burn it down

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Summary

Everyone knows sealing flames will change a person. It's too bad Timoteo and Iemitsu didn't stop to think about the consequences of their actions before locking Tsuna's flames away. Years later the underworld trembles as a vicious sky with burning ambition makes her mark.
Flames shouldn’t be sealed. The risks are too great, there’s always a chance of blindness, of hearing loss, of physical disabilities. There’s always the chance it can alter something mental, can cause something to change irreversibly.

Flames shouldn’t be sealed, everyone in the mafia knows this.

But such a bright sky, such a burning sky is an inconvenience and a threat, so the scheming boss and the neglectful father mutilate the sweet girl with a gentle smile and kind eyes without a second thought.

They tell her mother she fell sick when she collapses. They smile and laugh and don’t think about what they’ve done, don’t stop to wonder about the consequences.

The next day Sawada Tsuna opens her eyes.

The girl wakes and the future changes.

It’s been a month since papa left again. Only a month and she’s already divided her life into two parts: before and after.

Before papa brought the strange man that insisted she call him nonno to visit, before she woke up the next morning with no memory of the previous day.

She doesn’t know how, she doesn’t know why, but she knows the strange man and papa caused after.

After means the reassuring warmth under her skin has been replaced with a constant itch. After means she doesn’t feel anything when she sees mama crying, doesn’t want to comfort her like she did before.

She can hardly remember what she was like before, but she can’t have been like this.

Tsuna doesn’t think the girl of before would have laughed as she watched a child at the playground fall from the slide. She doesn’t think she would have watched the blood pool onto the sand in fascination, only moving when mama pulled her away.

And she knows the girl of before wouldn’t be doing this, wouldn’t be carving up a cat just to watch it scream.

She’s tried to stop. She’s tried to make friends, tried to smile and pretend to be normal, but the other children see through her. Creepy-Tsuna they call her, Odd-Tsuna, Wrong-Tsuna.

She knows, in a detached sort of way, that the names should bother her. That if any of the other kids
were called names they’d protest and cry.

But it’s hard to care when she has more important things to pay attention to. Important things like the pretty red staining her hands and the white bone that quivers beneath her fingers as the cat finally dies.

The clock strikes twelve and Tsuna startles before taking the body in her arms and heading out to the yard. It only takes a few minutes to pack the cat into a box, blood staining her fingertips as she closes the lid. Soon the cat is buried in the patch next to the skinned mice and birds with broken wings and broken necks.

The clock chimes again and she grimaces, running to the bathroom and washing the blood off her hands.

Mama will home from the store soon and Tsuna has to be perfect. She has to make sure mama doesn’t notice anything is different, she has to make sure the other adults still think she’s sweet and gentle. Tsuna isn’t stupid. She knows bad things happen to people that do what she does, that think how she thinks.

No, Tsuna isn’t stupid. She knows the girl of before isn’t coming back, knows she’ll have to live the rest of her life like this.

That’s alright though. She may not be normal anymore, but now she’s something better.
Chapter 2

Hibari Kyoya is not a nice child. The demon is a more accurate description, that hellion, that fucking monster, are more appropriate names. (And were frequently used by some in Namimori, at least until Kyoya got her hands on them.)

At first glance the girl has no redeeming qualities. If one looked harder and was particularly desperate, though, they might be impressed with the girl’s possessive nature, how it could so easily be mistaken for protectiveness.

The girl wasn’t possessive of a particular person—on the contrary, she considered most beneath her.

No, it was Namimori she cared about. The town was hers, not the adults, not the mayor’s, no matter what they might think.

The town was hers, and that meant she made sure to watch everyone who inhabited it.

She watched and listened and noticed, noticed how the little herbivore just entering school had changed.

Sawada Tsuna had been like her mother, gentle and kind and afflicted with a particular absent mindedness Kyoya found especially irritating.

She knew everything that happened in her town, she saw how Sawada shed her herbivore skin, though the other girl tried to hide it. She saw how the girl lost her distaste of blood over time, how the girl watched the other children fight with a longing look in her eye. She heard the other children call the girl odd, call her a freak—and she made sure they wouldn’t call Tsuna names again.

The girl had been someone Kyoya overlooked, just another useless herbivore that insisted on living in her territory.

But now? Now Sawada Tsuna is interesting.

Kyoya has enough self awareness to know she is stalking Sawada and is intelligent enough to know that the adults considered stalking bad.

But she doesn’t care what the adults think, especially when her prey is so interesting.

The thing is, Kyoya is growing bored. The not-baby hardly ever comes to visit and her parents insist they are retired, used phrases like ‘living a quiet life’ and ‘no more violence.’

Luckily the other girl was proving to be a welcome reprieve from her growing boredom. Tsuna had all the markings of a carnivore hiding itself, of a wolf pretending to be a sheep.

She wants to tear that mask off, wants to see how dangerous the little carnivore truly is.
The other girl knows someone is watching her. Kyoya can tell from how the carnivore in a herbivore’s skin glances around nervously, how she looks in store windows for any sign of someone following.

Eventually she gets her chance to confront the other girl, vaulting the fence to the Sawada’s backyard in the middle of the night and landing in front of Tsuna.

Tsun, who startles and drops a box filled with decomposing mice, with birds with their necks broken.

The blood rushes in her veins at the sight, at the thought of turning this budding carnivore into a true predator.

She rushes Sawada and the girl only barely dodges, tumbling to the ground before staggering to her feet and aiming a punch at her attacker.

The next few minutes are wonderful, Kyoya lost in the familiar motion of a fight, Kyoya watching the girl shed her herbivore skin with a desperate intensity.

The other girl has clearly never fought before, but there’s a gleam in her eyes she recognizes. A gleam that lets her know she’s finally found another carnivore.

Eventually the dance ends with Kyoya throwing Sawada to the ground, smiling when Sawada slowly staggers up with fire in her eyes, either not noticing or not caring about the blood dripping down her nose and staining her mouth.

“Why do you hide?” she asks, shifting her balance from one side to another. “Why do you pretend to be a herbivore?”

The other girl sniffs and then coughs, wiping a hand across her upper lip and smearing the blood before speaking.

