Hunter

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by corsairs

Summary

Kibum had to hand it to Minho, his choice of venue was perfect. Where better to spill blood together than on holy ground? And to do it *together*, to face all those hunters down, just the two of them against the world...

It was almost romantic.

Almost.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

A chorus of heartbeats thundered in Kibum's ears, none of them his own but each of them racing just for him. The frenzied footsteps that belonged to them rushed through the narrow streets, chasing after shadows and the scent of death that laced the man-made pollution.

Fools. Dangerous fools, in large enough numbers, ripping and tearing through Seoul like a pack of mad dogs after the quarry they just couldn't catch.

The shadows would never give him up. Undisturbed, deep darkness filled the alleyway, as did the rancid scent of days-old trash. Crouched behind the dumpster in perfect stillness, the monster listened closely to the chaotic symphony of those who dared hunt him.

With his eyes closed, he could hear it all. The sputter and purr of traffic, the metronome click-click-click of changing lights and signals, the clandestine chatter and drunken yelling of the humans awake and unaware in the witching hours. Easily, he raised and isolated the hunters; strands of vain and ugly thread leaping out of the tapestry of the cityscape. Barked orders and loud, desperate footsteps; screeching tyres, loading bullets and buzzing drones.

Kibum's fangs scraped the back of his hand as he wiped the blood from his lips. Tasted of iron, silver and questionable life choices. Lacing one's own blood with powdered silver before heading to the club, just in case a vampire takes a bite…

As idiotic as poisoning oneself was, and as dead as the hunter who did it was — the bastard hadn't died for nothing. The limp corpse left in the goth club bathroom truly got the last laugh, right as Kibum scrambled out the tiny window and into the night. He'd *never* had human hunters so hot on his trail before. Losing them had taken everything with the silver in his system. Kibum could still feel it in him, slowing everything down. Stinging in his veins, making him sluggish, dampening his senses and weighing down his limbs.

And that wasn't the worst of it.

The hunter's blood cut away at the deception that shielded Kibum from mortal eyes. It forced his hands to take their natural shape, fingers lengthening, tapering into dark, sharp claws. Not exactly passable for fancy acrylics, the same way his fangs that now refused to retract were too big, too jagged to be prosthetic. The whites of his eyes became ink-black and his irises reflected light like cat on the prowl, flashing crimson whenever he caught scent of prey. A stealth predator stripped of his camouflage, no way to disappear into a crowded club and meld into the anonymity of writhing bodies, his usual escape.

Hiding half-drugged in a trash-filled alleyway all night didn't feel very vampiric. But against more than a dozen hunters at half-strength, the alternative was…

The alternative was-

"Fine," Kibum hissed, kicking at the ground. A small, undignified tantrum that no-one would ever see. He could hide and bear the shame of it, or he could keep his promise to himself. Kick shame to the curb, there was no place for it in his world anymore. He was too old, too proud, too free for that ugly feeling to reign again.

So, option two was the only option. Call for backup. Let the right one in.

The list whittled down to one name fast. Who did he trust? Who would keep their lips sealed about seeing him in a weakened state? Who would kill for him without question? Maybe a few complaints and a smile, but no hesitation…

"Fine. Fine, I'll fucking call him."

Blood-slick fingers slid against the touchscreen glass, careful to avoid contact with his claws. The screen unlocked, and lo and behold Minho was the last person he'd messaged, smiling up at him through his insufferably handsome profile photo. Sighing at his own prescience, he brought the phone up to his mouth.

A compromise with himself. Why call and endure Minho's voice hitching with all the excitement of *getting to help* when a voice message would do just fine?

"Too many hunters tonight," Kibum said, sure to sound extra casual. An important step of asking for help was pretending doing it didn't kill him twice over. "They're not *good*, there's just a lot of them. It's too annoying to deal with and I've got shit to do. So this is me calling in that favour. "

The more he spoke the more annoyed he became. How had he become close enough with someone to even consider this an option? Vampires were solitary creatures. *Better to rely on me, myself and I.* Except he wasn't, and it felt like glass shards scraping him out from the inside.

Relationships were doomed to fail. Covens always ended in spilled ichor and bad blood. Humans died, or turned and eventually hated you for turning them. Witches wanted you for ingredients, usually chasing immortality, and werewolves…

Werewolves were natural enemies of the vampire. Werewolves smelled like wet dog and tasted like bad self-control. Werewolves were *really* annoying, so fucking transparent and easy to please. Minho texted back so fast you could practically hear his tail wagging from the other side of the city.

Where do you want to meet? Can we do my plan? :)

"Sure. Whatever. We'll do your stupid plan," Kibum hoped the eye-roll was audible, and any fondness that came along with it could later be dismissed as the drugged-blood talking. "You choose where. Just text me an address, I'll lure them wherever you want."

