What are you saying, you crazy bitch!? Get real!"

"Eh? But I'm right here. And I'm a vampire, see?" Yurine opens her mouth and points to her fangs. "I even bit you. But if you don't believe me... I guess I'll just have to do it again! The right way, this time~"

Ayato wheezes out a whine that sounds a little too frantic. He's on his feet as quickly as possible, stumbling over to the door. Trying the handle gets him nowhere. It's locked. He

slams against the door a couple of times to the same result. By now, he's hyperventilating. Even though he doesn't want to believe it, this is suddenly seeming way too real.

"Come on, silly, you're not going to get away. You don't think I'd have powers and stuff?" Yurine giggles again, still disturbingly innocent. "And anyway, if you go out there smelling like blood, my friends will find you. And let me tell you, they can be a loo~ot meaner than little old me."

"Fuck you!" Ayato yelps. "Get away from me!"

Before he can do anything to struggle, his wrists are pinned above his head with just one of Yurine's hands. At this angle, he's quickly realizing that she's taller than him by a good couple of inches-- and built twice as thick. She's *strong.* No matter how much he fights her grip, she doesn't budge even an inch. Instead, Yurine just keeps smiling, looking at him like she doesn't care a bit about his terror. He's helpless. He's truly *helpless.*

Yurine leans in. She inhales deeply as if taking in his scent. She presses a soft kiss to the place where his neck and shoulder meet, smiling against his skin. Ayato feels like his heart is about to beat out of his chest.

Then, she sinks her fangs into him.

Ayato lets out a choked-off scream. He jerks his wrists against her grip uselessly. It hurts way, way too much. The pain is radiating out from the place where her teeth are embedded in his skin and hurting, hurting *everywhere.* He can't hold back the noises any better than he can stay still.

"Le-- L-Let go--!" he shrieks. It's undignified and pathetic, but there's nothing he can do to stop himself from writhing in her grasp.

The bite feels like it goes on forever. By the time Yurine finally pulls her teeth out of him, Ayato thinks he might be about to collapse from the combination of pain and blood loss. He hurts everywhere. It's only her hands still pinning his to the wall that's keeping him upright. There's blood dripping down his shoulder, his chest. He can barely see straight.

"There we go! Does that prove it?" Yurine asks innocently, then presses a little kiss to the place where she bit. "You taste so nice~"

Ayato just whines. How's he supposed to respond to that? He's here with some literal *monster* set on who-knows-what, and she's expecting him to do anything but panic? This is sick. It's way, way too cruel.

"No response, hm? That's okay. We can still have *lots* more fun together while we wait for everyone else..."

Yurine hums those words in a way that leaves nothing up for interpretation. She's not done with him yet. Ayato doesn't know exactly what's going to happen to him, but he feels dangerously close to tears. This is pathetic. *He's* pathetic, but what else is he supposed to do?

He’s trapped.

. . .

Generally speaking, Kanato likes places that other people deem to be creepy. The dark has always fascinated him. Being alone is better than being in the company of loud-mouthed idiots who never understand.

However, the situation that Kanato’s in now is a bit much-- even for him. The mansion is a shade of ominous that even *Kanato* doesn’t know what to do with. There’s a sharp, strange smell in the air. Everything is dark. And dusty. And it all looks barely lived-in. It makes sense that this would be too much house for even a family, but Kanato still feels like someone should have performed better upkeep when it comes to the endless dust.

The rain outside is still beating against the windows. What was once simple rainfall has progressed to a thunderstorm of uncomfortable proportions. The sound echoes off the glass, spreading inside the empty halls of the mansion in an unnerving pitter-patter of sound.

Kanato clutches Teddy a little bit closer to his chest. He doesn’t like being alone here. He’d followed Laito for a while, trailing after his brother because he didn’t quite know what else to do. At some point, he’d decided that going it on his own was a better idea. Now, Kanato is starting to regret that choice. Something about this place makes him not want to be alone. Even if the other option is his *brothers,* it still seems better than wandering the silent halls and lights-off rooms by himself.

Sniffling, Kanato adjusts his grip on Teddy. He feels close to tears... he probably would be crying already if there was anyone to hear.

He doesn’t leave the ground floor. As confusing as this place is, he *might* be able to remember his way around if he limits things to just one floor. There are two or three floors to the place in total.

He’d get lost for sure if he wandered around aimlessly.

The whole place is cold. His soft, thin cardigan isn’t doing much good. Kanato shivers. He’s starting to feel like he can hear whispers in the distance, which is never a good thing. When that starts up, it means that his head is rebelling-- usually a side-effect of being alone for too long.

Or being too stressed, which is probably what it is in this case. Getting shipped off from his home to this place is terrifying. Even if Kanato hated his home and everyone in it, being uprooted from everything familiar gives him a sort of anxiety than he never knew was possible. It also proves that no one in that house ever wanted him, which is a fact that Kanato’s suspected for a while, but never quite confirmed. None of them really cared.

He should be used to that sort of thing by now.

Whatever the case, he needs to find someone. The sooner they track down whatever fools own this place but didn’t bother to answer the door, the sooner he can be done with it. He

hates this already. Whoever these people are, Kanato already has no interest in giving them any of his time.

It’s at that point that Kanato turns a corner right into a large kitchen-- with more cupboards than he’s ever seen in one place.

Kanato blinks. This... is lucky.

Reasonably speaking, he *should* be allowed to eat something. He’s a guest here, after all, and anyway, a kitchen this big is sure to have plenty of sweets to choose from. For once, something today is going right.

With a little smirk, Kanato enters the kitchen. He looks around a couple of times, hoping that no one is watching. The last thing he wants is to get lectured for going for his hosts’ food without permission. Reiji would surely throw a fit if he knew... but if no one knows, then it’ll be just fine.

Kanato opens the downright huge refrigerator first. To little surprise, there are all sorts of food inside. He sees a black forest cake in a glass tin, a few cups of what looks like lemon pudding, on the counter nearby, a plastic container filled with an impressive assortment of cookies, and more. He’s gotten lucky, Kanato thinks. With most of this, the people living here won’t even notice if he takes some samples for himself.