“Bad things happen to people like me,” the girl says, “bad things happen to people like me without parents like yours. Your parents can keep you out of jail. Mine can’t.”

This is even better. Kyoya had assumed the girl was trying to hide to please her mother, was maybe even afraid of her true nature.

Someone that is merely afraid of being locked away? That she can work with.

“You are a carnivore,” she tells the other girl, a smile curling her lips when Sawada blinks. “You are a carnivore, and you shouldn’t hide it.”

“I can teach you,” she offers. “I can teach you how to fight, I can teach you how to hide the bodies. I can make sure you never have to wear a mask again.”

Sawada looks at her and wipes her mouth again—a habit Kyoya will have to break her of before nodding sharply.

“Alright, Hibari-senpai.”
Chapter 3

Pain. That’s the first thing Tsuna notices when she wakes, the dull ache along her cheek and the stinging sensation spreading from her lips to her nose.

She staggers to the bathroom, drawing back with a puzzled frown at the sight in the mirror. So her encounter with Hibari hadn’t been some strange dream.

No dream would leave her with dried blood on her lips and a slight swelling of her nose, with burning legs and knuckles that hurt when she clenches them.

Hibari talked to her, Hibari fought with her—and it had been wonderful.

Tsuna thought (hoped) that hurting birds and cats and stray animals would be enough, but apparently not.

Not when just thinking of fighting Hibari again makes her smile, makes her twirl around in excitement despite the pain that flares in her legs as she moves.

Now she only hopes Hibari-senpai still wants to teach her.

“Carnivore.”

She looks up from her lunch at that, eyes widening in surprise at the sight of Hibari.

“Carnivore?” she asks hesitantly, sliding over so the older girl can sit next to her. Murmurs erupt from the other students when Hibari actually accepts, one student even gasping in shock.

“You are a carnivore,” the other girl says, turning to look at her intently. “You have been hiding in a herbivore’s skin but that doesn’t change what you are.”

Hibari looks away then, turning to unpack and lay out her lunch. Tsuna watches quietly, waiting for the older girl to speak again.

Finally Hibari turns to her, eyes bright. “I am going to make you a real predator.”

Tsuna finds herself mimicking the older girl’s bloodthirsty smile, grinning wider when Hibari smirks in response.

A month passes by when Tsuna realizes she has a friend.

At least, she thinks Hibari-senpai is a friend. Friends are supposed to watch your back and share your interests, friends are supposed to make you feel good when you’re upset. Hibari does all these things.

Tsuna is seven years old and she has a friend. Maybe she’ll have another one, she thinks, that would be nice. Hibari-senpai has trouble sharing though, they’d have to work on that.

Either way, she has a friend. Odd-Tsuna, Creepy-Tsuna, Wrong-Tsuna actually has a friend. Actually has someone that likes her, that thinks she’s worthwhile, that actually pays attention. Even mama hardly pays attention, and Tsuna secretly hopes papa never comes home.

He made sure she shattered. For that she hates him.
None of the other children really think Tsuna is dangerous, not at first. Everyone knows there’s something wrong with Odd-Tsuna but few are willing to believe she’s actually friends with the Hibari Kyoya.

At least, no one believes it until Tsuna knocks out a bully’s teeth. The girl is standing over the gasping boy, casually looking at the bystanders, when she steps forward and presses her foot down on his leg, something like satisfaction in her eyes when he cries out in pain.

Soon enough the name calling stops, replaced by frightened glares and meek glances.

Crowds part when they walk through, students step back and cling to their lockers, even the pettiest teachers ignore the temptation to mark down Sawada’s grades.

Not when she smiles at them like that, like she’s seen their soul and isn’t impressed. Not when everyone in Namimori knows she has blood on her hands.
Chapter Notes

warning for Nana’s unhealthy coping mechanisms/bad state of mind and a brief description of an animal corpse

Nana was used to living in denial.

Her papa had disappeared after a drug deal gone bad, her mama had drank herself into an early grave, but Nana still smiled.

It was just so much easier to think that papa was coming home, so much easier to block the memory of finding mama’s body. It was so much easier to lock away the memory of mama’s blank face, of the bile that spewed when Nana clumsily attempted CPR on a corpse that was already hours dead.

So many in the old neighborhood, in the tenement where she grew up, turned to drugs or alcohol to cope with what they saw and how they lived. Nana used denial. Maybe it was because it was so much cheaper, maybe it was because drinking left her with nightmares filled with bodies with bullet holes and vomit leaking from pale blue lips.

She is used to denial, wraps herself in it like a blanket, because otherwise she’ll break. She knows that if she stops something terrible will happen.

Nana grew up surrounded by the sound of gunfire, she remembers going to school and seeing empty desks, knowing that that meant yet another child had found a way to die for promises of safety or security.

With those memories come the memories of the funerals, of putting on her best dress and watching as solemn men in suits mingled with the guests and offered their condolences.

When the handsome stranger comes into her diner and starts flirting, she can’t help thinking of the last funeral she attended before leaving school.

The boy’s mother crying, the guests that milled about under the hot summer sun, she remembers it all.

Darling Iemitsu is charming and sweet and the epitome of a gentleman. He is all these things, and yet her mind still comes back to that final funeral.

It’s the denial, long entrenched, that keeps her from realizing why. That keeps her from realizing the look in his eyes mirrors the look Boss Haruki had when speaking to the dead boy’s brothers. The look of a predator pretending to be prey, the look of a conman whose found another target.

Nana is used to denial, and it’s what makes her think the shiver down her spine is from excitement, not fear. It’s what makes her forget the dreams that started after Iemitsu proposes. She makes herself forget the dreams where she finds papa’s dead body riddled with bullet holes. She makes herself forget the terror that spikes when she steps closer and the shooter isn’t one of Haruki’s goons, when it’s her Iemitsu standing over the body instead.
Her Iemitsu works in construction, she tells herself. Her Iemitsu is gentle and sweet, she tells herself.

He cares, she tells herself when he isn’t there for Tsuna’s birth. He cares, she insists when the weeks away turn into months and then into years.

He cares, she nearly sobs when he leaves her yet again to raise their daughter alone.

He cares, he does, because she’d shatter if he didn’t.