Calling the plan itself stupid was perhaps ungenerous, but the idea of Minho carrying out any deception-based operation was preposterous. He was a more-than-capable athlete and warrior, but could he truly lie? From the guileless tilt of his head when he asked a question to his full-throated laugh, the way he closed his eyes and tipped his head back, utterly unselfconscious - openness was at the very core of Minho's being. His emotions flooded out into the world through his ridiculous big brown eyes, it was admittedly part of his charm.

However, the silly wolf wanted his theatrics, and Kibum would agree to whatever got him to show up. It was exactly because of his honesty that Kibum could rely on him not to tell a soul about his weakened state.

The rest of his reasons for choosing Minho didn't need to be examined. Some truths were safer left unsaid, unthought. Unfelt.

With the narrative controlled, stories would be told this night for years to come. Not of the time the hunters almost overpowered a ferocious vampire, but of the massacre that followed their hubris.

Walking up the alleyway wall, Kibum brushed his bangs back down to cover his glowing eyes — his hair didn't seem to get the memo about defying gravity, but it didn't matter for long.

Sheer velocity kept it all in line as a ran, cutting a sharp silhouette on the rooftops, twisted superhuman angles.

He tore through the night, claws first, leaping from building to building with abandon, sure to move in front of every neon sign and bright light he could find. An improvised light show, projecting his image out onto the buildings opposite him, taunting his pursuers with the ancient arts of showmanship and shadow puppetry.

A night at the theatre. A horror show directed by, produced by and starring Kim Kibum. His only worry was the main set piece scene, over which he'd entirely surrendered creative control.

A Choi Minho original, right in the centre of all things. Enough to strike fear into the heart of any control freak, and yet he barely felt a twinge of it. A side effect of the drugged-blood? A severe lapse in judgement?

Or maybe just begrudging recognition. Minho was overflowing with passion when it came to even the least important of tasks, and this was his magnum opus. A plan only his strange wolf brain could be capable of creating, because who else devoted time to preparing elaborate scenarios where their friends were in trouble and only a dashing hero could save them? A dashing hero pretending to be a dastardly enemy, a grand deception worthy of a studio film deal. Idiot. Fool. He was a werewolf, not a superhero.

And yet. There Kibum went, soaring through over a busy street, hurtling towards whatever chaos awaited him in Minho's one big scene. He'd heard the script once, between shots at a busy bar —with Minho's weighty arm around his shoulder, his beer breath overwhelming and his mouth hovering around Kibum's ear to better yell over the music as he went on and on about his '*incredible, flawless, foolproof, amazing'* plan to trick the hunters he knew had been plaguing his vampire friend for awhile. Utterly ridiculous, and yet somehow endearing that he'd ever dreamed such a thing up.

Kibum *did* have to hand it to him. The setting was, admittedly, his favourite part. He landed on the angular roof of the church with a thud, sliding down the tiles with a grace he had to

strain to make look effortless with all that foulness in his veins.

A vampire taking refuge in a church, subversive and so cliche all at once.

Would the hunters really be stupid enough to take the bait?

After-hours, the faux-cathedral was a perfect playground for shadows. In the light of day it served as a gaudy imitation of older and more beautiful places. But at night? The dearth of light created by the vast expanse of unlit candles and switched-off wall-sconce lamps left only a smattering of dim streetlight to shine through the stained-glass windows. That faint, feather-light touch of colour cast a soft glow over the sacred altar and set the towering metal pipes of the organ agleam, only *just* touching the edges of the outermost pews.

Never let it be said that Choi Minho didn't have a sense of humour, or a flair for the dramatic. God's gentle gaze unable to penetrate the darkness in the centre of his hallowed halls, where the monster lay in wait? It was perfect.

"Enter stage left," Kibum murmured, as the sound of tyres screeching to a halt outside broke the church's contemplative silence. Like so many rats, the hunters scurried in a swarm towards their supposed prey, bursting onto the scene through the side doors and staff entrance and assaulting the set with their ugly tactical-gear clad silhouettes and with the sweeping movements of their blue-tinged head-lamps. An atrocious fashion choice, however practical.

Even at half-strength, the vampire moved faster than any mortal could catch with the naked eye, let alone while groping at the dark with impotent vision. He threw himself across the room, crawling up the church organ that stretched up the back wall to take his throne atop it.

And as predicted, each and every one of them whipped around to crane their necks up at him, blissfully unaware of the trap they'd sprung.

"Don't you think this is overkill?" Kibum purred from his perch, examining his own claws with theatrical disinterest.

He knew *exactly* how he looked, his full monstrousness backlit by the faint light of the city filtering through the stained glass in a mosaic of colour. Blue hues mingling with amber and gold, even a little red to match the way his eyes flared neon with both the colour and the strength of his pure contempt. The fools were transfixed. Of course they were. How could such pathetic creatures look away from such an archetypal evil in the house of God?

"Overkill, and it's just plain rude. No interest in upholding the rules of engagement. Tranquillise the beast and take it out through sheer brute force, no skill or style involved at all. You disgust me, honestly. My usual hunter at least has a sense of pizzazz."

