He’s wearing two T-Shirts but no coat, which isn't nearly enough clothes for an October night in Seoul. Though Seungcheol is pretty sure the guy isn’t feeling the cold because it’s obvious as day that he’s a fucking vampire.

Seungcheol can smell it on him.

For all that he’s not a big man, there’s a vibe about this guy that warns Seungcheol’s primitive instincts of another predator in the vicinity.

What he doesn’t understand is how the guy can’t smell him back.

Is he fucking nose blind or something?

Or maybe he has a death wish.
Things tend to happen without explanation in Seungcheol’s life. Random, confusing and unexpected things.

It’s irritating, because random, confusing and unexpected things are hard to take advantage of. Honestly, some days it’s like he’s literally bouncing from one disastrous adventure to the next.

Being born a Lycan has completely killed his ability to have a normal life, but Seungcheol thinks he’s just about managed to create some normalcy for himself by sticking to a few rules.

1)      Eating three regular meals a day.
2)      Limiting his red meat intake to once a week.
3)      Avoiding large amounts of alcohol.
4)      Burning off his excess energy in the gym.
5)      Avoiding certain areas of the city, and therefore pack politics.

So far, those rules have helped steer him, helped him stay ahead of the crazy curve and given him a life of his own.

It might not be enough to fill in the inevitable missing pieces, but it comes damn close; and it's near enough to peace that he thinks he could be happy. Genuinely. All he ever needs is more time. If he gets the urge sometimes to howl at the moon and chase rabbits, that's just a matter of willpower.

Of course, all that was before he got attacked by a vampire.

Although, attack is a strong word considering the context.

It’s freezing cold outside, and though it’s still dark Seungcheol knows it's fast heading towards dawn. He gets off at his stop and yawns, waits for the bus to glide away before crossing the road towards his house.

Fumbling for his keys at the front door, he hears a rustling to his left: a trashcan being upturned.

When he turns his head, a pair of eyes glow back at him in the darkness. A man is standing there, a line of perfect stillness in the shadows.

“Who’s there?”

Seungcheol feels kind of stupid saying it, because he's sure that’s the opening line to every horror movie—right before somebody gets stabbed.

The figure steps closer, moonlight pours over his features, giving it angles it shouldn't have.

“Your worst nightmare.” The stranger says.

Seungcheol narrows his eyes again at the sound of the voice, working against the urge to clench his
hands into fists. There’s a sibilant hiss to the syllables, and he knows what that means.

“Ronald Mcdonald?” Seungcheol asks calmly.

“Oh—No.” The man drawls, and there's a frown somewhere in the shadowed lower half of his face. “It is I—the darkness in the night.”

Seungcheol blinks. “Batman?”

“What? No!” The guy huffs, and this time he's definitely frowning, Seungcheol catches it in the brief glow of moonlight as the man emerges from the shadows a little more. “The darkness in the night—not The Dark Knight!”

The guy looks in his early twenties by Seungcheol’s estimate, despite how short he is there is a deepness in his voice, and the way he holds his body is a strange combination of rigid tension and insouciant calm.

There are…..Seungcheol revises his estimate of the guy’s age down a bit when the guy tips his head up and shakes hair out of his face, probably not quite twenty.

Blonde hair with dirty-blonde roots. Whatever eye make-up he'd been wearing looks as if it's been smudged off by the night and tired fingers. He's thin but his clothes are too large, frayed and holing at the seams. He’s wearing two T-Shirts but no coat, which isn't nearly enough clothes for an October night in Seoul. Though Seungcheol is pretty sure the guy isn’t feeling the cold because it’s obvious as day that he’s a fucking vampire.

Seungcheol can smell it on him.

For all that he’s not a big man, there’s a vibe about this guy that warns Seungcheol’s primitive instincts of another predator in the vicinity.

What he doesn’t understand is how the guy can’t smell him back.

Is he fucking nose blind or something?

Or maybe he has a death wish. It's the only explanation that makes sense. Some sort of complicated 'wherever I go—that becomes my territory, blah blah blah,' that only other vampires or a really expensive therapist could ever understand.

“Oh. Well,” Seungcheol shrugs, stuffing his hands into his pockets. He gives the vampire a careful once-over. “You’re too small to be Batman anyway. Robin—maybe.”

The vampire pulls his mouth into a thin line. He is so obviously offended. “Robin? Fuck that—I’m better than Robin. Wait—” He tenses, stepping back a little out of the light. “You can see me?”

“Oh—yeah.”

The vampire shuffles back a little more, “What about now?” His voice is a slow rumble of sound now. Not quite as sharp. Seungcheol thinks there's another accent somewhere underneath, long-buried and unplaceable.

Seungcheol sighs a plume of warm air. “Yeah, I can still see you.”

The vampire shuffles back a little more. “Now?” He asks.

Seungcheol can still see him—his mouth is open, and he's all teeth and blown pupils in the
“Yeah, that's better. You're kind of obscured by the shadows and your teeth are glowing. It's creepy.”

The vampire seems pleased that he’s achieved ‘creepy’ status.

“Good. Now—prepare to die.” The vampire says, but for some weird reason he sounds frustrated and angry at his own suggestion.

Seungcheol doesn't quite manage not to laugh at that. “Oh-kay.”

Seungcheol judges how far it is to the door, he could make a run for it—not get his hands dirty, but he kind of wants to see how this will play out.

The Vampire surges forward, lightening fast and suddenly his hand is flat on Seungcheol's shirt, cold all the way through to his chest, and one simple push takes him into the wall with a thump, and pins him there.

“This decision does not come lightly, but it must be done.” The vampire explains, weirdly polite.

“Oh really.”

A nod, then, an awkward cough. “Yes. Don’t take it personally. You have been selected entirely at random.”

Seungcheol isn’t convinced he’s in any danger, though he knows enough about vampires to play it carefully. “I see. That makes me feel a whole lot better.”

The vampire’s throat works through a heavy swallow, when he speaks again his voice cracks. “I’ll try and m-make this as p-painless as p-possible, as long as you d-don’t try and r-resist.”

He doesn't sound sure of himself, but his eyes are a flare of burgundy, bleeding outwards into his skin and are fixed on Seungcheol’s neck, on the pulse pounding in his veins no doubt.

Seungcheol holds up his free hand, palm open in a gesture of surrender. “Not resisting.”

The vampire looks confused for a split second, before his hand clamps round Seungcheol’s shoulder, forearm at full tension, muscles straining. The creature's hands are freezing, one moving to wrap round the back of Seungcheol's skull, fingers pressing in hard enough to hurt, making him look up to the sky.

“Any last words?” The vampire says, licking his lips. One hand's curved round Seungcheol’s throat and it's strong but Seungcheol knows he could crush it if he wanted to. Squeeze tight until bones break and mangle—and thinking it makes his fingers twitch, makes him smile.

He considers it, just for an instant. Considers reminding this guy exactly which one of them is on the high protein diet and which one of them is weak and soft and vulnerable because they haven’t eaten in what looks like a month. It's a reminder Seungcheol is always happy to give.

But instead, he lets the Vampire shove him again, lets him have his moment of horror.

“Yeah—hurry the fuck up.” Seungcheol says roughly.

A soft noise draws up the Vampire’s throat: it sounds like shock. “Y-you’re not s-scared?”
“About slipping into a fucking coma cause you’re taking so long? Yeah, petrified.” Seungcheol deadpans.

The vampire stops looking at Seungcheol’s neck for long enough to raise a truly impressive eyebrow of ‘what the fuck?’ at him.

“Well?” Seungcheol prompts.

Confused shifts quickly into annoyed disbelief. The vampire inhales, sharply and pins Seungcheol to the wall with one quick shove before shifting up on his tip toes and sinking his teeth at the bend of Seungcheol’s neck.

Well—that was probably his intention.

Seungcheol can feel the wetness of lips and tongue on his skin—but not the sharp sting of teeth like he expects. Instead, there’s a blunt scrape where the teeth don’t quite pierce the skin.

“Uh?”

“Relax.” The vampire’s voice is muffled where his mouth is still clamped around on Seungcheol’s neck.

Seungcheol rolls his eyes. “I am relaxed.”

“Don’t resist.” The vampire says, trying to bite down again—but still not managing to sink his fangs deep enough.

Seungcheol spares a quick look down, eyebrow raised. “Still not resisting.”

Though the angle is awkward, he can make out the vampires furrowed brow as he tries to feed, jaw relaxing and clenching as he tries to latch on.

“Are we doing this or what?” Seungcheol asks. He’d really like to get this out of the way soon—he’s got work tomorrow.

The vampire’s jaw opens stiffly, and he slips down a little, releasing Seungcheol’s collar where he has it fisted in both hands.

“I must—feed on you.” There’s a catch in the middle, like it hurts to say it.

Seungcheol shrugs, “No argument here.”

The vampire does look up at him then, face twisted into something horrified.

“Not that you have much choice in the matter.” The vampire continues talking, breath cold against his cheek, and the length of his neck. “Any minute now—I will pierce the skin and drain you.”

Seungcheol actually checks the time on his wristwatch.

“Okay, take your time.” Seungcheol replies patiently, earning another equally horrified expression.

Seungcheol doesn't understand why he’s letting this happen. He doesn't understand why he isn't fighting this.

The vampire shoves him harder against the wall, leans up for another go.
“Say goodbye.”
“Just wait.”
“Hold on.”
“Almost there.”
“Dammit!”
“Nearly got it that time.”
“Death is coming.”
“Just—give—me—a--second.” The vampire mumbles in between increasingly desperate attempts to bite him, again and again.

Seungcheol can't resist laughing, because it's all just too funny for words.

“This going to take much longer? I’m kind of hungry—haven’t had dinner yet.” He chuckles.

“I’m hungry too!” The vampire snarls with too many teeth. “Why do you think I’m doing this? You think I want this?”

His grip relaxes, just enough that Seungcheol could shake himself free if he wanted to. He does, in one smooth movement, turns and steps back.

The vampire tries to reach for him again, but stops short from actually touching him. His shoulders slump, clenches his hands into fists and then tugs at his own hair in frustration.

“Dammit. Why! Why can’t I do it. Stupid—useless—urghh.” The vampire says, his voice is hard and angry, shaking like it’s an accusation.

Seungcheol scratches the back of his head sheepishly.

“Don’t beat yourself up about it. It’s not like your life depends on that skill. Oh wait—yes it does.” Seungcheol says, tone some obscene mixture of joking and tragic.

“Shut up—just shut up.” The vampire says, stepping back out of Seungcheol's space on wobbly legs.

He stumbles on his next step and has to grip the wall for leverage. His breathing is laboured and Seungcheol can hear the way every exhale is slightly louder than the one before, the way the air trips out of him in little rushes. It’s like all the energy has drained out of him suddenly—or perhaps he used what little energy he had left to launch his pathetic attack.

Seungcheol straightens out his jacket, smoothing out the crumple collar. “Not to be that guy—but I’m a little disappointed. I was expecting more. You want to give it another shot?”

After a minute of heavy breathing, the vampire slides down the wall, pulls his knees up, and lets the back of his head rest against the brick.

“I—can’t.” he says finally, the word shaking out of him. His head tips forward, dirty blonde fringe falling over his face. “I’ve been trying for so long. Been—hungry for so long.”

“Well—A for effort.” Seungcheol sighs and goes back to unlocking his front door, wedging it
open. When he turns back around, there's a complete and unnatural stillness to the vampire now.

Seungcheol steps closer, bends down to study the vampire only to find the guy has passed out. Probably from exhaustion. Or hunger.

“Uh—hey. You probably shouldn’t nap here—it’s almost light out.” Seungcheol says, giving him a gentle nudge with his foot. He doesn’t put much force behind it, but the vampire goes sprawling awkwardly over the pavement.

“Aw—dammit.”

Seungcheol picks the vampire up in a fireman's carry and nudges the front door open with his foot.

The vampire is lithe, light and cold to the touch, soft muscles where Seungcheol had always thought he'd be heavy, thought he'd be strong and unbendable. Seungcheol could twist him until he breaks. Which is a tangled-up mixture of fascinating and horrible.

When he lays the small vampire down on his bed, the vampire winces, hands pulling over his head until Seungcheol draws the curtains over the weak, early light. Which is when it sinks in, properly, that this is really happening.

He’s taken in a stray. A stray vampire.

He looks the guy over while he shrugs out of his jacket and changes out of his work clothes. Attractive enough, Seungcheol supposes, in a jailbait sort of way with that light hair, pale pink lips and lean face. But unassuming, especially with his features softened in sleep.

The vampire has one pale hand flung across his chest, fingers curled. The tips of them are delicate, and ever so lightly blue. Without thinking about it too much Seungcheol reaches a hand out, touches the length of them. The vampire’s fingers twitch and curl around his, squeezing and then pulling away, as if he doesn't know what to do with Seungcheol’s warmth.

Seungcheol grabs a blanket and drapes it over the sleeping figure, tries to arrange him more comfortably on the bed. His limbs are sluggish and covered in dirt, and now that Seungcheol has an opportunity to examine him more closely, he can see sunken in cheeks, dark bruises like a watercolour of yellow, blue and purple over his pale skin.

Seungcheol’s never seen bruises on a vampire before—it’s not a good sign. He looks more like a prisoner of war than a vampire.

Gently, Seungcheol tips the boy’s chin down, thumbing apart his lips. He lets his fingertips slide over the vampire’s tongue and the sharp edges of his teeth, then pushes on his upper lip up to examine his fangs. Or—what the guy’s passing for fangs.

Seungcheol’s had his fair share of run ins with vampires during his life—but he’s never, and he means never—seen a vampire with such tiny fangs before.

Baby fangs in fact. The word Awww comes to mind.

No wonder he couldn’t pierce Seungcheol’s skin with those babies.

Seungcheol leaves ‘Babyfangs’ sleeping on the bed, and decides to head to the couch to catch some
much needed sleep.

As soon as he slumps down on the couch, he starts to regret it. This is a stupid idea, an incredibly stupid idea, and he has no idea why he’s still going through with it.

Seungcheol tries to tell himself that he couldn’t have very well left him to burn up on his doorstep. That would have attracted the kind of attention he’s been trying to avoid.

Seungcheol doesn’t sleep well. He doesn’t sleep at all in fact.

Every noise makes him jump; the hum of the fridge, creaks in the house, cars driving past. But however much he listens, he can’t hear a sound from the room next door. He finally gives up on sleep and gets up at 11:30am, padding into the kitchen and brewing himself some coffee.

Thinking ahead, he decides to pull a bag of Psuedo-Globin out of the freezer to defrost. It’s still in date and ‘fortified with Vitamin B12!’ according the package.

His guest is going to wake up soon, hopefully, and he’s going to want to eat something.

He’s lucky he has a few bags left over from his last ‘hunt’, because he doesn’t like the idea of leaving the vampire alone in his house to go emergency grocery shopping.

When Seungcheol goes to check on him again, Babyfangs is awake this time.

He’s sitting against the end of his bed with his knees pulled up against his chest, slouchy and brooding and in desperate need of a feed. He barely looks over at Seungcheol; mostly, it’s the flicker of tension in his narrow jaw that tells Seungcheol he’s been seen.

“Where am I?” He asks without preamble.

“Good morning to you too.” Seungcheol greets, closing the door behind him. “We’re inside my house, and this is my room, and that’s my bed which I so graciously vacated so you could nap. I would have offered you the ceiling, except I don’t have any rafters for you to hang from, so the bed was the only option. Don’t even think about hanging from the ceiling fan, my landlord would freak.”

The vampire’s making eye contact now, at least, shocked into it by Seungcheol’s relaxed tone. He looks hollow-eyed and confused, hands twitching in oddly helpless ways, as if he doesn’t know whether to relax or defend himself.

“You brought me inside?” He whispers in awe.

“Well—yeah. The sun was rising, and I figured you’d be a lot worse off if you woke up with the sun shining down on you.” Seungcheol confirms and he says it slowly, stalks closer until he can round the bed and face him, and maybe Seungcheol isn't passing for harmless as well as he thought, because the small vampire flinches.

“Hey, hey—Don’t be scared. I’m not going to hurt you.” Seungcheol says calmly, holding one
hand up while he hides the blood bag behind his back with the other. “I wouldn’t have brought you inside if that was my intention.”

After what Seungcheol considers is a pause that's just a shade too long, the vampire relaxes a fraction, perhaps too tired to stay suspicious.

Seungcheol takes two more steps, until he can sit on the edge bed. Babyfangs doesn't say anything at all, so it looks like Seungcheol is still carrying the conversation here.

“What’s your name?”

Babyfangs’ doesn’t answer, he just sits and stares at the dirt still smeared over the leg of his jeans, the dirt under his fingernails.

Seungcheol gives off a heavy sigh and crouches a little to put his face directly in the vampire’s sightline. “Yeah, I know you don’t want to tell me—but I think I’ve earned it after that little spectacle outside. Also—you’re in my home.” He protests, because he’s just too damn tired for this.

“Jihoon.” The creature offers at last, reluctantly.


The only response he gets is a flat stare.

Seungcheol smirks. “Sorry. It’s just I was expecting something elaborate and corny. Usually vampires have dumb, traditional, corny names like—Orpheus, Afanas, or Cornelius.”

Jihoon’s mouth twitches with private humour. “Cornelius?”

“I know—lame.” Seungcheol shrugs affably.” But, hey, it’s your tradition not mine. Jihoon sounds normal though—maybe you weren’t around when they were handing out the corny vampire names.”

Jihoon’s brow pinches in the middle. “Jihoon was my grandfather’s name.” He explains.

“Huh.” Seungcheol shifts a little closer, trying not to move too suddenly. “How old are you exactly?”

“I’m almost nineteen.” The vampire murmurs quietly

Seungcheol shakes his head. “No, I meant—what’s your vampire age?”

Jihoon blinks at him—eyes wide with confusion. The confusion can only mean one thing.


Things are making a lot more sense now.

Finally, Seungcheol understands why the vampire was foolish enough to attack him of all people. He’s so young—he was probably drawn to the smell of Seungcheol instead of treating his scent like the warning it was intended.

“Hey—I’m not a baby.” Jihoon says, with all the offended sensibilities he can muster. It turns out he can muster quite a lot. It’s adorable.
“Yes. Yes, you are. You’re a little baby. Aww.” Seungcheol coos. “You shouldn’t be out alone—you know that.” He tuts.

There’s an annoyed huff of air, it sounds impatient, and still just a little bit offended. Threads of embarrassment threatening to leak in. Which is ridiculous because Jihoon has nothing at all to be embarrassed about.

It’s his progenitor’s responsibility to teach him this, to take him under their ‘wing’ and teach him their ways.

The young ones never really understand that it’s not just dying and coming back. The body isn’t the only thing that changes. Vampirism also tends to burn away all those instincts that come from being a prey species. Which is why the ones that make them tend to keep them on a short leash, for the first decade or so.

Seungcheol scratches his chin and regards the creature thoughtfully.

He doesn’t look like the sort of person you’d pick to turn into a vampire. But then Seungcheol supposes ordinary people don’t call so much attention. Maybe vampires are still clinging to old habits.

Regardless, this stray is alone and clearly very hungry. Jihoon’s not his responsibility, but….

Okay, so Seungcheol still has absolutely no idea why he’s doing any of this, but it’s too late to back out now. Probably.

“Okay, so I need to do something, but I’m going to make this as painless as possible.” Seungcheol begins—which on a whole, isn’t the most reassuring thing to say.

The vampire tenses, uncomfortable, breath quick and afraid even if he tries to hide it. Seungcheol can taste it regardless, that thread of fear.

Seungcheol’s up before he even realises he means to move. He has no trouble at all grabbing Jihoon’s arm and yanking his sleeve up; it’s enough of a surprise to make the vampire yelp.

“It’s okay—sshhh.” Seungcheol reassures, pulling the arm taut.

Jihoon attempts to shove him away, but he’s just too weak. Seungcheol can feel the chill of him, fingertips pressed where the veins show through the skin. Where there should be a pulse but instead there’s just...an absence.

“What—are you doing?” Jihoon says, voice strangled and hoarse. He grunts, strains, tests his grip and Seungcheol holds him still.

Seungcheol produces the Psuedo-Globin blood bag from next to him, unsheathing the needle cap with his teeth.

Jihoon watches him, quiet and still afraid as Seungcheol brings the needle up close to his pale skin.

“Wait—”

Seungcheol squeezes Jihoon’s arm when he tries to protest further, the movement makes him stiffen, and then slowly relax. “Just relax—sshhh.” He murmurs soothingly, sliding the needle easily into the vein at the bend of an elbow.
He lifts the bag up over his head, letting gravity do its thing and watching the dark, rich red liquid snake down the IV tubing.

Seungcheol knows when it starts to work, because there's a ragged indrawn breath, a sharply bitten off curse that sounds like relief. He can feel the creature shudder, the low vibrating groan that screams 'yes'.

Seungcheol lets his fingers slide away after a minute, and sets the blood bag down on the bed at Jihoon’s feet.

Jihoon immediately reaches for it. He clutches the blood bag close, holding it like it might get taken away from him. Seungcheol pretends he doesn't notice the fine tremor in his shoulder, the wetness in his eyes.

Against his better judgement he makes himself comfortable on the bed next to his guest. He leans his back against the headboard, sticks a pillow behind his head and watches the level drop in the blood bag.

“IT’s not the fresh stuff,” Seungcheol says, gesturing vaguely at the bag of Pseudo-Globin. “Not how you like it, but it will help rejuvenate you.”

“I’ve never had fresh blood before.” Jihoon says, head tipped down, voice low like it's a secret.

It throws Seungcheol for a second. “Really? Never? When did you get turned?”

“Three months ago.” Jihoon says, propping his forearms on his knees, staring down at where his fingers clasp the bag tightly.

“What have you been eating since?” Seungcheol asks, narrowing his gaze.

The frown shows up slowly on Jihoon’s face. “Nothing solid in the last week. I’ve been surviving by raiding bloodbanks and hospitals, but I almost got caught. I tried regular food for a bit, but then it started making me sick. I tried to feed on others, but I kept chickening out.” Jihoon sighs.

He won't look at Seungcheol anymore, and Seungcheol lets him have his silence for a minute, because he thinks that's a lot for the guy to admit. There's something fascinating in the moral quandaries of...people with morals.

The Pseudo-Globin is definitely working now; a healthy colour is returning to Jihoon’s complexion.

Seungcheol gives Jihoon a long look before he asks, “How’d you get turned?”

Jihoon grates out an exasperated sound. He shakes his head, untidy lines of hair falling forward over his eyes. “I don’t remember.”

Seungcheol digests that for a second. “Who turned you—who’s your progenitor?”

“I—don’t know.” Jihoon says. But it sounds uncertain, as if he doesn't really know what that means, and Seungcheol doesn't even know how to begin explaining that to him.

“Oh—fuck. You’ve got so much to learn.” Seungcheol squeezes his eyes shut for a moment, running a hand across his face. “I’m guessing your conversion wasn’t—consensual.”

“I don’t remember.” Jihoon says again. His mouth goes down at the corner and there’s a growing
chill in his demeanour that makes Seungcheol’s skin crawl. “But I don’t think so. I remember it hurt a lot.” He adds in a thready, traumatised sort of way.

Now that Seungcheol knows what to look for, he can see it. There’s a series of long scrapes down Jihoon’s throat and dirt caught in the folds of torn skin. There’s also a very clear bruise on the side of Jihoon’s neck closest to Seungcheol, broken blood vessels purpling the surface, the slight indentation of teeth.

Seungcheol is torn between wanting to kill someone and laughing at the unfairness of it all; consent wouldn’t have been so painful.

Sometimes Seungcheol rather hates the world.

Jihoon loops his arms around his knees, tucking his head between them. He looks so small, so afraid.

Seungcheol frowns. He feels like he should offer something then, some sort of condolence, or attempt at human contact, maybe an apology for the dickish approach he’s had so far. Seungcheol isn’t the type to do that though, but he feels like he should attempt some kind of comforting gesture. He doesn’t know what he wants more: to put his fist through a wall or to wrap Jihoon in his arms, a gesture he’s fairly certain won’t be appreciated.

“Are you going to report me?” Jihoon murmurs brokenly.

“Why would I do that?”

The vampire snaps his head up to look at him, and his eyes widen slightly in bewilderment. “Because I tried to feed on you, multiple times.” Jihoon says honestly, in one long rush.

Seungcheol surprises himself again. He takes a breath, then shifts and leans on Jihoon, just a fraction. Seungcheol thinks it’s supposed to be the world’s most awkward shoulder nudge.

“Tried being the operative word. I won’t hold it against you. You suck at feeding. Wait—that’s not right. You can’t suck because you can’t even pierce the skin.” Seungcheol says on the end of a laugh, because he can’t stop replaying it in his head.

Jihoon twitches, and Seungcheol knows he’s hit a nerve, that the vampire has taken that as an insult.

When Seungcheol cuts his eyes sideways he finds Jihoon scowling at him. It’s—strangely comforting. And maybe a little adorable.

“I wasn’t really trying.” Jihoon huffs, practically vibrating with righteous indignation.

Seungcheol scoffs, because they both know that the vampire doesn’t have the balls, or more accurately—the fangs—to back it up.

“Listen—you have baby fangs, Jihoon. In fact—I’ve already nicknamed you ‘Babyfangs’ because I took a peek at them when you were sleeping and they’re so teeny. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a vampire with such small fangs before. Most vampires I’ve seen have really gross fangs, all long and sharp. But yours are kinda cute.”

Jihoon’s ears flash red. Seungcheol didn’t know vampires were even capable of blushing, but there you go.
“It’s not my fault.” Jihoon huffs. He looks away, but Seungcheol can still tell he’s scowling at the wall. “I tried sharpening them—but they wouldn’t get sharper.”

“You can’t file your fangs,” Seungcheol groans in disbelief. He rubs his temple, tiredly. “They’re practically indestructible now. Impervious to damage. Even if you rip one off—it will grow back in no time. They’ll be that small for the rest of your vampire life.”

It’s Jihoon’s turn to scoff. “Isn’t that like—an eternity or something?”

Seungcheol offers him a hangdog grin. “Yeah. So, good luck with that.”

Jihoon does huff real laughter then, it cracks a little, but it sounds right.

Seungcheol steps through the living room doorway and Jihoon follows.

Unexpectedly he’s dumbstruck. Maybe he was homeless before he was converted, because he looks around the house with wide eyes. Probably, Seungcheol thinks cynically, working out what to steal: the TV, computer, sound-system, phone, Seungcheol’s pride and joy—the microwave.

Dammit. It has never occurred to Seungcheol before just how many expensive items he keeps in his home.

He gives an awkward cough. “I got some spare clothes I can give you. Do you, um, do you want a shower?”

Jihoon doesn’t reply, just stares at the ground and fiddles with the torn sleeve of his t-shirt.

Seungcheol just decides for him in the end, because of course the guy wants a shower: he looks half-frozen and everything he’s wearing is caked in dirt.

Seungcheol mechanically shows Jihoon the bathroom and explains the faulty thing about the shower, before handing him a few towels and a set of dry clothes.

When Jihoon emerges from the bathroom, Seungcheol’s strangely happy he’s taken up his offer of changing into Seungcheol’s clothes.

He’s a good deal younger than Seungcheol and built completely differently so he hasn’t even attempted the tracksuit bottoms. They just don’t fit. Seungcheol’s blue jumper however, hangs low off one shoulder and comes down to his milky thighs.

Not that Seungcheol is looking at his thighs. Definitely not.

Jihoon must think he is though, because he drops his gaze, scrubs a hand awkwardly in his wet hair and says, “The pants kept falling down—even with the drawstring tied all the way. Sorry.”

“No—hey, It’s fine.” Seungcheol says, just stopping himself short from adding—‘You have nice thighs.’

He pours Jihoon a glass of orange juice, he doesn’t have a clue why - maybe cause it was either that or coffee, and the guy looks like he needs all the sleep he can get, so caffeine was ruled out.
It's just this weird disconnect that there's a visitor in the kitchen and he should be a good host and offer something. Still he's not quite sure why he immediately decides on orange juice.

"Drink it.” Seungcheol says, handing him the glass. Which probably sounds like it's not optional—and probably rude.

Jihoon looks briefly confused, but he drinks it anyway. Vitamin C is probably good for you, whether you're a baby vampire or not.

"Do you want to have breakfast with me?” Seungcheol asks, because he’s kind of hungry now. “I got toast and eggs—and *bacon.*” He offers with an eyebrow waggle.

Jihoon gives him the weirdest look. It's a look Seungcheol's getting used to.

“C’mon. What kind of vampire doesn’t like bacon?” He scoffs.

Jihoon sighs, like he has a million other things he could be doing and yet he's grudgingly spending time in Seungcheol’s kitchen having an opinion on foodstuffs.

"I should -" 

"*You should* like bacon," Seungcheol finishes for him, which probably wasn't what Jihoon was going for there, but it's true. Everyone loves bacon—Except a few major religions and vegetarians.

There's half a minute of tense silence. Seungcheol isn't sure why it's tense exactly.

Was Jihoon a religious vegetarian before he was converted? Has Seungcheol offended him by offering bacon?

"Okay," Jihoon agrees reluctantly, and then breathes out, as if they'd been playing a tense poker game which Seungcheol had unexpectedly won by playing his ace in the hole—*bacon.*

Jihoon hoists himself up into a stool by the breakfast bar and watches as Seungcheol cooks bacon, toast and eggs.

*Bacon, toast and eggs for *four.*

Hey—he’s just being a good host, but when Seungcheol piles the vampires plate to the brim with six rashers of bacon, Jihoon gives him that weird look again—Seungcheol’s beginning to think it’s awe.

“*You need to eat.*” Seungcheol clarifies, scraping butter over his toast. “*Now that you’ve got the Pseudo-Globin in your system—you’ll be able to tolerate regular food. You need to build up your strength, otherwise you’ll just get your ass handed to you if you try and feed on me again.*”

When Jihoon grins across the table, showing a glimmer of fang, Seungcheol smiles back warmly.

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After breakfast, Seungcheol prepares himself to ask the *important* questions.

He needs to find out where this guy is from, whether there’s anyone else who can help him, what his situation is, whether or not he’s on the run or perhaps *murdered* anyone. But instead of asking any of those vital questions, he asks if Jihoon wants to watch TV.
Because that’s how Seungcheol rolls.

With the television on they don’t have to talk. They spend the afternoon lounging in front of the TV. Occasionally Jihoon shoots Seungcheol a strange uncertain look, then his eyes flicker back to the television.

The yawning gap of unanswered questions opens up between them, and the clock ticks on towards the inevitable time when Seungcheol has to face up to the fact that he’s going to have to get ready for work soon—and he can’t leave Jihoon here.

Resigning himself, Seungcheol grabs the remote and kills the TV.

The silence drags out, and Seungcheol already knows what's coming, what's been hovering on the edge all day.

“Listen, Jihoon. I need to go to work soo-“

“I know.” Jihoon interjects quietly. He stares at Seungcheol and for a moment he looks even more vulnerable than he did curled up in Seungcheol’s bed.

Seungcheol’s heart goes out to him. “Are you going to be okay?”

The vampire smiles, but it doesn’t quite reach his eyes. "I'll be fine. I am fine. Better than fine."

Seungcheol thinks the fact that he's used the word 'fine' three times in one sentence might be suggesting the opposite.

“I wouldn’t advise you trying to feed in this neighbourhood. There’s a vampire neighbourhood watch thingy that patrols at all hours. They don’t tolerate rampant feeding, so you need to be careful.” Seungcheol says, feeling shocked at himself as soon as he says it.

“Okay. Uh—thanks.” Jihoon answers, almost as stunned as Seungcheol with the advice.

Seungcheol clears his throat. “Uhm, I have something to give you.” He says, getting up off the couch and heading down the corridor.

He grabs his wallet from his jacket pocket hanging in the hallway, intent on giving the guy some money to help him out, but when he pads back into the living room—Jihoon isn’t on the couch anymore. In fact, he’s nowhere to be found.

A quick check in the bedroom reveals his shoes are gone and he’s taken his dirty, torn clothes from the bathroom too.

Seungcheol sniffs the air—checking to see if the vampire is just hiding out of sight, but the only smell that greets his nostrils is his own.

Dammit.

Seungcheol spends at least five minutes trying to work out how to carry more than four bottles of coke at a time. Because, damn it, he's not making more than one trip. He can carry two under his arms and one under his chin. Or he can carry two in each hand and one under his chin, every time he tries to combine the two techniques the bottles go rolling off, and he has to stop them with errant feet and he's pretty sure one of them is going to burst any moment.
“Night shift is so dull. I don’t know how you do it. We’ve got six hours left and I’m bored to death already.” Wonwoo drones from behind the counter, where he’s been flipping through a magazine since his shift started two hours ago.

“I don’t see how you can be, seeing as we still have out-of-stocks on the shelves.” Seungcheol says, from where he’s crouched gargoylike among the bottles of soda, arms full. “You can help me if you’ve got nothing to do but stand and read. It’s not like we’re going to get any customers.”

Wonwoo turns his head and glares at him, opens his mouth to speak - only to snap it shut when he gets a good look at Seungcheol holding two bottles against his chest like a pair of missile boobs.

One of the coke bottles slides down his chest, but Seungcheol manages to catch it under his wrist before it falls.

“I was considering you for employee of the month yanno—but I don’t think you’ve pulled your weight to deserve it. I might have to give it to Mingyu again.” Seungcheol warns him.

Which, granted, may come out a little less determined than he hopes, because he's trying to hold a bottle of coke with his chin and mostly failing, and he's pretty sure he's partially unscrewed the one tucked under his arm, and everything is going to get very messy in a moment.

Wonwoo frowns pointedly in Seungcheol's direction, until he rolls his eyes and pretends to be bored with his magazine again.

Seungcheol finishes stocking the empty shelves and retakes his potion behind the counter.

Meanwhile, Wonwoo’s discarded his magazine and has opened a bag of M&M’s on the counter.

“You better pay for those—and the magazine. You treat this place like it’s voluntary work. You get paid Wonu—you need to start acting like it.” Seungcheol says, grabbing the M&Ms and tipping a few out onto his palm.

He drops the packet on the counter, which crinkles and falls sideways. One of them rolls across the table. It's a red one.

Seungcheol picks it up, rolls it between his fingers.

“What do you know about the local vampire coven?” Seungcheol finds himself asking, he's not entirely sure why.

That earns him a quick and curious glance from Wonwoo. “There isn’t one. You should know that Seungcheol—I think you of all people would have noticed if vampires were sniffing about Lycan territory.”

“I don’t really keep up with that political shit.” Seungcheol says with a sigh, popping the sweet into his mouth and crunching down. “Besides, It’s just me out here. I’m hardly a deterrent for them.”

Wonwoo makes a 'hmm' noise in his throat, as if he isn't entirely convinced.

“Don’t underestimate your repellent effect on them, Seungcheol. I personally find you very repelling, so imagine with their heightened sense of—everything—they can probably smell you half way across town.” Wonwoo says.