There is something wrong with her daughter.

Tsuna was cheerful and polite, Tsuna was always chattering away, was always eager to comfort her if she seemed the slightest bit sad, Tsuna complimented strangers in the street and smiled at everyone.

Tsuna was an innocent girl. (Not like the boys and girls in the old neighborhood, not like the teenagers that died young or the toddlers already used to hiding from blows.)

Tsuna was her treasure, her darling, her little girl that shined like the sun.

Nana watches the little girl experimentally twirling her chopsticks and thinks of the old tales, of the myths that spoke of children being snatched from their beds and replaced with lookalikes.

She wants to believe this girl-this girl with blank eyes and a dull smile—isn’t her daughter. But even Nana knows the old stories are just stories, the myths just myths.

Even denial can only go so far.

It eases her worry when Tsuna brings an older girl home and calls her senpai, it eases her fear when Tsuna genuinely smiles at the other girl.

But denial can only last so long, and a part of Nana’s soul is screaming for an explanation, screaming to know how and why her Tsuna-chan has changed so much.

Ignorance is bliss, as the saying goes, and Nana clings to it until she finds the box buried in the backyard while planting flowers.

She vomits on the grass, then and there, when she opens it. A decomposing cat is inside. Nana hurls the box to the ground, vomiting as the smell of rotting flesh hangs in the air.

Slowly, fearfully, after she is done, Nana picks the box up again, thankful as she looks into it that the first bout of vomit emptied her stomach.

She can’t look away from the bright blue eyes of the stray, mushed up like spoiled grapes. There are maggots crawling along the red flesh, there’s blood soaked into the bottom of the box.

And there are the knives that disappeared from the kitchen. Nana had believed Tsuna when she claimed not to know where they were, had believed her daughter because why wouldn’t she? Of course she’d trust Tsuna.

She must make an awful sight, Nana thinks distantly through the tears. She must be quite a sight, sobbing over a shoebox, gardening gloves stained with blood.

Eventually the tears stop. Eventually, without thinking, she finds herself putting the box back in the ground, finds herself covering it with dirt again.
Nana waits at the table for Tsuna to come home, waits to confront her daughter, to be brave for the first time in her life.

Nana is ready, Nana is prepared-until she sees Tsuna. Until she sees her daughter and it comes crashing down that her Tsuna has done this, that her Tsuna has killed.

Looking into her daughter’s cold eyes (cold, always so cold) she can’t bring herself to do it. She can’t bring herself to ask why, to demand answers, to even ask if her daughter is alright.

Nana is used to living in denial, but even she knows she's nothing but a coward.
Chapter 5

The funeral service has just started when Takeshi realizes there might be something wrong with her. She’s supposed to feel sad, that’s what everyone expects her to be. Mom is dead, mom is never coming back, but instead all she feels is anger.

Mom braided her hair, mom taught her the multiplication tables, mom introduced her to baseball. Mom held her when she was sick and made the best desserts.

Takeshi tries to tamp down the growing anger, tries to focus on the priest, when the epiphany strikes. She’s only nine, but she’s not stupid, despite what the teachers think. (It’s not her fault baseball is so much more interesting than their lessons.)

The priest is talking about how kind mom was, how gentle, how nice, and the realization comes as she watches dad wipe away tears.

She doesn’t miss mom, not really. She doesn’t miss the woman that raised her and so obviously loved her.

Takeshi misses what that woman did, not who she was. Mom loved her, mom cared for her, and all Takeshi feels is annoyance at the thought of dad trying to braid her hair.

Dad holds back a sob beside her, and she knows she should comfort him. She knows that, but she’s too caught up in memories of Mom telling her to smile, memories of overhearing mom telling dad baseball was “better than the alternative.” What alternative, Takeshi didn’t know, but she had a feeling it had to do with the time mom pulled her away from the bird with a broken neck.

There’s something wrong with me, Takeshi thinks, staring into the distance.

It’s freeing, almost, to know this, to know why mom kept her away from the kitchen and banned her from the knives, to know why mom had to teach her how to talk to people, how to pretend she cared.

The second realization comes lightning quick, a thought that makes her smother a smile.

Mom was the one that kept her from doing anything fun, kept her away from knives and made her practice her smile until her face ached. Mom was the one that insisted on it, and now she’s dead.

There has to be something wrong with her, for the only emotions she’s felt since mom died to be overwhelming anger and annoyance followed by relieved joy.

She doesn’t care though, not now. Mom won’t be here to braid her hair or teach her, she won’t be around to cuddle while she’s sick.

But that seems like a small price to pay in exchange for freedom.

The duo is walking home from school, taking a shortcut through the abandoned baseball field, when Tsuna nudges Kyoya with her shoulder, waiting until Kyoya turns to tilt her head towards the figure sitting against the chain link fence.
It takes a moment, Hibari looking between her friend and the girl slumped against the fence, before she understand just what Tsuna is asking.

“No.”

“But, Kyoya-” the younger girl starts before being suddenly cut off.

“I said no,” Kyoya snaps, eyes narrowing.

“She’s like us, though” Tsuna says after a moment of silence, looking up at the taller girl.

“How do you know?” she finally asks Tsuna, gaze still locked on the girl sitting on the grass.

“Her smile isn’t real,” the other girl responds. “It’s fake, it’s like the smile I used when I was hiding. And I’ve seen the look in her eyes before. It’s what I see when I look in the mirror.”

At that Kyoya pauses, looking at the girl sitting on the grass, looking at the way her shoulders tense when she notices them looking. Most of their peers would run or look away, would cower like the herbivores they are. But this girl is looking straight at them, a silent challenge in her eyes as she stares them down.

“You want to expand the pack,” Kyoya eventually says, more statement than a question.

“Would that be such a bad thing?” Tsuna questions, adjusting the straps of her backpack idly as she starts walking towards the girl on the grass.

No, Kyoya inwardly admits, it wouldn’t be. A group of three carnivores would have far more success than two. This other girl may let them go after difficult prey. Besides, though she’d never admit it, Kyoya likes the idea of having another carnivore to hunt with. (So long as the girl knows her place in the pack.)

Everyone at school knows about the Demons of Namimori, about the girls even the teachers and principal fear.