The expected soundscape of ripping velcro and safeties clicking off was disrupted on cue, by the groan and creak of the grand double-doors of the main entrance being forcibly opened. From on high it looked at first like a sliver of heavenly silver light, until a grunt of mortal effort sounded and the heavy oak gave in, moving forward with smooth momentum.

Enter, the scene stealer, biceps bulging from their position braced on each door. A display of brute strength, really, bringing with it the cool, evening breeze; the scent of summer, stale sweat and slightly damp dog. With one final push Minho crossed the threshold from the mundane world into their shared ficiton, and let gravity slam the doors behind him to announce his entrance.

"Stop!" His deep, commanding voice rang out through the pews. "That's *my kill."*

Oh. Oh Minho, honey. The script really couldn't be worse.

Kibum worked hard to keep his face blank out of respect for the conviction of Minho's performance, as half the flashlights turned to spotlight his intrusion.

Conviction, gravitas and half-decent costuming. He wore a high-necked crimson trench coat, with silver crosses for clasps and shoulder pads (as if his perfect proportions needed any more broadening out). The sunglasses indoors at night were perhaps a little excessive, but overall he looked the part.

Hunters and Minho had a lack of subtlety in common. The hunters erupted in cries and demands, unimportant and numerous. *'Who the hell are you?!'* and *'Back off, this one is ours'*, grating and entitled, their chatter barely registered.

Kibum's gaze was fixed on his co-lead, whose presence was undeniable. The architecture swallowed up the rest of the hunters, ants under Kibum's magnifying glass, but Minho strode forward in open competition with the grandeur of Catholicism, sucking all the air from the hallowed hall.

In a swift, effortlessly smooth movement Minho reached inside his coat — giving the room a glimpse of the stakes, crucifixes and even a couple of guns in snug holsters sewn onto the lining. He pulled out a beautifully carved wooden stake and thrust it in the direction of the terrible, evil vampire for dramatic effect.

"The Choi family have hunted this foul creature for seven generations," Minho continued, practically snarling at the hunters gathered before Kibum. "You *will* not take this honour from me."

Kibum hissed without missing a beat, contorting his unnatural body into a twisted crouch.

"*You*," Kibum spat. "We meet again, Choi Minho. This time, you die!"

With a snarl, he vaulted from the organ and onto the side walls of the church. On all fours, he ran across them, launching sideways into his 'nemesis' with everything he had. He swallowed the guilt of it, of being unable to curtail or lessen his power, of barely being able to control himself at all.

Minho could take it. A mortal's bones would crunch under his touch, but Minho's wolf-blood would hold strong. And there was every chance he'd mistake the force of the attack as an intentional move to put on a convincing show, maybe even give him the 'even fight' he'd always been begging for — just to see who would win.

When Minho had outlined the plan, he'd been so sure the power of their collision, the promise that an earth-shattering battle in sanctified halls would scatter the hunters like tiny insects in the wind.

But instead, the vermin froze in place as Minho braced to catch the vampire rather than attempt to dodge. His stance widened and he took a deep breath as if anchoring himself to the earth. Their bodies smashed together, his arms locking around Minho's waist. The velocity alone would have sent any one of the humans flying into the wall, but Minho pushed back with everything he had, appearing unmoving as stone.

As frozen in place as the scattered, unimportant mortals awestruck by the clash of titans.

It was for the best, in Kibum's eyes. Insects were better off crushed, chitin and fluid smeared on the heel of his boot. Nothing more.

Snarling wildly, he sprang backwards and let go, sudden enough to throw most opponents off balance, but not Minho. Minho grinned with vicious intent, his eyes flaring with bloodlust hidden under the dark lenses until the moment he threw his sunglasses to the floor. They clattered on the stone, oh the *drama*, as Kibum ran for the walls, scrambling up them under Minho's focused gaze. Stake after stake cut through the air, thrown with perfect precision to look like near misses, dodged by Kibum faster than the eye could perceive.

Without a word, they danced the choreography they'd never practiced without missing a beat or putting a step out of line.

In the chaos of the chase, one of the hunters aimed his gun at the blur of moment that was Kibum, only to have the pistol knocked from his hand by a flying crucifix. Kibum was lucky he shot along the church walls so fast that no one could see the smile he failed to suppress.

"Last warning," Minho's voice was low and dangerous, glaring at the offending hunter. "Interrupt again, and I'll finish you when I'm done with the vampire."

"Overconfident as always," Kibum responded, his cackle echoing back at him pleasantly, he had to admit, Minho knew how to choose a venue. Marvellous acoustics.

And the sounds of the battle were only going to get better.

Bearing down upon his 'foe' with supernatural strength, Kibum made a show of pushing their chests together and pinning Minho to the floor. He growled, snapping in Minho's face and hovering there, their noses barely an inch away from touching. His dark hair curtained their lips from the prying eyes of their audience, who saw only a vampire toying with his food.