He reaches over and steals the bag back, emptying what’s left on the counter. The M&Ms scatter, a riot of red, green and yellow—Seungcheol helps himself to another handful.
“Why are you asking about vampires anyway?” Wonwoo asks, raising a questioning eyebrow.

Seungcheol tucks the discarded magazine back into its place and shakes his head.

“No reason. I just wanted to know what would happen if there was a stray vampire in the area.” Seungcheol says, in what he hopes is an appropriately casual tone of voice. And yes, the irony isn’t lost on him that he’s asking about vampire welfare.

“They’d be euthanised. Or worse, sold for research.” There’s a graceless jerk of shoulders, like Wonwoo doesn’t care either way. “People are less sympathetic about stray vampires then they are stray animals these days.”

Seungcheol ignores the twin stabs of anger and panic.

“Classic humanity. Come across something they don’t understand and their first solution is to destroy it.” replies Seungcheol, failing to keep the bitterness out of his voice. Fuck—he was trying for uncaring but coming across defensive.

“Have you seen a stray?” Wonwoo asks, finger jabbed in Seungcheol’s direction. His expression is leaking alarm like a sieve, which is so annoying that Seungcheol decides to keep the part of him that might be - just a little bit - concerned for Jihoon's well-being to himself. Instead he makes an undecided noise, and goes back to eating Wonwoo’s stolen M&M’s.

“Seungcheol,” Wonwoo says, obviously not dropping the topic. “You need to report strays—you realise that don’t you? I know you’re not big of following the rules, but Strays are a danger to themselves as much as anyone else. You need to report them.” He adds, stressing the point, almost angrily.

Seungcheol happy he has too many M&M’s in his mouth to actually reply to that.

It’s a whole conversation that he really doesn't want to have right now, and with Wonwoo of all people.

Wonwoo’s just being paranoid. He thinks he knows a lot because he reads up about it, but he’s never been in the thick of it. He hasn’t seen what Seungcheol’s seen.

Jihoon may be a stray, but he isn’t a threat.

Yeah, okay, he tried to feed on Seungcheol—but he was clearly desperate and actually quite tame after. It’s not like he had elaborately planned the whole thing. It wasn't like he'd showed up floating outside Seungcheol's bedroom window. Not that Babyfangs knows how to float. Or even would, because that’s exactly the sort of tacky, movie rip-off bullshit that Seungcheol would have mocked him for mercilessly.

No, Jihoon’s not a threat. He’s just obviously struggling with his conversion and unable to compartmentalize, but that will take time.

He just needs........guidance.

Jihoon’s lingering in the darkness outside again when Seungcheol gets home from work a few nights later. Seungcheol can smell him from a mile away, thick and familiar and running shades of scared and unhappy.
He waits until he’s got the key twisting in the lock, before calling over his shoulder. “That you Babyfangs?”

There’s no answer but the scuffing of shoes on the pavement as the vampire shuffles closer.

Seungcheol breathes a sigh of relief. Ridiculously, he spent a really long week worrying about Jihoon and looking outside his house for signs of him.

He should have known better than to take in and feed a stray: they always come back.

Next thing Seungcheol knows Jihoon will be bringing back other hurt and injured baby strays to his home. They’ll huddle outside waiting for him to get back from work, to let them inside and feed them. His bacon expenditure will go through the roof. He’ll become the neighbourhood cat lady—but with baby vampires.

Awesome.

“Come back for another try?” Seungcheol asks as Jihoon steps out of the shadows to his left. A spike of moonlight illuminates his face.

The small vampire shakes his head with a frown which may be just the slightest bit petulant.

He looks healthier than their previous encounter; skin still alabaster but there’s hectic colour in his cheeks and frighteningly invasive eyes. He’s still wearing Seungcheol’s blue jumper; it’s the cleanest thing about him.

His hands are clasped in front of him, fingers twitching anxiously. Coming to Seungcheol must be his back-up plan, and that's funnier than it should be, probably.

Seungcheol would probably call it trust, in another life. He'd thought he was too old and too cruel for things like that, but it seems his life has become a mess of beautiful and frustrating contradictions.

“You want to come in?” Seungcheol drawls.

Jihoon nods, a small pleased smile on his face.

Seungcheol chuckles and holds the door open, but Jihoon doesn’t move. “What? You waiting for an invitation?”

Jihoon stares between Seungcheol and the open doorway, then his shoulders move in an uncomfortable shrug. “I guess.”

Seungcheol raises an eyebrow and tries not to look too amused, he tries, and probably fails. “You know that ‘invitation’ thing is probably bullshit. Like the garlic thing too. There’s probably a lot you think you know about being a vampire that isn’t true.”

Jihoon blinks at him—and Seungcheol realises that little myth has gone over his head. Jesus Somebodies Christ—he really is a vampire newbie.

Seungcheol shoves the door open wide, and tips his head. “C’mon—get inside.”

Seungcheol encourages Jihoon through the door with a gentle hand on his back, because it's cold and morning is somewhere in the not too distant future, and he’d rather get inside where it's warm than pose theatrically on the steps. Thankfully Jihoon has finished being scared and confused and
lets himself be gently pushed.

“You’re sleeping on the couch this time.”
It’s been ages since Seungcheol’s had to stray out of his territory, but Jihoon’s coming over a lot more regularly now and the specific brand of Pseudoglobin Seungcheol buys can only be found at the wholesale supermarket clear across town.

Seungcheol shops there sporadically, and he hates the place with a passion. Stuck in the twentieth century, the store only accepts cash and doesn’t even do online sales. But it’s the only place where he can locally buy large quantities of Psuedoglobin without unwanted questions and dubious looks.

Which is why, when he starts to run low, he makes the journey with freshly withdrawn cash and his carefully reviewed inventory list, feeling kinship with prehistoric Lycan that no doubt had to go to similar lengths for their bulk buying necessities.

Unfortunately for him, his shopping expedition this time takes twice as long, because the place seems to have had a refit since he was last here and everything isn’t where it’s supposed to be.

He manages to track down half the items on his list before getting lost between the canned goods aisle and preserves, searching for the Pseudoglobin.

Accepting defeat, he approaches the shop assistant wearing a burgundy staff jacket too large for his frame. As Seungcheol gets within shoulder tapping distance, he’s surprised to realise that the guy is actually a vampire.

He almost laughs. It’s not everyday you come across a vampire stacking shelves in a supermarket, but he supposes they have to make a living too.

“Excuse me,” Seungcheol begins, tapping the guy gently on the shoulder.

The shop assistant freezes in the process of stocking cereal boxes and snaps his head to the side. Seungcheol can see the flash of surprise in his eyes, catches the delicious whiff of terror coming off him the moment he realizes what Seungcheol is.

“Where did you move your Pseudo-” Before Seungcheol can finish speaking, the guy whirls around, throws his hands up in the air, and starts blabbering at Seungcheol with manic eyes.

“Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit, shit, shit!” The guy stammers, getting progressively shriller.

Seungcheol drops his voice and chances a stealthy look around, “Calm down.”

“Oh, God. No!”

“Calm down.”
The guy crumples to his knees, begging for his life at Seungcheol’s feet. “Please! No! Have mercy!”

“For fuck sake—calm down.” Seungcheol says in a frantic whisper.

“Don’t hurt me! I just work here!”

“I won’t! Just—get off the floor.” Seungcheol bites out. He tangles a hand in the collar of the guy’s uniform and lifts him onto his feet, holds him in place with a hand on his shoulder.

“I’m not going to hurt you.” Seungcheol soothes, giving the guys shoulder a gentle squeeze before letting him go. “I’m not hunting. I just wanted to know where you moved the Pseudoglobin fridge. It used to be at the bottom of this aisle.” He gestures to the empty fridge unit.

The vampire’s pupils are still saucer wide, fearful, but they don't stay like that for long. Seungcheol can actually see him forcing his face into a more neutral expression. He straightens out is uniform and adjusts the gold name badge on his lapel identifying him as “Soonyoung.”

“I—I—it’s over by the chilled foods now. I can show you where it is.” Soonyoung says, his voice tinged with fear and deference.

“No. That’s fine. I know where that is. Thank you for your help.” Seungcheol says.

Soonyoung nods and then gives him the oddest look, like Seungcheol has done something strange and unexpected and he doesn't know what to do with it. Seungcheol isn't sure whether that's a good thing or not.

That’s the end of that—Seungcheol hopes, as he pushes his shopping cart down the aisle and far away.

Turns out it’s only the beginning of his awkward shopping experience.

Soonyoung follows him around the store, lurking around corners and peering at Seungcheol from behind displays with slit-eyed suspicion. He maintains a reasonable distance so that he can’t be accused of stalking, but he’s definitely doing it.

There’s no mistaking the prickle on the back of Seungcheol's neck, which is distracting enough that he knocks over a display of canned peaches with his cart.

Why the fuck is it always peaches? Why do they always leave peaches where innocent people can smash into them?

Seungcheol sighs and scoops down to reassemble the tower of canned peaches. He’s used to assembling canned towers where he works, so he gets it done in no time. When he straightens up again he sees shifty vampire boy standing at the end of the aisle, looking like he might not agree with Seungcheol’s canned peach tower assembly methods.

It only takes one pointed look from Seungcheol to make Soonyoung scurry.

Which Seungcheol thinks is kind of unfair.

Understandable, given the circumstances, but unfair.

Seungcheol isn't currently wanted for arrest, or even as a person of interest, and it's not like he screams 'Lycan' on sight - well, ok, he does but only if you know what to look for and he hasn’t
targeted vampires for years. There’s no reason for this guy to be hovering nervously in the distance, jumping out of the aisle when Seungcheol enters it, and documenting his every purchase with tiny critical eyes.

Something tells Seungcheol this vampire isn’t that much older than Jihoon in vampire years. Something about his fresh scent, or nervous disposition or that fact that he keeps poking his head between the canned goods to spy on him.

Seriously, what’s up with this influx of baby vampires all of a sudden? And why are they all checking him out? If this one tries to follow him home—they’re going to have a problem.

Seungcheol resolves to ignore Soonyoung’s curiosity as best he can.

Ten minutes later, it’s still not working.

He can see the Soonyoung’s red jacket appear in the periphery of his vision as he searches through the Pseudoglobin display. They’re completely out of the fortified variety Seungcheol prefers, and he debates about asking Soonyoung again and possibly sending him into cardiac arrest.

Or whatever the vampire equivalent is. Possibly kick start his heart into beating again or something.

*Oh, fuck it.*

Seungcheol decides to approach Soonyoung again and ask him anyway, and the guy’s reaction is instantaneous: he's head ducks sharply, and lowers his eyes to the floor, pretends to be stocking shelves.

Seungcheol digs deep into his self-restraint to keep from rolling his eyes.

“G-got what y-you’re L-looking for s-sir?” Soonyoung asks, not looking away from the shelf.

“Unfortunately, no.” Seungcheol sighs. “You seem to be out of the brand I like. The fortified with Vitamin B12 one.”

Soonyoung’s head snaps up sharply. “Oh god. I’m so sorry. We’re expecting a delivery tomorrow morning. I can set some stock aside for you if you like?” He sounds a bit hesitant, as if wary of making any promises

“It’s fine.” Seungcheol grits out before the guy can start panicking about that. “I’ll just take this for now.”

Seungcheol rolls his cart towards the checkout and starts unloading his stuff on the conveyor belt. There’s nobody manning the tills, but before he can start to get pissed off about that Shifty McShifterson jumps into the spot behind the counter. Or at least, he *oozes* into it while Seungcheol’s not looking.

Soonyoung rings up Seungcheol’s groceries efficiently and even bags them, but when Seungcheol pulls out his wallet to pay, the vampire gasps in shock.

He clearly can’t get his head around Seungcheol being a *real* person with ID and money and stuff who wasn't literally raised by wolves in the forest. Or perhaps he wasn’t expecting Seungcheol to pay with money, but with the carcass of a dead animal.

Seungcheol wishes that trying to be normal every once in a while didn't feeling so exhausting.
“Thank you so much.” Soonyoung murmurs, accepting the folded bills graciously like Seungcheol has done something amazing by paying for his own groceries.

As Seungcheol grabs his bags to leave, Soonyoung jerks his chin up and tries to fight down the quaver in his voice. “H-have a n-nice day s-sir. Thank y-you for shop-shopping with us.”

Seungcheol offers a wan smile in return.

Looks like he’s going to have to find a new place to shop. Again.

It’s really only the tail end of a particularly bad and long shift when Seungcheol misses the bus home.

He had spent a good half an hour helping Mingyu unload a late delivery, and by the time he’d clocked out and made it to his stop, the bus had already left. The next one is a good hour away, so now he’s stuck walking home.

But the world had decided he still hadn't been punished enough, and now it was raining. He pulls his collar up, though it doesn't help in the slightest, rain still falls through his hair and runs down the back of his neck in hideously invasive trails. Wet over his clothes and wet under his clothes, after a few minutes it doesn't really matter any more.

He doesn't have happy memories associated with being soaking wet.

His shoes are making squeak, squeak, slosh noises, though give it another mile or two and they’ll be a ‘squelch’ somewhere in there too. He's not looking forward to the ‘squelch’ making an appearance.

If Seungcheol had known he was going to be walking in the rain he'd have brought a hat, and a bigger coat, and more enthusiasm.

As it is he's running on empty and he's really not in the mood. Honestly, if somebody crosses his path right now and pisses him off—he might just eat them on principle.

When he makes it home he’s feeling especially sorry for himself, but now he’s feeling guilty too because Jihoon’s curled up on his doorstep, obviously waiting for him. Seungcheol is momentarily taken aback to see how much smaller he looks, shoulders bowed, all folded in on himself in the rain.

He’s made a habit of this: loitering in the alleyway, the late night knock, the doorbell lean, the quiet scratch at the window. Turning up in Seungcheol’s space unannounced, though not unwelcome.

The promise of sanctuary is there as long as Jihoon leaves when Seungcheol leaves for work, doesn’t tell anyone about their little arrangement, or tries to bring anyone with him.

They're both fine with that. And the weirdest thing is--the Lycan in Seungcheol is fine with it. Some things are worth protecting.

“You’re late.” Jihoon grumbles through the rain as Seungcheol approaches.

Seungcheol raises an eyebrow at him, the rain ruins the effect somewhat by immediately plastering
half his hair to his face.

“Hello to you too.” Seungcheol bumps him with an elbow and Jihoon briefly wobbles on the verge with all the grace of a penguin. He’s got no injuries that Seungcheol can see, but he could just be tired and hungry.

“Did you have a productive night? Feed on anyone today?” Seungcheol asks.

Jihoon shakes his head.

“Are you sure?” Seungcheol says, with mock suspicion and Jihoon pulls a face like he knows he's being mocked.

“You know I can’t ass-hat.”

Seungcheol grins, unexpectedly charmed by Jihoon’s abrasiveness tonight.

He fumbles for his keys, fumbling all the more when Jihoon presses closer to his side, shielding himself from the unending torrent by huddling against him.

Seungcheol can't resist a smile, even if it does get him a mouthful of rainwater.

The minute they get inside, Seungcheol starts stripping off his soaking wet clothes in the hallway. No sense in drenching the rest of the house if he can avoid it. He stops when he reaches his boxers, still reasonably dry, and turns to find Jihoon standing quietly behind him dripping a tiny puddle on the floor.

He doesn’t look to be following Seungcheol’s example, so Seungcheol helps him out.

Jihoon grunts surprise when Seungcheol grabs the hem of his drenched jumper, yanking it up and off him and leaving Jihoon briefly spluttering protest and panic. “Hey!”

“You’re soaking wet, the clothes have to come off here.” Seungcheol explains.

Jihoon acknowledges that with a vague humph, already looking away as Seungcheol begins to work on his jeans, efficiently stripping away the belt, unbuttoning and unzipping.

The damp fabric puddles on the floor around Jihoon’s feet and Seungcheol does his best to ignore the lack of underwear, the sight of Jihoon’s dick.

It shouldn’t be hard, because he’s a Lycan and extreme nakedness after a transformation is standard. But it’s usually his nakedness and not….not this milky, smooth, flawless Vampire nakedness. So, he's not really prepared for sudden nudity in the hallway. Which is absolutely his own fault for stripping Jihoon down, but still….no underwear?

“I lost them.” Jihoon murmurs, as if reading Seungcheol’s mind.

Seungcheol gives him a look. “I’m not going to ask how.”

“Are you sure? It’s a very interesting story.” Jihoon says, and then he looks up at Seungcheol from underneath his eyelashes and smiles, an alluring curve of his lips.

There is a brief tightening in Seungcheol’s groin.

This is not how he pictured this night turning out.
Okay. Stop right there brain!

Seungcheol forces himself to remain still and keep his breathing even, not wanting to telegraph his frustration.

“Go. Have a shower. I’ll bring you some spare clothes in a second.” Seungcheol says, experiencing a damn hard time trying to keep his eyes on the Jihoon's face rather than have them travel south.

Jihoon nods then drifts off across the floorboards, which creak under his feet, leaving wet footprints as he goes. He pads into the bathroom, but leaves the door wide open; Seungcheol can hear the water running. Perhaps some kind of invitation to join…

No. Jesus brain. We talked about this.

He picks up his and Jihoon's clothes and throws them in the laundry hamper for later. He pulls out a couple of fluffy bath towels and lays the bathmat by the tub. There's nothing of Seungcheol’s that fits Jihoon well, so that’s why he went clothes shopping earlier this week.

Yeah. He did that. He went clothes shopping for his stray baby vampire.

It’s not much: a few smaller sized T-shirts, a few pairs of jeans, a hoodie and some track pants. Seungcheol adds one of his own thicker jumpers to the pile, a pair of sport socks; there's not much he can do about underwear, and he doesn't think Jihoon would appreciate an offer to share, so Seungcheol doesn't bother.

He piles everything on the bathroom counter, making a mental note to add underwear to his list of shopping for next time.

Turning to leaving the bathroom, he catches sight of Jihoon watching him through the gap in the shower curtain. Even through the steam, Seungcheol can see him just standing under the spray; narrow and angular, all spare muscles and slender hips; heated, pink skin making him look almost human.

Christ, there are no words - no fucking words for how gorgeous he looks. It takes Seungcheol from interested to something that's closer to a bright, hard ache in seconds.

Seungcheol is grateful for the presence of a shower curtain between them. If the curtain weren’t there, he may have done something stupid, something Lycan’s definitely don’t go around doing to vampires.

Or do they?

Nope. No. His brain has gone to that inappropriate place again.

Seungcheol knows he should just walk away, that would be the sensible and probably the polite thing to instead of just standing there and watching his guest shower. But for some reason his Lycan instincts compel him to stay put.

Seungcheol lets his gaze linger, heavy as a hand on Jihoon's skin, because he can, because it's always a good idea to keep a vampire off balance. He can see Jihoon fighting it, but finally can't
help squirming a little.

“You’re staring.” Jihoon murmurs. There’s a quiet, strangely serious tone to the words. It makes Seungcheol think Jihoon means something more than the obvious.

“You’re naked in my shower.” Seungcheol aims for flirtatious, but it comes out sounding awkward. He pushes on. “Towels are here, and some clothes. I didn’t know your size, so I just bought a few sizes smaller—”

Jihoon blinks water out of his eyes. “You bought me clothes?”

“No, not really.” Except yes, really. “I was just walking past a shop and I happened to notice they sold clothes and you need clothes, but you don’t have money, and I have money and clothes. And I don’t need more clothes, but you need clothes and—” And this is the worst, most roundabout explanation he’s ever given in his fucking life.

“Thank you.” Jihoon thankfully interrupts. He says it so firmly, without a trace of sarcasm or tease, that Seungcheol loses his carefully casual front, and finds himself blushing.

“It’s nothing.” He finds his voice hoarse, and he clears his throat before continuing, “Finish up and I’ll make us something to eat, yeah?”

The water turns off with a mighty whinge of pipes, and Seungcheol busies himself making sandwiches, wondering if he should refrain from adding garlic mayo to the BLT he’s making. He’s still not sure if the ‘garlic’ aversion in vampires is real or a load of baloney.

Better keep it to the side, just in case.

He keeps one ear out for Jihoon’s voice, or alternately, the sound of Jihoon’s quiet footsteps on the floorboard, since Seungcheol is well-acquainted with Jihoon’s silent nature, but there’s nothing. When Seungcheol sticks his head around the kitchen cupboards he sees it's because Jihoon’s stealthily made it to unlit fireplace, and is peering at one of the pictures on the mantle.

“Is this your family?” Jihoon asks without looking away from the picture.

“Was.” Seungcheol corrects.

Jihoon snaps his head up, an apologetic look on his face that’s obviously assuming the worst.

“No. They’re not dead. They’re just,” Almost twenty years clean and Seungcheol still locks up when anyone asks him about his past” ……not around anymore.” He finishes.

Jihoon’s face is pinched and grey, conflicting emotions written in the lines of his mouth.

Seungcheol doesn’t want to elaborate because even innocuous details of his life could lead to a dangerous verbal slip-up. And he doesn’t think Jihoon wants to hear maudlin stories about his childhood anyway.

“Come. Eat something.” Seungcheol ushers him away from the frame and into a stool by the kitchen island. He pulls out a defrosted Pseudoglobin blood bag from the counter and crack the seal.

Jihoon doesn’t take the Pseudoglobin intravenously anymore. Now that he’s grown accustomed to
the taste, he takes dainty sips of it out of a straw poked through the valve at the top. He still grimaces every now and then when he takes a particularly generous gulp, but most of the time he just looks like a kid with the worlds most grotesque Capri Sun.

He seems to prefer the taste and familiarity of normal food though, and tucks into his BLT after with ravenous enthusiasm. Seungcheol wonders how long that will last, clinging to old human feeding habits to feel normal again.

Somewhere between his second and third bite, Jihoon seems to notice the lack of mayo in his sandwich and reaches for the jar.

“I wouldn’t if I were you.” Seungcheol warns, before Jihoon can open it.

Jihoon glances down at the jar in his hand, then back at Seungcheol beseechingly.

Seungcheol grimaces, “It’s garlic mayo. I just don’t want you to get sick, you know—if it turns out it’s poisonous to you.”

Jihoon frowns confusion but seems to take the suggestion on board. Though it’s clear he’s still waiting for some sort of clarification, and seriously Seungcheol’s still kind of disturbed by the idea that anything he has to say about this might be taken as gospel, maybe fucking literally, by the vampire on the other side of the table.

“I don’t know a lot about vampires, but I know about them more than most. So we’ll err on the side of caution till we figure it out. Okay?” Seungcheol explains, mouth still half full of bacon, lettuce and tomato.

Jihoon nods and takes another bit of his sandwich. “You know a lot more than I do. I’m happy to just follow your lead.” He says around a mouthful of food.

It occurs to Seungcheol that maybe he’s not the best person to be teaching Jihoon the ways of his people. He ends up coughing laughter and almost choking on his sandwich, because the thought of a baby vampire following him around and learning from him is hilarious on too many levels.

“What do you do at night when I’m at work?” He asks, curious and perhaps a little concerned. The evenings are longer and Jihoon stays inside during the day, but there are still eight or so hours when Seungcheol’s working the night shift where Jihoon drifts about on his own. Seungcheol has no idea what he gets up to.

“I go to the library.” Jihoon says, almost conversationally, and Seungcheol almost chokes again.

“No.” Jihoon chases a piece of lettuce round the crust. “It’s a building full of books. I go there to read.”

“Nerd.” Seungcheol blurts out before he can help himself.

Jihoon's brows knit into a scowl, and Seungcheol has to fight not to smile.

Seungcheol pauses long enough to demolish more of his sandwich. “I wasn’t very academically challenged growing up—I think I resent the pursuit of knowledge.”

“Explains why you work in a convenience store.” Jihoon says archly.
“That’s harsh.” Seungcheol can feel his mouth twisting into something offended. “I’ll have you know I’m shift leader in that store and I’m due for a promotion soon.” He adjusts his elbows in the table and curves his shoulders inward, suddenly uncomfortable in his own skin. “And it’s the best job I could get considering my circumstances.”

Jihoon blinks, suddenly seeming so shy and small. “Circumstances?”

Seungcheol mentally scolds himself for that little slip.

He doesn’t really want to start explaining what he is to Jihoon, not yet anyway. He thinks Jihoon needs time to adjust to what he is now, not to start learning about everything else that’s out there.

“It’s nothing.” Seungcheol dismisses with a shake of his head.

Jihoon devours the last of his sandwich in silence, but there’s a tension to his face when he’s finished, hands restless on the table as he watches Seungcheol eat, like he’s trying to think of something to say.

“Sorry. I shouldn’t have said that, it was rude. There’s nothing wrong with you working in a convenience store. At least you have a job, which is a lot more than I can say for myself.”

“Forget about it.” Seungcheol grunts as he chews, and he's surprised to realize he mostly means it. “I insulted you, you insulted me. We’re even. Let’s get back to the reason why you were in the library.”

Jihoon recovers enough to offer an attitude. “I told you, to read.”

“Nerd.” Seungcheol blurts out again and they both erupt into laughter.

And - ok, fuck that was a thing. That was definitely a thing. Jihoon laughed.

Though now his face is completely blank, like he's willing to deny all evidence that it did in fact happen. But it happened because Seungcheol feels as though his mouth hasn't stretched this wide in ages. An atrophied muscle.

“Sorry, I can see we’re going to go in circles here.” Seungcheol snickers.

Jihoon’s sigh sounds very put upon, because he smiles tentatively when he says, “As nerdy as it may seem, I like the library. It’s quiet there, and clean. I feel safer in public places with lots of exits and nobody is paying attention to me there, except….”

Seungcheol is honestly curious to know how Jihoon is going to finish that sentence.

“Except who?”

“The librarian there. He’s nice. He gives me hot chocolate.” Jihoon says bashfully.

“I could give you hot chocolate!” Seungcheol tells him, and he isn’t sure whether he imagined the slight tinge of jealousy to the statement. “Uhh—I mean, if you wanted hot chocolate, there’s some in the cupboard. I’m sure there is. You don’t have to go to some creep in the library for your hot chocolate needs.”

“He’s not a creep.” Jihoon huffs. “He’s kind. He offers to let me sit on a little longer after closing time, and he even asked me if I’ve got a place to stay.”

Seungcheol feels a stab of what he knows full well is jealousy.
“What did you say?” He asks abruptly, bits of sandwich scattering across the table. Jihoon stares at a piece of lettuce that gets as far as the back of his hand before carefully tipping it off.

“I say I’ve got a place.” Jihoon answers plainly.

“Good. Cause you do.” Seungcheol points out, grabbing a dishcloth to wipe down the table. “And that guy sounds weird if I’m being honest. Too friendly almost. Be careful around him, don’t let your guard down.” He adds, trying not to sound patronizing. He’s been around longer than Jihoon can imagine. He’s already made these mistakes.

Jihoon rolls his eyes, “Why? Because he’s a librarian and thus a giant nerd?”

“A little.” Seungcheol dips his head to the side, assessing. “But in my experience, people don’t usually help other people out without a reason.”

Jihoon looks some strange mixture of confused and offended. Then mostly confused and disappointed. Seungcheol knows how he feels, spend long enough around anyone and your opinion of humanity can’t help but go down a little.

“What’s your reason for helping me?” Jihoon asks.

Oh. Well. Seungcheol really shot himself in the foot with that one. But that doesn't mean he can't hedge around the issue.

“I don’t know man, lots of reasons. Altruism, a little guilt, empathy, a weird sense of responsibility.” Cause you're small and cute and must be protected at all costs.

“Empathy?” Jihoon echoes.

Seungcheol takes a moment to choose his words, wanting to be truthful without sounding cloying. “I’ve been there once too, ya know. On my own—nobody to turn to. Scared and alone,-”

“I’m not scared.” Jihoon interjects gruffly.

Seungcheol lifts a placating palm. “My mistake. Of course, you’re not. I’m just saying, I get what you’re going through for the most part.”

Jihoon makes a non-committal noise in response, thinking that through. His mouth goes crooked and strange, and Seungcheol doesn't know what that expression is but it's different. Which is probably good.

They’re quiet for a beat until Jihoon tips his head back and yawns, shiny white, baby fangs glinting in the kitchen light.

They’re hardly noticeable when Jihoon’s talking, though Seungcheol finds he’s looking out for little glimpses of them anyway. They’re so unique, yet so perfectly suited for Jihoon and his tiny face. They almost make him look like a vampire kitten of sorts. Small, precious, baby fangs….

“Stop it.” Jihoon says, as if Seungcheol’s mind has been broadcasting every ridiculous thought in it.

“What?”

“You’re looking at me with that dopey grin again.” Jihoon says, looking off to the side. “Like I’m some kind of—baby kitten.”
“I was doing no such thing.” Seungcheol says, except where he most certainly was.

“Yeah, *right.*” There’s a hint of amusement in his words, then, the hint of a dimple on his face, and it suits him so fucking well Seungcheol can’t think of anything other than ways to *keep* it there.

“You want another sandwich before I pack this stuff away?” Seungcheol asks, gesturing to the ingredient set out on the table.

Jihoon shakes his head. “I’m good. Could I lie down for a bit? On the couch? I’m not sleepy yet, but I’m tired from walking around all night.”

“Sure. Knock yourself out. You don’t ever have to ask.”

Jihoon smiles, small and warm and almost shy and stands.

Seungcheol watches him move into the room with all the grace and speed of an octogenarian zombie and settle on the couch.

Thankfully, it’s the nearest piece of furniture to the kitchen as Seungcheol can only imagine if it had been a lamp or a small table, Jihoon would be draped over *it*, trying to look as if everything’s normal.

Seungcheol takes up watch in front of the refrigerator, leaning one shoulder against it and crossing his arms in front of his chest.

He thinks he’s being pretty generous letting anyone kip on his couch, especially a vampire. Yet when he watches Jihoon curl up on the lumpy couch, pulling a blanket over his narrow shoulders, Seungcheol feels a degree of sympathy for the guy that runs deeper than his usual “better you than me” philosophy.

He thinks of investing in a sofa-bed. Or maybe converting the ample walk in closet he hardly makes use of into a little vampire den.

He could fit a bed in there, and it’s completely dark with the door closed over, even during the day. A perfect, safe place for Jihoon to….

Oh, god. He can’t believe he’s actually considering asking Jihoon to move into his closet.

Leaning away from the fridge, Seungcheol opens the door and grabs the milk, wondering what exactly he's signed himself up for, and if he should be booking himself an appointment with a mental health professional.

Seungcheol pads into the living area about twenty minutes later, two hot chocolates in hand, topped with whipped cream and mini marshmallows for his mini vampire.

Jihoon’s curled up in one corner of the couch, and their eyes meet over the edge of the blanket he’s wrapped around himself. “What’s that?” He asks, sitting up.

Seungcheol steps closer and presses the mug into his hand. “Here.”

“Oh, wow.” Jihoon murmurs, accepting the steaming, frothy concoction from Seungcheol with something akin to a flush on his face.
Seungcheol tries not to look too triumphant. It's not like he went out of his way to make it or anything.

It’s just hot chocolate, with a few added spices he had in the cupboard: some aromatic cinnamon, warming nutmeg and a dash of vanilla extract. The whipped cream needed to be used up, and yes—okay—he did whip out his trusty blowtorch to toast the mini marshmallows on top—but he’s been looking for an excuse to use that blowtorch for a while, so really—it wasn’t a bother at all.

He’s definitely not anticipating Jihoon’s reaction or anything. That would be ridiculous.

When Jihoon takes his first sip Seungcheol is almost certain that he makes a small sound of satisfaction, and if he didn’t, well, Seungcheol will add one in anyway when he looks back on the moment.

“Wow, this is really good hot chocolate” Jihoon notes, licking at the mountain of whipped cream shamelessly. Seungcheol doesn't bother trying not to stare.

“Thanks. Turns out I didn’t have hot chocolate in the cupboards. But I had Nutella. Nutella hot chocolate is better.” Seungcheol grins.

“It is. It’s really good.” Jihoon encourages, taking another sip.

Seungcheol mentally pats himself on the back.

Good. Now let's never speak of that man in the library and his hot chocolate again.

“You’re dopey smiling again.” Jihoon mumbles into the rim of his cup.

Seungcheol tries for the world's most nonchalant shrug. He suspects he looks like he's trying to dislocate his own shoulders. “Yeah, well—that’s cause you’ve got whipped cream on your nose.”

Jihoon frowns and wipes at his nose, tongue darting out to lick the smear of cream on his finger.

“Shut up.” He grumbles and now there's a half smile on his face, which is just over the line of genuine. It doesn't slip away the moment it appears either. Seungcheol thinks it suits him, he should dust it off more often.

“What have you been reading in the library?” Seungcheol asks, picking up the thread of their earlier conversation.

Jihoon picks a mini marshmallow off the top of his drink and pops it into his mouth. He nibbles on it as he speaks, “Vampires actually. I’m trying to learn more about—me.”

Seungcheol tilts an eyebrow at him and takes a sip of his drink. “Oh? And what have you learnt so far?”

“Nothing useful if I’m being honest. Most of the books are fictional and romanticize the gory details.”

Seungcheol chuckles and leans his chair back until he can kick his legs up on the coffee table.

“So, you go to the library to read vampire romance novels and drink hot chocolate. I had no idea you were a middle-aged house wife.”

Jihoon ignores the tease and stares down into his cocoa as he says, “Well, I figured I should start somewhere. I’m sure there are more factual resources available but, I don’t want to ask for them.
I’m trying not to draw attention to myself.”

Seungcheol nods deeply in agreement, “That’s probably a good idea. Remember what I told you.”

“Don’t tell anyone I’m a baby. I know.” Jihoon lifts his mug and gulps down half of its contents. It must burn horribly on its way down, but Jihoon doesn’t acknowledge it with anything but a brief clearing of his throat. “But the other day, a vampire came into the library, and I thought I could speak to them—"

“You didn’t!” Seungcheol asks, his voice coming out higher pitched than he means it to.

Jihoon shakes his head, rotates his mug in his hand and admits, “No, I left.” He pauses, pushes his lips together and deliberates something for a moment before he continues, “But I thought if I could just talk with one of them, ask them—"

“Don’t.” Seungcheol interjects and Jihoon flinches at the gravely tone.

Seungcheol sighs and sets his mug down. He reaches out a hand, decides it’s too early in the conversation for placating touches, and pulls it back. He folds his fingers together between his knees and clears his throat.

“I know you’re curious, I would be too if I was in your position. But if I know anything about vampire culture, it’s that strays are considered dangerous. Especially to other vampires. If one of them gets wind that you’re a stray, and you have no progenitor—it can get ugly.”

Jihoon must understand that, at least loosely, because he doesn’t argue the point. He looks down at his cocoa, swirls it gently in the cup as if it’s a fine wine.

“Okay.” He murmurs with a nod of acknowledgement. His eyes narrow as he tries to pull a thought from the back of his mind. “How do you know so much about vampires?”

*From killing them*—Seungcheol doesn’t say, even though it would be the honest truth.

His lips twitch in thought, “Because I keep my eyes open. They’re everywhere now, in the open, holding down jobs. You’re bound to pick up on a few things here and there.”