With a devious little smirk, he reaches for one of the puddings...

“What do you think you’re doing?”

A voice comes from *right behind him.* Kanato lets out a little yelp, losing his grip on the pudding. It hits the floor and splatters-- against the tile, his ankles, and presumably, the person behind him.

When Kanato turns around, it’s to someone quite a bit shorter than him. The person looks maybe about twelve, with a downright tiny build, and it’s difficult to tell if they’re male or female. The kid has a cute face and a bobbed haircut that seems to suit it, but the school uniform they’re wearing is male. Either way, their orange eyes are narrowed in an expression of distrust. Their little hands are clenched by their sides tensely.

“Who are you?” he demands, holding onto Teddy tightly.

“I should be asking *you* that!” they squawk, their voice rising to an even higher pitch. “You’re the stranger wandering around in my house, you know--! What are you doing here? And why are you in our fridge?”

Kanato glares. Of all the people he could have run into, the bratty kid of the owner of the place-- as this person most likely is-- is probably the worst. Already, his temper is running short. With his snack interrupted and pudding splattered on his shoes, Kanato isn’t feeling friendly.

“I’m Sakamaki Kanato,” he informs them. “You know, one of the guests that your family was supposed to be welcoming today.”

The kid glares right back.

“How do I know that’s the truth? Shinoa said that we were having guests soon, but you could be lying to me! I can’t tell that you’re one of the ones who’s supposed to be here. You’re just trying to trick me!”

Kanato feels something near his eye twitch. This is getting irritating, and he hasn’t even been talking to the kid for five minutes.

“Because who else would I be? My brothers are here too, so please ask one of them if you’re so concerned. Or one of your family members, perhaps. I imagine that some of them have met by now.” Kanato keeps his words polite... even though his tone isn’t exactly that. He feels close to snapping at this stupid kid, even though he knows that Reiji would skin him for it if he did. At this point, it might just be worth it.

“Mmmm...” the kid growls. “I *guess* I’ll believe you... but if you do anything bad, I’ll punish you! You’d better remember that.”

How intimidating, Kanato thinks, coming from someone who barely goes past his shoulders. He’s willing to bet that if he yelled at the brat, they’d shut right up and have to hold back tears. This kid seems like the type who’s easily spooked. He could bully them into compliance with ease.

“I’ll keep it in mind,” Kanato deadpans. “Now, since I’ve already introduced myself, how about you do the same? Or did your parents not teach you how a child is supposed to speak to new people?”

“I’m not a child!” they immediately protest.

“Oh? Do tell, then. How old are you? Eight? Ten, if I guess generously?” Kanato smirks a bit. This is too easy.

“I’m fourteen! My name is Kurushima Mizuki, and I’m *fourteen.*”

Kanato blinks. That’s... older than he expected. And if the name is anything to go by, she’s female. From the look of things, she’s not lying... but Kanato supposes that her size is something just as easy to toy with her over. Mizuki *is* cute in her own way. Seeing her pushed to frustrated tears will be entertaining, even if Reiji does lecture him later.

“Really, now? You don’t seem that old at all.” He smiles *innocently.*

“You have no idea how old I am...” Mizuki mutters in response. “You shouldn’t open your mouth when you have no idea what you’re saying. Letting whatever you want slip out just makes you sound like a dummy!”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Kanato replies, his voice dripping with sarcasm. “Now, you’d better get to cleaning up the mess that you made when you startled me, ne? I imagine that your

parents wouldn’t be happy to see pudding all over the floor because you decided to sneak up on me.”

Mizuki goes quiet. She gives Kanato a glare that somehow feels a little too dark. Kanato has a moment of pause before he pushes the feeling aside. There’s nothing to worry about. She’s a literal *child.* Even if he does anger her, Mizuki doesn’t pose the slightest bit of a threat to him. And yet, looking at her, Kanato is getting the sudden feeling that something is off. The glint in her eyes doesn’t seem quite normal. He can’t quite place it...

Come to think of it, how did she sneak up on him so well?

“Well, go on! I’m going to have some sweets, and you can clean up.” Kanato pushes the feeling aside. He waves a hand dismissively at Mizuki, then turns to reach back to the fridge for a different pudding cup.

A tiny, frigid hand catches his wrist.

Kanato glances down at Mizuki. She’s holding onto him with one hand, glaring furiously. He tries to yank his hand away. It doesn’t budge.

“You’re a bad kid, aren’t you?” Mizuki asks, her voice just as cold as her grip. “You’ve got a nasty attitude, and you’re *naughty.* You keep talking about my parents, but didn’t yours ever teach you anything, either? I’m sick of being talked down to by you. Humans don’t get to push me around. You’re a bad boy, and I’m going to punish you!”

She-- She can’t be serious. Does this puny girl think that she’s going to punish him? Kanato feels his temper hit the boiling point. He grits his teeth, yanks at her grip once again, and *yells*--

“Shut up! A brat like you can’t tell me what to do! Keep your mouth shut and do what little girls are supposed to. And let go of me immediately!”

Wait. Kanato realizes too late that she called him a *human.*

The next thing Kanato knows, Mizuki gets a grip on his shirt with her other hand. Between that and the hold on his wrist, she wrestles him to the ground with more ease than Kanato can believe. He’s paralyzed with shock as he hits the floor, his face landing in the pudding seconds before he’s rolled onto his back with a rough, violent grip. Teddy flies out of his hands, skidding along the floor and out of Kanato’s field of vision.

She’s *strong.* He doesn’t even have time to lash out again before she’s straddling his waist.

“Wh-What--?”

“I said, humans don’t get to talk back.”

Mizuki’s body is colder than a doll. Her grip is so strong that it might as well be iron. In the dim light of the kitchen, her eyes seem to be almost glowing. Her expression isn’t one that a child her age should be capable of.

Kanato is hit with a wave of terror. This isn't *normal.* There's something very, very wrong. Between the dark, creepy mansion, Mizuki's mysterious appearance, and *this--!* Kanato likes a very different kind of horror than Kino does, but even he knows when something is starting to turn into a scene straight from one of his nightmares.