"*Jagiya*. No one is running," Kibum murmured, pressing his pale forearm into the warmth of Minho's neck. Gorgeous, golden and slick with sweat. "Are you gonna kill them for me or what?"

Minho let out a shaky breath, arching his neck into the touch. Wanting it more, wanting it harder. His jugular pulsed against Kibum's cool skin with more than the rush of the fight.

"Yeah. With you, for you, yeah," Minho's tongue darted out, wetting his parted lips. Obscene, all of him. From his sweat-damp hair to his blown-out pupils to the way his body lay strewn out on the sacred stone floor like a vision from a lewd dream Kibum had never been lucky enough to conjure up until it struck him in reality.

"Just putting on a show first," Minho whispered, panting, looking up at him with a glazed-over gaze. Dazed, fucked-out, exactly how he'd look if Kibum had his way with him, right there and then. Folded his knees to his chest and fucked him under the watchful eyes of the stained glass angels, fucked him until every one of his well-honed muscles burned with the sin of it, until he cried out for Kibum as if he were God.

The sudden bulge against his thigh brought the vampire back to reality. Minho's stupidly huge and useless cock, hard just from a quick staged tousle on the ground. He couldn't help the condescension in his expression, the same way the poor puppy couldn't help that it made him even harder.

But time for words was over. Kibum let up the pressure on his throat, and that was cue enough. At the slightest give, the mere *hint* of tension yielding in the vampire's muscles, Minho lunged upwards with all of his might. He was the perfect partner in this dance, knowing right when to follow and went to lead. With a sinful groan of effort, he threw his arms around Kibum's midsection and turned the tables, flipping Kibum flat on his back. Only for Kibum to shove him off with such strength it sent Minho flying backwards into a gathering of awestruck hunters not unlike a bowling ball tumbling a number of pins.

Three of the five crashed to the ground, almost a strike. But not quite.

The air was still in the aftermath of the toss. Silent, the whole church a held breath waiting for the duelling warriors to re-engage. The hunters remained blissfully ignorant, unaware they'd be holding their metaphorical breath until they suffocated, or better yet gargled to death on their own blood.

Kibum struck first, darting to a hunter leaning bug-eyed against a pew and stabbing his claws into the mortal's abdomen. He pierced through the kevlar like wet tissue, his hand sinking into the soft flesh. To beckon with his fingers was to shred through muscle and organ with the slightest effort.

How benevolent a devil he was, to let the mortal relish in the pain before he slammed his hand upwards with great force, shattering through bone until he reached the hunter's throat. With a sickening squelch he withdrew his hand, shards of his clavicle stuck in it like pieces of shrapnel. The hunter died with his face contorted in shock and pain, his body a corpse by the time it hit the ground.

Not his most elegant kill, but nothing to be ashamed of. The clarity wouldn't last.

The scent of blood, Kibum breathed it in like a mist, the metallic tang in the air had his fangs extending even further, his stomach churning as awoken instinct mingled with pure disdain. This disgusting, unworthy blood was enough to unchain his restraint, what they'd *done* to him! How they'd weakened him! The burning rage propelled his descent just as much as the blood-haze, and the panicked cries of the mortals meeting their final fate.

Rending flesh from bone, blood splattered onto the pews and pooled onto the cold stone. Tearing into tendons, Kibum spat muscle and silvered-blood at the face of his next victim as they ran with the delusional belief they could outrun the death they summoned themselves, provoked past the point of return.

The corpse count increased, each of them splayed out on the stone in an intentional fashion, blood pooling in the crevices of the stone tile and mingling together. A mural in the making, with Minho's kills as the centrepieces — bloodless, intact, beautiful bodies amidst the sea of gore.

The visceral snap of vertebrae he didn't cause was enough to break through the rush of primal, artistic instinct. Kibum jolted to look, just in time to catch the sagging of a broken neck under Minho's merciful hands. The final death of the night, if his counting was correct.

Minho killed clean, efficient, following the mortal rules of engagement because he had no need to break them. Wolven, he could have cleaved through a dozen bodies in the blink of an eye, but no, transforming would have made it too easy. Minho liked to use his brittle human body, for the challenge, for the rush, fire brighter in his eyes than it had ever been.

He was perfect.

A beautifully honed weapon. An artist. A gentleman. The hunters didn't deserve him, not even as a vision of horror in their final moments.

In Kibum's quiet awe, with the silver clogging his veins and the blood-haze clouding his mind, he made a crucial mistake.

There was a living body in his fresco of the dead. One with enough strength left in him to aim at the monsters and pull the trigger.

Minho gasped, the wind knocked out of him, and staggered back a few steps. The guttural sound that followed the gunshot was not his. The scream that curdled Kibum's cold blood tore from his own throat.

His head throbbed and his mind burned, inflamed with fear that the bullet was silver. Silver and lodged in an organ, stopping Minho's flesh from knitting back into place. Minho's ribs had cracked under his hands that night, but he knew they would mend in a moment.