Jihoon scrutinises him for a second longer, bright eyes narrowed thoughtfully, before he nods in acceptance.

Seungcheol wouldn’t say he enjoys deceiving people, but he does get a thrill out of maintaining his cover during unexpected encounters. At no point in the course of his nights with Jihoon did he give up any possibly compromising details about himself or what he is. Jihoon walks away most days knowing nothing about him besides his (not entirely accurate) name. That thought carves a small hollow in Seungcheol’s gut that feels a lot like disappointment.

But, it’s safer this way. Safer for both of them, probably.

Of course, there are still days when Seungcheol questions the wisdom of letting Jihoon into his life.
Seungcheol is about to turn in for the night when there's a quiet but persistent knock at the front door.

It's too late to mean anything other than trouble, so Seungcheol’s senses are on high alert when he moves stealthily toward the entrance.

He really needs to install a security system with a camera.

The thing is nobody knocks on his door. Everyone—from delivery men to random religious nuts—seems to take great (if unconscious) pleasure in ringing Seungcheol's bell, which sounds like a cross between a fire alarm and an old-time school bell. It's loud and piercing, and goes straight to the place in his brain where headaches are born. He's even tried to disconnect the damn thing, but like some kind of evil sentient computer, it always comes back to life.

Knocking at his door does nothing but make him more paranoid than usual.

“Who is it?” Seungcheol asks, making sure he's well-clear if someone decides to blast through the door. It wouldn’t be the first time. He hasn’t survived this long by underestimating the people who’d like to kill him.

“Jihoon,” comes the reply. The now open the fucking door is heavily implied in the tone.

It says a great deal about how far Seungcheol’s fallen that his immediate reaction is one of joy, not of irritation. He unlocks and opens the door, muttering curses under his breath and sure enough, standing in the doorway is Jihoon.

Seungcheol takes the opportunity to look Jihoon over, cataloguing the cumulative effects of the past few days he’s been missing: the usual circles under his eyes, a fair bit of tension in his neck and shoulders. Nothing a few days in Seungcheol’s care won’t fix.

“Almost didn’t think you were coming tonight.” Seungcheol smirks.

Jihoon shrugs, a graceless jerk of shoulders. “I lost track of time.”

“Reading in the library I bet.” Seungcheol says, distracted by how strangely Jihoon’s behaving. Stranger than usual anyway. He seems wary, anxious, fidgeting with something hidden behind his back.

“What that’s you have behind your back?” Seungcheol asks.

“What that’s you have behind your back?” Seungcheol asks.

“Nothing.” Jihoon answers, too loudly and too quickly, and Seungcheol raises an eyebrow.

Jihoon’s cheeks colour, which happens far more than Seungcheol would've expected from a vampire, but it's charming, like so many things about Jihoon. “It’s nothing. Honest.”

“Jihoon.” Seungcheol says slowly.

When Jihoon sighs and pulls the item out from behind his back, it’s impossible for Seungcheol to keep the shock and disgust off his face. “Holy shit Jihoon—what the fuck!”

“I just—” Jihoon begins to protest.

“No Jihoon. No. This is wrong. This is very bad. Bad baby vampire, bad. You know how I feel about this—this—sacrilege. I can’t believe you would try and bring that into my home after I opened my arms to you.”
“Oh, c’mon. You’re being dramatic.” Jihoon’s voice wavers between annoyance and genuine offence.

Seongcheol crosses his arms over his chest. “I think I’m demonstrating the correct level of drama considering the situation. This is just completely unacceptable. I’m disgusted. Have you no self-respect?”

Jihoon waves a hand impatiently. He doesn’t roll his eyes, but it’s clearly a near thing. “It’s not a big deal.”

“Not a big deal! Not a big deal?” Seongcheol repeats, voice rising with incredulity. “It’s a huge deal. There is no way I’m letting you bring that in here. I will tolerate a lot of things Jihoon. A dead body, a baby vampire trying to feed on me, how you finish the toilet roll and never replace it so I’m left in the lurch when I need it most. But young adult vampire fiction has no place in my home.” Seongcheol growls, pointing an accusing finger at the hardback copy of ‘Twilight’ Jihoon has in his hands.

Jihoon is still human enough to know he should look guilty then, and maybe he's trying. He looks...something? It seems to involve a lot of pouting.

“I just wanted to see if it had any useful information.” Jihoon protests.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Seongcheol stares at the apple on the cover and shakes his head. “Sparkly vampires and teenage love triangles? What could you possibly learn from that?”

Jihoon scrubs a hand through his dark blond hair and shrugs. “I dunno. I was just winging it. I heard the books were better than the movies.”

Seongcheol shakes his head, “They’re both shit Jihoon. I can’t believe you were about to get indoctrinated by Stephanie Meyer. How much of that crap did you read? I need to know how much damage control I’ll have to do.”

“I haven’t started it yet.” Jihoon says hotly, and he's very clearly lying the filthy lies of a liar. Seongcheol can tell by the way he looks guilty, and confused, and like he's about to either make up some disgraceful new lie on the spot to cover himself.

Seongcheol just taps his foot on the floor and stares him into submission.

Jihoon drops his gaze, “The first three chapters.” He murmurs, scuffing his toe on the concrete.

Seongcheol shakes his head like a disappointed parent finding out their kid’s doing drugs. “I guess it could be worse. We’ll just have to wash that shit out of your head with some proper vampire action. I think I got Blade on DVD somewhere. Oh, and Underworld too. That’s decent vampire action right there.”

“Okay.” Jihoon drawls. There's disappointment in that word, mixed with more than a little mockery.

Seongcheol waves him into the house with a hand. “Leave that book on the steps. Hopefully somebody will set it on fire while we’re inside.”

Jihoon lets out an angry breath through his nose. “I can’t leave it outside. It’s on loan from the library, I have to return it.”

“Fine.” Seongcheol heaves a reluctant sigh. He rubs the underside of his chin with his knuckles as
he thinks. “Leave it inside by the front door. Then I’ll arrange for a priest to exorcize the house later or something.”

Jihoon makes a dismissive noise that tells him he's being an idiot. Seungcheol's too used to hearing that to still be genuinely annoyed by it.

“How did you get a library book out anyway?” Seungcheol asks, turning to walk back inside. “Don’t you need a library card for that?”

“The librarian let me take it.” Jihoon chirps, walking up the steps. “He said I could keep it for as long as I like, as long as I don’t damage it.”

Seungcheol pushes a short laugh out through his nose. “Oh, that guy again. How nice of—wait.” He freezes, feeling a fervent rush of protectiveness.

He spins, and grabs the book out of Jihoon’s hand. Something is not right about this.

He thumbs over the spine, and feels across the hard backing of the cover searching for bumps or indentations. He’s trying to peel off the picture cover to check the inner lining of the book, when Jihoon objects to it’s rough handling by snatching it out of his hand.

“Stop, you’re going to damage it!” Jihoon snipes, pulling the book away and inspecting it.

“I was checking for bugs.” Seungcheol says defensively, because yes, there is perhaps a reason to be defensive here.

Jihoon blinks at him. “Bugs?” He says. He’s frowning now, clearly puzzled by Seungcheol’s reaction.

“You know—tracing devices. Trackers.”

Jihoon’s expression couldn't be more unconcerned. It's a wonder, really, that he's lasted as long as he has. “It’s just a book, Seungcheol.”

“It might not be. I need to be sure. Hand it over.” Seungcheol tells him gruffly.

“No, you’ll wreck it.” Jihoon snaps, holding the book tightly against his chest.

“Jihoon.” Seungcheol sighs, trying to convey with two syllables exactly how much he does not want to have this conversation right now.

People are usually pretty good at picking up the subtleties in conversations and Seungcheol's still not used to having to wave them in Jihoon's face and then carefully explain them when he still doesn't get it. It's like trying to explain things to a child who's both a judgemental genius and a little slow at the same time.

He really hopes Jihoon can’t read minds and heard that.

“I promised him I’d bring it back in good condition. It’s just a book,” Jihoon repeats, “Why are you so paranoid?”

Seungcheol can’t say a thing in response that isn’t incriminating or confusing or—very possibly—paranoid.

“Either give me the book Jihoon or leave.” Seungcheol says. It's a rush of words, shaky with daring, but he can't stop them falling free. They're out of his mouth before they pass through his
brain. Before he thinks about them at all.

There’s no hiding the hurt in Jihoon’s eyes when he looks up. For just a second, his expression goes naked, blunt pain in his blue eyes before he pointedly looks away. Seungcheol can see the walls going up around, within him. He has to say something, now, before he loses his chance to say anything.

But Jihoon recovers before him. “Fine.” He says, voice emptied of all feeling.

Seungcheol’s chest constricts painfully. He leans closer, hoping to convey without words that he’s sorry, he doesn’t want this, that he’s being careful for a reason.

“Jihoon, where are you..” Seungcheol begins, but Jihoon’s already taking a deliberate step away, bounding down the steps and disappearing into the darkness like vampire!Batman. Or just Batman, because Batman is already pretty good symbolism for bats and vampires.

Seungcheol stalks back into the house, ignoring the tightening in his gut, because it's so utterly ridiculous. He’s not going to rush out after a vampire, baby fangs or no.

Jihoon doesn’t come back that night, or the next.

Which is fine. Totally fine.

Seungcheol’s not going to worry, not going to pace the hallway listening out for a faint knock or an upended trash can.

Jihoon’s made his bed, so he can lie in it—which is a piss poor analogy that leaves a sour taste in Seungcheol’s mouth, because Jihoon doesn’t have a bed to make in the first place.

He has nowhere to go.

He’s out there—all alone, probably sleeping under a bridge or hiding in an abandoned subway station—reading Twilight.

That thought alone has Seungcheol dragging on his jacket and stepping out at 3am to circle the block and scent the air.

He stays out till the sun rises, scanning the endless sea of buildings for something. Anything. A feeling that there's something hiding in the dark. Waiting for him.

In days long past, when Seungcheol was still running wild, hunting regularly and close to out of control as he could get, he could smell a storm days before it hit, feel the minute shift of molecules the instant an enemy decided to turn and attack rather than flee. Those instincts have never left him; they’ve only sharpened with age, taking on a abnormal keenness, remarkable even for Lycan.

Those instincts are screaming at him now, telling him something is wrong.

He excepts now that Jihoon’s absence echo’s inside him with a desperate emptiness. It’s like a weird imbalance. A tilting of some cosmic part of him that, by its very nature, is supposed to stay level.
Seungcheol doesn’t know why Jihoon has triggered this in him—why now after a lifetime of happy independence does he acutely feel the shape of this person’s absence.

What claim does Jihoon have anyway? None that Seungcheol can see. He and Seungcheol are opposite poles, nothing in common, nothing to connect them. He isn’t the cure for anything Seungcheol has lost, but is familiar and wanted just the same.

Which is, Seungcheol finds, all that really matters.

In the end, it somehow doesn’t surprise him at all to come home from a trip to the corner store for bread and milk to find Jihoon bleeding a massive puddle on the rug in his living room.

"Jesus Christ, Jihoon – my rug."

Jihoon is pale and sputtering just as uselessly back at him, "I'm sorry," He slurs, "I got shot. I didn’t know where else to go..."

Seungcheol reaches him in an instant, drops to the floor and curls an arm around Jihoon’s shoulder. A rush of sense-memory hits him at the feel of Jihoon’s cool sweat-damp skin, the boneless, slumped line of his body. "It's all right," he says, even though it's not. "It's all right. I got you. It’s going to be okay."

He scoops the barely conscious vampire into his arms, lays him on the couch and hikes up his T-shirt, blood-wet and snagging against his skin.

Jihoon hisses in pain and by the time he gets the fabric out of the way, Seungcheol’s hands are smeared in red from trying to find the source of the blood. One bullet has apparently passed clean through Jihoon’s shoulder, while another has raked across his abdomen deeply enough to leave the flesh bloody and ragged.

Seungcheol has no idea whether that slug has passed through as well or if it’s still lodged inside him somewhere. Although, that shouldn’t matter—Jihoon’s body should have been able to heal over it or push it out by now. Vampires are able to regenerate almost as quickly as Lycans, unless.....

“Silver!” Seungcheol gasps with realisation. “Who the fuck shot you with a silver bullet?” He growls.

Surprisingly, Jihoon manages a small smile, reaching a blood smeared hand to cup his cheek. “Should’ve listened to you.” He murmurs, dazed, before passing out.

Chapter End Notes

1) Wasn't planning on updating this so soon, but 'Broke art student' asked for an update because they're graduating today. Congratulations!
2) Baby vampire Jihoon drinking hot chocolate. The mug so large he needs to hold it with both hands. I thought about this a lot and needed to write it. XD
3) Ahh, I love protective, weirdly jealous Seungcheol.
4) I'm sorry if you actually liked Twilight.
5) Hope you enjoy the update and thank you for reading! Feedback always appreciated!
For all that Seungcheol knows people who operate consistently outside the realm of the usual nine-
to-five, he knows only a very select few actually within life-saving distance who are willing to
make calls to a Lycan’s house at 6am in the morning.

Luckily, Yoon Jeonghan owes him a not inconsiderable favour.

He arrives within twenty minutes of Seungcheol’s call, wearing a dark trench coat, a bowler hat
and carrying an antique portmanteau bag, like some weird homage to ‘The Exorcist’.

If he’s trying to look inconspicuous—he’s spectacularly failed.

But he’s an okay-ish doctor, with an awful bedside manner and questionable morals. Perfect for the
task at hand really.

Jeonghan injects Jihoon with several syringes of illicit substances (it's always tricky, getting the
mix right for non-humans, Seungcheol knows from experience) and sits on the ottoman, smoking a
cigarette while he extracts the bullets then sews up the deep wound on Jihoon’s stomach. Then he
helps Seungcheol tuck Jihoon into his bed – since there’s vampire blood all over his couch— and
leaves him two vials with hand-written labels for when Jihoon wakes up.

“That should do for now.” Jeonghan tells him as they walk back into the living room and shut the
door behind them. “The wound will knit over—eventually. Your vampire has lost a lot of blood,
and he didn’t have a lot to lose in the first place.”

Seungcheol's not entirely sure how to take the whole 'your vampire' thing. Though Jeonghan
sounds more amused than disapproving. And it’s not like Seungcheol has been doing anything to
make it not true, hovering silently at Jeonghan's shoulder as though Jihoon might, at any moment,
wake up and want to hold his hand or something.

“I’ve got some Pseudoglobin in the freezer.” Seungcheol says, pacing towards kitchen, anxiously
running a hand over his forehead. “He’s had it intravenously before, I can—“

“Won’t be enough.” Jeonghan calls out, stilling him mid stride. He grabs an alcohol wipe out of his
bag, cleans the blood of his hands as he speaks. “He needs the fresh stuff if he’s going to make a
full recovery. That bullet was burning away at his insides and they’re going to need fresh blood to
heal properly. If he doesn’t get it—he’ll get weaker and weaker and then—yanno.”

Seungcheol pushes the thought far away. “Okay. Good to know. I guess I’ll, uhm— figure
something out.”

Jeonghan flashes him a half smile and steps into the kitchen area, dropping the alcohol wipe in the
trash. He crosses his arms and leans against the counter, staring at Seungcheol with fixed eyes.

Seungcheol is completely ignoring the way his face heats, because his body thinks it's hilarious to
make sure he fails at looking innocent before he's even opened his mouth. Jeonghan's fascinated
amusement just makes it worse.

“I’m not going to ask why you have a vampire passed out in your bed.” Jeonghan begins calmly,
then juts his chin out. “No, wait—yes I am. Why do you have a vampire in your bed, Seungcheol? Why did you call me out at ass-o-clock in the morning to save the life of a species I was pretty sure was your mortal enemy? Have you finally lost the plot?”

“He’s a baby vampire.” Seungcheol argues, like that makes all the difference.

There’s a curiously lifted eyebrow, as if he’s going to have to do better than that.

Seungcheol scrubs both hands through his hair, leaves it sticking up in a million directions. “It wasn’t a consensual conversion, okay. He’s all alone. He—doesn’t know who his progenitor is.”

Jeonghan tips his head and hums at him, like Seungcheol has proven his point already.

“Fangtastic. Not only is he a new vampire, he’s a stray. There’s no way this could possibly go wrong. It’s not like there are laws against harbouring vampires without a progenitor.” Jeonghan says, stressing the point, almost angrily. Which is a whole conversation that Seungcheol really doesn’t want to have.

“Look—I’m not paying you to ask me questions.” Seungcheol says, all frustrated bite and annoyance.

“You’re not paying me at all.” Jeonghan huffs, taken aback at Seungcheol’s brusque words. “I’m doing this cause I owe you one. And I wasn’t really asking questions. I was stating facts. You have a vampire—passed out in your bed. Fact.”

“What else was I supposed to do?” Seungcheol snaps.

Jeonghan laughs somewhat hysterically. “Uhm, how about—absolutely anything else instead of taking in vampire strays.”

“He’s got baby fangs.” Seungcheol says, as though this is explanation enough.

Apparently, it’s not, because Jeonghan is levelling him the eyebrows of great confusion.

“He can’t feed. His fangs are too small to pierce the skin, so he comes over a few nights a week and I give him some Pseudoglobin.” Seungcheol explains.

Jeonghan studies him quietly for a moment, eyes narrowing into a probing look.

“He doesn’t know what you are, does he?” He says, and the grin that comes with that is so very unnecessary.

Seungcheol holds an ‘obviously’ behind his teeth.

“Oh my god—Seungcheol.” Jeonghan makes a noise, some sort of choked laugh, which he immediately smothers. “I know you’re giving this whole ‘reformed’ lifestyle a go—but I didn’t think it would be to this Born-again werewolf degree.”

“He’s got baby fangs.” Seungcheol repeats for emphasis. “He needs me—I mean, he needs my help.”

“Right.” Jeonghan says doubtfully, then fishes for something in his pocket and pulls out the silver bullet he extracted. “Anyway—you have bigger problems to worry about than going soft in your old age. See this bullet I extracted—”

“It’s silver, I know.” Seungcheol interjects, bored.
“Not just that.” Jeonghan adds. “I’ve seen it before, look at the markings.”

Seungcheol steps closer, studying the bullet Jeonghan’s turning between his thumb and forefinger.

“It’s from a Starr 1858 Army revolver. They don’t just hand those out to anybody, and the bullets are custom made. They’re designed to leak molten silver on impact. I hope you know what that means.”

Everything inside of Seungcheol goes tight and cold. “Yeah. A Hunter’s weapon of choice.”

Seungcheol's got a pretty varied vocabulary, especially for profanity, but there aren't enough curse words in the world—in any language—to convey just how much of a disaster this is. Considering that the Lycan hunters he's met so far have tended to be a bunch of shoot fast, don't question the gooey remains later, psychopaths - he's not looking forward to running into the vampire equivalent. He figures it's a safe bet that they're not going to be the definition of love and tolerance.

Jeonghan shifts until he can catch Seungcheol's eye again, like he thinks not talking directly at him will fail to get his point across. Like Seungcheol's not going to pay attention.

“This kid’s got a vampire hunter on his trail, Cheol. Maybe one, maybe several. You’re going to have to get him out of here.”

“Why?” Seungcheol says instantly, without quite knowing why. The idea of letting Jihoon go makes his heart lurch.

“Uhm—Do you want a hunter kicking down your door looking for him?”

“Wouldn’t this be the last place a hunter would look?” Seungcheol says, not missing a beat.

Jeonghan quirks a surprised brow at him. “Touché.”

He throws the bullet up in the air, catches it and sets it down on the counter. “I better go. He’ll be out for a few hours, so that should give you enough time to figure out how you’ll get him a fresh feed.” Jeonghan says, pulling his bag off the couch, preparing to leave.

“Woah, woah, woah!” Seungcheol blurs out, stopping Jeonghan’s departure with dramatic hand waving. “You can’t go.”

Alarm slips across Jeonghan's face. “You’re not planning on feeding me to him or something—are you?”

Seungcheol makes a face. “No. I need you to stay with him while I go out.”

Jeonghan feigns a concerned look, patting his pockets down. “I see. Let me just get my business card out that says I’m a babysitter.” He swipes a piece of card out of his pocket and waves it under Seungcheol’s nose. “Oh, look—I’m not.”

Seungcheol goes a little cross-eyed zoning in on the card. “That’s a shopping list.”

Jeonghan waves a hand, in a dismissive sort of way. “That’s not the point!” he exclaims, voice sharp with exasperation. “The point is I don’t babysit vampires.”

Seungcheol doesn’t have a rebuttal for that except, “But he’s got baby fangs! He’s harmless.”

When Jeonghan doesn’t not say anything more, only squints at him as if he is insane, Seungcheol goes on, “Hannie, I need to clear up a few things. I’ll only be gone a few hours and—I don’t want
to leave him alone.”

“I don’t care—wait. What things?” asks Jeonghan, and if the look on his face is anything to go by, he’s got a pretty good idea what Seungcheol is thinking.

“Nothing you need to concern yourself about.” Seungcheol says stiffly. “I’m just going to be—returning a book to the library.”

Jeonghan rolls his eyes like he doesn’t want to play ‘I’m calling you on your bullshit’ today and holds both hands up. “Okay, you said that in a really dark and murderous wolfy way, so I’m just going to go ahead and assume people are going to die. And honestly, I don’t want to be part of that.”

Seungcheol isn’t in the habit of begging, not from anyone, not for anything, but he does it now. For Jihoon.

"Please," he says, the word threatening to stick in his throat. “Somebody tried to kill him. I need to stop that from happening again. You know I wouldn’t do this unless I thought it was necessary.”

Jeonghan huffs, like Seungcheol’s always making him babysit supernatural species that might try and eat him.

“Why do you care so much?” He asks Seungcheol, crossing his arms.

Seungcheol is silent for a long time, and he knows it’s a long time. He feels every second of it as he stares at the wall, at the sunlight washing over the clean white paint. Jeonghan knows him though, he isn’t put off. He just taps a finger against his arm and waits.

“I don’t know.” Seungcheol says with a shrug. “I can’t explain it. I just—I just need to keep him safe.”

The irony doesn’t escape him that only a few months ago he would have laughed if anyone had suggested he would ever care about such a thing. Clearly, back then, he’d been much more sensible


Seungcheol has long ago stopped counting the number of times he’s almost died, has stopped thinking about the number of lives he’s lived and the years that weigh on his psyche if not his body.

An occupational hazard, you might say.

Lycan and Vampires exists in a state of quasi-immortality, aged beyond what the lines on their faces show. Naturally, the longer they live the more their outlook on fatality becomes skewed; the primal fear of death is rendered numb, and their respect for life becomes perverted as the centuries pass and their mortal loved ones perish.

The majority of times Seungcheol has lost someone to the dictates of nature are too many to count, but each death has been as transitory as a shooting star, remarkable for only a flash of time.

But now, with Jihoon, and him, and them, it’s suddenly all different.

Now the thought of a Vampire Hunter’s gun pressed to Jihoon’s head puts a cold sweat on his
Now the thought of him dying carries with it an unfamiliar taste of regret.

Fear, Seungcheol discovers at the grand age of four hundred and fifty-six, sucks balls in a major way.

He doesn’t want Jihoon to feel it, to live with that fear. So he resolves to stop this from escalating anyway he can

It takes him a few hours to find what he’s looking for, but he finds it.

Seungcheol waits in the shadows outside the library, watching as the last of the visitors leave and the librarian locks up for the night and accepts a delivery.

Seungcheol looks at him closely then, inasmuch as he can from this distance. He had an image in his head of the sort of man he’d be up against. Because that's the type of thing you can't help.

You imagine people before you meet them and Seungcheol’s met a lot of people; he knows better than most that you don't always get what you see, but that didn't stop you from expecting it. So he imagined him small, old, maybe even ferrety, wrong in some way.

Wrong in a way you could see.

Maybe even in a way you could smell.

If he’s socialising with Hunter’s, he’d smell of blood, and poison and silver, all the way down to the bone.

But the Librarian isn't any of these things. He's almost exactly the opposite.

He's tall, almost as tall as Seungcheol, probably in his late twenties and he has smile dental hygienists would applaud. He actually smells quite pleasant, and is kind of handsome—which just makes Seungcheol want to kill him all the more.

How dare handsome, young Librarians with stunning white smiles lure his baby vampire with hot chocolate and young adult vampire fiction!

After the man retreats inside, Seungcheol waits a few minutes before crossing the road.

The door handle turns to metallic dust in his hands as he wrenches it open and steps inside.

He keeps his mind blank as he walks down the main aisle, listens to the rhythm of his footsteps echoing on the glossy tile and follows the only scent and echo of heat discernible in the ancient building.

He finds the librarian standing behind the main desk, scanning books.

The man looks up at the sound of his approaching footsteps and blinks in surprise.

“Oh, I’m sorry sir. We’re closed.”

Seungcheol forces himself to smile, imagining the librarians neck in his hand—it would take only
one movement—the press of his thumb into cartilage and bone, the satisfying snap as Seungcheol teaches him the true meaning of fear.

Instead, he keeps his body language open and deliberate — it wouldn't do to alert the man before the fun started.

“It’ll only be a sec. I just really wanted to find this book. I’ve searched everywhere for a copy and I hear this is the place to find it.”

The librarian flashes a brilliant white smile.

“I guess I can spare a few minutes.” He says genially, checking his wristwatch. “What book were you looking for?”

Seungcheol sighs inwardly. “Twilight.”

The Librarian’s mouth tilts up in a knowing way, and Seungcheol wants to do something to wipe the smile off his face. He's just not quite sure what would be the most satisfying.

“Hmm—odd. You don’t strike me as the Vampire YA fiction kind of guy, but hey—we all have our vices.” The man chuckles, dusting his hands off on his jumper. “Which one in the series are you after?”

Seungcheol smiles a little, thin lipped and not pleasant at all. “Oh—uhm—what’s the one where the librarian gets his face mauled off by the werewolf for hurting his baby vampire?”

The librarian opens his mouth, then closes it again and adjusts his glasses. “Erm—I don’t recall that ever happening in the twilight saga.”

“Oh, really?” It takes Seungcheol the space between molecules to mutate, leap over the desk and reach the Librarians’ side of the counter. “Well maybe I’ll just write my own version, where it does happen.”

The Librarian blinks up at Seungcheol like a new-born, eyes wide and disoriented for a long beat, and then terror blooms in his expression as his ham-handed brain catches up, does the math, comprehends the danger.

“Oh my god!”

Seungcheol watches the man scramble for the back exit, catches the delicious whiff of terror coming off him. In a blur, Seungcheol overtakes him, moves to stand in front of the door and blocking his retreat.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Seungcheol says, smile curling with casual malice, “I need you to help me pick out a book.”

He lunges, grabbing the Librarian by the scruff of the neck and hurling him across the room into a shelf, sending books flying.

That should have bruised a few ribs.

Or broken a few.

More than a few actually.

Seungcheol forgets his own strength sometimes, because the man’s really struggling to get back up
on his feet.

Rolling his eyes Seungcheol surges forward, making his way across the debris until he’s standing over the twitching, groaning body on the floor.

He has no trouble lifting the guy up with one arm, slamming him into the wall; hard enough to knock plaster loose. The Librarian winces and groans, teeth clacking together and Seungcheol brings his other hand to curve round the man’s throat.

He knows he could crush it if he wanted to—squeeze tight until the blood stopped pumping. But the man’s no use to him dead. So, instead he settles for squeezing until the man’s eyes are bloodshot and bulging.

“I’m only going to ask once.” Seungcheol bites out, sharp teeth aching inside his mouth. “Who are you working for?”

“W-what?” The librarian says, voice strangled and hoarse.

Seungcheol huffs a sigh and squeezes, counting to ten and watching the man’s legs kick out, fingers clawing at his jacket and shirt for reprieve. The only sound he's making is the hoarse, furious rasp-saw of his breathing.

Seungcheol loosens his grip on the man’s throat with some difficulty, leans in close till they’re nose to nose. “I know you hurt my friend. But you’re clearly no hunter yourself, so you must have arranged for him to get shot—or you’re working with one.”

“I don’t know-“

Seungcheol squeezes the windpipe again, feels the gristle of fine cartilage under his finger-tips. “Don’t lie to me. I can smell him on you. He’s a small, skittish baby vampire. Likes to come here and read books and drink hot chocolate.”

The librarian swallows, his face gone pale, and Seungcheol eyeballs him into remembering.

“Oh, oh yes. I know him.” He manages to choke out. “But I swear, I had nothing to do with it. I’m innocent. I just--” He trails off, lip trembling.

Seungcheol grits his teeth. He can feel the slow shift where his jaw is stretching to accommodate multiple rows of sharp canines.

“Just what?” He spits.

“I just told the local coven there was a stray!” The man says, breathing fast and short and fearful. His eyes are fixed on Seungcheol's mouth, on whatever Seungcheol's mouth has become.

“You did more than that, didn’t you?” Seungcheol snarls with too many teeth. He can feel his spine beginning to lengthen and bend, can see the bones in his hand reshaping where his claws extend. “You talked to him, you let him borrow books and made him hot chocolate. You made him trust you.” He growls, furious heat bubbling up under his skin.

The librarian shakes his head emphatically, makes an apologetic, nervous sort of noise. “I—I didn’t have a choice. He told me too.”

Seungcheol lifts him away from the wall, then slams him back into it again. “Who’s he?” he demands.
The librarian takes too long to answer, so Seungcheol slams him again. There's blood and there's spit and Seungcheol feels an icy fury grip him by the stomach. "Tell me who he is, or I'll eat your fucking face off."

The librarian’s wheezing now, Seungcheol can see the blue veins engorged in his paper-thin throat. "A hunter came around a few weeks ago. Asked me about him. I didn’t want to get involved but he told me I had a duty to help catch him. He told me to lure him somewhere, act as bait."

Seungcheol tastes bile in his throat and stubbornly swallows against it "Bait? He doesn’t want to feed on anyone. He can’t even feed! He just wanted to read books and drink hot chocolate you son of a bitch."

“I—I’m sorry. I didn’t think he’d get hurt. Just thought they’d catch him and tame him.”

Seungcheol barks out a laugh, or what's supposed to be a laugh. He’s still half wolves out, so it doesn't sound amused or human at all.

“No—you knew. You knew he’d do more than that.” He stops, forces his anger back down. He has to work at it, he really has to fucking work before he carries on. “Who was it—the hunter? What was his name?"

“I don’t know—he just flashed a badge. I don’t know his name.” The librarian says, evenly enough that Seungcheol isn't sure whether he's lying or not.

He'd be too stupid to lie to Seungcheol at this point—that much is true.

Seungcheol sighs at him, jaw tight. “You’re useless.” He spits, and the librarian flinches.

He releases the man, drops him to his feet and watches him curl up defensively against the wall. When Seungcheol shifts back and cracks his neck from side to side, there's a trembling heaviness to the man's shoulders, and Seungcheol knows that he's waiting for the final blow.

"Go," he tells the cowering man. "Run."

For a moment, the Librarian just blinks up at him, as if terror has rendered him too stupid to comprehend the words, but then his expression clears like the sun coming out from behind the clouds. Seungcheol knows that look: the moment of reprieve when Death is fended off.

The man scrambles to his feet and runs, tripping over his own feet in his haste to escape.

Seungcheol bides his time, tracking the man's progress down the corridor and out the back exit, the sound of his thundering heart ringing like music in his ears.

He waits long enough that the man will have begun to believe that he is free. That he is safe. Then Seungcheol overtakes him in the alleyway behind the library—and strikes before the guy knows what’s happening.

He moves like a vicious blur, cutting through the Librarian like a blade. Futile human shrieks echo of the walls, the intoxicating scent of terror thick in the closed space, blood everywhere, splashed on the pavement and smeared in Seungcheol's fur and soaking into his clothes.

This was one of the first things he'd learnt as a Lycan: never leave living witnesses.
1) BAMF Seungcheol killing to avenge his baby vampire.
2) I'm sure somebody expected Jeonghan to be vampire too, cause he would suit being a vampire. But I really need him to be something else in this story :D
3) I had to split this chapter in two, as it ended up being over 10,000 words long and I know that's a lot to read and take in in one go XD
4) Hope you enjoyed this update! I'm really enjoying writing this :) Feedback always appreciated!
When Seungcheol gets home after his ‘visit’ to the library, it’s almost dark again.

Jeonghan’s in the kitchen, leaning back against the counter, arms crossed over his chest, one ankle crossed over the other.

“Oh—*goodie*. You’re back! *And covered in blood—awesome.*” Jeonghan winces, and then he scrubs his face with the back of his hand, his levity slipping away. “I’d ask what you did, but I’m sure I’ll hear all about it on the news.”

Seungcheol ignores him in favour of shucking off his blood stained clothes and dumping them in the trash.

He’ll have to remember to burn them later. Then bury the ashes. Then plant a few flowers over the burial site.

Killing people and getting away with it used to be *so* much easier before forensics was invented. Not that it wasn’t entirely worth it, not that he regretted a second of it, not that he’d do a damned thing differently…but now there’s always a risk that he’ll leave something incriminating behind.

It probably would have been easier to just *eat* the guy—but does he really want to go down *that* road again?

“How is he?” He asks Jeonghan, who has followed him into the bathroom, watching him wash the blood spatter off his neck.

“Awake and—*in the closet.*” Jeonghan informs him cheerfully.

Seungcheol can feel his brows ticking upward.

“And I’m not talking about repressed homosexuality,” Jeonghan continues with a sigh. “I literally mean he’s in the closet. He woke up, freaked out when he saw me, started hissing and then ran into the closet. I guess you weren’t kidding about him being a baby—he’s *genuinely* harmless. Didn’t try and bite me or anything, just hissed and shied away when I poked him.”

It occurs to Seungcheol that Jeonghan maybe isn't the best person to leave his baby vampire with.

He grabs a clean towel off the rack to dry his hands. “Did you at least manage to give him some Pseudoglobin when you were *poking* him?” He grunts, startled at the sharp challenge in his own voice.

Jeonghan hands him over a clean T-shirt as a conciliatory gesture, “*No. Didn’t you hear the part*
about all the hissing? He wouldn’t let me anywhere near him Cheol. He practically had a fit when I opened the closet door.”

Seungcheol shakes his head and pads back out into the living area. He grabs a bag of Pseudoglobin from the freezer and sets it out to defrost.

“I tried to lure him out with a packet of Oreos,” Jeonghan adds thoughtfully, following close behind, “But he just turned his nose up at them.” He sighs, defeated.

“Should’ve made him a sandwich. He likes bacon.” Seungcheol says, probably more fondly than he means to judging by the indulgent expression on Jeonghan’s face.

“Well—forgive me for not thinking of that.” Jeonghan argues dryly. “I don’t have a lot of experience babysitting vampires. Or babysitting in general, actually.” He grumbles under his breath, then a little louder. “I’m a vet you know!”

Seungcheol chuckles, and heads towards the bedroom door. “Thanks, Hannie. You can go.”

“Seungcheol, wait,” Jeonghan says, calling him back.