"Wh-What are you--?" His voice cracks at the same moment that tears spill over. A last defense against what he's now realizing is *danger.*

"I'm a vampire. And you're my prey. So you're the one who needs to shut up and remember what his place is." Mizuki's voice drops to a tone that makes Kanato's stomach lurch. He doesn't want to believe it, but this whole situation is quickly spiraling into something that can't be denied.

Mizuki leans forward, grabbing his wrists and pinning them to either side of his head. Kanato is too terror-stricken to fight her.

"I'm going to bite you now," she tells him. "And if you fight me, I'll make it hurt. Even you know how to be a good kid, right? I'm not playing anymore, so if you're bad, I'll get mean."

Kanato's breath catches on a hiccup of a sob. He can barely *breathe.* This close, he can feel her chilled breath against his neck. Mizuki tucks her face against the exposed skin of his throat. He feels the sharp tips of fangs prickle against his skin-- a threat of what's coming.

"N-No--!" he squeals. "D-Don't bi-- bite me, p-please! It'll hurt-- I d-don't want it--!" At the very end, his voice breaks on a terrified whimper. He's gone from the one in control to the one pinned underneath the little monster fast enough that his head is spinning, and now Kanato knows that he's going to be hurt. His heart thuds in his chest rabbit-fast. His breathing comes out in pained wheezes. He's so, so scared. This can't be real--!

Mizuki sinks her teeth into his neck.

The instant, overwhelming pain draws a shriek out of Kanato's throat. He struggles helplessly against the hold she has on him, but Mizuki's grip doesn't falter. He can't so much as lift his wrists off of the ground.

Kanato can feel himself being drained. His blood flows into her mouth in a hot, steady stream. Mizuki makes a satisfied noise against his skin, adjusting her bite just to get a better angle. This isn't like the movies, where a vampire sinks in two neat little teeth. No-- Mizuki is *rough.* Despite her size, she's brutal. It feels like she's trying to chew a hole in his neck.

He lies there, whimpering and straining futilely against her hold. The moment seems to stretch on forever, all pain and fear and heat dribbling down his skin. It's like torture. It *is* torture. There's no getting out of this. Kanato's heels kick helplessly against the tile. Tears spill from his eyes. He's pinned like a butterfly on a corkboard, and there's nothing he can do escape.

Everything goes blurry and soft around the edges. some combination of blood loss and terror, probably. Kanato chokes around a hysterical laugh as his vision slowly goes black.

. . .

Subaru wanders the mansion for longer than he can keep track of. There really doesn't seem to be anyone home. The whole place is about as creepy as it gets. Between the dim, spooky lighting, the vicious rainstorm pounding down outside, and the layer of dust over everything that makes the whole house look the farthest thing from lived-in, Subaru is starting to get a very bad feeling about every part of this. He's getting *creeped out.*

Walking around aimlessly is just as boring as it is unnerving. Subaru normally has no problems with either dark places or being on his own, and yet... he's catching himself wishing that *someone* was around more times than he'd like to admit. Even if that 'someone' was one of his brothers.

But he has to find the owners of the place. Or at least, one of them does. The people have to be here somewhere, even as impossible as that's starting to seem. Unless they all suddenly went on vacation, they're in the house. And that means that Subaru won't be wandering forever. Even once it feels like hours have passed of wandering, he reminds himself of that fact.

For a while, Subaru just storms through the halls, listening for any sign of life. But when that gets him nowhere, Subaru starts opening doors. Of course, because life is cruel, he finds absolutely nothing of any use.

And then, he hits a dead end.

Where Subaru ends up is facing a staircase leading down. It's in a far, dark hallway where the lights seem even dimmer than before, and *something* in the air is giving Subaru the fucking creeps. The staircase is wide, bare, and made of wood, leading to a turn that cuts off his view.

No fucking way, Subaru thinks. He's not stupid enough to go exploring down the first creepy staircase he finds. Who knows what kind of basement a house like this is going to have. Subaru isn't eager to find out.

Just looking at those stairs is giving him a bad feeling. Staring for too long leaves a shiver running down his spine. Something is *wrong.*

This is where he's wound up, Subaru realizes. He's not going home. This creepy house is where all seven of them are stuck because apparently they pissed their father off enough to make him send them away for good. He's not seeing *her* again-- at least not anytime soon.

Subaru tenses, feeling the rage that he's so, so used to boiling up under his skin. The thoughts keep swarming, pressing, nudging at his mind in all of the worst ways. He's frustrated and teetering on furious, and the more he tries to control it, the more overwhelming it all feels. Even though he knows that breaking shit in someone else's house is stupid, Subaru swings a fist at the nearest wall before he can rein himself in.

Of course, his fist goes right through the plaster.

That earns a wince. Normally, Reiji could deal with it when this kind of thing happens, but this isn't their house. He might have just fucked up.

Subaru stares at the hole he made for a moment. His temper almost immediately simmers down. That's... going to get him in trouble. Maybe he can just get moving and pretend like it wasn't him if anyone asks--

"My master asks what you've done to our wall."

A quiet voice nearly gives Subaru a heart-attack. He flinches with a half-shouted curse, turning around instantly to face the source of it. With everything Kino had said about this place being straight out of a horror movie, having someone appear out of nowhere *behind him* is the farthest thing from good for his nerves. He's half-ready to land another hit, but--

The person he comes to face is a little girl. She's *tiny,* wearing an oversized, ill-fitting school uniform, and there seems to be enough of her hip-length pastel blue hair to swallow the rest of her whole. She's also holding a creepy-looking stuffed donkey. Or more accurately, clinging to it with the same fondness that Subaru is used to seeing from Kanato alone. Her lidded blue eyes are looking at Subaru with such open distrust and disfavor that it's hard for even him not to wince under the weight of it.

"Uh, I... What?" Subaru says pathetically. The way she's *staring* at him is making it hard to think properly, let alone get words out right.

"Do you not listen?" the girl says sharply... or more accurately, she makes the donkey say it. It's clearly her voice, but it seems to be coming from the toy. "You were asked what you've done to our wall!"