But if it was silver, like the silver in his blood…

In an instant, Kibum was bearing down upon the hunter who pulled the trigger, stabbing him with his claws over and over, shallow enough not to puncture anything just yet.

Defiance flared in the hunter's eyes, the desperate human instinct to cling to survival and fight to the very last.

"Good. Hold on as long as you can for me," he whispered, watching fear overpower the hunter's desperation as he smiled, sickly saccharine. He began, taking it slow, carefully

cutting through the flesh of the one who hurt his friend to find his ribcage, all at once lucid and delirious, snarling, "I want you to *feel* it."

The mortal was destined to disappoint him, of course. He would die during the process of having his back flayed so his wings could protrude, an agonising death but one he deserved. The pathetic cries, whimpers, the squelch of blood and muscle, Kibum lost himself in the unbearable potency of his own desire to avenge if he could not protect.

The untenable strength of his feelings, his attachment to the beacon of light that was Choi Minho. He loved him, God, he *loved* him.

And then he remembered. Remembered where he was, remembered who was there. Minho, the noblest of creatures, who never *wanted* to kill but had come running to just for him. Who would never relish in murder, not the way he did. The moment's hesitation was enough for Minho to approach, to cut through the darkness. Kibum's lighthouse, guiding him back to the shores of sanity. Minho cleanly put down the hunter under him, snapping his unmolested neck, and called out so softly.

"Kibum-ah."

From down on his knees, Kibum found the strength to lift his head to look at his companion. The very vision of a desperate believer in prayer at the altar, looking helplessly up at idols of the saints.

St. Minho the Merciful. There was no horror in those warm brown eyes. No judgement. Only palpable concern, and other soft, unnamed notions pouring out from his heart.

"I'm alright, look," Minho murmured, lifting up his shirt to show the his already healing wound. Unafraid, he grabbed Kibum's gore-slick wrist, lifting his hand from corpse's caved-in chest and brought his it towards the bullet-wound. "Feel it, Bammie. It's alright."

Ever so careful with his claws, Kibum pressed his hand flat against the burning heat of Minho's skin. Under his touch, the flesh knitted itself back together, even going to far as to spit out the bullet into his palm. A bullet that didn't hiss or burn, mundane and ineffective. Ridiculous. It was ridiculous to entertain the notion that Minho's natural healing power could have raced alongside his words, rushed forth with new power born from the desire to ease Kibum's mewling, puzzling concern.

And yet. Kibum withdrew his hand, gazing down at the battered bullet. *And yet.*

Surging upwards, he threw his arms around Minho's neck. His hands curled into fists, crushing the crumpled bullet against his palm.

He stopped just short of their lips meeting, their noses bumping together right as he began to lose momentum.

The sheer force of will that animated him through the bitter battle of a night burned away like skin in the sunlight. No matter how dead the enemy were, they remained in his bloodstream, sapping his strength from within. The familiar musk of Minho's stale sweat, the red-hot

warmth of him even through the fabric, with his solid body to lean against it was hard to hold on to the sheer desperation to stay upright.

Safe at last, he could no longer fight against surrender.

"Kibum-ah? What's going on?" Minho's hands grabbed at Kibum's shoulders, enveloping and strong. "What's wrong?"

"Bad blood. Happened before the fight. Jus' need a minute," Kibum slurred, feeling the fight catch up with him. All that his body endured in the battle with his own healing slowed, the pain reared its ugly head in a violent spasm before numbing to nothing with the rest of his senses.

He let his head lull against Minho's chest as the world slipped away, taking secret comfort in the knowledge he was in hands that would care for him better than he'd care for himself. Better than he deserved. Better than anyone deserved.

Such was Minho's nature.

The soft, tender warmth blooming bright in his chest as he faded from consciousness was everything he'd desperately strived to avoid. Weakness. The ultimate weakness.

Silver, garlic, sunlight and Choi Minho. The factors that made Kibum vulnerable by nature, immutable facts of the universe.

Sudden heat cut through the cold and the dark. The gentle warmth of skin pressed to his parted lips and the almost scalding liquid gushing into his mouth, far too hot to be human blood. Sunlight on his tongue, only it didn't burn. Felt like stepping out into the light of a summer morning, the way it used to feel with a beating heart. He felt his fangs extend even further, as far as they could, his mouth opening wide, latching onto the source that began to whet the endless pit of hunger, raw in him like an open wound.

The blood was familiar. The blood was divine. Rich but not *too* rich, full-bodied, the kind you'd have to gorge on to feel sick from indulgence. The kind that called for restraint.

His tongue lapped at the cut pressed to his lips, tasting the salt, the sweat on skin. Strange undertones. Familiar undertones.

Undertones of-

Dog.

"Yah!"

Kibum's eyes shot open just in time to see his exclamation fling droplets of blood back against the meaty forearm pressed to his lips. The man attached to the bleeding arm hovered above him, blocking the rest of his view, his worried expression angelically softened by the familiar amber light of the bedside lamp.