When Seungcheol turns to face him, he finds Jeonghan’s lips are pressed together in distaste, arms crossed stubbornly over his chest. He finally notices how fidgety Jeonghan is. How he keeps darting glances at the door.

“This was just a one off thing, right? You’re not planning on taking anymore people out to protect your vampire.” His voice is rough, but there's more tense worry than genuine accusation there.

“Of course not.” Seungcheol smiles tightly. He's pretty sure even priests and small children wouldn't believe him with that tone, so Jeonghan’s certainly not fooled.

“Seungcheol.”

Seungcheol sighs and waves a hand, "I've got it under control Hannie. It'll be fine."

It's not exactly the truth, but it's closer than Seungcheol would've thought a few hours ago.

That seems to be good enough for Jeonghan, who claps him on the back before leaving, a tacit kind of understanding between them.

Seungcheol knocks gently on the closet door, but when all he gets is an unhappy mew in answer he yanks it open. It swings wide and a shaft of light from the bedroom cuts through the shadows, illuminating the small vampire huddled under some jackets in the far corner.

Even though Jihoon’s hissing like the world’s most pissed off cat, he looks so vulnerable. He’s trembling, crouched against the wall in rumpled sleep pants and a threadbare t-shirt, his feet bare, hair sticking up in all directions.

When he sees it's Seungcheol at the door, he relaxes so quickly, it's like seeing water wash away sand.

“Hey, Jihoonie.” Seungcheol calls out softly.

Jihoon’s answering voice comes out sounding shaky and relieved, “Ch—cheol.”
He tries to stand up, and groans, because it very obviously hurts to move. Seungcheol carefully helps him to his feet and pulls his shirt up to check his wound hasn’t bled through. Jihoon makes unhappy noises the entire time but doesn’t protest otherwise, weak enough that he doesn’t back away from the supporting arm Seungcheol puts around his waist.

“I’m sorry I left you,” Seungcheol says, fingers brushing over Jihoon’s bare skin in a hungry caress before rubbing over the curve of his hipbone where the loose cotton pants he’s wearing have slipped low. “But I needed to take care of a few things and Jeonghan’s a good guy—even if he isn’t exactly stellar company.”

“He poked me.” Jihoon chokes out.

“I know, I know—” Seungcheol murmurs soothingly, urging Jihoon out of the dim closet with a gentle pressure from the hand on his side. “Like I said, not stellar company, and Vampires are kind of new territory for him.”

By the time they’ve reached the frame of the doorway, Jihoon’s legs are trembling.

“M’sorry,” Jihoon slurs, swaying a little as Seungcheol pulls him close, gripping the front of Seungcheol’s shirt. “I messed up your couch.”

Seungcheol put his arms up and around Jihoon’s back to support him, and feels Jihoon shaking under his hands, with fatigue and something else, something that is probably fear. Seungcheol realizes that he should have stayed with him, made sure he was here when Jihoon woke up, so he didn’t have to panic at the sight of an unfamiliar face.

He doesn’t care how it looks. Doesn’t care about the weight of history between their species or if Dracula himself emerges to shake his fist at them. He puts his arms around Jihoon and hugs him, hard.

Jihoon takes a second to get with the program, but when he does it takes Seungcheol by surprise. There are hands touching his shoulder blades and Jihoon's hugging him back with an intensity that makes Seungcheol thinks he needs this.

“I was so scared, Cheol.” Jihoon whispers against Seungcheol's shoulder. “The guy from the library offered to bring me to people that would help, he said there were other vampires just like me that I could meet. So, I followed him and then when we got there, this big, ugly guy came out of nowhere and—s-shot me. I told him I wasn’t going to hurt anyone, b-but he s-shot me a-again.”

Jihoon makes a strangled kind of noise and presses in closer, like he's trying to get under Seungcheol's skin, and Seungcheol tangles his fingers in the hair at the nape of his neck, kisses his temple, the top of his head. He does it without thinking, pure impulse, just wanting to comfort and reassure.

“It hurt so bad.” Jihoon finally continues, voice ragged and stifled against Seungcheol’s chest. “I could feel my insides burning, but I couldn’t touch the bullet. I rolled into one of the sewers and managed to escape. I don’t think he followed me—but I can’t be—”

“I’ve got you now.” Seungcheol says firmly, when Jihoon is gasping against him and those thin-strong fingers are clasped around his shoulders. “It’s okay. They’re not going to hurt you again.” He says more softly, and feels Jihoon relax a fraction though the effect on his breathing is lukewarm.

"I’m sorry I didn’t listen to you,” Jihoon chokes out finally, when his breathing has evened out.
"Jihoon, it doesn't matter."

Seungcheol means for it to sound normal, reassuring even, but when he takes a breath to tell Jihoon exactly how much none of that matters, he feels his senses go off-line for a second with how fucking good Jihoon smells.

Most vampires smell only of old blood and wind and dirt, but in the close press of their bodies, it’s impossible to ignore that Jihoon has retained his human scent, vanilla and cedar and fucking sunshine.

It’s all Seungcheol can do not to bury his face in Jihoon's neck and groan, and the rest of him wants to do—oh so much more than that.

Seungcheol starts to pull back, but Jihoon's having none of it. He makes a sorrowful sound against Seungcheol's shoulder, loops his arms around his neck and clings.

Seungcheol clumsily holds him back and—oh fuck—his scent intensifies.

Seungcheol's always suspected his sense of smell would be his undoing, and this feels like glorious torture, feeling Jihoon, smelling him, the heat of arousal starting to claw at Seungcheol's belly. The edge of instinctive violence that Seungcheol feels around him, to dominate and mount, itches at the base of his spine.

The Lycan in him wants to prove that he’s stronger, smarter, faster; to make Jihoon accept it, and then stuff himself so far up that pert little body...

"Jihoon, please." It comes out guttural and heavy with want so obvious even Jihoon must notice. Seungcheol tries again to extricate himself, both of them, from a situation that's rapidly getting out of hand.

Jihoon lets him go this time, lets Seungcheol put some space between them though it’s not fucking enough. Ten blocks wouldn’t be enough distance when Jihoon smells like that, and looks like this, and blinks up at him with big, wet, dark eyes.

“How—how are you feeling?” Seungcheol stammers, trying to find something, anything to distract himself from the scent invading his head.

Jihoon ignores the question and just stares at him, as if he's trying to read something in Seungcheol's face. But judging by the frustrated little crease between his eyebrows he doesn't find it.

“You’re weird.” Jihoon says quietly. Which is a subject change out of absolutely nowhere, and it immediately leaves Seungcheol confused and wary.

“I—what?”

Jihoon’s face gets a pinched look of pain that Seungcheol suspects means whatever pain relief Jeonghan gave him might be wearing off a little.

“I thought you were just being stupidly paranoid before, but I understand now. I know why.” Jihoon murmurs, stepping closer and taking Seungcheol’s larger hand with his small one almost unh thinkingly.

“You do?” Seungcheol says, mouth dry, and there's a shiver of unease making its way through him.
Jihoon pulls a face, sticking his bottom lip out a little. “Yeah—like you said before, people don’t help others for no reason. Except you, cause you’re weird.” Jihoon returns, his tone both mocking and kind, blurred at the edges with exhaustion too real to be faked.

Relieved he hasn’t been found out, Seungcheol laughs, feeling strangely light in the chest area. “C’mon, let’s get you something to eat.”

Two packs of Pseudoglobin later and Jihoon still doesn’t look right.

Seungcheol watches him eating a poppy-seed bagel, looking listless. Elbows on the pallid Formica, little black dots on his fingertips, deep black rings lining his eyes. His skin’s paler than Seungcheol is used to, and there’s the tiniest streak of blood on the stretch of fabric over his waist, but it’s enough for Seungcheol to know the wound beneath is not healing well.

Seungcheol doesn’t actually know how much vampires can heal themselves before it starts to be too much. Before their bodies just can’t any more.

He knows Lycan’s have a limit, but he’s never seen one reach it and survive, and it doesn’t bare thinking about Jihoon dying on him now after all this.

“Jihoon—don’t you want some cream cheese on that?” Seungcheol offers, gesturing at the bagel.

“Heh?” Jihoon blinks, staring through the centre of his bagel as if there is a more satisfactory answer hidden there. “Yeah, sure.” He comments sleepily. His replacement painkillers must be sinking in.

Seungcheol plucks the bagel from his hand and starts spreading cream cheese on it while thoughts pound the inside of his skull like tiny fists.

Jeonghan was right; Jihoon isn’t going to get any better filling up on the synthesized shit. He needs fresh blood and fast.

He assesses his options. He could go to a blood bank, purchase a few bags—but he’ll need his ID for that and that in itself opens up the risk of being traced. He could go out and hunt, drain a poor soul nobody would miss. But it’ll take time, he's a little rusty and he really can’t afford to leave Jihoon alone now.

There really is no other option. He’ll have to…

Seungcheol’s stomach is jerking like madness, protesting the idea he's just had. Protesting his belief that it's pretty much the only option he has left.

But he’s desperate, he's so fucking desperate.

“Hear me out.” Seungcheol says, turning the television onto something mindless and casually drawing a sharp kitchen knife out of the drawer.

Because Jihoon is awesome he doesn't immediately ask why Seungcheol’s standing shirtless in the middle of the living room brandishing a kitchen knife. Though he looks as if he's thinking about it.
In the end he seems to decide Seungcheol knows what he's doing, because he's willing to let Seungcheol run with things that might look a little stupid to start with, unlike some people.

“I’m going to cut myself, and you’re going to feed off me. But you can’t get used to it. Only take what you need.” Seungcheol says. His words are steady, but his mind is still reeling, spilling out reassurances he has no way of knowing are true.

*This is Jihoon. Jihoon needs to feed. Jihoon won’t drain him.*

Jihoon recoils then, almost sliding off the couch in his haste to back away.

“No. No—I can’t. No way.” Jihoon shakes his head, voice harsh and panicked. He makes a gesture which means nothing but there's a vague desperation to it.

Seungcheol has an urge to tell him to stop being a baby, but the impulse stills on his tongue. This is new for him, it's natural for him to be wary.

“Yes, you can. You *have* to.” Seungcheol says, as flatly as he can manage. Though there's a catch in his voice. He tells himself it's adrenaline, it's stupid reckless insanity.

Jihoon draws in his legs, resting his chin on one flannelled knee. “I don’t know how. I—I can’t.” his voice trails off on some sort of quiet hysterical noise that Seungcheol suspects might very well end up turning into actual hysteria if he’s not careful.

Seungcheol flips the blade to grip the handle upside down, bends over till they’re eye to eye. “Jihoon—you’re dying. Do you understand that? You might not remember a lot about dying before—and you might not think Vampires *can* die, but they can.”

He watches Jihoon’s mouth press into a thin, unhappy line, then quietly continues. “You need fresh blood to heal and this is the only way you can get it safely, so you need to work with me and do what I say. Trust me on this.”

“What if I can’t stop?” murmurs Jihoon, after Seungcheol has counted out two chilly minutes of silence.

“You will, don’t worry.” Seungcheol murmurs, reaching out to stroke Jihoon’s hair, still loosely clasping the knife in the opposite hand. “I’ve got it under control, and I’ll stop you if I have to.”

Tentative understanding sparks in Jihoon’s eyes and he nods once, slowly.

Seungcheol exhales something like relief and claps him on the shoulder. “Scoot over—I need to get comfortable.”

He sinks into the couch space next to Jihoon and makes an incision just above his collar; thin enough for a steady flow, deep enough so his body doesn’t try and heal it immediately. He barely registers the slice of skin, but beside him Jihoon draws a sharp, hissing breath, palms pressing flat to the cushions.

“Oh—fuck, Cheol.”

“It’s okay, come here.” Seungcheol says softly, watching the vulnerable dip of Jihoon’s throat as he swallows.

Jihoon goes without a flicker of protest, eyes shiny and liquid. And then he’s sitting astride Seungcheol’s lap, fingers curing over his shoulders.
Jihoon stares for an age, mouth opening and shutting in a series of unasked questions. Eventually he manages to say, “So, do I just—lick it?”

“Yeah. Or you could suck it.” Seungcheol offers, quirking an eyebrow. It comes out sounding like innuendo, and Seungcheol can’t decide if it’s on purpose. Innuendo always slips out of him like breathing, and there’s never been a reason to learn how to recognize when it’s intentional.

Jihoon laughs: a lovely, sparkling sound that—if Seungcheol is going to be completely honest with himself, and why wouldn’t he be—makes him want to do unspeakably filthy things to him.

“Should I use my fangs, bite down a little? Get a better flow.” Jihoon asks. Which is kind of surprising and proactive of him.

Seungcheol gives him a slow nod. “Sure—whatever you like.”

“What if I switch it up? Some biting, licking and sucking. Would that be okay?” There’s a polite sort of curiosity to Jihoon’s voice, that says he really wants to know.

Seungcheol blinks at the far wall and almost forgets what they’re talking about for a second. But it seems to involve his body getting confused about what exactly the ultimate goal of this entire exercise is. He thinks his dick would appreciate it if they were both less vague with their vocabulary choices.

“Yeah, that sounds fine.” He croaks, throat gone dry.

Jihoon’s eyes are flat black when he leans in, nostrils flaring at the scent of fresh blood. Seungcheol watches his mouth open, the wet, bright shine of his fangs, feels the coolness when Jihoon's breath shivers out over his neck.

Seungcheol can feel the wet slide of blood there, can feel when Jihoon flattens his tongue against it. Testing. Uncertain. But then Jihoon licks, spreading the flash of red up to the cut, leaving a shining streak of pink.

Seungcheol listens to the hitch and catch in Jihoon's throat as he tastes the blood’s freshness, then there’s warm fingers sliding up his throat, and a quiet growl as Jihoon finally sinks his teeth in and sucks.

Seungcheol’s world goes warm at the edges, throbs like someone has shoved a hand inside his chest, taken hold of his heart and squeezed. It’s not painful, not supposed to be anyway—but it’s definitely weird.

The warmth soon turns to heat, twists. It's like being burned alive, like fire in the blood and he can feel it all the way through him. His chest aches, but his skin's prickling under what feels like a thousand tiny electric shocks.

He shifts ever so slight, so that Jihoon is draped more comfortably against him, and taps a slow, calming pattern where his hands rest on Jihoon’s waist.

For a while Jihoon feeds desperately, mouth moving hungrily over Seungcheol’s throat, clawing at Seungcheol's shoulders, sucking in mute, helpless ways against his skin. Seungcheol can hear the way every exhale through his nose is slightly louder than the one before, the way he’s gulping down air as he drinks.

Seungcheol’s other hand settles on the back of Jihoon’s head, firmly holding it in place.
“Shhh. Slow down, relax. If you drink too fast, you’ll get trapped wind and I’ll have to burp you or something.” He says, letting his voice colour with the slightest hint of teasing.

He can feel Jihoon scowl against his neck, but the vampire does slow down and Seungcheol strokes his back, feeling the urgency and tension shake free of him.

Seungcheol sits there and lets Jihoon do his thing, and it’s easier than he’d thought it would be. He’d thought his body would rebel against it somehow. But aside from the restless tapping of his fingers, he’s ok with it. So much so, he’s surprised when Jihoon shifts back suddenly, pulling away from him. Seungcheol gets a good look at his face, and there are beads of sweat over Jihoon’s brow and lip, his pupils are tiny black dots in the half-light and his mouth is swollen and red.

“You okay?” Seungcheol asks.

Jihoon licks his lips and frowns like he doesn’t understand. “Yeah. It’s, it’s good. But it’s warm. I—I haven’t felt this warm in so long, it just feels a little weird.”

Seungcheol quirks a brow and lifts an arm, presses the back of his hand over Jihoon’s cheek. Jihoon’s skin where it touches him is burning hot. It always used to be just slightly below room temperature, like a freakin corpse. But Seungcheol’s the one who’s cold now.

“That’s a good sign.” Seungcheol says, but he sounds uncertain.

He doesn’t really know what it means or if it’s a positive sign at all. Jihoon’s hair hangs damp at the back of his neck, and although there’s a cool breeze coming in through the open window, the linen bandage covering his side and wrapping around to the small of his back is sodden with sweat.

It can’t be good for his slowly healing wound, but when Seungcheol pushes the bandage aside to check, he finds the plains of wet, broken skin are already knitting together sluggishly.

“You’re healing.” Seungcheol whispers, a little wonder in his voice.

Jihoon tips his head down, cranes his neck to get a better look. “Oh—guess I am. That was pretty fast.”

He locks eyes with Seungcheol again, intent, wordlessly asking if he can continue.

Seungcheol nods and Jihoon leans in, tongue sliding along Seungcheol's collar to catch a stray droplet, making him shiver. He latches on once again, sucking more softly this time even as his fingers clench and relax in Seungcheol’s arm, quick little digs of pain.

In the end Seungcheol doesn’t have to tell Jihoon to stop, doesn’t have to pull him off. He feels the vampire stop suckling soon enough, and now he’s just sitting there straddling Seungcheol’s lap, breathing low and even into the warm hollow of his neck.

After a prolonged silence where neither of them move, Seungcheol dares to.

He cranes his neck to study Jihoon, "Hey, what are you -" and stops talking, because Jihoon eyes are closed, mouth open just a little and he has one arm looped around Seungcheol’s neck. He looks small and soft, and completely exhausted.

For a second Seungcheol thinks he’s just passed out again, overcome with euphoric energy after his first feed—but then he dismisses that notion entirely because Jihoon starts snoring.

Jihoon literally just fell asleep on top of him during a feed.
Seungcheol isn't even sure how to process that. The fact that Jihoon trusts him enough to not only come here injured, but to fall asleep in his arms mid feed that’s—that's a huge deal. He’s not sure how or when it happened, but it’s very possible that Seungcheol has in fact imprinted on a baby vampire.

The whole world might as well just turn inside out while it was at it.

With an amused sigh, Seungcheol scoops Jihoon up and carries him into the bedroom. Time to put his baby vampire down for a nap.

A few hours later and Seungcheol is regretting every decision he’s made in his entire life.

Jihoon woke up after his post feed nap, padded into the living room where Seungcheol was trying to scrub the blood out of the couch—and hit the roof.

Literally.

Seungcheol’s blood has healed him—and then some. Because, now Jihoon’s jumping off the walls with manic energy, chattering a mile a minute and coming right up close to Seungcheol’s face to tell him how awesome he feels.

“Seungcheol—look—look.” Jihoon grins, lifting the couch over his head effortlessly.

“Put that down before you hurt yourself. Or damage the walls. Jesus.” Seungcheol sighs, because there’s a dent in the ceiling that Seungcheol knows is probably never going to be fixed.

Jihoon obliges him and sets the couch down, but like a Duracell bunny, he keeps moving. The Lycan blood continues to race through his body, leaving his muscles twitchy and electrified and his eyes unable to rest in any one place.

Seungcheol wonders if he should sit down somewhere out of the way and let the vampire exhaust himself. Then decides against this particular line of action when Jihoon demonstrates his new, impressive vampire strength by trying to lift him.

Seungcheol smiles, raising an eyebrow fondly, “Okay—that’s enough now. Please put me down.”

Up until Jihoon's arrival, he'd been a model neighbour. Quiet, pleasant, took out the trash like Swiss clockwork. This week, though, he's already been caught cleaning up a blood trail on his doorstep, burying ashes in the garden, and now raising his voice and trying to calm down a hyperactive vampire.

On the bright side, at least Jihoon’s hyperactivity stops them from having a super awkward conversation about the feeding session. Which Seungcheol's grateful for. But on the other - hell, Seungcheol doesn’t even know what the other hand's even holding.

“Aw man—I'm so buzzed. I feel amazing. I feel so strong. I’ve never felt this way before. It’s like I’ve got this well of energy now and I can do anything. Anything Seungcheol. I think I could lift a car. Hell, even a truck. I should go outside and check that out. Actually I will. Oh, no I can’t. It’s daylight outside. But later for sure. Man, I’m so excited. I need to do something. Hey you wanna wrestle? Let’s wrestle. I think we should wrestle. Come wrestle with me. I’ll be gentle on you dude, don’t worry. I’ll only like use 5% of my strength. Fuck, I feel amazing. Has the sun set yet? Damn, it hasn’t. I can’t wait to go outside and wrestle a truck. Or maybe find that guy who shot me
and kick his ass. Yeah—I’m going to do that. I’m so happy!” Jihoon says all that, in less than twenty seconds.

Seungcheol pinches the bridge of his nose, “Jihoon, please sit down or I will sit on you.” He says, for what feels like the hundredth time.

Seungcheol knows Jihoon's dealing with a massive surplus of energy right now, but if someone doesn't sit on him—quite possibly literally—he'll be out on the street and throwing himself into the first fight he can finagle.

“I can’t! I’m too pumped! I wanna test my strength. I need to.” Jihoon urges. He smiles, bringing out a dimple in his cheek. “Come on—let’s wrestle. I promise, I’ll go easy on you.”

Seungcheol opens his mouth to say ‘no’, then has a better idea. He feels an anticipatory smile pull at his lips.

“You know what. Why not!” He agrees amiably.

It’s how Seungcheol ends up on the floor with Jihoon straddling his waist, small but surprisingly strong hands pressing down on his shoulders.

Jihoon had taken him down in quick, efficient movements and Seungcheol hadn’t resisted any of it. He’d pretended to put up a good fight, sure, but ultimately allowed Jihoon to best him. His reasoning being: if Jihoon’s expending is new found energy in here—he’s not showing it off out there.

“Ha—got you.” Jihoon grins smugly.

Seungcheol fails to look impressed, “Oh no. However will I escape.”

Jihoon releases his shoulders and sits back, watching with sparkling eyes as Seungcheol stares up at the ceiling.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself.” Jihoon grins, patting him on the chest companionably. “You might be a big guy, but I have super vampire strength now—there was no way you could beat me.”

Seungcheol would roll his eyes at that if he wasn’t afraid they might roll right out of their sockets with the force of it.

“Of course. Thank you for being so gentle. May I just say, your modesty is admirable.” Seungcheol drawls.

Jihoon turns a smirk on him, friendly and teasing and a little bit smug. “Wanna go again? I’ll only use one hand this time.” He says, bouncing happily where he’s perched over Seungcheol and —Fuck—Jesus—Shit—Son of a bitch!!

The tight end of Jihoon's ass is brushing against Seungcheol dick with each bounce, forcing broken noises to spill from his throat and his hips stutter up, completely involuntary.

“Jihoon!” Seungcheol growls through his teeth, gripping the vampire’s hips to still him.
Jihoon stops immediately. He leans over Seungcheol again, hands on shoulders, eye to eye, head tipped curiously. He starts to smile, then stops. A flicker of uncertainty in his blue eyes.

“Are you okay? Did I hurt you?” He murmurs.

Seungcheol takes a deep, patient breath.

“No, I’m fine.” He says, then tenses and flips them over, reversing their positions effortlessly and pinning Jihoon to the floor.

“What the hell!” Jihoon yelps, startled.

Huffing, he tries to push Seungcheol off, but Seungcheol has the greater bulk and keeps him in place.

“Well—this was fun.” Seungcheol says, grabbing Jihoon’s wrists and holding them down near his head. He thinks maybe the expression Jihoon throws him is half confused and half accusing. He still reads it well enough to smile back.

“How are you—” Jihoon struggles under his weight, irritated and not a little bit confused at how Seungcheol has managed to pin him so easily. “Why are you so strong?”

“Hmm. Maybe the effect of the blood is wearing out.” Seungcheol shrugs, though he knows it’s not entirely true.

Jihoon tries to move but Seungcheol’s grip is like iron, he grunts with the effort of it for several minutes; then reluctantly gives in and relaxes, anger falling into an expression of quiet misery.


“Great—,” Seungcheol nods, releasing the vampire’s wrists. “And my prize is going to be you chilling the fuck out and staying in one place so I can get some stuff done.”

Brows furrowing, Jihoon scrubs a hand over his face and nods.

Seungcheol moves to get up, but a quiet sniffle from Jihoon stills him, seems to demand all his attention. He plants his hands down on either side of Jihoon’s head and stares down at him.

Jihoon has an arm thrown over his face, but it’s a pleasant surprise that he allows Seungcheol to move it out of the way to get a good look at him.

Seungcheol almost wishes he hadn’t, because there are tears in Jihoon’s eyes, and Seungcheol watches as they well at the corners and spill out, rivulets running down into and wetting the hair at Jihoon’s temples.

“Hoonie,” Seungcheol murmurs. He frowns, and reaches down to swipe his thumb beneath Jihoon’s eye. “What’s wrong?”

Jihoon shakes his head and looks away. Petulantly.

And that’s just great—fucking great! Seungcheol’s made his vampire cry.

He didn’t think he was being that rough, in fact he was putting more effort into restraining himself than anything. But now Jihoon’s in tears because Seungcheol’s a big, stupid, smelly, too many adjectives, insensitive jerk.
“Sorry—I just.” Jihoon makes a noise, something that's too complicated for Seungcheol to unravel. He sees it sideways and it might be apology, or guilt, or embarrassment. “I just realised how I must be such a pain in the ass for you.”

“What? Why would you think that?” Seungcheol says, letting himself laugh in disbelief as he runs his thumb across Jihoon's cheek.

Jihoon tries to glare at him but ends up pouting, looking ridiculously adorable with those baby-fangs peeking out over his lip.

“Seungcheol, please—” Jihoon says, voice going brittle. A stray tear collects, and he swipes at his face. “Don’t make excuses for me. I showed up at your door step and attacked you—"

“Unsuccessfully.” Seungcheol adds wryly, because he thinks that’s important to note.

Jihoon scowls at him, tear tracks smudged over the flushed skin of his face, brow screwed up in a frown.

“Yeah, but I’m eating your food and burning a hole in your pocket. And I didn’t listen to you even though you’re the only one who looks out for me.” He sniffs, eyes fluttering shut briefly. “I got myself injured and then bled all over your carpet, and now I’m bouncing around out of control and pissing you off. For fuck sake Cheol—I fed on you.” He says stiffly and his mouth presses tight and thin to stop it from quivering.

“Hey, don’t. It didn’t hurt.” Seungcheol says with a shrug, which is mostly the truth. “I invited you in, remember? And I offered to share my food, and it was my idea that you feed properly so you’ve got nothing to feel guilty about. And anyway, it worked. You’re healed and I’m sure you’ve learnt a valuable life lesson about trusting people too quickly.”

Jihoon gives him a sharp look, like he knows Seungcheol’s letting him off there. But he makes a strange shrugging movement, like he doesn’t like thinking about it, doesn’t like remembering it.

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“Listen Jihoon, you’re not a pain in the ass—I like having you around. I—I enjoy your company.” Seungcheol says shakily. It's a rough burst of strange honesty. One of the hard-edged things he makes a habit of not admitting to.

"Really?" Jihoon gives him a look which plainly doesn’t believe him.

“I don’t know if you’ve noticed—but I don’t exactly have a lot of people to hang around with.” Seungcheol smirks, letting just a touch of self-deprecating humour show.

Jihoon makes an apologetic noise and Seungcheol looks at him, not knowing what to expect. His eyes are soft, though, and when he speaks his voice is very kind. “Why? You seem pretty friendly to me.”

Seungcheol shrugs, scratches the back of his head awkwardly. “I didn’t always use to be. I guess people remember that, and it takes a while to change their perceptions.” He murmurs, trusting Jihoon to follow what he's not saying.

There is a pause while Jihoon considers this.

“What about that guy from earlier? The one with the long hair. Isn’t he your friend?”

“Who, Jeonghan? Yeah—I guess we’re friends.” Seungcheol says with much confusion. He’s not quite sure himself.
At least he thinks Jeonghan and him are friends, antagonistic friends. Chaotic neutral friends?

“It’s hard to be friends with your vet though.” Seungcheol says after a minute, smiling askance at him, “We don’t exactly run in the same circles.”

“Vet?” Jihoon echoes, wrinkling his nose. “But—you don’t have any pets.”

At Jihoon’s perplexed expression Seungcheol grimaces.

“Yeah—uhm—it’s a long story. I’ll explain later.” He smiles, and stands, pulling Jihoon up with him. “But first, I need you to stay here and keep an eye on the place while I go out and buy a futon.”

“Why are you buying a futon?” Jihoon asks him, raising an eyebrow.

“You’ll see.”

Seungcheol makes a trip to the hardware store, fills a cart, and has a very productive day off work.

Twelve hours ago, his walk-in closet had been freshly cleared of his surplus clothing, having served its function as a bonus closet for two years. It hadn't been much to look at, last Jihoon saw it: four whitewashed plaster walls, a scratched-up hardwood floor, and a single lightbulb serving as the only source of illumination.

Now the walls are freshly painted with a sort of deep-hued Saracen red, the floor refinished and stained walnut with black baseboards around its margins. The overhead light is muted, on a dimmer switch. There's a small chest of drawers, several little bookshelves, a wooden chest, and against the far wall there's the futon he had delivered that morning that doubles as a small couch.

"Holy shit, Cheol." says Jihoon, leaning in the doorway, stunned.

"Once I started," Seungcheol begins embarrassedly, "I — I got carried away. I know it’s kind of small—but when the doors shut, it’s pitch black. Even during the day. You could—stay in there and sleep and stuff. It’s for you.”

Try as he might, he can't seem to meet Jihoon's eye. It’s partially instinctual, he knows that, like a shy dog being skittish around new friends.

Jihoon stares at the side of his face for what amounts to be the longest minute of Seungcheol’s life, then tilts his head slightly to the side as if to see Seungcheol from a new angle. Seungcheol can almost hear him thinking 'of course you'd build me a vampire den in your closet, Choi Seungcheol, you predictable idiot.'

"If you don’t want it, that’s totally up to you. I just thought it would be a good idea?” Seungcheol says, and it comes out as a question, even though he hadn’t intended that at all.

He's almost expecting a flippant answer, but he doesn't get one.

"I want to.” Jihoon blurts out. “I love it, I just—you really don’t have to do this Cheol. You’ve done so much for me already.”

Seungcheol glances out the window, embarrassed.
“Well—it's too late now. The adoption's final, and I'm the proud owner of one slightly damaged baby vampire, so would you please just get inside your vampire den already.” He mumbles, gesturing vaguely in the direction of the closet. “You're making me tired just looking at you.”

Jihoon huffs something annoyed, but steps inside and lets Seungcheol close the door to test it out.

He’s quiet for a few minutes, then--

“It smells of you.” Jihoon’s voice says from across the door.

Seungcheol face crumples into something offended. “Well—we can blast it with air fresheners if you-“

“No. I like it!” Jihoon interrupts quickly. Shyly? “I like that it smells of you. It makes me feel… safe.” He murmurs almost too quiet to hear through the door.

Seungcheol ignores the way it surprises him, the way it makes something clench in his chest.

He doesn’t think Jihoon would have admitted to that if there wasn’t a door between them, shielding both their expressions to that little revelation. He’s glad there is cause he’s never blushed so furiously in his entire fucking life.

“Oh. Uhm—okay then.”

Seungcheol should be sleeping. Of course he should be sleeping. In the quiet haven of his room, with Jihoon resting peacefully in a closet a few feet away from him, he should be out cold.

But Seungcheol can’t sleep, because Jihoon’s quiet snoring stopped a few minutes ago and Seungcheol can’t stop thinking about it.

It’s completely stupid, but Seungcheol is compelled by a sudden need to make sure that Jihoon is still breathing.

He usually can’t stand the sound of somebody’s snoring, but it’s too damn quiet here at night. Not enough distractions to ward off the creeping hunger that still comes to him in the dark sometimes, no matter how many layers of glib jests or brazen bravado he buries himself under. And he’s grown fond of Jihoon’s snoring: it’s strangely soft and cute and he’s been doing it since Seungcheol’s known him, so he can’t very well decide to stop just when he fancies a change. It’s not fair.

After another minute of fitful twitching, Seungcheol levers up a bit and strains his ears, tries to listen for the sound of breathing coming from the closet. Nothing.

Seungcheol chews on his lip, torn by indecision.

Should he just get out of bed and knock quietly on the door? And if Jihoon is asleep, if that wakes him up, say what? Please can you keep snoring, so I know that you’re okay?

That doesn’t sound insane at all.

Or maybe he should concede to insomnia and get up, get a drink, read a book. And wait until morning, when he’ll find his baby vampire lying dead in his closet, having suffocated in his sleep while Seungcheol faffed about in the next room!
You know what: fuck that.

He can’t stand it anymore. He throws off the bedsheets and stumbles out, walking quietly over to the closet across from his bed.

When Seungcheol cracks the door open and pokes his head in, Jihoon doesn’t so much as stir, remaining a shapeless inert lump under the covers on the futon in the corner.

With a little sigh, Seungcheol steps in and over to where Jihoon is lying. In the shadow-filled room, he can barely make out the pale stretch of neck and blonde, tousled hair above a heap of blankets, and that little bit of Jihoon is visibly lax and soft with sleep.

Or possibly rigor mortis!

Seungcheol stops a foot away, and then curls a hand very gently around Jihoon’s shoulder; Jihoon is not known for his slow and tender awakenings as a matter of course. But Jihoon doesn’t budge, doesn’t move, still, a cold solid thing under Seungcheol’s touch.

Seungcheol tries not to be alarmed at this; only minutes can have passed since he could hear soft snoring from under the gap in the door.

“Hoonie,” Seungcheol says, and squeezes Jihoon’s shoulder now, feeling his own heart thump a little worriedly in spite of himself.

Jihoon wakes on a quick inhalation. His shoulder rolls out from under Seungcheol’s touch as he turns onto his back and blinks bleary eyes up at him.

“Cheol?”

Relieved, Seungcheol can’t prevent himself from hooking his fingers under the blankets’ edge and tugging them down to see Jihoon’s face. “You stopped snoring,” he says by way of explanation.

The futon creaks as Jihoon shifts up onto his elbows, the dim silhouette of his cowlick sticking up like it’s expressing his confusion. “So? I thought not snoring was a good thing.”

The calm acceptance in Jihoon’s voice makes it worse, causes Seungcheol to babble his way through an explanation.

“No. Snoring is healthy. Snoring is recommended by health experts—probably. Don’t hold it in Jihoon—let it out. Snore.”

Jihoon snorts tiredly, “I thought that was farting?”

“No—it’s definitely snoring. Please snore. I mean—you can fart if you want, but this is a confined space dude. Too much carbon dioxide is probably bad for you in a small space. That’s how people suffocate in cars yanno, by leaving the ignition on. Granted the carbon dioxide output from farting is not as big, but a room this small can fill up quickly.”

And now Seungcheol realises he veered wildly off topic and stops himself with a sigh. “My point is—I’m used to hearing you snore, and when you stopped I was quietly freaking out about you not breathing.”

He will not invest in a baby vampire monitor. He will not.

A beat of silence, then the rustle of cloth as Jihoon resettles onto his side, facing him in the dark.
“You’re thinking of setting up a baby monitor, aren’t you?” Jihoon says dryly, and now his mouth has acquired a slight curve. Seungcheol doesn't have to use his superior night vision to see the flash of white teeth in the darkness.