Takeshi doesn’t think all the rumors are true, at least not the ones claiming they drink blood and skin cats, but that doesn’t mean she isn’t curious. That doesn’t mean she doesn’t shiver when Sawada turns that knowing gaze on her, that doesn’t mean she doesn’t dream of fighting Hibari.

The girls are wrapped up in each other, though, scarcely paying attention to the “herbivores” as Hibari insists on saying, so that doesn’t explain what’s happening.

That doesn’t explain why Sawada is smiling cheerfully at her and Hibari’s foregone her usual scowl to stare like she’s an insect under a microscope instead.

“Takeshi-chan!” Sawada practically chirps as she comes to a stop before her.

It takes a moment to remember, but then Takeshi awkwardly smiles, lifting a hand to her neck.

“Tsuna-chan, right?”

Tsuna nods before hesitating, looking sideways at Hibari, before speaking up. “We were wondering if you wanted to be friends.”

“What?” Takeshi blurts out without thinking, nearly wincing as Hibari scowls in response.
The other girl looks at her for a moment before dropping down onto the grass next to her, lazily stretching out and looking at the sky.

“Have you ever killed something?”

“I-” Takeshi pauses, thinks of the birds mom had found, how she’d been scolded without ever getting an explanation. “Maybe.”

“Felt good, didn’t it?” Tsuna hums. “You have trouble with people, don’t you? You wonder why you should care about their petty problems, wonder why you should care about anything they do.”

“Maybe,” Tsuna says slowly, lifting herself up on her elbows and turning to look at Takeshi, “maybe you even dream about killing them.”

Takeshi swallows thickly, thinks of the dreams of beating Hibari black and blue, thinks of the dreams where she carries a sword like dad, where she sinks the blade into flesh and watches the blood spill out. She thinks of how she wants to gut their homeroom sensei, how she wants to see the boy that sits next to her hanging from the gym’s rafters, how she gets so mad over these useless people and their useless problems.

“Yeah,” Takeshi finally whispers. “I do.”

Mom is dead, has been dead for weeks, but there’s still a part of her that feels shame. There’s still a part of her that makes sure she hides the birds under the porch, makes sure to continue pasting on the fake smiles.

Hibari kneels down to look her in the eye and Tsuna rights herself, brushing grass off her skirt as she smiles at Takeshi.

The duo share a glance before looking back at her, Takeshi unconsciously straightening under their twin gaze.

“We haven’t killed anyone yet,” Tsuna says, so matter of fact it nearly makes Takeshi choke, “but we’re like you, and we’d like a friend.”

“Yes,” Takeshi says without a moment’s hesitation, smiling wide when Tsuna smiles back, when the look in Hibari’s eyes turns approving.

There’s something wrong with her, but looking at Tsuna’s smile, looking at the poorly concealed fondness in Hibari’s eyes, she’s finding it hard to care.
Chapter 6

Takeshi isn’t nearly as subtle as she thinks she is. His daughter still thinks he doesn’t know, still thinks he considers her an ordinary girl.

He’d known since she was five and Aiko had told him about finding the birds with broken necks. Tsuyoshi hadn’t been surprised about the dead animals, though he wished he was. Of course he hadn’t been surprised, not when that particular brand of madness ran in the family.

Tsuyoshi himself didn’t have it, though he could set aside morals with a frightening ease. He didn’t have the blood lust that ran in their family, didn’t have the lack of empathy that showed so easily in his father’s eyes.

Takeshi had been a surprise, an accident they decided to keep, and he’d foolishly never given any thought to how he’d manage to restrain a child that was already finding ways to kill.

Aiko, wonderful and amazing Aiko, had been the one to step up to the challenge, to teach their daughter how to hide.

It hurt sometimes to watch Takeshi chafe under the restrictions, to see how fake his daughter’s smile really was, but it was better than the alternative. Better to have a child that learned to adapt to society than raise another killer.

He’d seen too many die, men and women he’d befriended despite their profession, despite how they killed for living. He couldn’t see Takeshi die like them, die bleeding out in an alleyway or tortured to make an example. She’s resilient, he tells himself, she’ll learn how to adapt.

Tsuyoshi is ashamed to admit that he was too caught in grieving to pay attention to Takeshi like he should have, too caught up in losing Aiko to plan for the future. Teaching their daughter control was his responsibility now, no matter how much he didn’t want to do it, didn’t want to watch her smile dim again.

It’s after school one day, Takeshi is late coming home and he’s doing his best not to worry, when the bell over the door finally rings and Tsuyoshi looks up to smile at his daughter. And then he blinks, because Takeshi has always been courteous, always been friendly, but she’s never had any actual friends.

She’s never bothered, never felt the need, so it’s a surprise, to say the least, to watch her laugh with the girls walking in. A feeling of foreboding comes over him, a feeling of anxious nausea washing over him as he recognizes one of the girls.

The Hibari couple may have been retired, but he still remembers their glory days. He still remembers how the underworld quaked before the pair of killers—and that’s not even counting their rumored connection to the Storm Arcobaleno.

Tsuyoshi doesn’t recognize the other girl, however. She doesn’t seem like a threat, not with her doe like amber eyes and her braided brown hair, not with how small she is, how delicate she looks.

But he’s seen that look before, seen it in his father’s eyes when he went off to kill, and he tightens his hold on the knife without thinking, eyes narrowing when the girl notices and smiles wider in response.
“Dad!” Takeshi nearly yells, scrambling around the chairs to meet him. “I made friends!”

“Maybe you should introduce us?” Tsuyoshi replies, gentle admonition apparent.

“Oh, right,” she flushes before turning and beckoning the other girls closer.

“This is Hibari Kyoya-” she pauses to let the other girl respond, but Hibari only stares. Typical, he thinks, of a Hibari.

“And this is-”

“My name is Tsuna,” the smaller girl interrupts, “and it’s a pleasure to meet you, Yamamoto-san.”

“Tsuyoshi is fine,” he responds, doing his best not to glare at the girl.

It’s working, right until he notices the bandage wrapped around Takeshi’s arm and the dirt and blood buried under all three of the girl’s nails. Tsuna pulls her hair up quickly, but Tsuyoshi knows that the spot below her ear is dried blood.