The thought of Minho bringing him back to his apartment, finding the spare key under the pot-plant and tucking him into his own bed was *almost* enough to quell his anger.

Almost, but not quite.

"What the fuck are you doing?" He near growled, as he batted Minho's arm away from his mouth with a little too much strength. Blood splattered onto Minho's black tactical vest, and dripped down from Kibum's chin to stain his precious Egyptian cotton sheets.

The thought of another drop of Minho's precious blood being wasted on undoing *his* mistakes was so infuriating, he hardly cared about the mess at all.

Minho let himself be pushed away, stepping back from the bed to give Kibum space, as if his pleading pout didn't trivialise the distance.

"Taking care of you. I can do that, can't I?" Minho asked. He held the place he'd cut into his arm deep enough that it wouldn't heal *right* away. Considerate. Foolish.

Kibum sighed, letting his whole body sag back into his bed with the exhaustion of it all. Carefully flexing his claws, he couldn't tell if he was somewhat less affected by the silver or simply feeling better for all the safety he found in the embrace of his own bed with his perfectly fitted black-out blinds blotting out the sunrise. Safe in the presence of the only person he could ever stomach seeing him like this.

His bedroom smelled like home and Minho. Neither scent was quite distinguishable from the other.

"Keep your blood. You've done well. You've done enough," Kibum said, trying to sound gentle. Appreciative, because he was.

Only for Minho to roll his eyes and throw his hands up in the air, as if somehow gentle praise that would have normally set his tail wagging was instead his final straw.

"Wow, thank you *so* much, Minho! You're so kind, Minho! Carrying me all the way back home, calling in favours to find a clean-up team short notice *and* feeding me your own blood after realising I'd been drugged by the hunters, which I neglected to tell you until I was collasping in your arms. What would I do without you, Minho?"

Minho ranted and gestured wildly, animatedly, as if the adrenaline from the fight still had him abuzz despite the fact it was barely tastable in his blood. His impression needed work. Kibum doubted he'd ever sounded so laissez faire about anything in his near-century of existing.

But you had to admire the audacity. The complete lack of self-preservation instincts. The trust Minho had that Kibum would just let him continue to waffle his semi-relevant nonsense.

Kibum narrowed his eyes and settled sitting with his back against the headboard. He hid the decaying ends of his grotesquely extended fingers in his elbows as he crossed his arms over his chest. Maybe it was more than *semi* relevant.

Studying his companion closely, he was still in the clothes he'd worn during the battle, just missing the jacket. There were bags under his eyes and his hair was frizzled from the action, stiffened by dried sweat. From his deep frown lines, Minho had the look of someone who had been up all night fretting, even though according to the little red numbers on the clock beside his bed, it had only been a few hours since they'd met at the church.

All the murdering must have exacerbated the emotions. Or maybe that was just what it was like, when you really cared.

"Yes, yes, all of that," he began with a sharpness he could not maintain in the face of those wounded puppy eyes. "Thank you. Without you, I- Well there's a reason I asked for you. Nobody else would do."

It shouldn't have been that easy. Minho perked right up, life flooding back into his big brown eyes followed by a sweet smile on his plush lips, one Kibum didn't deserve. No, it *couldn't* be that easy, the bare minimum could not rescue him from ire he had truly earned. He had to stay on the hook for all his sins for at least a little longer.

"It's just a matter of taste. A matter of you tasting like a wet dog smells to be specific," Kibum lied, forcing himself not to look at the trickle of blood he could smell travelling down Minho's veiny wrist. He barely had the willpower not to snatch his arm right back and lick a line straight up from the lines of his palm all the way to his still healing cut, taking every last spilled drop for himself.

"I *taste* bad?" And oh, there it was. So predictable. Minho's shoulder slump, his body beginning to droop like a wilting flower at the inevitable sting of rejection. "But my diet is great, and my blood count is high…"

The guilt hit alongside the realisation he had the perfect excuse to act on his weaker impulses. Come sunset, all this sentiment could be blamed on the silver.

"God, you're so thick. Do I have to spell it out for you? *No*, you don't taste bad. It's just that you need your blood. You're still healing. But you wouldn't take that for an answer, would you? Just- Come here." He sighed, and patted the bedspread in front of him.

The tilt of Minho's head with his round, guileless eyes was so utterly canine. Ever the faithful hound, he came when called, sitting exactly in the place Kibum gestured without question or complaint.

That was the trouble with Choi Minho. He was just so terribly good.

Kibum carefully raised a hand to cup his cheek and felt the blood rush to bloom a blush under his icy touch. The full breadth of Minho's expressiveness overwhelmed even initial intention, the earnest desire to kiss him senseless. Everything from the way Minho's already too-loud heartbeat picked up speed to his scent — the unmistakable musk of him, having sweat and bled all for the creature he looked up at with nothing but wonder and awe in his glazed over. Kibum's gaze swept over him, watching every muscle tense with the effort to keep still, his lush lips parted and wanton, practically begging.