"You can fix it," Subaru huffs. "'s not hard... and anyway, why didn't you answer the door when we got here? We wouldn't have had to wander around this creepy-ass mansion if you people had let us in!" As he says it, Subaru knows he's being harsh-- but he's tense and keyed-up from a long, stressful day, and holding his temper back feels impossible.

Of course, the little girl *flinches* at the volume of his voice, which makes Subaru feel awful in ways he didn't know were possible.

"So you're one of our expected guests?"

"Yeah, I fuckin' am."

"How many of you are there? Your family is with you, correct?" the donkey asks, held in front of the girl's mouth so he can't even see it move. Having to talk to a stuffed animal feels beyond stupid.

"There are seven of us. It's me and my stupid brothers. I'm Sakamaki Subaru, and the rest of us are all Sakamaki Tougou's kids. You know that much, right? Or you can at least tell me what *your* name is?" Subaru's temper is slowly ebbing. Now that he's found one of the people here, he should be shown to his room soon enough. And then, he can shut himself in there and ignore all of the people in this stupid house-- family included.

“My master’s name is Ise Kuroe,” the donkey informs him. “And I am Baron. You’d do well to remember it... and keep your attitude in check.”

Subaru feels a vein twitch somewhere near his eye. Being talked down to by a girl who barely goes up to his shoulder is already getting on his nerves. Even worse is how much she reminds him of one of his more annoying brothers. Kanato’s female edition really is a pain.

“What’s a little girl like you doing telling me to keep my attitude in check?” he growls. “Aren’t you just a kid? We might be stuck here with you and your family, but don’t think that means I’m just gonna bend down and do whatever you tell me to!” Subaru *knows* that taking such a harsh tone probably isn’t smart, but fuck it; he’s pissed off and it’s impossible to stop himself from taking it out on whoever’s around. He feels sort of guilty about it being a little girl, but she *is* the one not backing off.

Kuroe cowers. As in, she gives a full-body flinch, her blue eyes widen, and she holds the donkey up almost protectively in front of her. The pang of self-hatred that that sight rises in Subaru just serves to make him angrier. He just wants to *leave,* but he can’t do that until this girl shows him to his room. He’s stuck here until he can get something out of her.

“M-My master--” she starts again, but Subaru cuts her off.

“Shut up! I don’t want to hear that stupid toy talking to me!” With a snarl, Subaru grabs the donkey and rips it out of Kuroe’s hands, then throws it roughly to the side. He’s way too sick of dealing with this.

Kuroe lets out a miserable squeak. Her hands grab at the air in the direction of her toy. She stares at its crumpled form for a moment, then...

“Y-You...” she stutters, her voice a pitiful whisper now that she’s not talking through her toy. “C-Cruel... You’re cruel...”

Subaru twitches at the words. A part of him is well-aware that he’s being unnecessarily mean to a *little girl* for no reason other than that he’s pissed off, but Subaru has also always been very bad at self-control, and at this point, he doesn’t know if he can make himself stop. Looking at her frightened, pained expression, though, really does make him hate himself. For fuck’s sake, she looks like she’s about to *cry.*

“Just quit whining and tell me where to go to get away from this!” Subaru’s voice rises in volume even more. The sooner he gets this over with, the better. She’ll be rid of him soon enough.

But instead of cowering again, Kuroe’s eyes narrow. She looks right at him with an intensity that’s way too out of place for her behavior so far.

The room suddenly feels much, much colder.

“How dare you...” she mumbles, but instead of a frightened whisper, her voice is low and frigid. “We let you into our home... and all you do is treat me so cruelly... You’re bad... Bad...

Bad..." The muttering plummets from weird to creepy as fuck in seconds. Subaru doesn't know what the chill in the air is, or why it suddenly seems *darker* where he stands, but--

"T-Tell me where my room is and I'll leave you the fuck alone!" Subaru shouts, hating the way his voice trembles. She's a *little girl.* What is he afraid of? "I don't wanna be here any more than you want me to be!"

"Shut up..."

The next thing Subaru knows, Kuroe is in front of him, mere inches away. One of her little hands goes to his hair-- and she *forces* him down to her level with a strength that shouldn't be possible from someone so small and thin. Subaru tries to grab her arm, tries to shove her off of him, but his hand is caught in a grip that might as well be iron for how much it budges.

"Th-The fuck--!?" he squawks, but before he can struggle any more, Subaru is forced to the ground.

When he looks up, Kuroe's eyes are cold enough to make a shiver run down Subaru's spine. On top of that, they're slit-pupiled and appear to be *glowing.* A spike of panic runs through him. This isn't normal. The chill in the room, her inhuman strength, the unnatural light in her eyes, and now--

The sight of fangs in her mouth.

"What *are* you--?"

"Vampire..." Kuroe says in a quiet, chilling tone. "And you're a weak, fragile human... you're helpless... *helpless...*" Without the donkey in her hands, her voice is little more than a whisper, but every word is ice-cold.

Subaru's heels skid on the hardwood. He needs to get up and get out of here. This can't be real. *Vampires* aren't real, but even so, there's far too much wrong here for Subaru not to start to believe it.

But before he can even get to his feet, Kuroe drops to her knees beside him. She reaches for him. Subaru swings a messy punch. Instead of making contact, Kuroe vanishes from thin air, appearing behind him without so much as a whisper of sound. Subaru heaves a wheezing breath. This is impossible, he thinks, even as Kuroe wraps her arms around his neck from behind and holds on tight. Her body is as cold as a corpse.

"G-Get off of me--!" he shouts, grabbing at wrists that don't move an inch. "Fuck, I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Just get away from me, y-you psycho--"

"Bad children need to be punished," Kuroe breathes against his ear. "Cruel people should suffer just as they hurt others. You're my prey... so I'm going to make you hurt..."

Subaru feels her cold lips against his neck, the tickle of her breath. For a moment, time seems to stand still. But just as quickly, icy fangs plunge into his neck with sharp, sudden pain. It hurts more than breaking his knuckles or a thrown glass plate shattering against his forehead.