“Yeah,” Takeshi says with a nervous laugh as she notices the way his gaze lingers on the bandages, “we kinda got in a fight? Totally didn’t want to, I swear-”

“Takeshi,” he interrupts, doing his best to keep his voice gentle as she flinches back, “I understand.”

“You…you understand?” His daughter parrots back, confusion plain.

“Yes. I’d prefer you avoid killing, but I do understand. We’ll talk about it later, alright?”

Takeshi beams at that, though there’s confusion still on her face, before settling on one of the stools before the counter and waiting for the other girls to join her.

The talk turns to school and the latest assignments, the Hibari and his Takeshi easily getting distracted, but he can still feel a gaze on him. He looks up from chopping to see Tsuna eyeing him, something appraising in her eyes.

Tsuyoshi looks at the way the other two girls lean towards her without seeming to notice, thinks about how familiar the look in the girl’s eyes is, sees how empty her gentle smile truly is, and resolves to look into this Tsuna.

Hibari looks like the more dangerous at first glance, but has no doubt the girl watching him is the true threat.

It takes someone truly dangerous to ensnare a Hibari and his daughter so effortlessly, after all.
Ryohei hates therapy.

She hates how one broken leg was enough to get her banned from the dojo, how one student sent to the hospital was enough to make her parents decide there’s something wrong with her.

The therapist shows her pictures of people making faces and wants her to say what they’re feeling, the therapist gives her scenarios and expects her to care about these fake people. The therapist tells her she’s not supposed to fight, the therapist tells her it’s unhealthy and Ryohei bites back her reply. Even she knows telling the therapist she can’t stop will make it worse.

Kyoko is her only saving grace. Ryohei complains to her sister one day, tells her she’s going crazy with these never ending sessions and the doctor that judges, when Kyoko stills. There’s that look in her eyes, the one that says she’s plotting something, but she just waves it off when her sister asks.

Ryohei finds out the next day when her little sister comes home with a stack of medical textbooks from the library. (Stolen probably, since they don’t have a library card. Or Kyoko could have talked the librarian into handing them over, she’s always been good at getting what she wants.)

“Here,” her little sister says, dropping the pile of books on the table with a thump.

“What?” She asks, baffled as Kyoko starts flipping them open.

“We’re going to find out what’s wrong with you,” her sister states so matter of fact Ryohei blinks, “and then we’re going to find something you can tell to get the therapist off your back.”

“What?” Ryohei asks again, this time completely confused, but Kyoko only rolls her eyes.

“You’re unhappy,” she says as though it’s obvious. “The sessions are making you upset, so we’re going to find a way to get the therapist to back down. If we do it right mom and dad might even decide you’re cured.”

They spend the night rifling through the textbooks, Kyoko showing her sister likely diagnoses and Ryohei marking down which symptoms match.

By the end of it Kyoko is frowning as she looks over the possibilities they’ve written down, annoyance plain in her eyes.

“We can’t tell them this.”

No, Ryohei agrees as she looks over the names Kyoko’s scribbled, they can’t. These are severe, these are the kinds of things that make specialists get involved, that add in pills and even more therapy sessions.

“So what do we do?” She finally asks, looking at Kyoko as her sister thinks.
Kyoko bites her lip as she thinks before looking back up at her sister.

“Anger management issues.”

“Huh?”

“You just need to pretend you have anger management issues. It’ll explain away the violence, and you just need to pretend you’re calming down after a few sessions. The therapist will think you’re cured and we can stop this.”

Ryohei looks over the textbook and the symptoms, chewing on her lip before finally deciding.

“I guess it’s worth a try.”

She hadn’t expected the plan to actually work. Sure, the therapist doesn’t seem entirely convinced, but her parents are, and that’s the important part. Kyoko’s even let her know she’s overheard them discussing stopping the sessions.

She didn’t expect the plan to work, but it has, and now everything’s back to normal. The only thing left is figuring out how to fight without her parents fighting out.

“Ryohei,” mom’s voice interrupts her thoughts and she looks up from her plate.

“Yeah?”

“We were thinking,” she starts, sharing a look with dad before turning back, “since you’re doing better, it might be time to to work on making friends.”

Friends? Ryohei has never thought it necessary. Why would she need friends when she had the thrill of the fight, the satisfaction that came from watching the fear on her opponent’s face?

“Sure,” she eventually responds, knowing that this has to be another hoop to jump through before therapy finally stops, “I’ll try.”

Mom beams before launching into another topic, but Ryohei can feel Kyoko’s eyes on her. Her little sister raises a disbelieving brow before going back to her food, and Ryohei bites back a sigh.

Their parents can live in their own little world where she’ll magically make friends, but both of them know tricking someone into thinking she’s normal will be hard.

This ‘making friends’ thing is hard. Putting aside not even knowing where to start and what to say, none of her classmates are interesting.

They’re either too dumb or too smart, just perceptive enough to know something’s off. And the ones that aren’t, the ones that are smart but still the right shade of oblivious are boring. If she has to spend time with them, they need to talk about more than crushes or more than the local baseball team.

Ryohei is walking through the halls after class, running through the options, when someone barrels into her.

“Sorry, sorry!” A voice apologizes, and Ryohei looks up from her position on the floor, staring straight into Sawada Tsuna’s bright eyes.

Everyone knows about Sawada. Everyone knows she and Hibari rule the school, everyone knows
they get away with things no one else can. And Ryohei notices things, she’s seen the bandages on Yamamoto’s arms, she’s seen the dirt under her nails and the bruises decorating Hibari’s shins. Even more, she’s seen the two of them follow Sawada without a second thought.

Little Tsuna, with the big doe eyes and the flowery braids. Tsuna, who broke a boy’s jaw, who knocked out someone’s teeth for no reason at all.

Tsuna, who looks like an angel but has blood on her hands.

Ryohei accepts the hand she offers, Ryohei can only nod when Tsuna asks if she wants to study with them.

It may not be love at first sight, but it’s something close.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

This is kind of a filler chapter? (By the way, I'd recommend not examining the timeline too closely.)

It takes the addition of the loud carnivore for Kyoya to recognize her own place in the pack.