Seungcheol huffs a breath of laughter. “No.” He retorts, straightening up, letting go of the covers. “I’m sorry—I shouldn’t have woke you.”

Jihoon grabs his wrist before he can step away, curls his finger around it and squeezes softly, “Are you okay Cheol?”

Seungcheol is grateful for the darkness because he has the horrible feeling that he might be blushing.

"Me—pfft. Of course. I wasn’t the one who got shot.” he says, grinning and adopting what he hopes is a casual pose. But Jihoon is looking at him strangely, with eyes so heavy and considering that Seungcheol almost flinches under the weight of his gaze.

“It’s fucking warm in here, are you sure you have enough air to breathe?” Seungcheol blabbers, trying to cover the way his pulse is thumping hard now in his wrists. “Maybe I should drill some air holes in the wall for you. Or—”

“Cheol.” Jihoon interrupts softly, squeezing his wrist again. “I’m okay. I feel great. Better than I have in months.”

He seems to realise he's still holding Seungcheol’s wrist, gives his own hand an almost bewildered look, before very carefully letting him go.

Seungcheol rubs tiredness out of his eyes and draws in a slow breath. “Yeah, I know. Just might take me some time to accept it. You’ll have to be patient with me while I work on my crazy protective instincts. It, uhm, runs in the family.”

There’s a rustle of fabric as Jihoon shakes his head against his pillow.

“They’re not crazy. They’re sweet.” He whispers back, eyes sliding shut again.

Silence falls over the room, briefly.

On impulse, Seungcheol reaches out and touches Jihoon’s hair, presses his fingertips where it curls around Jihoon’s ear, and mirrors Jihoon's smile. “Good night Jihoonie.”

Jihoon shuffles under the covers, makes little sleepy stretching noises. “Night, Cheol.” He says, cracking a yawn.

Seungcheol’s out of the closet (not like that) and swinging the door shut when Jihoon calls out to him.

“Can you leave it open a little? Please.” He asks, the soft whisper tight with embarrassment.

Seungcheol smiles to himself and leaves the door ajar. “Sure.”

He climbs back into bed and sleeps—actually sleeps, rather than pretending to sleep while furtively keeping an eye on Jihoon.

He should probably be worried about a Vampire sleeping in his closet, but the soft sound of Jihoon’s snoring drifting through the crack in the door is powerfully and unexpectedly soporific,
shaking loose some fine line of tension he’s been carrying for an age unknowing. The room smells of antiseptic and paint thinner, and faintly still of blood, but under all that there’s Jihoon, and Seungcheol has him now.

Chapter End Notes

1) Jihoon falling asleep during a feed XD he would tho.
2) I couldn't get the idea of a vampire den in the closet out of my head. It makes me soft. And Cheol would let Jihoon personalize it and stuff.
3) A vampire being super hyper isn't normal after a feed. But obviously Seungcheol isn't human and his blood would be extra stimulating......hint. Bye.
4) Hope you enjoyed this update! Let me know what you think of the direction. It will get...gorier later. Well, that's my plan anyway.
Thank you for reading!
Sympathy for the Devil

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

It’s not boring, strictly speaking, starting off Friday evening by hitting the gym and then the grocery store once he’s gotten off work. It’s routine. There’s an enormous difference. Seungcheol has learned to value routine very much, thanks to a few too many years of not having any at all.

So when he comes home juggling his bags and trying to text Mingyu one-handed that he’s not going to the next reunion just to play a Lycan five-a-side football match, he doesn’t expect to practically trip over the person hunched outside his door.

Someone in worn jeans and an oversized maroon hoodie, someone who grunts when Seungcheol drops everything to make sure he doesn’t have an actual corpse to deal with. If his home is being robbed, he’s got a very uninspiring lookout on his hands.

Seungcheol takes his chances and tentatively crouches down a bit more. “Hey, all right there?”

The shape stirs some at that, muttering something that sounds suspiciously like “Oh, shit.”

There’s not nearly enough of a chill in the air for exposure to the elements to be fatal and Seungcheol absurdly thinks at least he doesn’t have to deal with the bureaucracy of reporting a dead body. A dead body in front of a Lycan’s home is never going to look good, regardless of the cause of death.

“This probably looks really creepy, huh?” his visitor sighs, sitting up and pulling back his hood.

It’s Soonyoung.

Soonyoung the vampire from the supermarket, who practically shat his pants when he first laid eyes on Seungcheol, then stalked him in plain sight as he did his grocery shopping last week.

He’s still waking, still half-curled around a brown paper bag, which is clearly the position he’s been in for some time. The expression on his face is a mixture of embarrassment and sleepiness as he moves to stand, a study in lanky angles and incongruous grace.

Seungcheol has a distinctly bad feeling about all this. He scratches his chin thoughtfully, “Soonyoung, what are you doing here?”

The vampire’s mouth falls open with a soft gasp.

“You, you remembered my name.” He says seriously, words slow and surprised.

“What are you doing here?” Seungcheol repeats, his irritation palpable enough to jolt Soonyoung out of his stupor.

“Oh, uhh—came to give you these.” Soonyoung says, holding out the bag for Seungcheol to take.

He looks confused at Seungcheol’s reluctance to accept the parcel and pulls it back towards him slowly. “I was gonna wait till you came back, but I didn’t know when you’d be back. Then I got to thinking maybe you wouldn’t come back at all, because I know I was kind of intrusive when we met and I thought maybe I’d scared you away, so I just thought I’d stop by and bring them to you.”
Seungcheol thinks that comes out sounding more like an apology than an explanation.

More than a bit suspicious, Seungcheol reaches out carefully to pull down the top of the paper and peeks at the contents. He blinks stupidly at the four bags of Fortified Pseudoglobin he finds inside.

It comes back to him all at once: asking about the fortified variety because the shelves where empty, and Soonyoung offering to keep some back for him. He never imagined Soonyoung would remember his promise, much less actually turn up at his home.

Seungcheol takes the parcel from his hands then, because he doesn’t know what else to do. He knows what he would usually do with a vampire—growl, flash his claws, send them running, anything but encourage them to loiter—but he can’t now for some reason.

“How did you find out where I live?” Seungcheol asks, carefully sizing up the vampire. He can see the glint of sharp fangs in the dark and knows better that to turn away.

Soonyoung looks at him guiltily from behind a wayward lock of hair, “I might have followed you.”

Seungcheol raises one eyebrow sceptically. It has taken him a long time to learn how to do that, and though he doesn't have need of it often, this is definitely one of those times that calls for the raised eyebrow. “Might have?”

Soonyoung draws a breath as if to say something, then deflates. “Okay. I just followed you.”

Seungcheol shoots him a dark look, “Why?”

“Because, I—like—dogs.” Soonyoung says, slowly, purposefully, as if that matters in some way. And now he’s shifting his weight, looking even more uncomfortable.

Seungcheol was 100% sure he could predict the course of this conversation, but that statement has effectively derailed his assumptions.

“What the fuck’s that supposed to mean?” Seungcheol asks, honestly curious, fighting to keep his voice steady.

He’s afraid of where the conversation is heading, possibly to some weird and uncomfortable territory where Soonyoung admits to being a furry, and wanting Seungcheol to attend an orgy with him or something.

“It means, what it means. I like dogs. A lot.” Soonyoung repeats with a half shrug. He looks tense, hands pushed so hard into his pockets that his shoulders are sharp curves. “I like dogs and therefore, I thought we could be best friends.”

“Best…friends?!” Seungcheol echoes in disbelief.

He’s a little concerned that ‘Best Friends’ is an option here, when he’s almost certain they’re not even ‘friends’ to begin with.

You don’t just jump from being random strangers who meet in a supermarket to best friends in a week. They’re not even acquaintances for crying out loud. Soonyoung doesn’t even know his name and Seungcheol’s not planning on sharing it now, just in case Soonyoung goes out and has it tattooed on his wrist or something, like a permanent friendship bracelet.

Oh, God—that’s a horrifying and very distinct possibility in the near future.
Soonyoung is absolutely the type of guy who would wear a friendship bracelet. Seungcheol doesn’t know what’s worse: Soonyoung being a furry or Soonyoung making him a friendship bracelet and forcing him to wear it.

“I know that seems a little out of the blue,” Soonyoung interrupts before the mental images of matching friendship bracelets get any more disturbing. “But I was thinking about you lot this week and I think you’re interesting. I came because I…wanted to get ‘closer’ to you.” He says, in what he clearly thinks is absolutely not a creepy voice.

Seungcheol nearly drops the bag of Pseudoglobin. The fact that his brain just put that in air quotes is very, very disturbing.

“I—I can’t deal with this right now.” Seungcheol stammers, shaking his head to clear it. He fishes his wallet out of his back pocket and starts thumbing through the bills there. “How much do I owe you for the Pseudoglobin.”

Soonyoung waves him off with an airy gesture. “Oh, no—I’m not expecting you to pay. The Pseudoglobin is my peace offering on the ladder of our friendship.” He breaks off, shoving both hands into his pockets again, “Now, what are you going to offer to earn the title of my best friend?”

Seungcheol lets out a startled laugh. “Absolutely nothing. Get the fuck out of my territory.”

“Hey, don’t say that.” Soonyoung murmurs, shoulders slumped, eyes downcast. “We’re friends.”

“We—are not—friends.” Seungcheol growls out.

Soonyoung’s silence sounds offended, though he doesn’t say anything for almost a minute. “You’re right—we’re not friends. We’re best friends.” He says with renewed vigour.

Seungcheol clenches a fist. “No.”

“Can I pet you now?” Soonyoung interjects cheerfully, and Seungcheol goes slack jawed, certain he’s heard that wrong.

“What?!”

“Can I pet you?” Soonyoung repeats, and no, apparently Seungcheol heard it just fine the first time.

“No! You cannot fucking pet me.” Seungcheol spits incredulously. He straightens his back and squares his shoulders, adopting a pose he knows sets people on edge. “Now, fuck off before I rip your—"

“I don’t think you’re going to hurt me.” Soonyoung interrupts, stepping closer. He gives the illusion of confidence with the outward jut of his chin, meeting Seungcheol’s gaze dead on. But there’s no disguising his anxiety with the way he’s chewing his bottom lip and scuffing his shoe on the concrete.

“Don’t talk to me like you know me.” Seungcheol huffs.

Soonyoung shrugs, slinking closer once more. “I’m just saying, I think you would have hurt me already if you were going to. But I don’t think you want to do that. I think you’re a nice, reformed Lycan who wants to make friends.” He finishes with a smile.

Seungcheol frowns and puts some space between them. He watches Soonyoung’s smile for a long time, tries to see the edge. He’s good at finding the edges, where things don’t fit, finding out exactly
how to pull them free and get at what's underneath.

But Soonyoung looks for all the world like he's just here for friendship. Like he really just followed Seungcheol home cause he found him interesting. Somewhere along the way he’s gotten the wrong idea and determined ‘Lycan’ is interchangeable with ‘Pet’, and perhaps hoped to domesticate Seungcheol so that they might—oh, God—frolic through the woods together or something.

Seungcheol isn't quite prepared for that.

He blames Jihoon. He has no clear reason to blame Jihoon, yet it seems like something that should be entirely his fault. Things like this didn't happen to Seungcheol before he met Jihoon.

Jihoon’s obviously made him soft, turned him into the friendly neighbourhood Lycan and he never signed up for that.

Seungcheol breathes in slowly. Breathes out again with his eyes closed, pinching the bridge of his nose, and doesn't speak until he's found a measure of calm.

“Listen—kid. I don’t know what you’ve been smoking, but let’s set a few things straight right now. You’re a Vampire, and I’m a Lycan.” Seungcheol reminds him, in case he's forgotten. “I’m dangerous and I like my solitude. I don’t want friends, and if I did—It sure as hell wouldn’t be you because I don’t hang around with Vampires. Got it?” He bites out.

Of course, this is the exact moment the front door swings open and Jihoon decides to poke his head out.

“Seungcheol? I thought I heard you out here!” Jihoon chirps, shuffling out of the doorway and into full view. He’s clearly just woken from a nap what with the floofy hair and rumpled oversized T-shirt of Seungcheol’s he likes to sleep in.

Seungcheol sighs, dropping his forehead into his free hand. This is going to go so well.

He can see it happening in slow motion, the realisation dawning on Soonyoung’s face as he takes in the sight of Jihoon standing in the doorway, the way his startled confusion is slowly replaced with something terribly, terribly gleeful.

“Holy shit. Interspecies relationships?” Soonyoung asks, looking between them for a long moment. “Nice.”

Jihoon pauses just outside the doorway, finally registering Soonyoung’s presence with a curious tilt of his head. “Cheol? Who’s this?”

Seungcheol’s mouth opens and shuts, caught not knowing what to answer.

“I’m Soonyoung—his best friend.” Soonyoung says, not missing a beat.

Seungcheol eyeballs him, sputtering uselessly as Soonyoung steps closer and throws an arm around his shoulders, before turning to Jihoon and giving him a quick, assessing look. “And you are…?”

Jihoon looks at him with sad, expectant eyes, “I’m Jihoon, I live in his closet.” He says in a wounded tone.

“Jihoon?” Soonyoung echoes, considering that for a moment. “That’s odd, Seungcheol’s never mentioned you before.”
Jihoon wrinkles his nose at the suggestion.

“Yeah—well—he’s never mentioned you before either.” Jihoon says, suddenly defensive to an endearing degree. His forehead creases and his mouth ever so slightly pushes out.

Seungcheol thinks he’s sulking.

God damn it.

“Jihoonie—don’t listen to this guy.” Seungcheol twists his head, and glares at the side of Soonyoung’s face. “I haven’t told him anything about you because I don’t fucking know him!”

“Oh, but you remembered my name.” Soonyoung whispers out of the side of his mouth.

Seungcheol tamps down on the hysterical laughter that wants to bubble up and spill over. He shoves Soonyoung away and walks backwards towards the door. “He’s crazy. He’s high on something, I’m telling you.”

“You’re right, I am high. High on our friendship.” Soonyoung nods his head solemnly, like he’s just said something profound.

Seungcheol spreads his hands, “That’s it! Jihoon, please go inside. And you,” he turns, pointing at Soonyoung accusingly as he backs up the steps, “Stay the fuck away from me. I’m not kidding.”

Soonyoung’s face crumples as he watches, “Wait-”

The door slams shut at his back. Seungcheol tosses the bags of Pseudoglobulin he’s still holding on the cabinet, before spinning and dead bolting the door.

“Why didn’t you tell me your best friend was a vampire?” Jihoon snaps, then looks slightly guilty. “Not that I care or anything. It just would have been nice to know beforehand, not to mention useful when I was having an identity crisis.”

Seungcheol closes his eyes and manfully holds back the urge to bash his head against the nearest wall.

“He is not,” He says, in a completely level tone, “my best friend.”

Jihoon nods, slowly. There’s an obvious Okay, have it your way intended there, but Seungcheol doesn't feel like doing anything about it. He shakes his jacket off, hangs it up and forces himself to relax before continuing.

“I literally met him for the first time last week in the supermarket. We hardly spoke, and now he’s followed me home. He’s a stalker, Jihoon. Oh my god, I have a vampire stalker.” He repeats in disbelief, mostly for his own benefit so his brain can play catch up.

Jihoon levels him a dubious look, then stands on his tip toes to look through the peephole.

“Uhm, Cheol? He’s still standing outside.”

“What?” Seungcheol gasps, moving Jihoon aside to look through the peephole himself.

Soonyoung is indeed still there, standing at the bottom of the front steps and—waving. He's
smiling like some sort of demented cherub, in a way which, in that one second, Seungcheol finds viscerally, almost *painfully* adorable.

“Okay, that settles it. We need to relocate.” Seungcheol announces drastically.

Jihoon’s quiet for a moment, then hesitantly offers, “Maybe you should just invite him in?”

Seungcheol eyeballs him, “Why the fuck would I do that?”

Jihoon scratches the back of his head, one shoulder rising in a half shrug. “I could ask him questions. About being a vampire and stuff. I don’t know any other vampires, and he *seems* friendly enough.”

It probably says something about Seungcheol’s life that he doesn’t even bat an eye at that logic.

Jesus, it's going to be a long day.

Soonyoung spends his first ten minutes in the house watching Seungcheol, transfixed. He hasn’t quite learned the art of meaningful and suggestive looks being subtle yet, so it’s mostly just staring.

Really intense staring.

Of course, the whole ‘Lycan instinct-don’t turn your back on a vampire’ thing is encouraging Seungcheol to stare right back, which he's fairly sure won’t make it all better. He’s torn between wanting to say ‘Take a picture, it’ll last longer’ and fearing Soonyoung will actually take a picture.

Thankfully, Jihoon eases the tension by coaxing Soonyoung into the kitchen. They sit on stools at the breakfast bar, swapping stories over mugs of hot chocolate, while Seungcheol watches them with building trepidation from his position sprawled dramatically over the couch.

Two months ago, he had zero vampires in his home.

Now he has *two*.

He’s never been great at mathematics but that’s like—one vampire a *month*. In a year he’ll have twelve vampires, and that’s practically a football team. A vampire football team! He grins imagining the look on Mingyu’s face when he shows up at the next Lycan reunion with his vampire football team.

Okay, so he might have allowed himself to get a little side tracked there.

He blames the two vampires in his kitchen.

Having vampires in your kitchen is a lot to take in any day of the week, especially when said vampires stop chatting every few minutes to look over at him and *smile*.

It’s very disconcerting to say the least.

He doesn’t really want to use his heightened Lycan hearing to eavesdrop on them, but he does because he’s very worried Soonyoung is filling his baby vampire’s head with fanciful notions of dinner parties with Lycan’s as the main course. Or maybe he’s pushing the whole Lycan/Furry orgy thing and—no, Seungcheol decides eavesdropping is essential for his continued state of
mental health.

Of course, it’s almost impossible to keep a straight face once he does intrude, because the conversation goes a little something like this.

“I’m sorry I can’t be more helpful, but I don’t really know that many vampires either. Everything I’ve learnt I picked up from watching my progenitor, but now that I’m alone I’ve just had to wing it and so far it’s turned out okay..... Mostly okay.” There’s a drum of fingers against ceramic, Seungcheol thinks there’s more there, that Soonyoung’s not willing to share. “I’m pretty sure being here goes against the vampire code. Not that there is a vampire code or anything. Or maybe there is, I don’t know. Also, another thing about being a vampire I don’t know which I probably should.”

Jihoon’s shoulders rise and then fall, something like a shrug, “It’s okay. It’s cool to just be able to talk to another vampire.”

Soonyoung smiles warmly.

“I know right? Although, I’ll let you in on a little secret,” He turns suddenly serious, switching his voice into a theatrical whisper that has no impact on the volume. “Vampires aren’t that friendly. In fact, most of the ones I’ve met are pompous jerks that only look out for themselves. If you don’t belong to a coven—they treat you like garbage, and even if you do, there is a lot of backstabbing going on. So you’re not missing out much if you never meet another one.”

Jihoon doesn’t seem to know what to say to that, but he eventually manages a quiet “Oh.”

“But you seem to be doing pretty okay for yourself.” Soonyoung smiles genially, taking a sip of his hot chocolate, then wiping his mouth. “I don’t know how I would have survived my first few months without my progenitor.”

Jihoon pulls a face.

“Ah—I almost didn’t. I was close to giving up, but then I—” He looks conflicted for a moment, the tips of his ears turning a delicate pink. He’s clearly too embarrassed to share the entire story. “It’s a long story, but basically Seungcheol took me in and saved my ass.”

Soonyoung’s eyes widen and he sits up a little. “I was just about to ask how that happened because—wow. You live here—with him. And you’re still in one piece.” He gasps and claps his hands. “That’s pretty amazing.”

Jihoon’s very silence sounds puzzled, Seungcheol can hear it.

“Uhm. I guess.” He says eventually, though his brows are twitching.

“It’s nice of him to invite me in—I really wasn’t expecting it.” Soonyoung smirks. His gaze darts in Seungcheol’s direction. “I was sure he’d rip my face off when I asked to pet him. I probably shouldn’t have done that.” He laughs nervously.

Jihoon shakes his head, confusion and amusement warring for a position on his face. “Seungcheol may seem gruff at first, but he’s really sweet. He didn’t have to help me, especially after all the crap I caused, but he did. Even when nobody else would, he’s been there. He’s sweet, and generous and so h—” Jihoon bites off whatever word he wants to use and struggles for a better one instead.

Seungcheol finds himself unconsciously leaning closer, straining for the end of that sentence.
“He even made me a vampire den to sleep in.” Jihoon finishes with a blush, glancing Seungcheol’s way, a little slide of his eyes. Unfortunately, Soonyoung is still looking at Jihoon when he does this, so he looks Seungcheol’s way, too, and suddenly Seungcheol’s being stared at.

He tries not to fidget too much when he smiles back neutrally.

“Woah. He’s so cool. Don’t you think he’s the coolest?” Soonyoung says, and there’s definitely something disturbingly dreamy about the look he directs at Seungcheol.

Jihoon’s eyes lift, meet Seungcheol’s, and then slide away. His lips quirk at the corners, showing a glimmer of fang, “Yeah, he is.”

Seungcheol feels something warm curling in his chest and fights the urge to smile and blush and give himself away. But it’s really dam hard; he’s never been called cool in his whole life.

“I knew he was different when I met him. Usually Lycan’s are really vicious, growly and angry—but he was pretty calm and didn’t try to kill me at all.” Soonyoung says. His voice takes on a faraway quality. “When our eyes met across the tower of canned peaches, I knew he was special. That’s why I followed him home. And now we’re best friends.”

Jihoon eyeballs Soonyoung for a long minute, apparently too stunned to speak.

Seungcheol sighs and pinches his brow, expecting the inevitable questions from Jihoon’s lightbulb moment that will out him from his Wolfy closet. But when he glances up, the expression on Jihoon’s face is awkwardly uncomfortable but reassuringly clueless.

Instead of saying anything else, Jihoon excuses himself, pushes his stool away from the table, climbs down (aww) and pads over to where Seungcheol’s sprawled on the couch.

Taking a seat next to him, he tugs on Seungcheol’s sleeve and whispers low enough that only he can hear, “Cheol—I think you’re right about that guy being really weird. I’m beginning to think he’s not your best friend.”

Seungcheol snorts. “Oh, so now you believe me.”

Jihoon slants him an amused look. “I don’t think he’s dangerous Cheol, but yeah—some of the stuff he’s saying doesn’t make sense.

Seungcheol feels a pang of guilt at that; it’s not Soonyoung’s fault that Seungcheol’s been less than transparent about what he is.

Cautiously, Seungcheol rests a hand on the back of Jihoon's neck. Jihoon leans into it, some tension flowing out of him with a relief Seungcheol feels viscerally. “Well, just ask him the questions you need so he can go.”

Jihoon shrugs, “He doesn’t seem to know that much.” He pauses, looking over at Soonyoung in the kitchen. “I feel kind of sorry for him. I think he’s a baby vampire too.”

Seungcheol looks at Soonyoung from the corner of his eye, unsure of how to approach this, whether he should. “How old did he say he was?”

“I’m twenty.” Answers Soonyoung, whose hearing is apparently sharper than Seungcheol thought.

Seungcheol holds in a frustrated sigh. “And in vampire years.” He asks, slowly and condescendingly. He’s starting to see where this is going.

Seungcheol does finally sign this time. “Great.”

It’s official. Two baby vampires.

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Turns out Soonyoung’s an abandoned baby vampire.

His story’s a real tear jerker. The stuff Korean Vampire Dramas are made of.

He had a consensual conversion almost twelve months ago, and a blossoming relationship with his progenitor, until the man was killed six months ago. With no backing or status in his original coven, he was forced out and had to find a job to support himself. He informs Seungcheol that he lives in Deadlow heights, a government run vampire housing association that Seungcheol’s more than familiar with. It’s not a pleasant place to live and is frequently targeted by Anti-Fang groups so Seungcheol doesn’t blame him for trying to branch out and ‘make friends’.

Seungcheol, despite himself, feels a little sorry for Soonyoung and that’s probably why he lets him stay for dinner. Which is lasagne, that Seungcheol makes from scratch with Jihoon and Soonyoung’s help.

He even puts them to work after, washing up the dishes too.

Baby vampires might as well be useful while they’re in his house and eating all his food.

“I should go, I’ve taken up enough of your time.” Soonyoung smiles sheepishly, pulling on his hoodie. “Thanks for letting me stay and—thanks for dinner.”

Seungcheol waves him off, an airy gesture. “Don’t mention it.”

They walk Soonyoung to the door, Jihoon leading the way and Seungcheol hanging back a little.

“We should hang out again sometime.” Soonyoung says, giving Jihoon a hug at the open door. He turns to Seungcheol and hesitates, hands folding in complicated ways.

“What is it now?” Seungcheol sighs heavily.

Soonyoung really looks at him for a moment. His mouth is a thin line, eyes gone narrow, and dark, and Seungcheol gets the impression he’s thinking about hugging him too.

Finally, he opens his mouth and says, “Can I pet-“

“No.” Seungcheol interjects swiftly.


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Once Soonyoung’s safely on his way, and the doors locked and bolted, Jihoon rejoins Seungcheol in the kitchen.
“Has your thirst for vampire curiosity been quenched?” Seungcheol opens the fridge door, stares inside, and closes it again. “Or am I going to have to put up with him again in the near future?”

Jihoon turns slowly to face him, the corner of his mouth turning up slightly. “Seungcheol, I don’t know how to break this to you but—Soonyoung’s just asked me to ask you, if you liked playing Frisbee and would you like to go to the park with him sometime.”

Seungcheol presses his forehead against the fridge door and sighs. “Oh—god.”

Jihoon crosses his arms and leans back against the counter “Why did he keep asking to pet you?” he asks, laughing slightly.

Seungcheol snorts, twisting to lean again the fridge and rubbing a tired hand over his face. “Beats me.” He shrugs uncomfortably. “I guess I’m really pettable or something.”

“Mmm,” Jihoon rumbles lengthily in his throat, giving him a head-to-toe-and-back-again once over that is a little too slow to be completely guileless.

“Only one way to find out.” Is all he says before he steps closer and reaches up to rest his hand on Seungcheol’s head.

For a minute, all they do is just blink at each other. Then Jihoon strokes his hand tentatively over the top of Seungcheol’s hair and round to his nape, before lifting it back to the crown again, and setting a petting motion.

Seungcheol opens and shuts his mouth a few thousand times, struggling to come up with anything coherent to share.

He was expecting the Lycan in him to object to this in some way, to come crashing out of its cage snarling and frothing at the mouth. But instead he finds himself swallowing down a happy whine, dipping his head forward obediently and exposing the nape of his neck in what is clearly a request.

Jihoon chuckles and rubs two fingers along the bump at the top of his spine. “I think Soonyoung was right Cheollie, you are very pettable.” He murmurs, pushing his fingertips into Seungcheol’s scalp in a move that will utterly destroy the sleek, product-sculpted line of his hair.

Seungcheol shivers involuntarily, letting his eyes slide shut.

Unconsciously, he pushes at Jihoon’s hand, moving so Jihoon’s fingers are behind his ear, and Jihoon takes the hint and scratches. Seungcheol doesn’t mean to make the noise, but an eager whimper escapes his throat before he knows it’s happening.

“You like that?” Jihoon asks, voice soft and sweet, his breath close enough to move the hairs nearest Seungcheol’s ear.

Seungcheol shivers again, letting his eyes slide shut.

Unconsciously, he pushes at Jihoon’s hand, moving so Jihoon’s fingers are behind his ear, and Jihoon takes the hint and scratches. Seungcheol doesn’t mean to make the noise, but an eager whimper escapes his throat before he knows it’s happening.

“Who’s a good boy?” Jihoon whispers, running impulsive fingers through the fringe of hair now drooping over Seungcheol’s closed eyes.
Seungcheol’s eyelids flutter open, and he blinks rapidly as he considers the question. “Uh—I am?” He answers, uncertainly.

It must be him.

There’s nobody else here.

He must be the bestest boy.

There better not be anybody else!

“Yeah. You are.” Jihoon says, giving him a quick scratch under the chin and- oh that’s an interesting sensation.

“Such a good boy.” Jihoon giggles, fingertips moving to ruffle the short hairs at Seungcheol’s nape. He smiles at him so fondly, Seungcheol feels a tightness in his chest.

“T-thanks.” Seungcheol lets out a pleased huff, causing Jihoon to giggle more.

Encouraged, Jihoon digs his fingers into the thicker hair over the crown and kneads in a slow, circular motion.

Seungcheol doesn’t know what sounds he’s making now, but he’s sure there must be plenty. He feels great, better than great. His muscles feel loose and relaxed, every nerve ending dulled and soft. If Jihoon keeps this up Seungcheol might have to stretch out on the floor, roll over onto his back and….

“Are you—purring?” Jihoon asks suddenly, scratching Seungcheol under the chin again.

Seungcheol launches himself out of the fantasy and away from Jihoon’s side, opening his eyes to find Jihoon watching him intently. There’s a small smile on Jihoon’s lips, but his eyebrows are high, high, high on his forehead.

Seungcheol drags a hand across his heated face, forcing his mind clear of the lusty, Jihoon-induced fog and wishing he could so easily wipe away the last five minutes.

“No. That was my stomach….digesting.” He says, his voice is a mess and the words run together, come out breathless. He catches himself shuffling his feet. Like a damned schoolboy with a crush.

Jihoon continues to look surprised for a second, then he rolls his eyes and it's like his face is his own again, all eyebrows and mouth and interested tilt. “Yeah, sure. I think you were enjoying that Seungcheol. I think you really like getting petted. Maybe I should rub your belly next.” He snickers.

Seungcheol roll his eyes right back at him and pretends like this conversation isn’t making him want to crawl into a hole.

It’s humiliating to hear Jihoon reduce his Lycan traits to such silly, embarrassing terms. It’s not like Seungcheol has much control over how he reacts to a good ol’ petting session. And Jihoon was scratching behind his ears for fucks sake—that’s like Lycan Kryptonite.

“Is that the time?” Seungcheol announces, glancing quickly at his watch-less wrist. “Wow, it’s later that I expected.” He tries for a yawn, but it comes out so fake he has to do the wide arm stretch to accompany it and hope that compensates for the supreme fakeness.
Jihoon watches him fake yawn with narrowed eyes and sighs, loud enough for Seungcheol to know it's meant to be mocking.

"We should go to bed." Seungcheol says, then quickly amends. "Separately of course. In our separate beds."

He cringes a bit at his clumsy wording and actually considers fake yawning some more.

"Seungcheol." Jihoon drawls, tone rich with amusement.

"Goodnight Jihoon." Seungcheol blurts out awkwardly, rushing towards the bedroom without so much as a backward glance.

He really doesn't think he can handle any more humiliation tonight.

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Seungcheol keeps his eyes closed and faces away from the door when he hears Jihoon enter the room.

Footsteps wander closer, less tense than before, less heavy, a soft meandering wander of feet. Then he hears the closet door creak open, and Jihoon whispering "Night Cheol." as he slips in to his den.

Only then does Seungcheol allow himself to relax and open his eyes, to listen to Jihoon getting ready on the other side of the door.

Jihoon gets ready for bed at a slower pace than normal. Seungcheol can hear the muted thump of the cabinet drawer, the drag of cloth over skin, slow, half-lazy movements that end in the flick of a light switch and the faint creak of futon springs as Jihoon climbs into bed.

It's a miserable night out, drizzle hitting the window in a hard-running trail in what's becoming a familiar sound. Seungcheol tries to concentrate on that. The tapping of rain on glass.

But it's a losing battle, because soon there's something breathless under the water; shivers of sound caught before they're even half formed.

Seungcheol shakes his head and rolls onto his stomach, pushing his face into the pillow.

There are things you carefully pretend you don't notice when your sense are sharper than normal, things you're obliged not to notice for a peaceful life, for something close to a normal life. It makes everything easier if you pretend you don't notice a lot of things.

Things like your vampire housemate masturbating in his vampire den for instance.

Yeah, Seungcheol probably shouldn't be listening into that—no matter what his Lycan wants.

Seungcheol tries to will himself to sleep for a few fruitless minutes, but there's a purring in his chest and an erection between his legs that tells him he's failed.

Turning onto his back, he frowns at the ceiling in silence.

There's hardly six feet of space between them—so Jihoon must realise he can hear this. If Seungcheol can hear him snoring, he can hear him jerking off.

Not that it justifies listening in or getting off on it, of course. But it certainly makes Seungcheol
feel better when he stops restraining himself altogether and starts focusing on the sounds drifting from the closet. If he slows his breath just right, he can clearly hear the wet slap of a hand on skin, the near silent catch of air.

Pretending not to notice things is easy, ignoring them is not. Especially when Jihoon’s rhythm falters, and his breath free falls a second later, not half as controlled but broken into pieces as he gasps out one word.

“Cheol.”

Jesus.

Chapter End Notes

1) Possessive friend Soonyoung XD
2) I imagined Soonyoung being so excited about having a lycan friend and just invading Seungcheol's space with his enthusiasm.
3) Cheol will have his vampire football team soon.
4) This was a little rushed as I have a lot going on this week! Hope you enjoy!
At dawn they sleep

Seungcheol may have lived and learned enough to master self-control, but he's not actually masochistic. There is no fucking way he’s sleeping tonight with Jihoon touching himself a scant few feet away and moaning his name.

He needs to get out of here before he does something decisive and irrevocable.

Even if Jihoon knows he can hear him. Even if this is some kind of invitation—Seungcheol can’t act on it right now. Jihoon doesn’t know what he is, doesn’t know the danger he’s inviting.

There’s a short moment, when he’s grabbing a pair of jeans and fumbling out the bedroom door (a few minutes after he hears the breathless gasp of his name), when Seungcheol can smell Jihoon’s scent sweeten.

The scent hits him like a freight train, it makes his vision blur and saliva pools in his mouth.

He stumbles into the corridor and barely manages to get shoes on before he is rushing out the front door, ignoring the bite of cold air and trying to fixate on something else: The restaurant down the street, where some dog has marked the corner of a building a little way along - anything but the sweet, honeyed tonal notes of Jihoon’s body chemistry that are driving Seungcheol’s Lycan side nearly out of its mind.

Heading towards the outskirts of the woods at inhuman speed, Seungcheol is rock hard. He can already he can feel his fangs lengthening, can feel his fingers turning to claws as he strips out of his clothes and takes in big gulps of fresh air, trying to control himself. It’s only good fortune that brings a deer into view a moment later and he can free himself and go bounding off after it.

Seungcheol wishes that his instincts were so easy to pack away, but it’s the first time in years and Seungcheol really needs it.

Sometimes you have to give in, a second here or there where you let yourself think about it, let yourself live in that moment, and it’s better to do it here, better to do it somewhere safe, somewhere he doesn't have to hold on so tightly.

It would only be better if he had Jihoon running with him, body pressed against his as they darted through the trees, chasing. Seungcheol would catch him eventually, roll him onto his back and scent Jihoon in all those places where his smell would be strongest – his neck, under his arms, between his legs. Seungcheol would press his nose to each of those places, breath in that heady scent and roll in it till that scent is indistinguishable from this own.