And yet, he waited. Despite his tremendous impatience, he waited with trust and bated breath, besieging the vampire's senses from every possible angle.

"Stop looking at me like that," Kibum scowled. "I have a purpose. You're distracting me."

Minho beamed, sincerely. Smiled with a sweetness that was utterly puzzling, unabashed in his misplaced adoration.

"I can't help it," he said, almost whining but not quite. His tone turned softer, more revelatory, as if the two of them were back at the church taking refuge in confession. "This is special to me, I never get to see you like this. You never let *anyone* see you like this."

Kibum laughed, a dry and dark cackle.

"Like this?" He gestured with his free hand, at the general state of his shambling body. "Hideously monstrous?"

The silver revealed a truth beyond his usual pleasing human guise, it was true. After the battle, he looked even worse than he had before. The 'whites' of his eyes were ink-black and his irises were red with hunger, a stark contrast against the pallor of his skin — so pale it had become translucent, revealing his spindly network of sluggish, good for nothing veins across every inch of exposed skin. His fangs, usually neatly retracted, were so large that the tips of them pressed into his bottom lip.

A monster if ever there was. Without any of the warmth, the beating heart, the conscience of someone still living. Cold flesh, cold and dead. A decaying vessel, empty of anything that mattered.

Minho shook his head with such conviction that it messed up his long, pretty hair. He met Kibum's eyes with a burning intensity, as if with the strength of his belief alone he could drive away the dark thoughts he saw behind all the bravado, behind the fast fading facade.

"No. Not as a monster, just as yourself," Minho professed. Gently, he laid his hand on Kibum's chest, right where his heart lay dormant."Beautiful. So beautiful, really, I've dreamed of this. The fact you're letting me see you, Kibum-ah… the fact that you called…"

The way he trailed off, smiling shyly and still gazing at Kibum as if merely to look at him filled his heart to bursting. Kibum felt his own jaw slacken, and tried to wipe the speechless shock he knew was forming off his face.

He could blame the silver later, for him being too late. Minho read the truth from his face.

There was no doubting the words, no calling him a liar. Weaponised sincerity was utterly unfair, sliding right under Kibum's armour and deeper under his skin. It visibly, obviously got to him. Disgustingly sentimental.

"Don't piss me off," Kibum's voice dropped low, forcing himself to scowl. "I didn't *call.* I left a voice note. Completely different. Look at you go, making a thing of it. It's almost like you don't *want* to be kissed."

Utterly seen through Minho couldn't stop smiling. He laughed, though his adorable laugh cut off abruptly at the exact word Kibum knew it would. And for a moment he beheld quite the similar sight to the breathless moment Minho was helpless under him on the cathedral floor, Kibum's arm bearing down in his jugular. That almost-dumb, fucked-out look on his face from the barest touch and just a mere few words.

Twice in one night, Kibum was handed the secret to feeling alive. Beholding this beautiful man. Drinking in Minho's open desire, fuel to the fire of his own.

Minho wanted him, and was so honestely wanted in return. There was no taking that back, even after the silver left his system.

Leaning in, Kibum closed his eyes, trusting they would meet half way.

"Mind the fangs, honey," he whispered, as Minho's breath brushed hot against his lips. One of his big hands came to rest splayed out on the cool skin of Kibum's exposed neck, and finally…

Finally.

Minho smashed their parted lips together, and jammed his tongue up onto Kibum's right fang, puncturing right through his own muscle in an artless but impactful act of rebellion. Blood seeped from the fresh wound, hot and rich, mingling with saliva. He swallowed Kibum's startled gasp and sinful moan the same way Kibum swallowed the gift of his blood. Eager, willing and unable to hold back.

"I like your fangs," Minho broke away panting, murmuring in the scant space between them. Another thing to love about him. He was never *too* predictable.

Just the right amount.

"You're crazy," Kibum chuckled, disbelieving. Yet the proof of reality was right there. His unnervingly long tongue darted out to wet his bottom lip, and found it smeared with Minho's blood. "You're seriously fucking crazy. It's embarrassing how into you I am, yah! Seriously. That was so-"

"-hot?" Minho supplied, his voice dripping with self-satisfaction.

Kibum opened his eyes just to roll them. Maybe because stupid questions weren't worthy of dignified answers, or perhaps it was a matter of delaying the swallowing of his own pride.

Infuriating as it was, Minho read him just right with alarming regularity. Yeah, the tongue stunt was absolutely doing it for him. The blood helped, made him feel like himself again after a night of feeling alien in his own skin. And asking for help? It might as well have been a love confession.

"Not as hot as when you killed for me," he conceded, leaning in to lick the blood staining Minho's teeth. The shudder that rippled through his ample muscle was revelatory, such a delight to know he liked it messy and murderous. They *both* did.