She’d assumed she held the title of alpha. With the addition of the loud carnivore, though, she realizes she is wrong. An alpha must be able to lead and protect in addition to teaching, an alpha must be able to discipline the pack while still giving them support.

Kyoya cannot fulfill these requirements, but Tsuna can.

Tsuna is the one that lifts Takeshi’s mood when she is consumed by pointless shame over not being normal. Tsuna is the one that strokes Takeshi’s hair when she curls up on the other girl’s lap and complains about her sire.

Tsuna is the one that disciplines Ryohei when her bloodlust hinders fighting properly. Tsuna is the one that taught Ryohei how to hide in the shadows and how to conceal her skill to lure in prey.

But most important of all, Tsuna is the one they follow. Takeshi thinks of her as a savior, Ryohei loves her, in her own twisted way, and even Kyoya admits to herself that she will gladly follow the girl wherever she goes.

Kyoya never thought she’d be satisfied with any position but alpha, but looking at Tsuna as she knocks Takeshi to the ground, she’s pleased nonetheless.

She knows she would follow the younger girl without question, she knows she would kill for her without a second thought. She knows, if it came to it, she would die for her.

It’s as it should be, Kyoya finally decides. Only the best of alphas would be worth following, and Tsuna is nothing less.

Kyoya is growing impatient. It’s been nearly a year since the two fledgling carnivores joined their pack and they still haven’t gone on a proper hunt. Putting herbivores in the hospital is satisfying, leaving false carnivores with broken legs and broken jaws is glorious, but it’s not enough.

She wants to watch the life leave someone’s eyes, she wants to feel the blood spilling over fingers as they gasp and gurgle and plead for their lives.

Her alpha sighs when she complains to her, running a hand through Kyoya’s hair as the older girl rests her head in her lap.

“Takeshi and Ryohei aren’t ready. Takeshi still hasn’t managed to convince her dad to teach her swordplay, and you know Ryohei is still too impulsive.”

As if to reinforce her words, Takeshi takes advantage of Ryohei’s charge to duck under her fist and
kick upwards and into her ribs, sending her flying back. Kyoya is forced to acknowledge the point as she watches Ryohei twitch on the grass.

“They’re not ready, and I don’t want to hunt without them.”

Kyoya watches the duo start sparring again, still sprawled on the grass, and finds herself agreeing. Takeshi can be infuriating. Ryohei is entirely too loud, but she wants her pack-mates there when she kills for the first time.

“They’re both decent at shooting, you stealing guns from your parents really helped, but I know they don’t want to settle for shooting someone dead.”

No, Kyoya knows they don’t. Ryohei and Takeshi are carnivores, they want to watch as their prey bleeds out, they want to feel blood coating their hands just like her.

“Takeshi never took to knives like me,” Tsuna continues, “and Ryohei is good at unarmed combat, but you know she needs to be sneakier if we go after harder prey.”

As usual, Tsuna is right. Her pack-mates are true carnivores, but they are still young and untested.

“Fine,” Kyoya reluctantly agrees, looking up at Tsuna with a frown on her face, “but that only means they need to train harder.”

“Of course.”
She doesn’t know what made dad finally relent, and to be honest, she doesn’t really care.

He’s going to teach her how to wield a sword, Takeshi could care less about his motivations.

She winces just after that thought, Tsuna’s admonishing voice clear in her mind. The other girl had made sure she knew never to take things at face value, and for Tsuna to find out she didn’t even bother to ask—Takeshi dreads the thought.

“Why are you doing this?” She gathers the courage to ask when dad takes a katana off the wall of the dojo. “I spent a year asking, why are you giving in now?”

Dad looks tired, Takeshi realizes, tired and drawn with grief. It makes her think of walking home from the funeral and doing her best not to stare at the tear tracks on his face.

“We’re doing this,” dad starts as he looks over the blade, “because I know you nothing short of death would make you leave the Sawada girl’s side. After all, she is your sky.”

“My sky?” Takeshi blinks at that, and dad only smiles bitterly before a blue flame lights up along the blade. She scrambles back at that, reflexively reaching for the knife Kyoya gave her before coming back to her senses.

“I’d hoped we’d have a few more years before this, but I never expected you’d find a Vongola sky. I know you’re confused,” he says, pointedly ignoring the knife in her hand, “but I promise I’ll explain everything.”

Takeshi listens quietly as he explains the different types of flames and how they’re used, filing away everything to tell the others.

“What am I then?” She asks when he finishes the explanation, peering curiously at the rain flames flickering along the edge of the katana.

“Shape your hands-no, like this,” dad demonstrates, “and you need to focus.”

“On what?”

“What do you want, more than anything else in the world? What’s worth dying for?”

“Tsuna,” Takeshi answers without a moment’s hesitation. “Protecting Tsuna.”

“Focus on that,” dad advises, “focus on that feeling—that resolve.”

Takeshi stills, taking a deep breath and settling into a meditation pose before staring down at her hands. She thinks of Tsuna, thinks of the other girl’s smile, thinks of how desperately she wants her to be happy.

It doesn’t work, at least not until her thoughts stray to imagining Tsuna beaten and bloody, to imagining being too late to help her.

The image makes her want to wretch, but it’s enough to conjure up blue flames.

She stares, transfixed, as the blue flame flickers. Takeshi takes a deep breath, feeling calmer than she’s ever been as she stares at the rippling flame.
“Well,” dad says after a long moment of silence, “you’re doing better than I did. I couldn’t hold it nearly as long the first time.”

That’s enough to break her from her daze. Takeshi settles back into the meditation pose, her clenched hand still flickering with brilliant blue flames.

“What does it mean, that Tsuna’s my sky? And what’s Vongola? How do you know about this?”

“I used to kill people for money,” dad says casually, as though it’s not a shocking revelation. “The underworld uses these flames, the mafia and the yakuza and the triads, basically every major criminal organization.”

“As for Tsuna-skies attract people. If they manage to “match” with someone with a different element, they harmonize with them and form a bond. Tsuna has attracted you, but the bond should have manifested by now. It’s strange for a Vongola sky to still be dormant at this age.”

“What’s Vongola?” Takeshi asks again, feeling a shiver of apprehension as dad looks even more serious.