With Jihoon safely out of reach, Seungcheol allows himself to picture what he wants.

He pictures Jihoon spread out under him, naked and breathless, clutching his shoulders—taking his cock inch by inch, gasping and squeezing down around him. Seungcheol’s Lycan side would want it traditional, of course, and he’d mount Jihoon from behind, marking his claim and knotting him full.

Oh fuck—he could actually knot Jihoon. Jihoon could handle it.

A minute later and with a dead deer at his feet—he still doesn’t feel any saner. The moon rises above the bare trees, a white grin—tempting his Lycan to stay out a little longer and that is all the impetus Seungcheol needs.
He races through the woods, needing to get it all out of his system, and doesn’t stop until the pale glow of the moon is slowly overtaken by the strengthening dawn.

Seungcheol only returns home when he can pass for human again and his heartbeat is trailing back into steady, careful, normal.

He can smell Jihoon even when he’s still miles away from the house, even through the satisfied languor of having just hunted, the heavenly scent grows stronger as he steps through the door, and into the house.

Jihoon is in the kitchen, Seungcheol finds him compiling the ingredients for a cheese and tomato toastie.

The vampire is standing at the side, introducing a tomato to a very sharp knife with rather obvious consequences. He’s wearing jeans with bare feet and a threadbare T-shirt that had once belonged to Seungcheol, the sight of which makes Seungcheol’s heart go too fast and his gut churn in a way that suggests he very much wants to wolf out again.

Jihoon’s jeans are missing a belt this morning, and have given in to gravity, slithering down his slim waist to hang precariously on his sharp hipbones, low enough that there’s the barest hint of curve at the back.

His baby vampire has thankfully been gaining weight, though if Seungcheol wanted to, he could probably get both hands around Jihoon's waist.

Then he spends a strange moment actually trying to decide if he could.

"I’m making toasties, do you want one?" Jihoon asks without looking up.

"Yes please."

Jihoon hooks two more slices of bread out, goes back to his tomatoes.

Jihoon cooking in the kitchen isn’t exactly a rarity but it’s early enough for the quiet and the smell of cheese to lull Seungcheol into something that's close to indulgent. He's got nothing else to do but stand and watch his baby vampire.

There's a pause in Jihoon's intent vegetable- no the tomato is technically a fruit, in his intent fruit slicing.

Which is curious until Seungcheol realises that Jihoon has noticed him looking. Noticed that his looking is more focused than usual.

Seungcheol flounders for something to fill the silence, ends up staring at the fall of neatly sliced tomato and blurtling out, "Did you sleep well?"

The knife comes to an abrupt stop, abrupt enough that for a second Seungcheol is afraid Jihoon has chopped his own fingers off.

Jihoon twists his head just a little. It makes his eyelashes stand out against his cheeks. There's an odd sharpness to that image, something Seungcheol thinks he'll remember still when he's old and
everything else has faded away.

“Yes. Slept like a baby.” He says quietly, he tips his head back over his shoulder, fixes Seungcheol with a pointed look that it's impossible to shrug off or look away from. "And you? You don’t look like you slept at all."

Seungcheol glances down at himself, at the rumpled clothes and the dirt under his fingernails. “Oh—uhm—yeah. I was a little restless, so I decided to go for a jog.” Seungcheol says, keeping his voice light.

There's a long strange moment where Jihoon opens his mouth to say something, but fails to dredge up a single word. His head turns back and the knife is slicing again, but slower than before.

There's now more than enough tomato for a cheese and tomato toastie.

Actually, there's enough sliced tomato to make some sort of artistic display. Jihoon is slicing tomatoes on automatic clearly, distracted with Seungcheol’s eyes on his back.

Seungcheol decides to stop staring like a creep and make himself useful by brewing some coffee. He reaches to grab the cups off the draining board, just as Jihoon reaches to open a high cupboard beside the fridge, so they end up interrupting each other halfway.

Instead of stepping back and letting Jihoon fetch whatever he wanted first, which is what he should be doing here, something (probably the Lycan) makes Seungcheol redirect his intentions. He steps right in close, right behind Jihoon, possessive and entitled, and reaches his arm high to parallel Jihoon's. He flattens his palm against the cupboard door Jihoon has just started to open, and closes it with an abrupt snap.

Jihoon doesn't let go of the cupboard handle, and Seungcheol doesn't lower his arm. He waits a beat, then rests his other hand on the countertop to Jihoon's left, bracketing the Vampire on both sides and leaning in.

Pressed against him like this, Seungcheol can feel the tension tightening Jihoon's body.

Jihoon swallows and Seungcheol watches the bob of his Adam’s apple and bites his lip hard enough to taste blood. It's all he can do not to press a kiss to the smooth, inviting skin just below the ear.

Fuck, Jihoon is right there, and Seungcheol forces himself to inhale slowly—to ground himself in the moment. He noses lightly at the shell of Jihoon's ear, letting his breath ghost out on a shallow sigh.

They hold that way, taut and still, for an impossibly long moment.

Jihoon moves first, turning just his head, just slightly to the right. Just enough to whisper a barely audible, "I was just going to fetch some plates."

The movement offers up even more of Jihoon's throat, pale and tempting, and Seungcheol is practically nuzzling him—just wants closer, god damn it—as he answers with a low, murmured, "I’ll fetch them for you."

He nips Jihoon then, just below the ear, imbibing the soft flesh with the smallest amount of pressure.

There's a sharp intake of breath that turns into a swearword, then a full body shiver. Jihoon lets out
a quiet moan, hand sliding off the cupboard handle and dropping to his side.

Seungcheol comes back to himself a little at that, blinking away the haze of lust as his thoughts begin to focus, still clawing with animal need but gaining depth and clarity. His rational brain is telling him to back off, so he quickly fetches two plates from the cupboard and steps back out of Jihoon’s space.

Surrendering the contact takes more effort than it should, and by now Seungcheol more than a little irritated with himself.

He didn’t just spend all night wolfing out in the forest to come home and breathe down Jihoon’s neck. He was trying to avoid this, but as usual, his Lycan side is a wilful hurricane twisting his emotions around and trying to make him *indulge*.

Jihoon’s the closest Seungcheol’s ever come to losing his composure, something he’s worked damn hard at and if Seungcheol submits to those urges now, he fears becoming that creature again; the one that acts on instinct and blood rather than the reformed person Jihoon knows.

It’s not Jihoon’s fault that Seungcheol’s a bad, bad man for everything he’s been thinking and feeling. It’s not Jihoon’s fault that he’s a tease and that he smells good enough to mate and eat.

Well, okay—maybe it is a little bit, but it’s not his fault Seungcheol’s being driven mad by secrets of his own.

Jihoon matters to him a whole lot more than he likes thinking about. He’s the first real friend Seungcheol’s made in a long time, and while he doesn’t want to start pushing Jihoon away, he doesn’t know how to handle himself.

Thankfully, the rest of the food prep goes by uneventfully and they eat together in strained silence. Every few bites they look up and smile at each other, until there’s nothing left on their plates to distract them.

“So—” Seungcheol pauses to dump their plates in the sink. He swallows hard and sucks his lower lip between his teeth, biting it just a little too hard. “Got any plans for the day?”

Jihoon shakes his head. “Not really. I was just going to go to my den, maybe read a book or something.” he says, so soft that Seungcheol has to strain to hear him,

“Why don’t you read your book out here?”

Jihoon’s expression goes pinched around the edges.

The silence that threatens to settle between them is stretched and strained, and finally Jihoon's face softens and he says, "I was going to, but I--" He pauses and turns away, and the discomfort sits like a painful weight across his shoulders. “I didn’t want to bother you.” He says, voice quieter than before

Seungcheol winces a little at that. The last thing he wants is Jihoon to start avoiding him out of some misplaced awkwardness. He can’t deal with that. *He’s* the one at fault here. He *needs* to be in control of the animal inside him.

Seungcheol takes a deep breath, exhales, and lets his shoulder drop.

“You’re not bothering me.” He says, much more calmly than he feels. “I was going to watch a
movie actually. I thought we could watch one together. I’ll let you pick this time. We can even watch Twilight if you want.”

Jihoon gives him a frustrated look, but it’s the fun kind of frustrated. “I bring one Twilight book home, and you never let me live it down.”

Seungcheol laughs, low and sleek, and says, “Some sins can never be erased Jihoon, regardless of how much you repent.”

There’s a tense millisecond where he doesn't know which way Jihoon will jump.

When Jihoon flops down on the couch and starts flicking through Netflix, Seungcheol is so fucking relieved he could burst with it.

Cautiously, Seungcheol takes a seat next to him. Not too close to be considered an invasion of space, but not too distant that Jihoon could misinterpret it for avoidance.

It hardly matters in the end, because Jihoon just closes the distance and scoots over, handing him the remote.

“So, what are we watching?” Seungcheol asks brightly.

“I don’t mind. You can choose.” Jihoon says, leaning sideways with a contented sigh, rubbing shoulders with him.

Seungcheol decides pretty quickly that the only respectable course of action is to acclimatise himself to Jihoon’s presence. If he’s going to have anything with Jihoon—and he really wants to—he needs to be right up in Jihoon’s space and maintain control.

He goes about it subtly at first. He gets too close whenever he reaches past Jihoon for something. Takes to setting a hand at the small of Jihoon’s back whenever he can get away with it, a hand at the nape of his neck whenever he peers at something over Jihoon’s shoulder. He sits closer than strictly necessary, inhales Jihoon’s scent when he passes him in the corridor, in the kitchen, when he’s napping on the couch—wherever the opportunity presents itself, really.

His efforts don't go unnoticed. Jihoon responds so beautifully to the attention that it banishes Seungcheol’s lingering uncertainty about letting something grow between them. Jihoon still scowls for Korea of course, but there’s always a smile threatening his lips when he catches Seungcheol doing something weird.

Seungcheol almost can’t believe his luck. Jihoon accepts his weirdness—he likes spending time with him despite it.

He gravitates towards Seungcheol naturally, like a reliable orbiting moon. He seeks Seungcheol out first thing every morning, waits up for him to get back from work, never goes to bed without stopping to say goodnight. He shares wide, bright grins with Soonyoung, but his softest, warmest smiles are for Seungcheol. He even saves a spot on the couch for Seungcheol right in the middle between himself and Soonyoung, like Seungcheol belongs there, like Jihoon has carved out space for him, and has no intention of letting anyone else fill it. Seungcheol thinks he should feel embarrassed about how ludicrous and fanciful that sounds. But he’s too old to lie to himself, too old to do anything other than make short, token protests about the awful Movie they’ve decided and watch as they eat all his popcorn.
Jihoon gets this look in his eyes sometimes, wistful and wanting, and Seungcheol is sure he reflects the same look back.

He's got it bad, and he quickly comes to realize: he can't come back from this.

He's already too far gone.

But as the days stretch by and Seungcheol watches Jihoon orbit him, he feels guilt settle low and stubborn in his heart.

Unfortunately, now that Seungcheol knows what the final score is, he accepts that he can’t make a move until he lays down all the facts to Jihoon.

That is easier said than done.

It’s a difficult conversation to have, telling Jihoon what he is.

What the hell is he even supposed to say?

‘Do you like Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’? How about I re-enact the opening scene for you in the living room? But without the music—or the zombies—or the kick ass dancing.’

Seungcheol starts it a hundred times but never manages to get past the first sentence without skidding off to something else.

“Jihoon—I need to tell you something…… I want to buy a waffle iron.”

“Listen, Jihoon. There’s something you need to know. I…… love cocktail sausages more than full sized ones.”

“I don’t know how to tell you this Jihoon, but I…… don’t think I can wait for dinner. I’m going to order pizza now.”

With each failed attempt, Seungcheol feels like nothing so much as a coward and he’s pretty sure Jihoon thinks he’s got an eating disorder or something.

It’s ridiculously frustrating. He’s never had to sit somebody down and explain it all before, because people just knew or didn’t have to know at all, so Seungcheol is left struggling with the most appropriate opening for his reveal.

He supposes he could just up and Wolf out in front of him, but he’s terrified Jihoon would run a mile.

He was half hoping Soonyoung would reveal all in one of his many visits (read: intrusions). But the other vampire seems to have cottoned on that Jihoon doesn’t know, and now makes vague references to Seungcheol’s ‘wolveness’ that completely go over Jihoon’s head.

Soonyoung even winks at him after, as if to say: ‘your secret is safe with me’.

At least, Seungcheol hopes that’s what he’s winking about. He really hopes.

There have been no further requests to pet him, but if Soonyoung starts blowing kisses to accompany those winks, they’re going to have a problem.
Seungcheol steps off the bus, a plastic shopping bag dangling from his fingers. He’s bought more orange juice on his way back from work.

They always need freaking orange juice. Seungcheol's not sure where it all goes. He's not sure how, or why they always need orange juice.

It's not like they drink that much of it.

Maybe Jihoon's using it in some sort of Vitamin C-related experiment that he hasn't seen fit to share with the class? He wonders if they do orange juice with a child-proof cap. Probably not, since there's nothing inherently dangerous about orange juice.

He’s still thinking about what Jihoon does with the practically commercial quantities of orange juice he buys when he gets home and sets the carton in the fridge, only to realise Jihoon is nowhere in sight.

That’s unusual.

Seungcheol tries not to panic about that. And mostly fails.

Where is his baby vampire?

Jihoon’s usually in plain sight when he gets home, either standing in the kitchen or sprawled on the couch, usually telling him he needs to buy more orange juice.

“Jihoon?” Seungcheol calls anxiously.

“Up here,” Jihoon yells. There's a thump from the roof, and Seungcheol follows the noise into the hallway with a wary sort of curiosity.

The attic stairs in the hall are down, and a small shudder of horror travels through Seungcheol at the implications. Seungcheol’s a big bad wolf that has stared death in the face and then promptly eaten him, but one fat, juicy spider is enough to give him a shudder.

When he hears another, worrying thud, he climbs up the stairs, spiders be damned. There’s a light shining down from the opening in the attic; Jihoon had installed a light, at least.

When he sets his foot on the landing, he finds Jihoon rifling through some boxes stacked against the wall.

“I bought orange juice, with any luck it won't all disappear into some netherworld when I'm not looking this time.” Seungcheol says.

Jihoon is engrossed, or is pretending to be engrossed, in a box of dubious origin and doesn’t look up when he asks, “Awesome. What took you so long? Did you work overtime?”

It's strange how slow time seems to move for Jihoon when he’s at work. The vampire is restless and Seungcheol’s only been gone for - Seungcheol checks his watch - six hours now, not even a full shift. Seungcheol thinks Jihoon shouldn't even be used to his presence yet, let alone to the point where being left on his own for a few hours makes him anxious.

Then again, very possibly it's the boredom that's gnawing at Jihoon's nerves.

Seungcheol picks his way through the open boxes spread out on the floor until he reaches Jihoon.

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“Cabin fever officially hit, huh?” Seungcheol asks, nodding at the mess Jihoon has made.
Jihoon ignores the question entirely. “I thought I’d make myself useful and organise the attic space. You’ve got a lot of crap up here—did you know that?”

“Yes—thank you. It’s my crap.” Seungcheol replies flatly.

“Really?” Jihoon gives a nervous little laugh as he stands and dusts himself off. “I don’t think so. I think a lot of this stuff has been left behind by the previous owners. Some of it is hella old.”

He kneels on the splintered floor and pulls one of the boxes to him, flipping it open and producing the contents. “Like—look at these swords. And these weird books.” Jihoon holds up one of the books—a book so old it just about falls apart in his hands.

“They’re practically falling apart they’re that old.”

“They’re not that old—they’re vintage. They have character.” Seungcheol frowns, ignoring how pretentious he sounds all of a sudden.

“They’re ancient Seungcheol.” Jihoon declares dryly, shaking his head.

“No, they’re not.” Seungcheol says crossly, or as crossly as he can manage anyway while eyeing an unfairly large spider-web in the corner. The stuff he stores up here is at most three hundred years old. Things have to be way older than that before they’re classified as ancient.

The next box Jihoon opens holds much of the same. The one after that is a little better: it has some old leather-bound books in reasonably good condition. These at least Jihoon seems to appreciate, taking great care to pry apart the pages and coo over the foreign scripture.

“Why did you keep these?” Jihoon asks, placing the book back in the box.

“I kept them because it’s mine. I owned them once and—I kept them. People generally keep things that belong to them—god!” Seungcheol says, peevish at having to explain the concept of possessions to Jihoon.

“So—is this yours too?” Jihoon asks, lifting a dried tree branch from the box and waving it at him in a strangely tantalizing way.

“Branchy!” Seungcheol declares with a joyous grin, recognizing the stick in Jihoon’s hand.

Jihoon arches an eyebrow at him, half lifted in question. “Branchy? You seriously named this piece of junk?”

“It’s not junk!” Seungcheol huffs, pacing the creaking floors and swiping the stick from Jihoon’s hand. “It’s Branchy. It’s sentimental.” He murmurs, holding the stick protectively against his chest, in case Jihoon hurt its feelings.

Jihoon raises an eyebrow at him. “It’s a stick.”

Seungcheol frowns. His has half a mind to inform Jihoon this isn’t just any stick, it’s his favourite stick. He’s had it since he was just forty-five years old, a young pup in Lycan years. He used to carry it with him everywhere, played with it daily and slept with it tucked close in his nest. He buried it once and forgot where, then howled for days until a rainstorm swept through the valley and washed it up. That was quite the adventure.

Lots of things have changed over the years, but Branchy has always been a comforting constant.
“Branchy was a big part of my life. Still is a big part of my life.” Seungcheol says fiercely. Maybe in case anyone got any ideas about using Branchy as firewood or something.

Jihoon starts to say something, then cuts himself off and ducks his head. Seungcheol can see him snickering under his breath.

“Something funny?” Seungcheol huffs. “Excuse you—nineteen-year-old baby vampire who hasn’t lived long enough to collect anything of value yet. Not everything has to look impressive for it to be worth something to someone. Maybe when you get older, somebody will point at your stuff and criticise it. See how you feel then.”

Jihoon’s eyebrows arch up. He opens his mouth to say something, shuts it again, and looks at the stick, considering it. “I’m,” He hesitates, brow furrowing. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to offend you or—Branchy. It’s erm—a very nice stick.”

Seungcheol strokes the branch, smiling. “Thanks.”

“You should put it on display.” Jihoon suggests, looking up at the stick again with narrowed eyes. “Maybe on the shelf in the living room, so everyone can appreciate it’s—rustic beauty.”

“Oh. Maybe I will.” Seungcheol grins, tucking Branchy under his arm.

Jihoon smiles warmly and goes back to his snooping. Seungcheol joins him this time. He takes a seat on the floor next to Jihoon and watches as the Vampire roots around a few more boxes, pulling out pieces and inspecting them—often eyeballing Seungcheol before returning them carefully.

Seungcheol himself is surprised at the number of possessions he’s accumulated over the years, he didn’t think he had the wherewithal to actually keep anything.

As a species, Lycans are generally nomadic, rarely committed much to staying in one place. Seungcheol has travelled to a degree seen rarely even in Lycan’s double his lifetime, worked and lived in more places than he is confident he can name. Then one day, he found himself craving something irrational: familiarity, solitude and a place to call his own.

That went down about as well as expected with his ‘pack’. He tries not to let the memory sour his mood.

He watches as Jihoon opens a damaged suitcase and pulls out some musty old clothes, wrapped in plastic. There’s some neon shit, like from the 80’s that make Jihoon giggle, and then some even older stuff like the vambrace from Seungcheol’s old plate armour.

“Woah, woah, woah. What the fuck? What is this?” Jihoon gasps, inspecting the piece.

Seungcheol shrugs and casually chews on his fingernail. “I dunno.”

Jihoon gives him a side-eye as he fingers the intricate carvings on the metal. He rummages around some more until his search produces a metal and leather chest piece. “Woah. This is—some kind of chest armour. It looks so authentic, I—” he pauses, then his expression dissolves into something delightfully amused.

“Oh my god—were you into some kind of medieval cosplay?” He gapes.

Seungcheol blinks at him. “What?”

“This all makes so much sense.” Jihoon says absently, outright grinning now. “The old books, the
old clothes, the armour—you used to cosplay, didn’t you.”

Seungcheol rolls his eyes. “No.”

“Yes, you did. Oh, god—and you called me a nerd.” Jihoon snorts, good-natured.

Seungcheol doesn’t argue against that untruth.

He’d rather be falsely accused of cosplaying than admit that he’s a four hundred-year-old Lycan and that the leather flap Jihoon’s sniffing suspiciously was once a codpiece used to cover his genitals.

“What is this?” Jihoon asks, eyeing the codpiece suspiciously. “A hat?”

“Sure.” Seungcheol shrugs.

Jihoon places the codpiece on his head and attempts to fasten it in place. Remarkably—it fits.

Seungcheol doesn’t feel the slightest bit guilty watching Jihoon admire his reflection in a dusty mirror with a genital flap on his head. Serves him right for going through Seungcheol’s stuff.

Seungcheol ducks into the shower after, to wash off the work grime, and he’s towelling his hair when he steps out into the living room to find Jihoon sprawled out on the couch, arms crossed behind his head, looking like a fucking three course meal.

Well—almost. The sexy, flawless, untouchable vampire effect is somewhat muted as he is still wearing the codpiece on his head.

Seungcheol's pretty sure he's supposed to be making fun of Jihoon right now, but he can't bring himself to do that—his baby vampire's foot is jumping in a most unpromising manner.

He gestures at the codpiece, “Jihoon—please take that off.” You look ridiculous. “It has sentimental value.” My dick used to rest in there.

Jihoon scowls at him as he walks around the couch, lifting his feet so Seungcheol can take a seat underneath his legs. He unfastens the codpiece and sets it down next to him, resuming his tapping motion with his foot.

Seungcheol puts a hand on it to make it still, but that only makes Jihoon raise an eyebrow in irritation.

“What’s wrong?” Seungcheol asks.

Jihoon dramatically throws his arm over his eyes and sighs. “I’m bored.”

Seungcheol mentally rolls his eyes at him. “I’m sorry. Was the performing clown I hired not entertaining enough? I’ll try and get a rollercoaster installed in the bathroom tomorrow.”

Jihoon levels him a look that clearly says his sarcasm won’t be appreciated.

Seungcheol sighs, draping the towel over the armrest, “I know you’re bored Jihoonie. I lead a pretty boring life these days, but I appreciate the routine. You will too one day. Give it a few more weeks and it’ll be safe for you to venture outside by yourself again.”

“I’m not bored now,” Jihoon corrects, jabbing at Seungcheol with his foot. “I’m not bored when you’re here. But when you’re at work—time just drags. I’ve read everything, and there’s nothing
Seungcheol considers the ceiling for a beat. “How about you hang out with Soonyoung? You can set up your own baby vampire coven and recruit more baby vampires. If you have enough followers you could say—set up your own vampire football team. Just a suggestion.”

Jihoon levels him a flat look. “I’ll pass. Although—Soonyoung did imply that you might like it if we went to the park and threw a ball around. Whatever that means.”

Seungcheol carefully doesn’t say anything in response to that. Even though he would like to. That sounds like tremendous fun. There must be a ball somewhere in the attic.

“Besides, I can’t always rely on Soonyoung for entertainment. Soonyoung has a job.” Jihoon says pointedly.

“Okay. So, what are you suggesting?”

Jihoon sighs and averts his gaze. “I want a job.” he pouts.

“Oh.”

Which puts Seungcheol in a foul mood he can’t rationalize, until he realizes he’s worried. He doesn’t like the thought of Jihoon out there, dodging the law and shady hunters on his tail without him. He wants to be supportive, he really does, but there is a part of him that is immensely relieved to know that Jihoon is tucked away safe and sound here when Seungcheol’s away.

“Okay. What kind of job?” Seungcheol asks, trying hard for a neutral expression.

It’s another second before Jihoon catches what Seungcheol actually said, and his gaze slides back to his. “You’re not angry?”

Seungcheol’s smile turns into a half-curve of his mouth, eyebrow twitching up momentarily.

“Why would I be angry? You want to work—that’s great. Responsible even. Good baby vampire.”

Jihoon brightens at that. “So, I can apply? I can get a job?” He says, with all the certainty of youth.

Seungcheol holds in a sigh, makes a noise of experience, or at least that’s how he likes to think of it. Of course Jihoon would think it was going to be that easy.

“Sure. And I can help you prepare for your interview. In fact—lets practice now! We can roleplay.”

“Uh—okay.” Jihoon gives him a sudden, unexpectedly bright smile.

He jumps up off the couch, runs into the bathroom and shuts the door—which forces Seungcheol to replay the last few sentences in his head because he has no idea why Jihoon’s just done that. That is until Jihoon knocks on the door, and—bless him—he’s really taking the interview roleplay seriously.

“Come in.” Seungcheol calls out, chuckling as he stands.

The bathroom door swings open, and Jihoon strides out with his super serious interview face apparently. He looks constipated.

“Hello, nice to meet you. I’m Mr Choi, the manager.” Seungcheol says, working a deeper voice as
he shakes Jihoon’s hand.

“Hello. Uhm. I’m Jihoon.” Jihoon says, tightening his grip on Seungcheol hand painfully before letting go, because nothing says ‘hire me’ more than crushing your prospective employers hand.

“Thank you for taking the time to interview me. I’m—I’m really excited about this position.” He adds sensibly.

“That’s great to hear Jihoon. Please, take a seat.” Seungcheol smiles genially, gesturing to the couch. He retakes his seat, and then cuts right to the chase. “Before we get started, I’m going to need to see your work permit, birth certificate and or conversion certificate and Photo ID for legal reasons.”

Jihoon’s blinks at Seungcheol, as if what Seungcheol just said was an utterly foreign concept to him.

“I—I don’t have any of those.” He murmurs. There's something confused in Jihoon's tone, almost hurt.

“You don’t? Well—how the hell do you expect me to hire you without any of that paperwork? For all I know—you could be a wanted fugitive. Or a stray baby vampire for instance.” Seungcheol says from under raised eyebrows.

Jihoon looks at him in pure astonishment. “I—I didn’t know they’d need that stuff.”

“You didn’t know your prospective employer would need proof of ID to let you work and pay you a salary?” He taps the centre of Jihoon's forehead as if to say *Think a little.*

“Getting a job isn’t a case of acing an interview and having skills. There are background checks. Lots of background checks, a whole *slew* of background checks. Employers can get in a lot of trouble for hiring people without checking their right to work.” Seungcheol says, more vehemently than he intended.

He's not sure what he meant to say next but that's blocked, train of thought thrown clean off the lines by the defensive hunch of Jihoon's shoulders. Jihoon’s clearly annoyed that no one told him this before.

Seungcheol coughs and lowers his voice slightly. “Look Jihoon, you’re a stray. You can’t just go out there and start applying for jobs. When your progenitor first made you—he should have reported it to *legalize* it, but he obviously didn’t so you don’t have a conversion certificate. If that wasn’t bad enough—you don’t have *any* documentation to prove who you are. Without identification, you can’t get a job, you can’t earn money. Hell, you can’t even get medical treatment in some cities. You’re nobody without an ID. According to government, you don’t exist and never should have.”

Jihoon’s expression changes then, from one of frustration to one of pain; a blind look of hurt that Seungcheol is sure will haunt him for a long time.

“Oh, that came out sounding pretty harsh. But what I was *trying* to say was: it’s going to be hard without falsifying a few things first.”

Jihoon doesn’t react. He doesn't make any sort of verbal protest, or cutting remark, he just jumps off the couch leaves the room without a further word of explanation.

“Woah—where you going?” Seungcheol says, voice startled soft.
But Jihoon is already gone, hurried footsteps down the hall.

Seungcheol follows the vampire into the bedroom, just in time to see him disappear inside his den and hear the soft click of his closet door closing.

The lock turns.

Seungcheol blinks. *Oh shit.* This is not going as expected.

“Jihoon—*baby.*” Seungcheol begins softly, padding over to the door.

He hears a quiet sniffler.

Seungcheol groans. He could fucking kick himself.

“Aw, no. Jihoonie—*don’t.* I—I didn’t mean it like that. Please don’t be sad with me.” Seungcheol says, after a short silence. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you.”

Another sniffler.

Seungcheol slumps against the door, pressing his forehead against it.

“I know I was being a dick, and I’m sorry. I was just trying to make a point and—it came out harshly. I’m sorry, please open the door.”

Jihoon doesn’t sniffler, but the silence is almost worse.

Seungcheol wants to kick the door in and wrestle Jihoon into a hug. But he doubts the intrusion would be appreciated right now.

Instead he sighs, grabs his jacket and heads out.

When Seungcheol returns from his little jaunt outside, Jihoon is still holed up in his den.

Taking a deep, steadying breath, Seungcheol knocks on the door lightly. “Hey—it’s me. The *asshole.* Will you open the door? I—*got* you something.”

He’s greeted with nothing but silence. Seungcheol carries on anyway.

“Fine. I’ll describe it to you. It’s black—*your favourite colour,* and it has *buttons.*” He sing-songs.

More silence.

“Okay, I’m shit at describing things, but it’s a shirt. I think I finally got your size right. I thought it would look good for when we go out to get photographs taken for your new ID.”

That, at least, gets Jihoon’s attention. There’s a creak of futon springs and the closet door opens just enough for Jihoon to poke his little head out. He’s frowning, but it’s not an angry frown. This is Jihoon’s problem-solving face.

“But—how? I don’t have any of my old paperwork.”

Seungcheol waves a hand. “We’ll take it one step at a time. *First*—we get some headshots. *Then*—I *might* know a guy, who knows a guy, who can help us with—*acquiring documentation.*”
Jihoon continues to scowl at him through the gap in the door as if he is a particularly challenging puzzle to solve.

“That sounds illegal.” He says in a tone which somehow manages to be both uncertain and strident.

Seungcheol snorts. “You bet your ass it’s illegal. But—it’s not your fault you had a non-consensual conversion. It’s not fair that you have to struggle just cause the system is so ridiculously difficult to navigate.” He points out. Hell, he can even elaborate: “You deserve a life Jihoon, and I’m going to help you get it. If we have to break a few laws to get you a job at……wait—where did you want to apply for anyway?”

“Petsmart.” Jihoon decides, possibly on the spur of the moment.

“Petsmart?” Seungcheol echoes. He has to work hard to hide a smile. “You want to work at petsmart?”

“What’s wrong with petsmart?” Jihoon pouts, mildly offended. There’s a neat little furrow in the centre of his forehead and Seungcheol has to look away before he can be tempted to kiss it.

“Oh—no. Nothing.” Seungcheol shrugs affably. “Just hard to imagine is all.”

Actually, Seungcheol can imagine it just fine. But what he imagines is Jihoon being mistaken for a precious pet and somebody attempting to purchase him. *How much is that baby vampire in the window?*

Jihoon *would* look good in a collar. A *lace* collar.

Seungcheol coughs to cover the expression that thought makes his face slip into.

Jihoon’s own new and interesting expression tells him that he’s clearly offended by whatever’s going on in Seungcheol’s brain.

“It’s a fun job, okay. With good career progression and benefits.” Jihoon’s voice is conversational, though his eyebrows look quite angry. “And it will get me out of the house—and teach me important life lessons. And I like animals! I’ve always wanted to own a pet, but my grandparents couldn’t afford to let me have one. It’s a job I could excel at okay! I used to walk the neighbours dogs for free when I was growing up, because it was like having a pet, just not one I could keep at the end of the day. And Petsmart don’t discriminate against vampires, the advert said so. The advert was targeted specifically for vampires actually, because they need night time shift workers to run the store and look after the pets after it closes.”

"Jihoonie," Seungcheol says again, as he's repeated at least three times during Jihoon’s little defensive hissy fit. "Okay, you’re right. It sounds like a great idea. My bad. I know it probably seemed like I wasn’t coming across supportive, but I totally am."

“Really?” Jihoon says hopefully.

“Really.” Seungcheol nods. He drags a hand through his hair, smiles loosely. “You’ve clearly put a lot of thought into this and I’m impressed.”

Jihoon gives a self-deprecating little shrug, “I was thinking I could coincide my shifts with yours. Since you work night shifts mostly, I thought we could leave for work together and be *here* together.” He says, and it's odd and stilted, like he's picking his words carefully.

Seungcheol lifts a hand to cup Jihoon’s chin, tipping his head up and pinning him with a steady
gaze. “That sounds perfect. I’m on board with that. So, will you try on your shirt? If it fits, we’ll go
to the mall tomorrow night and get your photographs taken.”

“Okay.” Jihoon murmurs.

He tugs the shirt out of Seungcheol’s hand and disappears into the closet. After a few minutes he
emerges, looking uncertain; tugging down the hem of his shirt and rolling his shoulders
awkwardly.

“How do I look?” He mumbles.

“Adorable.” Seungcheol promptly says, and Jihoon promptly scowls at him.

Seungcheol smirks. “Oh, I’m sorry. I meant—employable.”

Jihoon ducks his head and shares a smile with the floor.

Seungcheol accepts that going to the Mall for late night shopping is one of his less intelligent
ideas. But he’s restricted by Jihoon’s extreme prejudice to sunlight, so they’ll just have to make do.

The minute they step through the sliding doors of the foyer, it’s as though somebody has pressed
the pause button on a live stream.

Well—not quite. The humans are still milling around minding their own business, but the
Vampires that have ventured to the mall tonight freeze in place, and slowly turns their heads
towards him. Then a second later, slant their gaze towards Jihoon.

Then back to Seungcheol.

Then back to…..you get the picture.

Seungcheol would like to think it’s his overpowering animal magnetism making them behave this
way, but it’s probably because of the baby vampire tucked close to his side, chattering a mile a
minute and seemingly oblivious to the danger they presume him to be in.

Jihoon does eventually notice their lingering gazes, and as they ascend to the second floor he taps
Seungcheol’s arm gently.

“Cheol—uhm—is it just me, or are people staring?”

“Yes, Jihoon, they are.” Seungcheol says seriously, then ducks down to whisper in the vampire’s
ear. "It’s because you look so fucking precious in your little shirt.”

Jihoon makes a noise that's half laughter and half interest. He rolls his eyes and thumps Seungcheol
on the chest lightly, which earns several gasps from the vampires closest to them.

Jihoon blinks at the reaction. There is a subtle shifting to put more space between them, a vexed
knitting of Jihoon's brow as the vampire tries to figure out exactly what this craziness is about.

He begins to withdraw his hand, but Seungcheol’s fingers close around Jihoon’s wrist, drawing him
up short. He takes hold of hand—and without first consulting his brain, he presses a soft kiss to a
knuckle.
The chaste gesture provokes approximately ten gasps, one faint spell and a ‘now I’ve seen everything’ from their captive audience.

One of the gasps comes from Jihoon, who eyes him with confusion and suspicion. There'll be eye rolling in a minute too, Seungcheol can feel it coming. It's not quite as effective while Jihoon’s cheeks are bright pink.

"What are you doing?" Jihoon asks, more lazily curious than scandalised.