Subaru is pinned from behind, held in place, and he can't find space between the agony to *breathe*. This tiny girl is restraining him like he's as weak as an infant, and-- Subaru suddenly can't find the strength to even struggle.

His own blood runs down his throat, into and over the dip of his collarbone. Subaru heaves one aching, shuddering breath after another. It feels like he's being strangled by the twin points of pain in his skin. He can hear himself whimpering, but the sounds feel distant and far away.

It seems to go on forever. Kuroe is far from gentle. She tears at his throat like she's trying to rip a few pieces out. And then, finally, she's pulling away. The feeling of her fangs sliding loose hurts worse than anything.

"F-Fuck--" Subaru chokes, his voice a trembling whine. "I-- G-Get off of me--!" Even now, he can't just lie down and take it.

"My master will be done with you when she deems fit."

The voice isn't Kuroe's.

When Subaru's gaze flickers over to the source, he sees the donkey *standing*, balanced perfectly in place where it had been a crumpled heap just moments ago. A bolt of terror like nothing else surges through him.

"Baron is right..." Kuroe mumbles. "You don't get to choose when I'm through with you. You've been very cruel to us... so I can't let you go just yet. You'll have to learn the hard way how to behave in this house..." Her frigid tongue laps at the wound she's left behind. Her tiny hands clutch at Subaru's shirt in a mockery of childlike neediness.

This has to be a nightmare, Subaru thinks as her fangs sink into him once again. He's dreaming. He'll wake up and none of this will be real. Not this mansion, not vampires, not a creepy little girl dead-set on hurting him.

But Subaru knows that that's not the case. Reality is a cold, painful thing that hurts more than even Kuroe's fangs when it settles into his gut. He's not escaping. He's not waking up. He's not going home ever again. Hyperventilating makes the room spin. Subaru's breathing catches, goes thin, and then--

The last thing he registers is the donkey's button eyes staring emptily. Right. At. Him.

. . .

It doesn't take Reiji long to realize that he *despises* this mansion. At first, it had looked respectable. Large, impressive, and obviously owned by the well-off. However, upon exploring inside of it, all Reiji can conclude is that no one had cleaned properly in longer than he wants to imagine.

And Reiji is well-used to being a maid. When it comes to his brothers, that's most often the role he fills. He cooks, he cleans, he makes sure that everyone wakes up on time for school,

and that they do their homework. He feels like the mother of the family more often than the second son. And he *detests* that feeling more than anything. All he can do is hope that this family has the decency not to resign him to that fate even here.

But... that raises a distinct question as to where ‘here’ is. And a question as to where the people who own the massive mansion are.

There are far more questions than answers, and because of that, Reiji can’t help but feel on edge. He has no idea where his father sent him-- sent all of them--, and that’s something that doesn’t bode well. Reiji has always thought that he’s been *good enough.* He’s the good son. The one who gets good grades. The one who always gives his all to reflect well upon his father.

Apparently, it wasn’t good enough.

Now, he’s stuck in some disturbing mansion with all six of his brothers and no way to leave. He doesn’t know a single person who lives here, and that means that he has no idea what to expect from it all.

Reiji keeps wandering. He thinks he’s doing a pretty good job of keeping track of where he is, but in the confusing halls of this mansion, it’s difficult to say for sure. Everything looks alike. There’s the same layer of dust in every room he finds, and it seems like not a soul is home.

It’s getting on his nerves. *Surely,* his father called ahead and made sure that their hosts were aware of their arrival. These people are either ignoring them or purely ignorant that they had guests, in the first place, and neither is a thought that Reiji particularly enjoys. He doesn’t like the thought of surprisingly the owners of this place with the sudden arrival of seven young men who truly have nowhere else to go now.

And on top of that, Reiji is starting to feel a little more nervous than he wants to. There’s an atmosphere in this place that’s making him deeply uncomfortable. There’s something unsettling about this place.

Reiji forces those thoughts down and keeps walking. If he’s the first one to find someone, maybe he can at least make a good impression.

Eventually, Reiji feels like he’s explored most of whatever floor he’s on and found nothing. It’s a frustrating feeling to have. He’s going to have to search the next floor at this rate-- and he doesn’t even know if he’s been going in circles this whole time. There’s too much unknown. There’s too much that he can’t make sense of. He *hates* every moment of this.

And then, he turns a sharp corner and comes face to face with something that he never expected to see.

“Oh, hello there.”

It’s a young woman, probably about his age. Her skin is tanned, her hair is bleached, and she’s wearing a mockery of a school uniform that consists of a shamelessly short skirt, a cut-

off hoodie that shows most of her midriff, and knee-high white combat boots. She's showing more skin than anyone in uniform ever should. And... even Reiji is having trouble looking away from just how much cleavage she has showing.

For a moment, he stands frozen. This girl looks like everything he *hates*, but... there's no denying that she's one of the people who live here. Of all of the people he could have run into, it had to be *this*.

"What, not gonna answer me?" the girl trills, taking a step closer. She's tall for a woman, and her heels aren't helping that matter.

"My apologies," Reiji says. "I was simply caught off guard by running into someone so suddenly." More like he was stunned by encountering someone dressed like a bad caricature from the kind of manga Ayato enjoys.

"Of course," the girl laughs. Her tone is sharp, mocking, and somehow, not amused at all. "Sure, sure. I believe that. And I also believe that you weren't staring at my tits. So, are you one of those boys who's supposed to be living with us now, or just some random trespasser?"

"You were aware that we were arriving today?"

"Yeah, totally. I thought that someone else would handle greetings and pleasantries, though, so I just stayed out of it. I don't really give a fuck about making sure everyone's welcomed and comfy, y'know?"

Reiji can't help but bristle. After the sudden uprooting he's had-- and the three-hour car trip on top of that--, it feels like the least his new hosts could do would be to welcome him properly. Perhaps some of the others may have cared, but this girl's flippant attitude is already getting on his nerves in the worst of ways. Just looking at her, Reiji can tell that she's the kind of person that he'd *never* be able to tolerate well.