“The most dangerous and most powerful famiglia in the underworld. They’ve ruled the mafia for decades, and Tsuna’s father is one of them. He’s head of the CEDEF, which is their intelligence branch. The current head is the ninth, Timoteo di Vongola I can tell you their history later, if you want, but I think I’ve shocked you enough for today.”

It’s true, Takeshi is shocked, the only thing keeping her calm the flickering flame running through her. But that’s not enough to keep her mind from whirring, that’s not enough to keep her from remembering Tsuna’s confession one night.

“Dad,” she starts hesitantly, “is there a way to block flames? Can you keep someone from using them?”

“Seals,” dad answers with a look of disgust, “were used as punishment if someone disobeyed. They’re barbaric things that can cause death or damage someone severely. It’s why using them is outlawed by every organization in the underworld.”

“Can they affect someone’s mind?”

“Sometimes,” dad answers, looking at her warily, “why?”

“I think-” Takeshi starts then stops, torn between wanting to respect Tsuna’s privacy and the need to help the other girl. “I think Tsuna is sealed. She said her dad came home one day with an old man, and she said the next day she woke up different. She wasn’t-she wasn’t like this. Something happened to make her this way.”

Dad looks disbelieving at first, but it quickly morphs to cold fury, a level of anger she’s never seen on his face before.

“Tsuna’s my sky but we’re not bonded, and she hasn’t accessed her flames, but she should have by now. And seals can mess with people’s minds…do you think?”

She’s never seen dad so angry. “I think it’s very likely,” he finally says.

“How do we get rid of it?”

“I don’t know.”
Takeshi knows that’s a lie, knows for some reason he won’t tell her, but that doesn’t matter. She has
to tell her sky.
She’s never been so angry.

Fury had boiled up as Takeshi spoke, hot and blinding, close to making her shake.

There’s a red haze she has to blink away, there’s fury boiling in her gut, anger turning into sharp hatred.

Tsuna’s dreamed of killing before. She’s dreamed of strangling men to death, of watching as they bleed out, of carving open their insides and pulling out their guts.

But they’ve never had her father’s face, they’ve never begged and pleaded for their tuna-fishy to stop. (And that’s not even counting the old man—the old man she somehow knows is the ninth.)

She hadn’t realized a part of her had held out hope, had desperately wished they didn’t know what they were doing.

*But they knew. They knew it would damage her, they knew she would suffer—her own father allowed it.*

And for what? It can’t have been to protect her, it can’t have been for her sake. No, she knows why. She was a threat, an inconvenience, something that got in their way.

Tsuna moves and slides a box out from under her bed, grabbing a gun and strapping her knives under her clothes. When she’s done she turns to Takeshi, dimly aware there’s something like a smile on her face.

“Takeshi,” Tsuna finally starts, her own voice sounding soft and far away, “get the pistol and the knives Kyoya gave you.”

“And then,” she continues, “we need to get Kyoya and Ryohei.”

“Tsuna?” Takeshi asks, something like fear in her voice, and normally Tsuna would feel guilty. But right now she just wants to make someone suffer.

“We’re going to kill someone,” she tells her, voice faint, “we’re going to find someone, and I’m going to carve out their heart.”

Takeshi doesn’t respond, only falls into line beside her as she walks down the stairs and opens the door.

If Tsuna can’t kill *them*, she’ll settle for a bloodbath.

They find Kyoya first, the older girl perched on top of a roof, obviously watching for any signs of
trouble.

The older girl looks down at them, stiffening as she stares down at Tsuna. She stares before smiling slowly, a grin creeping across her face.

Tsuna doesn’t have to say a word before Kyoya jumps down, eager and ready.

She finds Ryohei next, climbing up to her window and knocking, the other girl startling before sliding it open.

“We’re going to kill people,” Tsuna says, seeing no reason not be blunt. “Get your brass knuckles and the chains.”

Ryohei doesn’t hesitate, lifting the floorboard by her bed and wrapping the chains around her arms, fitting the brass knuckles around one fist.

“Do you need anything?” a voice calls out, and Ryohei turns to see her little sister standing in the half opened door.

“An alibi,” Tsuna responds, turning and climbing down after Kyoko nods.

They have an alibi, they have weapons—now they only need a target.

Kyoya directs them to a house just outside of the city limits, a house that a new batch of yakuza have apparently claimed. Tsuna doesn’t care why or how they’re here, she just wants to watch the life leave their eyes.

It’s funny, she thinks distantly as the duck and weave in the shadows, she thought she’d be nervous. She thought she’d be shaking, that the thrill of finally killing would make her twitch. But all she feels is calm.

Tsuna is the best at picking locks, so the rest play rock-paper-scissors to decide who gets the guard by the back door.

“Hey!” Takeshi cheerfully cries out after her win, stepping out of the shadows and into the light to smile at the guard.

“What the fuck are—” is all the yakuza manages before Takeshi stabs him in the gut, stepping forward as he clutches at his stomach to pull him down and reach for his neck.

The others watch, Kyoya obviously jealous and Ryohei fascinated, as Takeshi stabs into his throat, sinking the blade as deep as she can before cutting across.

It’s a sloppy cut, nothing like the quick slide Tsuna had fantasized about, but Takeshi doesn’t seem to mind. The other girl is delighted at the feel of blood on her hands and her neck, obviously not bothered even though it’s staining her clothes a deep dark red.

The lock is gone soon enough, and Tsuna smiles once at her girls before stepping back as Ryohei leaps forward and kicks open the door.

The men gathered around the table look up, and Tsuna knows they want to immediately dismiss them…after all, they’re only a group of girls. But their eyes catch on Takeshi, on the blood that stains her clothes and smears her neck, that drips from her hands.

“Hello!” Tsuna says, twirling the knife in her hands and smiling. “We’re going to kill you now.”
Kyoya fires before the first one can reach for his gun, bits of brain splattered across the wall.

Ryohei leaps at the nearest one before he can react, bashing in his face with her spiked knuckles before blocking another’s attack with the chains wrapped around her arm.

Tsuna wades in as the brawl starts, letting her laugh bubble up as Takeshi knifes another one and Kyoya takes out her tonfas, as Ryohei crushes another’s throat beneath her boots.