“You’ve got pretty hands. I was admiring them.” Seungcheol shrugs, admitting to his shamelessness without shame. At Jihoon’s emerging scowl, he quickly changes the subject. “There’s a good bookstore on the top floor. We should check it out.”

“Oh, yeah! We should! I heard it’s the biggest in Seoul.” Jihoon grins, and steers Seungcheol eagerly towards the escalators.

Seungcheol doesn't resist. He makes an intrigued noise instead and lets himself be steered, taking note that he now knows exactly how to knock Jihoon's train of thought off its carefully laid tracks.

After the bookshop, and another bookshop, and a break stop for food, they get the photographs taken. Which in Seungcheol’s very biased opinion, are the most adorable passport photographs he’s ever seen.

They end up with two sets of pictures, because Jihoon didn’t think he looked serious enough to hire in the first set, where his closed lip smile made his precious dimples poke through. The second set makes him look serious yet constipated, which is apparently a much more employable quality.

Jihoon smiles at him warm and shy as they leave the store, photographs in hand, and his fingers slide into Seungcheol’s like it's the most natural thing in the world.

Seungcheol relishes the contact. It buoys him up and fills him with confidence, and he thinks tonight—tonight, finally he’ll explain things to Jihoon.

As they head towards the exit, Jihoon pulls him to a stop outside an electrical store to peer intently through the window.

At first, Seungcheol thinks he’s eyeing the hi-tech headphones that are on offer, but on further examination he seems to be watching the TV screen on display, broadcasting KBS local news briefs. In the next second, Jihoon’s hand slips out of his and the vampire is pressing his head to the window, watching the screen with disbelief, and something so complicated Seungcheol suspects even Jihoon doesn't know what it is.

Seungcheol blinks and he too turns his attention to the screen, listening in to the warbled noise coming through the speakers.

“—most gruesome discovery he’s ever seen in his thirty years on the force. The library and surrounding buildings are still being searched for the rest of the victims remains, but authorities are certain now the body is that of Shin Hoon-Min, the chief librarian who has been missing since late last month.”

Seungcheol feels the vampire stiffen next to him, holding his breath.

Seungcheol holds still, saying nothing.

“Officials are asking for any witnesses with information pertinent to the investigation to come
forward.” The News anchor says, before the screen cuts to a police officer making a statement outside the Library.

“*As this is still an open investigation, I can’t divulge what we know. But what I can say is, this was a vicious attack that is clearly non-human in nature and our specialists are working around the clock to identify what could have done this.*”

Seungcheol holds back a snort. Good luck to them with that.

He chances a glance at Jihoon next to him and finds the vampire staring at the screen, deathly still. His eyes are so pale they look white, pupils tiny, and his skin's the colour of chalk.

Seungcheol's a little tempted to poke him to see if he's fallen asleep with his eyes open - then immediately feels bad about it. His baby vampire is clearly in shock.

Slowly, Seungcheol reaches over and wraps a hand round Jihoon's shoulder. The vampire leans in to his touch easier than he's expecting.

“It’s that guy, it’s that guy—*that guy.*” Jihoon’s saying frantically, over and over, like a child who doesn't understand. All soft breathless half panic and widened eyes.

“Jihoon, hey—it’s okay. Shhh.”

Jihoon turns his head and looks at him. Seungcheol can practically see the questions swarming in his eyes, but he doesn't dare explain.

"It’s okay.” Seungcheol tries again. “Relax. Let’s just get home.”

Jihoon turns back to the screen, and stares until the News Anchor moves on to the next story, then exhales what sounds like all the air in his lungs. “Yeah, that’s—that’s probably a good idea.”

Seungcheol slips an unobtrusive hand into his and tugs him gently towards the exit.

On the bus ride home, Jihoon’s quieter than usual, and he clutches Seungcheol’s hand so tightly Seungcheol starts throwing him concerned looks, but he continues to keep his thoughts to himself.

Jihoon disappears into his den soon after they return home, claiming fatigue. Seungcheol knows better but doesn’t question it; he knows Jihoon needs time to let that News report sink in.

His only regret is that he’s missed another opportunity to tell Jihoon, and now his big reveal will have to wait for another day.

“Cheol?”

His name is softly spoken, but in the midnight quiet of the room Seungcheol has no trouble hearing it.

He jerks up to find Jihoon standing at the foot of his bed.

His hair is a bit wild and his eyes are red—well, bloodshot anyway. He doesn't look like he's been sleeping any better than Seungcheol has.

“What’s up?” Seungcheol asks softly.
“Umm.” Jihoon clearly thinks about telling him it’s nothing. He sees it in his eyes. Then he scrubs his hand over his face and says, “I don’t know. I was just trying to sleep, but I couldn’t stop thinking.”

“What were you thinking about?”

“Everything.” Jihoon accompanies this with a meaningful look. This would be more helpful if he told Seungcheol the actual meaning.

“Could you be more specific?” Seungcheol says, when further clarification is not forthcoming.

Jihoon joins him on the bed, crossing one leg under him, “You, me, that news report, the hunter on my tail. I was thinking about it all and I just—I don’t know why I bother anymore.” He says, quiet but desperate.

“What do you mean?”

Jihoon looks at him, and it's not a hard look. Just tired, and completely immovable.

“My parents died when I was a baby,” Jihoon says, turning his eyes away briefly. There's this painful quirk to his mouth that Seungcheol can’t properly identify. It's not sadness, exactly, but something harder, something worse.

“I was raised by my grandparents in Busan till I was eight, when social services decided they were too old to take care of me properly and rehoused me with my Aunt. She was a total bitch, and I hated living with her. I was picked on at school because of my height, pushed around at home because I wasn’t her kid. Coming to Seoul was my big chance to do something different, to break the cycle of awfulness my life was stuck in. I think I made it one month before I was bitten.”

Jihoon murmurs, darting his eyes away again, like he is ashamed to admit this.

And for all Seungcheol is terrible at this sort of thing, he picks Jihoon’s hands up, runs his thumbs across the palms. “Jesus Jihoon. Are you trying to break my fucking heart?”

Jihoon laughs, something short and broken. “No. I’m just pointing out that my bad luck isn’t something new. It’s been following me my whole goddamn life.” He sighs, staring at his hands “I must be cursed or something. That hunter was just doing me a favour by trying to kill me—an act of kindness really.”

Seungcheol sees red for a moment at the casual carelessness of the words.

“Don’t ever say that again.” He growls, feeling Jihoon tense under his hands, but he doesn’t pull away. “I’m sorry your life hasn’t been so peachy Jihoon—mine wasn’t exactly a walk in the park either but you don’t see me getting super emo about it. Awful shit happens, and you just have to salvage something out of all that crap and keep going because it’s all that awful stuff that’s going to make you the toughest son of a bitch on the planet. This is new to you—I know that. I know you’re scared as much as you like to pretend you aren’t, but I’m going to keep you safe. Nobody is going to hurt you as long as I’m around.”

Seungcheol has to stop to take a breath, and he realises that was the cheesiest stream of cheesiness to ever come out of his mouth. But it seems to have gotten through to Jihoon, who is staring at him with an expression that is so open and pained and grateful that Seungcheol wants, needs to hold him.

“How do you know that?” Jihoon breathes. His voice is thin, careful, strained.
Seungcheol looks him straight in the eye. “I just know.” He rubs Jihoon's hand, slowly, offering what comfort he can. “You’re safe here Jihoon, trust me. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

“What about when you’re not around? I couldn’t even feed without you.” Jihoon says at once, and he won’t look at Seungcheol now, won’t look at anything but the place where their hands are meeting, Seungcheol’s tanned skin warring with his milky tones.

Seungcheol leans forward before he can help himself, dips his head, meets Jihoon’s eyes from an awful, awkward angle.

“It won’t matter. You'll be safe.” he replies, his voice gentle. “In time you’ll get used to everything you can do, you’ll become more experienced. And, we’re going to work together and I’m going to train you, going to make you stronger and faster and smarter in every way possible, and when you see that hunter again—he’ll be the one begging for his life.”

Jihoon nods and swallows, throat working with the movement, and Seungcheol's eyes are caught by the sight for a moment before he thinks to jerk his gaze up again.

“Thank you. I’m sorry I woke you up, but I feel better now.” Jihoon says, which is a bloody stinking lie. Seungcheol can feel it in the slight tremor of Jihoon's hands, in the uneven rhythm of his breaths. Jihoon is only forcing down his anxiety, making it stay put.

"I’ll let you get back to sleep. Goodnight." Jihoon says quietly, letting go of Seungcheol’s hands. He stands from the bed and turns to leave.

“Do you want to sleep next to me tonight?” Seungcheol blurts out.

Jihoon stills, half in and half out of the room, back to Seungcheol; but Seungcheol already knows what expression Jihoon will be wearing.

A frisson of panic runs up his spine. The panic is useless; he banishes it and clears his throat.

“Plenty of space, if you wanted to.”

Jihoon turns back to face him, but flicks his eyes away, looking not quite embarrassed. “No, I--” Then, “It’s okay. We don’t have to. I’m okay really.”

Seungcheol lifts the corner of the blanket. "Come here, will you?"

He doesn’t even get a chance to scoot over and let Jihoon climb in; Jihoon just insinuates himself under the covers and right into Seungcheol’s arms, sliding a leg between Seungcheol’s and snuggling closer, hands clenching in Seungcheol’s T-shirt.

The position he’s adopted is less next to Seungcheol—and more on top of.

Not that Seungcheol’s going to complain.

This is nice. More than nice. Nice enough that his eyes slide shut instantly, and he breathes out a content sigh. But if he’s being honest, this isn’t the usual position he adopts if he’s sleeping with someone.

Lycan’s usually like to sleep on top, their possessions tucked safely underneath them. It’s one of those instincts Seungcheol can’t unpack—or doesn’t want to anyway.

So Seungcheol’s hand finds a nice warm resting place in the dip of Jihoon's spine right above his ass, the other curling around his waist as he instinctively rolls them over.
Jihoon makes a small puffing sound when Seungcheol’s weight pins his back to the mattress but doesn't resist otherwise. Maybe he doesn’t really consider this strange, or maybe all the emotional strain and the threat of a hunter on his tail has dissolved his personal boundaries.

Jihoon lets out a quiet laugh, warm breath against Seungcheol's cheek. "What are you doing," he says – it really isn't a question at all.

Seungcheol allows his eyes to slide shut again and says. “Sorry—instinct.”

“You’re cocooning me on instinct?” Jihoon says. His tone isn't discouraging in the least.

“Yes, in case somebody tries to steal you in the middle of the night.”

Jihoon’s laughter is a vibration Seungcheol feels against his ribs. “Who? Do you have much experience with people trying to steal things from you when you sleep?”

“Shhh now. Time to sleep Hoonie.” He slurs, too content to try for coherency right now. His Lycan side is purring its ass off.

Thankfully, Jihoon relaxes into it, winding his arms around Seungcheol, laughing a little as Seungcheol drapes himself over him a little more, making sure Jihoon’s limbs are safely tucked underneath.

Distantly, he remembers this is going to be awkward as fuck when they wake up. Possibly with Seungcheol all wolfed out and sporting a boner.

Seungcheol rolls the repercussions of this around in his head for a few minutes, and decides to…..

…..do absolutely nothing about it, because Jihoon's already conked out, softly snoring in Seungcheol’s arms and staying up to fret is singularly losing its appeal.
Jihoon is alive and well.

Actually—not so much alive because of the whole dead vampire thing—but he’s in one piece and snoring softly when Seungcheol wakes up draped over him.

Recently, Seungcheol life has been a continuous stream of new experiences, which should be frightening and confusing. But waking up to his baby vampire tucked under him - not so much.

Jihoon has an arm thrown over Seungcheol's waist, and their legs are tangled together, and he makes a low, grumbling noise, when Seungcheol moves, like he knows Seungcheol is awake and doesn't want him to be.

Seungcheol’s sure he could slip out of bed and get ready for work without disturbing him, but that assessment proves to be wrong when Jihoon curls his fingers into his T-shirt, tugging Seungcheol down when he levers himself up on his elbows.

Seungcheol tries to gently uncurl the sleeping vampire's fist from his shirt, but Jihoon won’t budge.

“I got to go to work Hoonie.” Seungcheol whispers.

“No.” Jihoon mews sleepily.

Seungcheol huffs out a breath of laughter and considers his choices.

Trying to slip out of his T-shirt while a baby vampire is clutching it in a death grip is no easy feat, but he manages it with a little shuffling, some grunting and thankfully no dislocation of his shoulders. The second he’s free of the material, a sleepy Jihoon clutches it against his chest and rolls onto his side. He snuffles and rubs his face into Seungcheol’s T-shirt like it's some kind of —security blanket. And—Jesus—maybe it is.

After Seungcheol’s finished dressing, a quick glance at the clock on his bedside table reveals he doesn’t have enough time to grab breakfast before he leaves. He does however, have enough time to nuzzle the sleeping baby vampire curled up on his bed.

Jihoon has an arm thrown over his eyes, chest rising and falling in a way that’s hypnotic. The sheets have slipped down just far enough to meet the elastic of Jihoon's underwear, and there’s a long line of bare skin showing on his stomach where his shirt has ridden up. Seungcheol unconsciously slides his tongue across his lips at the sight and is suddenly faced with the reality of wanting to do a lot more that just nuzzle.

But he’s got to be at work in less than an hour, so nuzzling sleepy Jihoon is all he has time for.

The mattress doesn't make a noise when he kneels over the be, the springs quiet for a change, and Seungcheol doesn't quite know whether to feel guilty about that or not.

It's not particularly easy to surreptitiously nuzzle someone, but Jihoon is clearly a heavy sleeper and doesn’t protest when Seungcheol rubs the tip of his nose against his cheek lightly.

That’s all Seungcheol intends to do; skin touching skin for a fraction of a second. But then he just had to go ahead and inhale. And then inhale again.
With each sniff the everyday smells fall away, leaving that unique background that is Jihoon, a collection of basic scents that wind together like DNA. It's a smell Seungcheol would know without looking. Jihoon's skin holds it like his own holds warmth, and it's stronger against the curve of his neck, where the skin is fine and close.

Seungcheol knows it would be stronger still behind the curve of Jihoon's ear, in the darker edges of his hair, and he can't resist stretching just a bit further and pressing his face there.

There's something familiar in that, the urge to press your nose against something new and interesting and delicious and inhale. Just because you could, and that isn't strange at all. He's seen people doing that in the supermarket all the fucking time—okay.

“Cheol.” Jihoon murmurs in his sleep and that's when it occurs to Seungcheol that he's far too close, that's he's far too close and one stray thought away from doing something ridiculously inappropriate.

When Seungcheol pulls back—he’s stopped short by a surprisingly strong grip. Glancing down, heart thumping crazily in his ribcage, he realises sleepy Jihoon has now curled his fist around this shirt too.

“Aw—crap.” Seungcheol murmurs, as he starts to unbutton his shirt.

He leaves for work five minutes late because he has to fish out another shirt, while Jihoon snoozes peacefully with two security blankets.

Seungcheol ends up sleeping in the next morning because he's genuinely tired after working two shifts back to back.

They're seriously understaffed but aren't allowed to hire any new shift workers till the new financial year, so as shift manager—he’s first in line to fill unwanted overtime.

He drifts off for no more than ten minutes. But when he wakes up there are fingers in his hair, pushing up through the back of it in a way that's hypnotic and more than a little arousing. He opens his mouth to speak to Jihoon - and then stops.

He can feel himself frowning.

Something's off, something's wrong, and it takes him a moment to put his finger on what it is: whoever this is—it doesn’t smell like Jihoon.

There's a strange, dizzy and very worrying moment where he has absolutely no idea who he's in bed with. And the slow drift of long, clever fingers isn't helping at all.

He's either going to have to wait until they speak, or he's going to have to turn around and look, to find out exactly who thinks they are allowed to pet him when he’s sleeping.

He gives it another few minutes, and when no greeting seems to be forthcoming, he turns his head and comes face to face with a grinning, mischievous looking Soonyoung!

“Huh?” Seungcheol manages a breathless noise of stunned confusion. Which he thinks conveys the very basics of what he's feeling. Anything more complicated is...beyond him.
“Good morning handsome.” Soonyoung says, voice rough and far too low to be decent. And if that’s not disturbing enough, there’s a hand sliding low on his waist and…

*Oh—hell no.*

“Get the fuck out.” Seungcheol growls, eyeballing Soonyoung—but Soonyoung seems to be *immune.*

“I am out, *come join me.*” Soonyoung purrs, cupping Seungcheol’s cheek, thumb curving round his jaw slow and impossibly intimate in a way it has no business being.

Seungcheol tries to roll away – but Soonyoung’s arm slithers round his waist and he hooks a leg over Seungcheol’s hip and holds him exactly where he is.

“Get the fuck off of me or I swear to god Soonyoung—I will eat you.” Seungcheol says slowly, trying not to sound like he might start screaming hysterically at any moment. But Soonyoung just squeezes him tighter.

“Don’t make promises you can’t keep Cheol.” Soonyoung says against the back of his neck.

Seungcheol thinks this is probably one of those important life moments when someone comes to the realisation that their life is spiralling out of control—where they convince themselves they have to stop. Or to accept things being weird.

Instead Seungcheol feels a hysterical laugh building up somewhere in his chest.

“What the hell is your problem? I’m a big, bad wolf. I’m *dangerous.*” Seungcheol tries again, breathless, like this is some ludicrous parallel universe where Soonyoung hasn't noticed.

There's a huff of air against the back of Seungcheol's neck which is impossible to discern a meaning from. “*Hmm.* Maybe once upon a time you were. But now you’re just a big—soft—cuddly puppy that wants his belly rubbed.”

The last part is said with such *certainty* Seungcheol's not sure if he should be insulted, embarrassed or terrified.

He settles for all three.

“Soonyoung, I’m—” Seungcheol trails off, because Soonyoung’s hands have strayed down, finding the dips and shallows of his hipbones before sliding over his stomach—*petting*

“Hey!” Seungcheol twists his head, pinches his fingers together until there's only a sliver of light between them, “I’m this close to wolfing out and tearing your face off.”

“Oh—don’t be like that.” Soonyoung titters. As if Seungcheol's suddenly being unreasonable. “If I don’t have a face—how will I ever blow a raspberry on your belly like this.”

“DON’T YOU DARE!” Seungcheol yells, but Soonyoung is already all movement and purpose, tugging the hem of his T-shirt up, and leaning down to plant his mouth on Seungcheol’s tummy.

Seungcheol ends up laughing even though he doesn’t mean to, all messy noises under every push of Soonyoung's mouth on his skin.

This is humiliating.

This is the most demeaning thing anyone’s ever done to him.
He should stop this.

“JIHOON!” Seungcheol calls out helplessly.

“No—shh.” Soonyoung panics, clamping a hand around his mouth, like Jihoon’s the one he should be afraid of here.

“Soonyoung?” Jihoon’s voice comes from the doorway.

Soonyoung immediately removes his hand, and Seungcheol shifts his head on the pillow until he can look up.

Jihoon is leaning lazily against the frame of his bedroom door, looking stern and dishevelled and still wearing his pyjamas. His eyes manage to slide over and take in absolutely everything without any visible reaction. “What are you doing to my Cheollie?”

Soonyoung tries to stand up so fast Seungcheol suspects he nearly teleports to the side of the bed.

“Nothin,” He says with a nervous laugh, “Just came in to wake him up.”

“No, he wasn’t! He was being weird again, Jihoon—he was petting me in my sleep and blowing raspberries on my stomach.” Seungcheol points accusingly. “He wasn’t even petting me right!” That's really not a helpful addition to the conversation but it's all he has at the moment.

Soonyoung doesn't even have the good grace to look sheepish. “I’m sorry,” he shrugs, not sounding sorry at all. “But I couldn’t resist when I saw him all sleepy and snuggled up.”

Jihoon takes two steps forward, one eyebrow arched curiously, “Did you even tell him why you’re here?”

Soonyoung winces. “Oh—uh—no. I was going to do that next. After the belly rub.”

Jihoon crosses his arms and makes an irritated noise. “Soonyoung, this is important.”

“Why? What’s going on?” Seungcheol asks, looking between them.

Soonyoung tips his head down, expression strangely and suddenly focused. “I came over to warn you guys, some man came to the supermarket yesterday, asking about a stray baby vampire in the area and if we’ve seen one. He was passing around this card for us to report anything suspicious.”

Soonyoung says, fishing in his pocket for a card and passing it over. “I think he was a hunter.”

Seungcheol examines the card, considering the implications. There's no identifying details on it, just a number printed on the back with the government stamp.

“And what did you tell him?” He asks.

“Uh—nothing, of course.” Soonyoung’s voice is stunned honesty.

Seungcheol squints at him, but he seems to be telling the truth.

“I may be a little new to the vampire game, but I’m not an idiot.” Soonyoung huffs. Something in his demeanour grows serious and grave. “I knew something was off about him when he started checking ID’s and asking questions. I didn’t realise what till I saw the gun he was carrying. I think he flashed it deliberately, to get a reaction. I wanted to tell you guys straight away, but I didn’t think I should leave work right after he left—in case he was still watching the place and followed me. So I waited for a day—and here I am.”
Seungcheol nods approvingly. “That was smart—good work.”

Soonyoung’s eyes are suddenly bright, smile widening at what he clearly decides is the best compliment of all time. “Thanks Daddy.” He drops his voice suggestively, giving Seungcheol a look through his lashes.

Seungcheol shudders and shoots him an unimpressed look. “Don’t—don’t ever call me that again.”

“Cheol—what does it mean?” Jihoon asks, shuffling closer.

“It means—I need to fast-track your ID.” Seungcheol says, rolling out of bed. He opens a drawer and starts rooting through it for a change of clothes as he talks, “I’m going to pay a visit to an old contact of mine, see what he can do. I was supposed to meet with him next week, but hopefully he can fit us in earlier.”

He’s about to start getting changed—then stops short at the lecherous look Soonyoung levels at him. Throwing the change of clothes over his arm, he heads into the bathroom to change instead.

Thankfully, no baby vampires attempt to follow him, but Jihoon’s eyes are on him when he exits, piercing and curious.

Seungcheol has to smile at him, at the small concerned frown he’s wearing. Any other facial expression will cause Jihoon to fret. And Jihoon can fret like no one else on the planet.

“Hey—don’t worry Jihoonie, it’s going to be okay. I’m going to take care of it” Seungcheol assures. He smooths a thumb over Jihoon’s lovely bottom lip, follows it up with a kiss to the baby vampire’s forehead.

Jihoon inhales, it’s quick and rough, like he hadn't expected that. A sliver of perfect human reaction. Which is a heady sort of rush, enough that Seungcheol presses down harder just fractionally.

When Seungcheol pulls back, Jihoon smiles at him and despite the dark circles under his eye and the fatigue in his face, he looks momentarily placated.

“Thanks daddy.” Jihoon says carefully, like he thinks he might get told off for it.

“I—uhm.” Seungcheol stammers as Jihoon’s grin sharpens, flashing Seungcheol a hint of fangs. He’s pretty sure his face is some shade of red as yet undiscovered by science. “Yeah, okay—I guess you can call me that.”

“Hey—no fair!” Soonyoung scoffs from the corner of the room. "How come he gets to call you that and I don't?"

"Because he doesn't pet me while I'm sleeping."

Seungcheol ignores the pout Soonyoung throws at him in favour of grabbing his jacket from behind the door.

He toes on his boots, collects his keys and wallet, and trudges out into the midday sun.

He has an old friend to meet.
The air just outside the door smells like cinnamon and apple pie and for one serious minute, Seungcheol thinks that he's taken a wrong turn, until he glances through the store window.

It should throw him more than it does, this bright slice of hectic colour and gaudy shine, but Seungcheol knows it's just a carefully maintained front for Namjoon’s blossoming criminal empire.

Namjoon's an old friend of Seungcheol’s, from the days when they both lived the more traditional sort of Woodland life. Except Namjoon still dabbles in less than legal activities, and has found an outlet for his destructive tendencies in the form of a little document forgery.

The second Seungcheol steps through the door of the bakery, the bell rings and he’s greeted with a chorus of: ‘If it isn’t the big bad wolf’ and ‘Please Mr Wolf—don’t blow my house down!’ and ‘What time is it Mr Wolf?’.

“Is he here? Or should I go get lunch and come back?” Seungcheol growls over the sound of Jimin and Taehyung and Hoseok cackling.

Seriously. These jokes are getting old.

He contemplates shutting them up by wolfing out and devouring the traybakes displayed on the counter, but he knows better than most the bakery is just a poor front for Namjoon’s other business ventures and those traybakes probably have some dubious ingredients in them. Raisins or something. Eugh.

He’s saved from doing anything unsightly when the back-door swings open and Namjoon steps out to see what all the ruckus is about.

He looks surprised to see Seungcheol, then his eyes spark up with interest.

They haven't spoken in over two years and—why should they? Seungcheol has been trying to reinvent himself and Namjoon had his comfortable life of intrigue and debauchery, and there’s just some people you don’t meet up with for a friendly drink.

“Ohay,” Namjoon cuts in, gently and with the slightest tinge of humour. “Enough jokes. Get back to work.”

He deliberately catches Seungcheol’s eye and jerks his chin towards the door, twice, signalling for him to come on through. Namjoon still walks like a predator, still smells like one too. But he’s paler than he used to be, a bit leaner about the jaw and cheekbones—and he’s wearing an apron and there’s even a smudge of flour on his cheek. A watertight disguise.

Seungcheol follows him out the back, down a narrow set of steps into a basement where Namjoon clearly conducts business of the ‘not baked’ variety. The window’s slightly ajar, even with tools and documents and expensive cutting-edge tech covering most of the available surfaces.

Namjoon has clearly developed rather lax habits in civilian life — it's like he no longer expects ambushes and pissed off ex-clients who try to shoot his kneecaps off.

Seungcheol might have to retrain him with stealth attacks, for his own good, of course

Seungcheol looks around with idle interest while Namjoon shoos the cat sitting on his desk away, doubtless for Seungcheol’s benefit and sprawls in a black leather overstuffed chair, puffing on a cigar he conjures out of nowhere.
"Business still booming?" Seungcheol asks, running the backs of his fingers along the edge of a table.

"People always looking for a new life." Namjoon says, nodding towards the empty armchair in front of his desk. "Now stop getting your fingerprints all over my office and sit your ass down."

Seungcheol raises an eyebrow but does as told, taking the indicated seat. Because despite rumours to the contrary, Seungcheol is clever enough to be charming to people who have the ability to make him wake up in a cockfighting ring, in a thong, unsure of how and why he got there.

“So—you need something I take it.” Namjoon says, leaning back in his seat and crossing his arms. “Cause I’m guessing you’re not here to sample my madeleines?”

"If I came to eat, I certainly wouldn’t buy your shit Joon," Seungcheol says dryly, and Namjoon laughs. It makes him look ridiculously young, even with the lines set around his eyes.

"I missed you, you bastard," he says. “Where’ve you been?”

Seungcheol smiles at him.

Pining over baby vampires and building a vampire football team, for the most part, but Namjoon hardly needs to know that. "This and that," Seungcheol says dismissively. "Keeping busy."

Namjoon smiles, the twist of mouth that Seungcheol remembers so well. "I know you have."

He reaches for a folded-up newspaper on a cabinet behind him and tosses it on the desk, where Seungcheol can read the headline: LOCAL MAN SHREDDED TO DEATH.

When Seungcheol looks up, Namjoon’s stippling his fingers on the desk, eyes narrowed in concentration. Giving Seungcheol just enough rope to hang himself, if he knows him at all.

Seungcheol tosses the newspaper back across the desk at him. “This supposed to mean something?”

Namjoon rolls his eyes.

“Don’t try that with me Cheollie.” His voice is calm and solid, cutting through Seungcheol’s bullshit. “I saw the News segment on the TV last week. Then I had the pleasure of hearing about it in more detail when a hunter came snooping around the shop.


He has no reason to think Namjoon would lie to him, but then again, it's been a long time since they've moved in the same circles. He doesn't honestly know what goes on in Namjoon's head these days; he's not sure he ever did.

“Yeah—just two days ago actually. Came strutting in, throwing his weight around, flashing a badge and a few grizzly pictures, asking me to help identify what or whom could have done that.” Namjoon's smile turns wider, his eyes narrowing in appreciation. “I took one look at those picture and thought—Choi Seungcheol."

They stare each other down across the desk for a long minute. Seungcheol's the first to lean forward.
“Well—I hope you weren’t thinking it out loud.” He counters, sounding decidedly strained.

“I didn’t tell him shit. We both know I have no reason to help hunters.” Namjoon says sincerely.

Seungcheol slouches back, relaxes; he knows that much is true.

Namjoon waves his cigar. “Enough mutual masturbation. What do you need?”

“Identity papers. The whole lot. Birth certificate, tax number, vaccination records, a solid background and—”

Namjoon interrupts him with a startled cough, and quickly he puts his cigar to rest in an ashtray, “You running again? How bad is it?”

Seungcheol raises a hand, asking for patience. “No, it’s not for me.”

“Oh?”

Seungcheol looks aside, sheepish, “I’m going to need a conversion certificate too.”

The space between Namjoon's eyes slowly disappears in a bewildered furrow. “Why don’t you just submit a conversion certificate at city hall? You don’t need me to—“

“It’s not for a Lycan.” Seungcheol interrupts. He sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. This is going to come out sounding bad whether he likes it or not. “It’s for a Vampire actually.”

Namjoon mouths Vampire? at him, eyebrows quirked with amusement. “You convert vampires now? Pretty sure that’s not possible with your DNA.”

“I’d really rather not answer a bunch of questions right now.” Seungcheol says, quiet and tight. "It’s kind of a time sensitive situation, so I need to know if you can do this—and if it’s going to pass inspection.”

Namjoon looks at him for a second, a mixture of ‘confused but willing to negotiate’ and what ‘the hell are you up to, Seungcheol’ and…something else...on his face.

“All my work is flawless Seungcheol. Nobody will be able to tell the difference. I have a guy that gets me the exact same paper they use at City hall and I invest in the best printing equipment. Even the microchips I use in the passports are from the same wholesaler officials use.” Namjoon offers proudly. He’s all about the details. It's one of the reasons Seungcheol came to him first.

“Great. So—you’ll do it?” Seungcheol wants it to be a question, but there's a thin note of pleading.

To his credit, Namjoon just nods. He’s used to making deals with dangerous, desperate men. “Of course. But it’s not gonna be cheap.”

“I know.” Seungcheol nods, one sharp head movement. “How much?”

“I’ve got a few clients that need a few ‘things’ taken care of. Let’s say—three hits? Should be a stroll in the park for you—quite possible literally.” Namjoon says, with some evident satisfaction.

“No. I don’t do that anymore.” Seungcheol cuts him off with an abrupt shake of his head.

"The dead librarian’s corpse littered all over the city disagrees.” Namjoon says, eyebrow rising sharp. He jerks his head pointedly at the newspaper still spread open between them.
Seungcheol pinches his brow, frustrated.

The thing is, Namjoon and him go way back. If Seungcheol makes it clear he's uninterested in that line of work, he'll back off. But he'll want to know why, and Seungcheol can't help but feel he owes him some form of explanation. It's hardly fair, changing the rules on him like that after so many years.

"That was different. I had no choice."

Namjoon looks sympathetic, which is a relief. But he follows that up with, "Alright then—$4000 dollars. That’s my price," which is..... less so.

"$4000 dollars for papers?!” Seungcheol gasps, spreading his arms dramatically. “What the fuck? I don’t remember mine costing as much.”

Namjoon frowns back at him, looking a bit offended. “That’s with a discount Cheol. Technology is always improving to detect forgeries, so forgery techniques need to improve too. It’s not a cheap process, and you at least had some paperwork to work off. If you’re asking for everything from scratch—naturally it’s going to cost more.”

“Alright—fine.” Seungcheol grunts. “I got some money saved up—I’ll have to withdraw it in instalments though. Don’t want my bank to get suspicious.”

“I’ll take a third upfront as a deposit, and the rest after I finish the papers.” Namjoon claps his hands together, happy to have business concluded. “Oh—and I’ll need a picture. Whoever it is—bring them in for a photograph.”

“No need—I already got some taken.” Seungcheol says, pulling the small photograph envelope out of his jacket pockets and sliding it across the table.

Namjoon eyes the envelope curiously. His fingers twitch uncertainly in the middle of the table.

"Not going to introduce me to your friend? I’m vampire friendly you know—don't you trust me?" The offense is put on, a game.

Seungcheol's quite right not to trust him, as a matter of fact. He used to command loyalty without trying once upon a time, but in this line of work, Seungcheol accepts people can be bought. He can't just transfer his old reputation part and parcel. Some of it must be earned anew.

Seungcheol shrugs affably. “Like I said—it’s a time sensitive situation, not a question of trust.”

Namjoon sighs. He picks up the envelope and unseals it, tipping out a few passport sized photographs onto his palm. He plucks up one from the edges and holds it up to examine it, then stares at it unblinkingly for an age, before his lips twitch at the corners. “Aww.”

Seungcheol can't help the flash of a smile that creeps onto his face. “I know.”

“Holy shit—they’re so tiny. You can hardly see them.” Namjoon laughs, grinning at the photograph between his fingers. “How does he even feed with those?”

Seungcheol presses his lips together, unable to fully suppress a chuckle. “He doesn’t. Not without help anyway.”

“So you’re grooming a stray to get access to a coven.” Namjoon says with a quick smile that fades into something pensive and faintly troubled. “That’s pretty dangerous, no?”
Seungcheol can feel his eyebrows lifting in shock.

“Uh—what?” Seungcheol stalls, thoughts racing and tumbling over themselves, “That’—that’s not what I’m doing.”

Namjoon narrows his eyes at him considering. The information he's fishing for is professionally relevant to him, as well as personally so. “So, what’s your plan then? Train him? Build a little killing machine to do your bidding.”

Seungcheol shakes his head and tries to head him off. He can’t let Namjoon go on thinking along these lines.

“No!—no! I don’t want that for him.” His voice is a little sharp, because seriously the thought makes irritation chase down his spine.

But Namjoon doesn’t flinch, just looks at him for a moment, head tilted slightly to the side, like a curious dog.

“Look,” Seungcheol says, despairing of the world. “It’s not for anything dodgy. He just needs the papers for a job. A job at petsmart.”

It's actually true, in part, which is the best part of making this believable. He's already thinking ahead, trying to come up with other plausible explanations for his sudden “tolerance”.

Namjoon stares at him, blinking slowly. “Let me get this straight—you’re forking out $4000 dollars of your own money, so some baby vampire can work at petsmart?”

There's a long quiet pause, as if Namjoon is daring him to say any different. Seungcheol takes the dare.

“Yeah. So? Petsmart is a fun place to work. He likes animals and wants to contribute to society in a positive way and there’s nothing wrong with that.” He cuts himself off. A flush is rising in his cheeks, and he has the bad, humiliating sense that he's exposed something he should have kept covered.

He averts his gaze, but not before he sees Namjoon's expression loosen, his eyes soften.

There is a pointed silence. Then Namjoon laughs, a little nervously, and says "Jesus, Cheol. Have you—imprinted on a vampire?"