"I... I see," he manages. It's a struggle not to snap at her the way he would his brothers. "I can't say that I am entirely pleased with this development, but at least it will be sorted out now." He sighs. "My brothers are wandering around these halls as we speak. We'll need to find everyone and discuss the pressing matter of where we are to be staying."

It's easy to launch into the mindset of sorting out problems and making sense of things. Now that he's found at least one person here, even if she happens to be like *this*, there's at least something that can be done. He'll take control of this mess yet, Reiji thinks. He won't allow this situation to spiral any more than it already has. He's managed the near-impossible task of keeping his brothers in line for years now; dealing with it for one more night will be possible. He just has to get this girl to cooperate...

"Oi, oi, since when do you give *me* orders?" the girl smirks. "I didn't say I wanted to help you and you bros get settled."

"You are our host," Reiji counters, gritting his teeth. "It's only polite to at least make sure we've been shown to our rooms. If you wish to find someone else to do so, that would be

acceptable, but it would be inappropriate to leave me to figure your household out for myself."

"Polite, huh? You haven't even asked my name yet."

Reiji stiffens at that realization. It *has* been a stressful day, but this girl clearly isn't going to take that as any kind of excuse. She seems to be dead-set on making this as difficult as it possibly can be.

"...an error on my part," Reiji says in as polite a tone as he can manage, even though he feels more like scolding her for every taunting word that leaves her mouth. "Allow me to ask now. I am Sakamaki Reiji, the second son of Sakamaki Tougou's household. What may I address you as?"

"Yaegashi Tsukasa. See, that wasn't so hard."

The girl, Tsukasa, laughs in a way that makes a vein twitch near Reiji's eye. Oh, he doesn't like this. This is the exact kind of person he can't stand.

"Yes... now, the matter of our rooms?" Reiji presses. The sooner he can get into contact with a more responsible member of her family, the better. Dealing with Tsukasa is already starting to give him a headache.

"Yeah, yeah, we'll get to that soon. I'm more concerned with what kind of man you are, y'know? I want to... really get to know you." Tsukasa cracks a cocky grin, pulling a lollipop out of her pocket and unwrapping it with a quick, practiced motion. Despite her words sounding flirtatious, her tone is pure mockery. She sticks the lemon-yellow candy in her mouth and swirls her tongue around it-- disturbing sexual for something so simple.

"There will not be any 'getting to it soon'!" Reiji snaps, finally past the point of patience. "This is a simple request. If you can't accomplish even something so basic, I will find someone who *can.*"

Reiji, in more of a huff than he wants to admit, takes a step back. He's had enough of dealing with this. He didn't spend all day crammed in a limousine with his brothers just to have more arguments on top of that. Staying here already seems like a nightmare, but--

Tsukasa grabs his wrist with a grip more firm than it should be.

"Hold on there... I didn't say you could leave," Tsukasa drawls, her free hand still gripping the stick of her lollipop.

Reiji eyes her small, tanned hand for a moment, debating whether or not he should try to pull away. It would be terribly rude to be rough with a woman, especially his host, but his patience really is running out.

"Please, excuse me," he says at last and tries to yank his hand away.

Tsukasa's grip doesn't budge. Her fingers are *cold.*

As in, Reiji can barely move his hand an inch. Her fingers are as strong as steel, and it barely seems like she's exerting any effort at all. Reiji's gaze flickers up, meeting Tuskasa's sharp yellow eyes. She looks... amused.

"That's not gonna work, stupid. I don't want you to leave, so you're not going anywhere. If you struggle... I'll just make it hard on you." She sounds entirely unconcerned, like Reiji's frustration, annoyance, and exhaustion mean absolutely nothing. The way she's looking at him resembles a child with a magnifying glass standing above an ant, and Reiji-- Reiji is starting to get the feeling that something here is *wrong.*

"Wh-What are you--?"

"Oh, give it a rest. I'm bored with this game. I wanna do something more fun, so c'mon... scream for me."

With those few words, the situation plummets from *off* to downright unnatural. People don't *say* things like that. There's something so wrong that Reiji could swear the atmosphere itself is going dark. Kino's comment about the mansion being straight out of a horror movie flashes through Reiji's head with a weight and accuracy that he doesn't like one bit.

Tsukasa's grin hasn't changed, but something feels different. Looking into her eyes is making Reiji feel unnerved in a way that he didn't know was possible. He's abruptly overcome by the urge to *run.*

"Th-This is getting ridiculous," he manages in a tone of voice that sounds way too shaky, even to his own ears. "Release me."

"Wow, you really are stupid. Still haven't figured it out yet? Here, I'll give you a hint. Have a good look at my mouth." Tsukasa pulls the lollipop out of her mouth and opens her jaw wide. For a moment, Reiji has no idea what he's looking for, until he realizes... fangs. Her canines are *fangs.*

"You--"

"There we go!" Tsukasa laughs. "Now you're getting it. It took way too long for someone who's trying to act so smart, but at least it finally clicked. I'm not *human*, you get it, right? How else could I be so strong? Why else is my hand so cold? You're thinking all of this stuff, so I'm giving you the answers. I'm a vampire and you're my prey. Figure out what happens next."

Reiji's heart feels like it catches in his throat. This *can't* be real. This stupid, awful girl is saying things that don't make any sense and expecting him to believe them. There's no such thing as vampires. Any sensible person knows that. It's impossible for her to be something that doesn't exist. Reiji takes a staggering step back. Tsukasa finally lets go of his wrist. There are a thousand thoughts running through Reiji's head, and every one of them winds up doubling back to the singular need to *escape.*

Before Reiji can make himself move, though, Tsukasa slams him back into the wall behind him with enough force that he feels something in his chest *crack.* The breath is knocked out

of him all at once.

He can't even scream.

"You humans are all so fucking *stupid*," Tsukasa cackles. "You don't pay attention to what's in front of you until it's way too late. You're all easy prey, and you know what? You deserve to be my entertainment. I won't go easy on you, so get ready to know what pain feels like."

She says it all with a smirk on her face that makes Reiji's blood run cold. Colder yet is the feel of her breath against his throat.