She’s lost in the feel of it, lost in the dance as she dodges a punch and drags her knife against a man’s throat, smiling wide as the blood stains her hands and soaks into her hair.

There’s only one left, and Kyoya moves to kill him, before Tsuna raises a hand to stop her. He’s blond, and vaguely tan, and looks like he’s at least partly foreign.

He may not be her father, but it would be nice to have someone that looks like him to practice on.

“What do you want?” the man screams, eyes widening as he takes in the blue flames dancing along the edge of Takeshi’s knife, of the yellow brightness flickering around Ryohei, of the purple flames curled around Kyoya’s hands.

Tsuna kneels as he shakes against the wall, broken kneecap preventing him from rising.

“Practice,” is the only answer she gives before slicing him open slowly, before watching dispassionately as he screams and brings up a leg in a futile attempt to kick her away.

He dies both too slow and too fast, as odd as it seems, Tsuna decides as she finally finishes.

She doesn’t give the mangled corpse a second glance, instead picking up the phone on the table and tossing it to Kyoya.

“Call your parents. We can’t clean this up by ourselves.”

The men Kyoya’s parents send don’t even flinch as they look over the carnage, two of them slipping on gloves and masks while the third ushers the girls into a waiting car.

Kyoya leads them into the Hibari home, disappearing into her room and coming out with piles of clothes, throwing them to the floor before gesturing at the bathroom.

Tsuna showers quickly, scrubbing the blood from her skin and picking it out from under her nails. The other girls take turns as she dresses, until finally they’re all clad in Kyoya’s clothes (too small on Ryohei, too big on Takeshi and Tsuna.)

She reaches out to grab Kyoya’s hand when the other girl starts to lead them to a guest bedroom.

“Can,” Tsuna starts then stops, “can we share?”

Right now all she wants is them close to her, to hear Ryohei breathing and to see Takeshi, to feel Kyoya’s pulse as she sleeps.

They don’t hesitate after she asks, the girls quickly piling onto Kyoya’s giant bed.

Tsuna takes a deep breath, feels the weight of Ryohei’s arm on her, of Takeshi nestled against her shoulder and Kyoya sprawled across the bed.

"Go to sleep," Kyoya mutters before yawning and wrapping the blanket around her.
Tsuna laughs at that, tugging the blanket back and smiling as sleep finally claims her.
Hideko slowly opens the door to her daughter’s bedroom, careful not to make any sudden movements. Kyoya opens an eye at that, body instinctively tensing, before she relaxes as she recognizes her mother standing in the doorway.

The two look at each other for a moment, Kyoya too tired to even attempt to decipher the emotions in her mother’s eyes, before Hideko closes the door again.

She finds herself focusing on the clicking of her heels as she walks to the living room, as she steals Hiroshi’s glass of wine without a word and downs it.

He doesn’t protest, face mirroring her own look of tired resignation.

“Our daughter just helped slaughter a house full of trained yakuza,” Hideko finally speaks. “Our daughter killed men because her sky wanted it. Even if I can’t sense the flames, I know what a sky bond looks like.”

“Tsuyoshi’s daughter is there too,” he replies. “His daughter, who has to be a rain like her father. And the civilian, the tall girl? I’ve never felt such a strong sun.”

“Do you think?” He starts to ask next, stopping when his wife snorts in response.

“The sky is named Sawada, that Vongola idiot is selfish enough to marry a woman just so he can play house—”

“And stupid enough to leave them with his real name.” Hiroshi finishes with a sigh.

A moment of silence passes, Hideko idly running her fingers around the rim of her wine glass, when her husband speaks up.

“So what do we do now?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” She asks, turning from gazing out the window at the dark night below to face him.

“I wanted to be the one to teach Kyoya to kill. I expected Kyoya to eventually follow in our footsteps. But she’s found her sky, she’s already found her path. All we can do now is support her.”

“So we train them properly.”

“Exactly,” she responds, beginning to pace, “We train them properly. We bring in instructors to teach the sun how to heal, we convince Tsuyoshi to train his daughter harder. As for the sky? We’ll teach her politics, we’ll teach her poisons and how to cripple a man with only her words.”

“You never know,” Hiroshi points out, sounding unconvincing even to his own ears, “the girl may decide to be a civilian after all.”

Hideko doesn’t stop her disbelieving snort, gaze firmly focused on him.

“Sawada Tsuna is a sky of Vongola blood. I don’t need their famed intuition to know the girl will shake the underworld.”

“Kyoya could do worse,” he agrees, leaning back in his chair and letting out a sigh.
His wife pauses, clearly working up the courage to say it, before finally speaking. 

“‘The girl is sealed, isn’t she?’”

“I don’t see any other explanation.” Hiroshi eventually replies, frown tugging at his face. 

Hideko pauses before moving, throwing the wine glass against the wall and watching as it shatters.

“They sealed a sky,” she says, voice angry and raw. “They sealed a child of their blood.”

He purses his lips, watching as she begins to pace, rage apparent on her face.

“You don’t have the right to bring them to justice,” he eventually starts, looking up at her when she turns to face him. “Tsuna is the only one that has the right to demand blood.”

She laughs in response, voice already lighter, before moving to perch on the edge of his armchair.

“Did you see the girl? The blood on her clothes, that look in her eyes-Vongola doesn’t stand a chance. She’ll make them burn.”

“And our daughter will stand beside her.”

“I can think of worse fates for our Kyoya, than to be the Cloud of the Sky that changed the underworld.”

She recognizes the look in her husband’s eyes, she knows he’s already decided to accept it.

But-

“We really should call Fon,” Hiroshi continues, “at least to have him oversee Kyoya’s training.”

Hideko hums thoughtfully, mulling it over, before nodding. “We’ll have to have him swear not to let anyone know about her sky.”

“He’ll swear it,” he says confidently, no doubt in his mind.

“He will,” she agrees before catching his chin with her hand and tilting his face up gently, pressing a close mouthed kiss to his lips.

They part with the same thought in their minds, the same calculating confidence.

They know Sawada Tsuna will rise to greatness. Just as they know Kyoya will rise with her.

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