Kibum closed the distance between their lips again at last, kissing him recklessly, never mind the fangs. Minho met him with the same spirit; desperate, messy, leaving strings of saliva between in the brief moments they parted only to join again and again. Blood spilled out of the kiss and smeared around their open mouths, yet all the while Minho held him by the waist with such heartsick tenderness, as soft and loving as Kibum's hand on his cheek, gingerly caressing back and forth with careful claws.

In conceivable every way — on the battlefield, with their banter, and now in the bedroom — they were perfectly matched.

Kibum could pretend it irked him all he liked, but Minho knew better. Minho knew him best of all.

Naturally, no matter how he tried to hide the signs of the bad blood slowing him down, he couldn't. The lingering lethargy in every movement, imperceptible to most mortals, and the way his hand on Minho's shoulder clung hard enough to hurt. The struggle to control his strength, his fangs, the way he pushed past it in the name of the sheer power of their want.

Minho pulled away first, reluctant. He lingered, clearly stopping himself from chasing the kiss he broke himself like a dog chasing its own tail.

Cute. Ridiculously cute. Was Kibum turned undead just to suffer?

"We should wait," Minho said, resigned but sure. Much less cute. "Until tomorrow at least. The silver…"

Kibum laughed in disbelief, somehow the most adoring sound he'd made all night. Oh so carefully, he reached up up to tuck away some of Minho's lovely brown hair, tracing the shell of his ear with a claw.

"*You* want to wait? *You?* Choi Minho? You expect me to believe that?"

It was mostly teasing, he couldn't help it. Those half-lidded eyes, a deep concern clouded the lust. Love, it seemed, was more potent a force that even the culmination of all their years of tension.

"Not really," Minho smiled, and pressed a soft little kiss to Kibum's pouting lips. "But we should, still. At least until your head is clear. If you still want me tomorrow at sundown, I'll be right here. I've always been right here."

Patience was supposed to come easy when you had infinite centuries ahead, and yet Kibum strained against the concept.

The thought of jostling for power and control as his revealed self was thrilling beyond compare. To meet his match, disadvantaged, and through that disadvantage able to genuinely lose and surrender himself to the pleasure of everything Minho had ever imagined doing to him. Tantalising, he imagined babbling in Minho's ear, unable to control himself, spilling every secret sentiment. All the words that were too difficult to say, sober and unaltered.

But something tender unfurled in the centre of his chest, knowing Minho in all his burning impatience thought he was worth the wait. A second, a minute, a day. Months, years, how long had he been waiting already?

Patience came easy with long decades of practice, but not to one who lived every day knowing he was hurtling towards his last. How long had Kibum kept him waiting? Even a milisecond longer seemed too long.

"You're too good to me," Kibum murmured, only for Minho to shake his head.

"No I'm not. Not even close! You give the ones you love the world, Kibum-ah. Don't think I haven't noticed. No matter how you try to hide it, it's what you do. It's who you are. And I try to compete, I'll never stop trying, but in the end all I can really give you is me."

Minho gazed at him endlessly with those beautiful eyes, so full of naked vulnerability and endless sentiment. He spoke the truth of his heart with such eloquence, even if he had one thing dead wrong.

Unable to bear it any longer, Kibum averted his gaze.

"Nonsense. There's so much I haven't given you. The truth, most of all," his voice trembled with the weakness of the words he knew he had to say, barely above a whisper. "You're all that I want. I'm- I'm disgustingly greedy when it comes to wanting you. So don't give yourself to me unless you mean it. Because I'll take you. "

The horror of saying it aloud was stronger than even his desire to see what the verbose werewolf looked like speechless. His cream-coloured sheets with their ridiculously high threadcount were suddenly very interesting, at least until he felt the fleeting press of lips against his temple, and strong arms squeezing playfully around his waist.

"Tell me again when we wake up? And I'll tell you I'm already yours." Minho's words were warm and assured, spoken with all the confidence of a promise he knew with every fibre of his being he could keep.

In response, all Kibum could do was swallow the terrible fear of not being able to say it sober, and instead give a small nod. Kibum felt Minho's soft lips curl into a smile against his forehead, just as he peppered another kiss there. Unbearably loving.

"Come on," Minho continued, "Let's sleep, so sundown can get here faster."

Kibum stopped fighting the urge to keep up any kind of mask right then and there. He allowed himself to smile, and launched himself back onto his pillows, bringing a willing werewolf down with him. A comfortable weight and warmth on top of him, one he could get used to.

When Minho took his hand carefully laced his too-warm fingers in the gaps of Kibum's still cold claws, he smiled even harder.

"Finally, something we agree on."

Closing his eyes, he promised himself he'd say it all again in the morning. All the sincere, sentimental words Minho deserved to hear and more. Deep was the well he had to draw from, as he loved far more deeply than he ever dreamed he could in life *or* death.

His heart may lay silent and still, but by God it had never been so full.

End Notes

It's close enough to spooky season that I thought this would be a good pick for my first fic on here! Originally written as a birthday present for N, love you <3

Thanks for reading!

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