Reiji wants to beg her to stop. Forget pride, forget propriety. Pleading for his life seems like the only option right now, but he can barely fucking *breathe.* He can't get the words out to say a thing.

The sharp nip of Tsukasa's fangs meets his neck. Her body is as cold as a corpse this close. She gets one hand on his shoulder, puts enough pressure behind it that Reiji can't so much as wriggle, and tips her head so that the bleached fluff of her hair brushes teasingly against the line of Reiji's jaw. In her free hand, her lollipop drops to the floor.

"Hold still, four eyes," she says mockingly. "Or don't. I don't really care. If you fight me, I'm just going to make it hurt more, so make whatever choice will make you feel good about yourself when this is over."

Her fangs sink into his skin, and Reiji's world turns to pain.

. . .

Kino starts out with the hope that this is going to be just fine. Just. Fine. He's been uprooted before. He's been pulled right out of where he was used to living and shoved into a house with six brothers that he never knew existed until literally days before. Being moved to a new house isn't going to kill him. He's survived much, much worse than living somewhere strange.

But at the same time, this whole house is creepy. Like, so creepy that it reminds Kino of something straight out of a freaking *horror movie.* He didn't make that comment for no reason. He could swear that he's seen this exact house in something to do with serial killers and mass murders.

And as much as Kino likes the idea of splitting up from his brothers, he also does *not* like the idea of being in this creepy-ass place alone.

He wishes that he could text Yuuri. Even though they don't see each other in person anymore-- and probably won't for a long time--, just seeing his 'brother's' messages on his phone makes Kino feel a little more at ease.

Unfortunately, because the world is cruel, there's no cell service. No texting, no calling, and no wifi. Kino is isolated from the rest of the world like this. All he can do is hope that he

either finds someone who lives here or doubles back with one of his brothers before this gets too unbearable.

Outside, the rain is coming down hard. Kino can hear it pounding against the windows in battering sheets. There's the occasional clap of thunder in the distance too, and that doesn't exactly sit well with him. With the weather like this, they're all stuck inside the house no matter *what* happens. And yeah, Kino's smart enough to know that no serial killer is going to pop out from behind the wallpaper, but that doesn't mean that he's not massively creeped-out. He wants to find his room and lock himself inside for a while. And get the wifi password. That part's important too.

Eventually, Kino makes it to something that looks like a personal library. There are more books than he's ever seen in someone's house-- and that's counting his father's mansion. These people are a league above even Sakamaki Tougou, it looks like. That fact is... kind of foreboding. Intimidating, really. Even if Kino is a 'prince' in his own right, he's still not too keen on the idea of being surrounded by a bunch of *really* rich people.

Wandering the library proves to be kind of useless. Kino scans over the spines of books in languages that he doesn't understand-- most of which look absolutely ancient. This might be more of a personal collection than a library when he thinks about it. Which is somehow even worse.

Kino winds up settling at a small table in one corner and taking out his phone. He turned off his music while he was walking, but right now, he kind of needs the familiarity. This place *sucks.* The least he can do is have what other people deem the most annoying music in the world playing to soothe his nerves. It's hard to be stressed when listening to anime girls, after all.

"Who, may I ask, are you?"

A sudden, chilling voice comes from behind him. Kino very nearly jumps out of his skin. His phone goes clattering to the floor.

When Kino turns around, expecting the worst, it's to a relatively small girl. Her hair color teeters right between white and lilac, she's shockingly pale, her body is thin and small, and she's wearing a school uniform that would be normal if it wasn't for the pantyhose and dangerously short skirt.

"Same to you!" Kino squawks. "What are you doing, sneaking up on someone like that? You scared me to death!" Okay, he's sort of upset now. After all of this time being creeped out, he's a *little* jumpy.

"You're the one in my house," the girl says bluntly, her crimson-red eyes staring at Kino with all the affection of someone looking at a squashed spider on the floor. It's... disconcerting. "And the one in my library. I believe you owe me more of an explanation than I owe you."

"Fine," Kino sighs, scowling. He already doesn't like this girl. "I'm Sakamaki Kino. Y'know, one of the brothers who was sent to live with you?"

If she doesn't know that they're supposed to be here, Kino is going to *explode*. He didn't wander around this creepy mansion for who knows how long just to run into someone who's completely clueless.

"Yes, I'm aware. I didn't know which one of them you were. There were seven of you, correct?" She doesn't give him a chance to answer before continuing. "No matter. To give you an introduction on my part, my name is Shiihara Sui. As you should have assumed, I live here."

"Great, nice. Glad to finally *find* someone," Kino snarks. "Speaking of which, why'd you all ignore us? It's pouring buckets out there, and we were left on the front porch to get drenched." To make a point, Kino flips a lock of his still-soggy bangs. He really hopes that there's some kind of explanation for this. Or better yet, some kind of apology for the trouble.

"It wasn't my problem," Sui says bluntly. "My job isn't to welcome guests. And, frankly, I don't particularly care that you got a little bit wet."

Her biting tone actually takes Kino aback. He'd been rude himself, but he still wasn't expecting Sui to turn the same thing right around at him. Most people will at least pretend to care or be polite about it.

"Wow, that was harsh," Kino says. He's still painfully aware of his phone on the floor and the faint music still playing from it.

"Yes, it was. And I don't care too much about that either. Now, remove yourself from my library. I don't want to deal with you."

At those words, Kino feels something by his eye twitch. That's just too much. She's not even *pretending* like she wants to be a good host. For someone so tiny and weak-looking, this girl sure does have a mouth on her. Kino is pretty damn sure that he could break her wrist if he tried.

"Fine, whatever. I'll get out of here and find someone else. Could you at least tell me what the wifi password is? There's no freaking service here, so I've been stuck with my downloads only." Kino bends over to pick up his phone as he says it. Not looking into Sui's cold eyes is a bit of a relief. The way she was eying him gave off no positive impressions.

"We don't have one," Sui states with absolutely zero delicacy. "And turn that music off. It's grating and unpleasant."

Okay, that's it. He doesn't have to put up with this. Host or not, this girl is being nothing but rude to him at every turn. He's not just going to sit there and take this kind of verbal abuse. Even if Reiji gets after him for it later, he can at least say that he didn't start it. Kino knows he can be a brat, but now... she's just asking for it. Sui thinks he's a nuisance *now*? Kino can show her just how annoying he can be when he tries.

Kino grabs his phone, and as he does, turns the volume up a few notches. The high-pitched voices get louder, and when he stands up, Sui looks more than a little irritated. Kino barely holds back a smirk.

“Eh? Sorry, I can’t hear you over my music,” he says sarcastically. “Did you ask me to turn it up?” This is childish, and he knows it, but...

Who the fuck cares?

“You heard me. And I wouldn’t recommend being this obtuse. If you make an annoyance of yourself, you certainly won’t be a *welcomed* guest for long.” She levels a direct glare at him, but Kino doesn’t falter.

Instead, he sticks out his tongue.

“I hate to break it to you, but you were the rude one *first.* I’m just playing your game. You started it, and, well... I have brothers. I know how it goes when people want to be dicks to each other.” Kino smirks and crosses his arms. This is probably going to get him in trouble, but that doesn’t matter much right now. He just wants to get back at Sui for... a lot of things. Especially the part where she’s not telling him the wifi password.

Sui closes her eyes and sighs. When she opens them, there’s something... different. Her gaze looks somehow colder. Kino can’t help but blink. It’s like she’s suddenly way more serious about this stupid annoyance contest than before. It’s like she wants to *skin him* or something.

“I told you,” Sui says. “Quit playing around. I don’t have the patience to deal with these childish antics. If you keep it up, you will be punished.”

Normally, a threat like that would just sound stupid. Some tiny girl saying that she wants to *punish* him is just ridiculous. And yet, when Kino looks at Sui, he can’t help but get the feeling that she’s not joking.

“Come on,” he says, because knowing limits is something that he’s never done. “You? Punish me? You’re so puny you look like you’re made of sticks! I’d like to see you *try.*” He smirks. He’ll walk out of here after another line or two and be done with this. He’s almost reached maximum irritation potential anyway, so it’ll be time to call it quits in another minute.

But suddenly, the room seems to darken.

Sui’s gaze goes from bored irritation to a vicious glare. As in, one that has Kino feeling, even though he can’t place why, like he needs to *run.* He has no idea what part of his last statement pissed her off this badly, but Kino knows, *knows* that something he did was one major mistake.

There’s nothing she can do to him, Kino reassures himself. She’s just a little girl, probably not even older than him.

“Tell me,” Sui says in an impossibly cold tone, “what you think I’m doing in a house like this. Hours from civilization. Dark. Barely lived in. Doesn’t something seem strange to you? Go on, think about it.”

“Wh-What’s that supposed to mean!?” Kino asks. His voice comes out dangerously close to a squeak.

“I told you to think.”

Suddenly, every light in the room goes out.

Kino barely bites back a scream. It has to just be a power outage, but-- something feels *wrong.* He feels his breathing pick up. Even his phone is dead silent and black-screened.

Kino doesn’t have long to panic. The lights flicker back on a moment later, but now, Sui is right in front of him, just inches away. Her expression is severe enough that it could be carved out of stone. Her eyes, rich, vivid red, appear to be glowing in a way that Kino knows isn’t possible.

“C-Come on...” he stutters. “A power outage, right? No big deal. And anyway, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have been such a little shit. I’ll just get out of here now, get out of your way, and we never have to speak to each other again.” At the end of his sentence, he can’t help but laugh nervously. He’s terrified. This situation is hitting a degree of nightmarish that’s *really* making him reconsider his earlier thought about serial killers. At this rate, he really is going to end up stabbed or skinned alive and left to bleed out.

“There’s no need to apologize. You’ve already angered me to a point where it won’t do you any good.” Kino *feels* his heart sink. “Now, I’ll answer my own question, since you appear to be incapable. I’m a vampire. Does a statement that simple make sense, or do I need to use smaller words?”

Kino’s throat tightens. That... that isn’t possible. Vampires don’t exist.

But Sui, apparently bored with waiting for an answer, grabs Kino by his collar and *forces* him down to the table behind him. Once again, his phone goes clattering along the hardwood. This time, Kino doesn’t care.

“Do you understand what I’m going to do to you? You should. You humans have so many ideas about what vampires are like. Few of them are *accurate...* but one thing is always made very clear.” Sui goes for a handful of his hair next, yanking Kino’s head back with a force that definitely isn’t human. All Kino can do is swallow around terrified nausea and *hope* that this isn’t going to end as badly for him as it seems.

“L-Let go of me--” he whimpers. A plea for Yuuri comes close to slipping out next, but Kino manages to bite that one back. He’s on his own now. There’s no one to save him. “C-Come on... I w-wasn’t that bad, was I? You don’t have to kill me. I p-promise, I’ll behave now--!”

“I’m not going to kill you. That would be a waste of perfectly good food.” She says it like the statement is *obvious.*

“What’s that supposed to--”

Kino’s horrified squawk is cut off by two painfully sharp fangs embedding themselves in his neck. It *hurts.* The hot waves of pain racing through him leave Kino tongue-tied. His breath is constricted in his chest to the point where he can’t even force himself to scream.

He can feel the blood draining from his body in slow, agonizing pulses. The feeling is nauseating. Kino gags on nothing. His fingers skid against the table helplessly. He wants to struggle, but-- There's nothing he can *do*--

The moment drags on. Kino's vision begins to blur. Sui's body is frigidly cold, and she shows no intent to stop. Kino is beginning to think that she really is intending to drain him dry. And... this is where his father sent him. To a house full of vampires. Kino is used to feeling unwanted, more than, but this is a visceral knowledge that none of them, *none of them*, are ever meant to be seen again.

Kino chokes on a sob. His vision progresses to going black around the edges. His body starts to feel limp all over, too weak, too lax.

The last thing he hears is Sui's cold voice.

"You and your brothers now belong to us. None of you will leave here alive, that much I can promise you."

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