"Something like,” Seungcheol tilts his head in reluctant agreement. “I've just recently started collecting them."

_____________________________________________________________

Seungcheol drags himself through the front door after another gruelling double shift at the store. He peels his leather jacket off, kicking his shoes against the baseboard, and slumps his way into the kitchen.

He’d left money for Jihoon to order take out, so there ought to be something left over, he reasons, and he can just eat it cold. He glances at the clock on the oven and groans: two in the morning. As soon as he flips on the light, he sees Jihoon curled up in the corner of the couch, clutching a Chinese take away menu in one hand and a phone in the other.
“Oh, good. I was hoping I timed it right. I just ordered.” He says cheerfully.

Seungcheol blinks at him. “You—you waited?” There's something that feels strangely important about that, that he’s afraid of unravelling.

Jihoon blushed, sits up and stretches out his back, “I wasn’t hungry earlier and—we always eat together.” He shrugs.

“Awesome,” Seungcheol grins. “I’m starving. I’ll grab a quick shower then.”

When Seungcheol steps out of the bathroom, freshly showered and dressed, Jihoon’s sprawled on the couch in front of the television, eating noodles from a carton.

He passes Seungcheol his own carton as he settles on the far end of the couch.

“Thanks,” Seungcheol says, squinting at the television as he reaches for a set of chop-sticks. “Keeping an eye on current affairs?”

Jihoon shrugs without looking away from the television. He’s watching the News—again.

“There wasn’t anything else on.” Jihoon digs a piece of Chicken from his carton and nips it neatly in half. “And while I’m incommunicado, It’s like a window to the outside world for me. I hate not knowing what’s going on out there.”

“It won’t be forever, Jihoonie.” Seungcheol says. “My contact will have your papers ready soon, and then it’ll be safer for you to go out again.”

Jihoon looks at him, chewing. Then he goes back to the television. “What if I come across the same hunter that shot me? What if he recognizes me? He already knows I’m a stray—so won’t he know the papers are fake?”

Seungcheol looks down at the carton in his hand, frowning, “Yeah—there is that.” He purses his lips, thinking about fake passports and forged I.Ds.

He trusts Namjoon’s work, but there's always the possibility that even Namjoon's genius might not stand up to legal investigation. The Korean government's very, very interested in non-humans right now.

“Look—try not to worry too much about it. If I know anything about Hunter’s—it’s that they’re not very good at sharing. They’re competitive and secretive and never pass along leads to each other—so the one on your tail, probably hasn’t told anyone else about you. He’s maybe hoping to catch you all on his own, and that works in our favour cause you only have to avoid one guy. Do you remember anything about him? Any identifying details?”

“No. It all happened so fast. Sorry.” Jihoon sighs, picking at his food.

Seungcheol reaches out to him, stroking a hand through his hair. “No—don’t be. There’s a lot of hunters in Seoul anyway, almost no hope in narrowing it down. But if I knew who it was, I could—” Seungcheol catches his words and slips them back into his mouth.

“Could what?” Jihoon prompts when Seungcheol hesitates.

“I—uhh—could write them a strongly worded letter.” Seungcheol deflects, and there's a snort of
laughter from Jihoon, which doesn't sound impressed at all.

Seungcheol opens his carton and they eat in silence for a few minutes. The food is good, spicy and sour. He’s hungrier than he realized and is only half concentrating on the TV.

This close to the full moon his attention is falling from one distraction to another, tiny sounds, smells, the way his sleeves irritate his wrists. But he's watching the television anyway, because watching the television is what you're supposed to do, it's normal, and he can do that. Even if his skin and his nose and his ears are determined to drive him mad by pointing out every little thing...and there are a lot of little things. Like Jihoon—smelling amazing a few feet away.

Seungcheol’s focusing so intently on the TV he startles when Jihoon’s hand closes suddenly, affectionately on his knee.

“Did you really mean what you said the other night? About training me to whoop ass?” Jihoon asks, and his voice sounds just a tiny bit hopeful. The hand drops, but Seungcheol still feels the phantom touch on his knee.

Seungcheol peers into his carton, then plants the chopsticks and puts it down on the floor by his foot.

“Yes, I plan on training you, but not to whoop ass. To protect yourself.” Seungcheol corrects sternly.

Jihoon laughs then, low and sleek, and says, “That’s not what you said though. I believe your exact words were: The next time you meet the hunter—he’ll be the one begging for mercy.” he says, in a hideous imitation of Seungcheol’s own accent.

Seungcheol makes a face at him, “Hey—I don’t sound like that. And I know what I said, but I don’t want you using your skills to hurt people. Only to defend yourself. Anything else—it’s a slippery slope Jihoon. Harder to step back from that kind of life than you think.”

The gratitude and affection is obvious in Jihoon’s expression for a few moments, before it settles on exasperated. “You say that like you have first hand experience. Like you’ve lived a whole other life I don’t know about or something. Have you?”

Seungcheol picks up his carton again, then clears his throat. “Everyone’s got skeletons in their closet Jihoon.” He says, squeezing his way around the truth.

Seungcheol is aware that he's been doing a lot of squeezing the last few days, which explains the look he's getting from Jihoon now; young and frustrated and curious.

They finish eating in the silence that hangs after that until Seungcheol wipes his lips with a napkin and puts the carton back in its bag.

The news segment has switched focus to the weather, presented by a ghostly pale female vampire with bright green eyes.

“I never realised how many vampires there were in the population,” Jihoon says, dropping his own empty carton onto the table. He leans back into the couch, then tilts sideways into Seungcheol. “I knew they were around, and that we had to avoid certain areas of the city at night, but I hardly noticed them until now.”

Seungcheol tilts his head in acknowledgement. “Things have changed. They used to be so obvious, but they blend in so well now. Sometimes even I struggle to tell the difference unless I smell
them.” He says, entirely too honestly, his post-prandial lassitude making him careless.

He winces and looks over at Jihoon- who's watching him sideways, expression unreadable.

“You can smell me?” Jihoon asks, obviously confused and trying to sniff himself surreptitiously.

“How? Do vampires have a unique smell?”

Seungcheol works his jaw until he can get words out.

“It’s not immediately obvious, unless you know what to look for. And it’s not a bad smell—it’s just different.”

Jihoon jerks his chin slightly. “Different in what way?”

“Soil, wind, blood—damp chalk.” Seungcheol says, rolling the words in his mouth like blood. “It’s an odd combination of scents, but recognizable.”

Jihoon pouts. “That’s doesn’t sound like it smells very nice.”

Seungcheol chuckles and shakes his head. “Don’t worry, you’re not included. For some reason you don’t smell like other vampires do. Maybe it’s because you’re still a baby.”

“Really? What do I smell like then?”

Seungcheol sighs. It isn't a question he has an easy answer for.

Jihoon carries the everyday human being smells around him like a slowly disintegrating coat. But underneath the surface underneath the dust, peach shampoo, laundry detergent, soap, coffee and the stray drift of chocolate, he's smoother, sharper, far more interesting.

There's a flicker of cold metal and blood and a trail of something which is, without doubt, death but that's a part of Jihoon that Seungcheol has become familiar with. Then there's something else, something all the way underneath, something hot and familiar and very faint, something that whenever Seungcheol is close enough, whenever his nose is good enough he always finds himself leaning to catch, frustrated and hungry.

“It’s even harder to describe, but I like it. The closest thing to describe it as is a—warm, freshly baked cupcake.”

Jihoon narrows his eyes at him. “Like a sickly-sweet smell?”

“No dude, not like that. Not sickly. It’s a delicious smell. A smell I want to roll around and rub my face in. A smell I want to eat.”

Seungcheol realises what he's said a second after he says it, and he can feel heat flood his face.

When he looks over, Jihoon’s lips are parted in a silent ‘What the fuck’.

“I mean—I didn't mean to say that.” Seungcheol bites the inside of his mouth to keep from talking for a second. Jihoon's still watching him, expression amused, and - not just amused, oh my God, kind of intrigued as well.

“Can we pretend like I didn’t say that?” Seungcheol ducks his head sheepishly.

Jihoon very slowly reaches over for the remote, flips the volume back up.
They're apparently going to pretend Seungcheol didn’t just say that. Jihoon is going to let him pretend that he didn’t just suggest he’s like to roll around with him and eat him. Jihoon is awesome.

Seungcheol breathes out and grabs the empty containers to dump in the trash. He downs a pint of water, thinking of how he’s kind of craving a cupcake now—but he’s sure there’s none in the house.

*Dammit.*

When he pads back in, Jihoon’s yawning and stretching on the couch. There are goose bumps along his arms, Seungcheol notices, and as he watches, Jihoon pulls the blanket off the arm of the chair and wraps it around his shoulders, shivering a little.

“Are you cold?” Seungcheol asks, plopping back down on the couch without ceremony.

“Yeah, a little.” Jihoon seems to think it over for a second and then a slow, smug smirk curls across his face. “Why? You wanna *warm* me up, Cheollie?” He asks. His tone is teasing, but his eyes are heavy.

And there it is—one of Jihoon’s invitations.

“I could fetch you a bigger blanket.” Seungcheol murmurs, his eyes sliding down Jihoon’s body where the black shorts ride high on his milky things. He jerks them back up to Jihoon’s face when he realizes what he’s doing and finds Jihoon smiling at him with a particular kind of focus.

Jihoon nudges Seungcheol’s thigh with a foot, goading. “How sweet of you. You want to keep me warm—warm like a *freshly baked cupcake*?”

Despite his embarrassment, Seungcheol feels his cock shift in his pants. “Thought we agreed to forget I said that?”

“I agreed to no such thing.” Jihoon counters, eyes heavy lidded and trained on Seungcheol as he nudges him in the thigh again. “So, are you going to fetch me another blanket? Or where you planning on supplying me with *body heat*?”

His eyebrows suggest he wants something else entirely, like for Seungcheol to rip those tiny shorts off of him, flip him over and lick into him.

Seungcheol swallows hard and gives himself a mental shake, a quick reminder that he’s the responsible one here. Or at least he’s supposed to be.

“I don’t think,” Seungcheol says slowly, “I would make a very good blanket.”

“I disagree.” Jihoon purrs, a sleepless husk in his voice that makes Seungcheol shiver. His foot is taunting where it drifts and presses against Seungcheol’s crotch, stealing all the air in his lungs. Seungcheol grins and grabs the offending appendage, fingers wrapping tightly just above Jihoon’s ankle. Jihoon gives him an appraising look, pushing up onto his elbows.

Seungcheol has the feeling they are on the edge of a precipice, and strangely enough, he isn't afraid of falling. For a guy who’s always cautiously skirted the edges, it’s a huge shift in perspective.

Coming to a decision, he tugs on Jihoon’s ankle, pulling Jihoon closer in one quick pull. The vampire’s eyes go wide, and he yelps as he goes sprawling half over the couch and half over
Seungcheol’s lap.

“Seriously—Cheol, how are you so strong?” he gasps, sliding a leg over Seungcheol’s to straddle his thighs.

Seungcheol shrugs, clenching his hands around Jihoon's hips “Gym. Lots of protein—stacking shelves.”

Jihoon hums a disbelieving sound, tongue darting out to wet his lips, making them even more invitingly pink if that were possible.

“You’re weird Cheol,” He says, even as he shifts on Seungcheol’s lap, movement deliberate and full of offered potential. He settles his hands on Seungcheol’s shoulders, leans closer to add, “But you’re nice and warm and make a very good blanket.”

Seungcheol pulls him closer until they’re chest to chest, holding him there with a hand flat against the small of his back, but he doesn’t even have the chance to get a word out before his nostrils flare and he stops moving.

Jihoon had smelled good before, tantalizing in his subtlety, but now he’s…

Aroused. Aroused and excited and Seungcheol sucks in a deep breath before he can stop himself.

It’s unmistakable, this close. Jihoon smells of musk and desire, intoxicating even without the added stimulation of the attraction being mutual. Seungcheol can’t believe how quickly the scent makes the hair on the back of his neck stand up, the way it edges red into his vision. Right then, every speck of adrenaline coursing through Seungcheol’s body easily turns into desire, his body lighting up with it, his heart almost shuddering in his chest.

He wants to bury his nose against Jihoon’s skin and lick his pulse point to feel it jump beneath his tongue.

Just as he’s leaning in to bite on the pale curve of a shoulder, Jihoon’s back goes ramrod straight.

He’s staring at Seungcheol now, a strange expression on his face.

“What?” Seungcheol frowns at him.

Jihoon looks dazed for a second longer, then snaps out of it quickly. “Your eyes, they—they’ve changed.” He gasps, not sounding afraid in the slightest, only curious.

Seungcheol immediately averts his gaze, blinking at the far wall.

A Lycan’s eyes are strange and changeable, often very different from their tame form. Seungcheol’s never seen his change in a reflection, but he’s been told his eyes turn silver when he’s fighting to keep control, a bright hue completely divorced from his normal dark brown.

Jihoon must have seen the change, and not known what to make of it.

“Must be the angle of the light.” Seungcheol hedges.

He doesn’t know why he’s still lying to Jihoon—this would be the perfect entry to the conversation, but he’s terrified.

Jihoon must see the conflict on his face, because his hand cups his cheek for a moment, then tilts his head back to face his. For a good long while, Jihoon's quiet, studying his face. His eyes narrow
very slightly, as though if he squints hard enough he'll see right through Seungcheol.

“What are you not telling me?” he says at last. He looks like he’s been thinking about asking the question for a while.

Seungcheol doesn’t read judgment in his voice. He doesn’t read much of anything at all. He stares at the wall for a beat—like it can give him a roadmap for navigating this conversation and laughs even though he’s pretty sure nothing will ever be funny again.

“Don’t—please don’t get scared.” he says, soft words spilling that he had no intention at all to let out. He really doesn't want to lie to Jihoon right now. For a very strange moment, he's not certain he even could lie.

Possibly, that's the most terrifying part of it yet.

Jihoon goes quiet. Then he shuffles himself on Seungcheol’s lap, until he’s almost literally nose-to-nose with him.

“I’m not scared, Seungcheol. I trust you.” He says it baldly, like a dare.

Seungcheol doesn’t know if he wants to curl away from Jihoon’s implacable trust or give him a strong ding on the ear for being such an utter idiot.

The house phone starts ringing, startling them for a second, but they both choose to ignore it.

“I haven’t been completely honest with you.” Seungcheol admits in a shamed whisper.

“Okay—but you’re going to be. Right?” The careful interest in Jihoon’s tone burns like an accusation.

Seungcheol scrubs a hand over his face, certain that he’s already fucking up this conversation. He lets his eyes close, just for a moment. Lets himself hide. “I wanted to tell you before,” he says in his gentlest voice. “But I didn’t think it was the right time.”

The answer machine beeps with an incoming recorded message.

“Seungcheol—pick up. Pick up now—this is an emergency.” Namjoon’s unmistakable voice comes from the machine, anger and frustration come through, crisp and curt, across the line.

Seungcheol lifts Jihoon off his lap abruptly, pulling away from him over the roaring hunger of every instinct in his body. If Namjoon is ringing him at half-past bastard, something is most definitely wrong.

“Hold up, I need to get that.” He tells Jihoon, angling towards the phone.

He reaches is just as the screen starts flashing again with another incoming call.

“I don’t suppose you care what time it is,” he says by way of greeting, holding the phone loosely to his ear.

“Shut up and listen to me.” Namjoon says without preamble. He takes a deep breath and stresses his next words with audible caution, “You need to take that vampire out of your house and leave now. There’s a hunter heading your way—he has your address.”

Seungcheol draws in a slow breath as anger spikes through his system, throwing the world around him into hyper-focus. “What? How?”
Namjoon sighs, a deep, gusty lament that crackles through the speaker.

“It wasn’t me. I didn’t tip him off. There was a break in at the bakery, but there was nothing missing. Nothing but the fucking papers for your vampire I was working on. The CCTV cameras had been tampered with, files deleted—but when Yoongi put them back together, I recognised him. The break in was last night. He’s probably on your fucking doorstep by now—you got to go.”

“And go fucking where exactly? I don’t have a lot of options.” Seungcheol hisses through his teeth. Anger threatens to bubble up over the greater mass of nerves and desperate need churning in his belly.

He rakes a hand through his hair and sighs. “Do you think this guy’s likely to come here? Would he really be dumb enough to knock on my door and invade my territory?” Seungcheol says, his voice regaining a measure of patience.

Namjoon exhales with deliberation. When he continues, his voice is lower but no less intense.

“He probably doesn’t know what you are Cheol. He just knows you have a stray, and that’s enough for him. That’s all he cares about.”

Seungcheol hangs up, feeling helpless and hating it.

He prowls around the house in a manic fever born from too many emotions spiraling within him at once. And the one question that keeps spinning out to the forefront.

What the hell is he going to do?

“Cheol?” Jihoon asks quietly from the couch.

Seungcheol shakes himself out of it and meets Jihoon’s eyes, warm and concerned.

“Just—give me a minute Jihoonie. I need to think.” He says, one hand coming up to rake furiously through his hair. Though he’s already thinking, brain running on overtime, planning his next move.

A hunter knocking on his door is only fate jerking his chain, he knows it was bound to happen sometime. But this revelation brings desperation tempered by despondency because he’s going to have to hide Jihoon away. Away from him, somewhere safe for God knows how long.

Part of him is tempted to leave now and start tracking this hunter down, one block after another, until he finds his man. The need to protect is powerful, nearly drowning out the quiet voice urging caution.

But he can’t leave Jihoon here—and he can’t take him with him on his merry murder spree.

There is one, final recourse open to him. Something he’s hesitant… truthfully, frightened to try. Only the possibility of losing Jihoon frightens him more.

He grabs his cell phone off the coffee table and scrolls though his contacts, hitting dial when he finds the number he needs.

The call is answered on the first ring, before Seungcheol has actually worked out what he plans to say, leaving him to stammer through the greeting.

“Cheol? You know what time it is?” Mingyu grumbles over the line, yawning.
“Yeah, sorry Mingyu—but I really need a favour.”

“Anything boss.” The change is Mingyu’s voice is subtle. Careful. “Are you okay? Did—did you lapse?”

Seungcheol smiles a little, even though Mingyu’s not here to see it.

“No—but I feel like I’m about to.” He pauses to clear his throat. “I’ve gotten myself in a little predicament right now, and I need you to look after something for me. Well—not something, someone.”

“Go get dressed—grab some things.” Seungcheol tells Jihoon the second he hangs up, “You’re going to go stay with a friend of mine for a while.”


“Jihoon—do as you’re told.” Seungcheol snaps, louder and sharper than he intended.

Jihoon blinks at him for a moment, obviously startled by the ferocity of the outburst. But he complies readily enough, padding into the room and into his den.

Seungcheol grabs him a spare duffel bag and helps him pack a few things.

Just a few things, because he’s going to sort this mess out and then he can have his baby vampire back at his side, where he belongs.

“Ready?” Seungcheol says, forcing a hoodie over Jihoon’s head because he may be a vampire, but dammit—it’s cold outside.

“No—” Jihoon huffs, poking his arms out of the too big sleeves. “I wish you would tell me what’s going on. I know it’s about me—I know it’s about the hunter.”

Seungcheol clears his throat, resettling the strap of Jihoon’s bag on his shoulder. The uncertainty in Jihoon’s voice needles at him.

“I will—I’ll explain everything. Just not now, okay. We need to move.”

There’s hurt in Jihoon’s face, but also resignation. “Okay.”

Go-bag in hand, Seungcheol closes up the house and ushers Jihoon out and into the street.

It’s below zero outside.

The cold creeps under Seungcheol’s skin, making his Lycan body want to compensate with a shift into a furrrier state. He resists and tugs his collar up instead, slanting a glance over at Jihoon, who’s not said a word since they left the house.

Seungcheol embraces the lack of small talk as the calm before the storm. He does his best to ignore
the thrumming tension between them and just enjoy being close to Jihoon as they walk hand in hand down the dark street.

He wants to soak in the moment, fix every sight, sound, and smell of Jihoon into his memory for the interminable future.

It’s a mistake, in hindsight, letting himself get distracted.

His concentration falters, so he doesn’t smell the man lurking in the alleyway until he steps out to greet them.

“Going somewhere?” The man says, stepping forward as he speaks

“Shit.” Seungcheol hisses under his breath, curling an arm round Jihoon's waist, pulling him back into the curve of his body, already focusing his sights on the man’s artillery. He’s got a crossbow in one hand, a gun in the other and a hunting knife on his hip.

Jihoon goes still at his side; Seungcheol can smell fear rippling off him in waves.

He’s going to take a wild guess that this is the Hunter.

They’re clearly smarter than he remembers because this one seems to be using some kind of blocking spray to shield his scent.

The hunter’s eyes narrow as he considers them both.

“Not much of a talker eh? I was hoping you’d tell me why an average jo would go out of his way to protect a stray, but never mind.” He says as he circles them, giving them a wide birth.

He sounds amused, though there's a stiff edge to it, one that says his amusement doesn't always end well for other people.

“I do really appreciate you bringing him out into the open like this though. I don’t exactly have a warrant to kick your door down—not that I would have needed one. But this can get real messy indoors, and vampire blood can be a real bitch to clean up.”

Seungcheol doesn’t say anything in response, just pulls Jihoon behind him protectively.

The man’s trying very hard not to react, but Seungcheol sees his mouth tighten briefly, sees those dark eyes cold and menacing, sizing him up.

“That’s sweet. And also unbelievably stupid. By law—I only need to warn you once, so step aside.”

Seungcheol’s hands clench. His skin feels too tight.

The frantic urge to move and bite and kill pricks through his limbs, punctuated by the shortening of his breath and the sudden racing of his heart. The sensations run in such perfect parallel to his spiraling emotions that it takes Seungcheol several painful seconds to realize it’s not an impending panic attack he’s feeling. No, it’s an instinctive, visceral reaction to the man standing several meters away trying to aim a gun at his baby vampire.

“Cheol.” Jihoon whimpers from somewhere behind him. He tangles a hand in the back of his jacket, pulls hard enough to actually get Seungcheol swaying back a step.

Seungcheol huffs through his nose and shrugs his jacket off, letting it fall to the ground. The less
he's wearing the better.

The hunter is smiling now, small and amused, and Seungcheol gets the feeling that he knows he's always the smartest man in a room.

“Well—can't say I didn't warn you.” He takes a step towards Seungcheol, cocks his gun. "Gonna have to shoot you now. But just a little, just enough so you can watch while I bleed your little friend dry.” The hunter laughs.

The anger that overtakes Seungcheol is fresh and clean and he swallows hard, fighting back the bile that rises in his throat. He’s pretty sure the disgust must show on his face, because the Hunter laughs, a croak that sounds demented and hoarse.

"Any last words?" The hunter drawls, raising his gun.

Seungcheol scoffs and shakes his head.

He wants to tell Jihoon to look away, not to watch what’s about to happen. But the elongation of his teeth are already stretching his jaw, and when he finally says, “Jihoonie-I’m sorry you had to find out this way,” it comes out in a wet, animalistic snarl.

"Cheol?" Jihoon's terror stricken voice rings out as Seungcheol drops his humanity to the floor, shifts into his werewolf form and roars.

This isn't how it was supposed to play out, but hey-at least the Hunter's definitely not smiling anymore.
Temptation waits

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

One shot—two.

Seungcheol feels the bullets punch through his skin, but he’s already shifted and the sensation is muted—like tiny staples pinching the flesh.

The hunter doesn’t attempt to shoot again. Knowing full well there’s nothing in his sorry excuse of an arsenal that will take down a motherfucking Lycan.

The hunter goes pale, then red, breathing hard. “Oh—fuck.”

Indeed.

Seungcheol wants to destroy him, to flagellate and eviscerate and murder and rip and shred.

‘How dare he’, his Lycan seethes, ‘how dare he try to hurt what is ours, how dare he do this on our land, on our territory, we will tear him to pieces for this transgression’.

Decision made, objective selected, everything becomes… focused, for Seungcheol.

He feels his Lycan side encroaching and reaches for it in greed. Let it’s rage and hunger peak, bleed through and gradually sink his humanity to the depths of the abyss.

And with his mind clear, he’s able to do what he needs to.

He launches himself at the hunter, before the man can bolt. It’s a blur of light and a flash of red and a noise like something’s tearing in two. Seungcheol can feel his own heartbeat in his throat, the vicious thrill of it that he promised he was never going to admit to, was never going to acknowledge again.

He had hoped to make this swift and bloodless, for Jihoon’s sake—but his Lycan clearly has other ideas.

Decapitation seems to be the flavour of the day, tearing the man in half is another. There’s a grisly wet burst of blood, and the sharp crack of bone as Seungcheol’s claws grip each shoulder and shred the body in two.

Tossing one half to the side, he starts chewing his way through the other, a voice whispering to him all the while—see what we can do together, when you don’t try and shut me down. Now take what you want—he’s right there. Take him—take him—take him.

It’s a litany he struggles to push aside, the two-syllable, single words repeating over and over make it almost impossible to keep the thrashing monster inside him subdued.

There’s a quiet thump from somewhere behind him and his ears prick upwards. He unlocks his jaw with a crack, pulls his teeth off the shoulder he’s chewing on and rolls his eyes towards the sound.

Oh. No….

Jihoon.
Jihoon’s staring directly at him, mouth gaping soundlessly. He’s dropped to his knees on the ground, duffle bag at his side, hands still fisting Seungcheol’s jacket.

He looks at Seungcheol as if he’s a stranger, but there’s a dawning light of horror in his eyes, along with something darker and sharper, something that drags through Seungcheol’s bowels like a serrated blade and lodges in his throat.

He knows that expression, saw someone wear it before. Once upon a time.

He looks into Jihoon’s stormy, beautiful eyes, and he finds…fear, revulsion, betrayal?

He turns away, before his eyes make sense of it, something still human in him rebelling at the look in Jihoon’s eyes.

Seungcheol whines and backs away, clawing at the Hunter’s dismembered body to tug it away with him.

He ignores the punch of roiling hurt settling low in his gut, churning its discontent and scraping him raw to sprint down the street at breakneck speed towards the edge of the forest.

Within minutes of burying the body, Seungcheol breaks down.

He nuzzles his head into the ground and howls.

For months, he’s done everything possible to protect Jihoon. Only to end up here?

*Like this?*

There’s clearly something irreparably damaged or missing inside of him that will ruin those he holds too close. A sick, shaking, desperate part of him that wants to just give in to temptation. That’s just sitting there waiting for him to stop fighting, that wants the old him back. Every grisly, horrible second of it. Because it was familiar and easy, and everything since then has been hard.

Or maybe it's just exhausting to resist all the god damn time.

Sometimes it feels like that's all he has any more. The restraint, the need, the frustration. Like he's balanced on the edge and there's no room to take a step back.

Or maybe he's cursed to forever stand in that narrow space with no room to fight. Maybe that's his punishment.

The truth of that is clearer now than ever. Sometimes, no matter how hard Seungcheol tries, how many promises he makes, to himself, to other people, that part wins. It claws its way up his throat and turns everything red.

Four hundred years of it. It's understandable that it colours everything, that it shapes everything, a never-ending circle that always comes back to the beginning.

Even when he tries to do the right thing… the look on Jihoon’s face…

Seungcheol grabs onto that hurt like a comforting shield, a familiar old friend that he pulls around himself.
He had been trying to fool himself into believing he could have this, could have Jihoon. Could love someone and be happy together. But being with Seungcheol wasn’t going to make Jihoon happy. It was going to hurt him. And Seungcheol long ago decided to destroy anyone that caused Jihoon harm. Anyone.

When he finally raises his head from the dirt, he doesn’t know how long he’s sat there whining pathetically. It’s still dark out, the stars blinking from behind a thin cover of clouds. The dirt beneath his palms is red, syrupy. His fur damp and soaked in mottled, rusty red, carmine.

It’s not always immediately obvious how bad you’ve hurt if you can’t see the wound. No matter how many times you’ve been shot or stabbed you can't always be one hundred percent certain exactly how much damage you’ve taken. Adrenaline is both your best friend and your worst enemy. A flesh wound can take your legs out from under you, or you can run up a flight of stairs feeling fine, only to collapse at the top because you'd run out of blood.

Seungcheol's more than aware of that while making his way through the forest, keeping a careful eye on how much blood he's losing. From what he can tell through the thick fur on his chest, the bullet holes are already healing over, leaving only the occasional spatter and drip trailing behind him.

He isn't going to collapse from blood loss or anything, but he’s going to need the bullets removed.

Only one person for the job, really.

Yoon Jeonghan doesn’t let himself panic.

Not anymore, anyway.

Maybe once upon a time he experienced emotions like fear and concern as a normal human would, but that all went by the wayside after his years in practice. Normal Veterinarians don’t make careers out of doing the things he’s done.

And yet all that fortitude and discipline flies right out the window when his partner Jisoo messages him:

‘There’s an honest to god Werewolf in our basement.’

The text message is only ten minutes old when he first sees it, but his responding message doesn’t get a reply. Neither does the next one, nor any of the eleven phone calls he makes during the hour it takes for him to break free of work and race home.

It doesn’t help his not-panic one bit that Jisoo isn’t answering the house phone, either.

Jisoo’s car is still in the drive when Jeonghan gets home. The front door is locked and the kitchen light on, which was thoughtful of the spooky bastard but does little to appease that oily sick feeling in his stomach, because he finds the house quiet inside.

No sign of Jisoo or ‘The honest to god werewolf’.

Hunch has him grabbing his emergency pistol from the kitchen cabinet as he moves downstairs. Prudence has him taking the safety off, holding it at his side but ready to be drawn.
As he creeps silently down the stairs, he can hear the tumble dryer running which makes it impossible to hear anything else. But can just make out a low, pale, folded-over shape in the very corner, the slices of sunlight creeping through the small windows are just enough that he can pick out quick, jerky heaves of fur.

When his shoe hits the last step, he jumps and spins, aiming his gun on the intruder immediately.

There is an honest to go werewolf in his basement—but he’s not doing anything murderous or sinister. He’s just sitting there, slumped in front of the tumble dryer, looking like something that got dragged through the gutter and watching a red sock spin inside the machine.

“Jesus Christ—Cheol?” Jeonghan whispers incredulously as he lowers his weapon.

That may seem like the stupidest thing to do when you find a werewolf in your basement, but Jeonghan knows Seungcheol’s file inside and out—wrote much of it himself, actually. He knows Seungcheol in human form is a lethal, ruthless man that’s drawn wire-tight on the best of days, just as much as he knows that Seungcheol, wolfed out, would have killed him already if that was his intention.

As it is, the Lycan barely acknowledges his presence with a grunt, still absorbed with the red sock spinning in the tumble dryer.

Jeonghan puts the safety on his pistol and steps closer with deliberate movements, stopping just a few feet away to lean against the wall. Still out of reach.

“Seungcheol.” He says the name clearly and assertively, the same tone that always worked for him when situations with Seungcheol got... tricky. “Finally decided to take me up on that dinner invite? It’s a little early though—but you’re welcome to stay for breakfast.”

The Lycan looks up at him with glassy, vacant eyes—then down to the gun in his hand. Several tense seconds pass before a hint of recognition sparks—then the Lycan huffs out an amused sound.

Jeonghan dares to roll his eyes at him. “Yeah—I know. It wouldn’t have done much to stop you—but I wasn’t sure who it would be. You’re not the only werewolf in town you know.”

He waits until it eventually becomes clear that Seungcheol has no intention to shift back. Normally he’d be willing to give Seungcheol all the patience needed, but he needs to know. “Where’s Jisoo?”

The Lycan gives no indication of hearing the question. He turns his gaze back toward the tumble dryer, snout moving in circles as he follows the red sock spinning inside.

Jeonghan reaches forward and stops the machine mid cycle and gets a throaty growl for his efforts.

“Yes, yes—you find it very entertaining, but I would really like to know where my husband is.”

The Lycan chuffs at him several times, clearly affronted and trying to convey ‘How the hell should I know—I didn’t eat him!’

Jeonghan frowns and takes the opportunity to pull out his phone and send Jisoo a strongly worded text. The immediate and tart reply he receives goes a long way towards reducing his anxiety.

Trust Jisoo to think it was a sensible time to go to the gym when there was a werewolf in the basement.

“Alright—let’s talk.” Jeonghan says, pocketing his phone. “What happened?”
The Lycan continues to focus his attention on the silent tumble dryer, trying to turn it back on by butting his head against it.

Jeonghan flicks a small, hollow smile. “No—no more tumble dryer fun for you. Not until you tell me what happened.”

Seungcheol grunts at him, emphatically.

Jeonghan restrains the very real urge to find a newspaper, roll it up and smack Seungcheol on the snout. If he wasn't worried about a possible terrible mauling.

“I have no idea what you’re saying. I don’t speak wolf.” Jeonghan drawls. “Turn back so we can talk properly.”

Seungcheol hunches over a little, before he raises himself up on his back legs and stands.

He’s looming over Jeonghan now—and that is more than a little terrifying when he’s a good five feet taller. His eyes are bright crimson, and Jeonghan remembers, belatedly that you're not supposed to look a dog in the eye. Because it will take that as an invitation to rip your face off.

(He's pretty sure that thinking of Seungcheol as a dog in this situation probably isn't helping either.)

Thankfully the Lycan leaves Jeonghan’s face where it belongs, but he does lifts his snout in the air, chuffing arrogantly, before padding away towards the exit.

Jeonghan blows out a frustrated breath, “Alright—ya big baby.” He says, then slams the ‘on’ button on the dryer to start it spinning again.

Seungcheol’s back in a flash, shoving him out of the way to retake his seat in front of the machine.

Seriously, what is it with Lycan’s and the colour red?

It’s only then Jeonghan notices the droplets of blood speckled on the floor, the trails of red matting the fur along Seungcheol’s stomach and leg. There's a glint of something bright, jutting up out of the fur of his chest, just to the left of his heart.

“Have you been shot?” Jeonghan whispers, he doesn't know why he's whispering, “Jesus—hold on.”

Jeonghan rushes back up the stairs to fetch his Gladstone bag, and while he’s at it he grabs a change of clothes for Seungcheol too.

Seungcheol’s still watching the tumble dryer like it’s teaching him the meaning of life when he returns, and doesn’t bat an eyelash when Jeonghan snaps on a pair of gloves and sits next to him.

The minute Jeonghan pulls out his scalpel however—the Lycan starts rumbling loudly, like he knows what it’s for and he’s not happy it’s been invited to the laundry worshiping party.

“Now, you’re going to have to let me take those bullets out—and you’re not going to eat my face off.” Jeonghan says, in what he hopes is an assertive way.

The first bullet is easy enough to cut out, since it’s embedded in the thick muscle on the Lycan’s chest. The second one is lodged deeper in the tissue of his stomach, and Seungcheol’s superior regenerative properties have already started building tissue over it so Jeonghan has to slice deep.

It’s nerve-wracking work, and it doesn't help that Seungcheol's growling like he’s thinking about
tearing Jeonghan’s arm off, and Jeonghan’s going to have to explain why he has one arm to Jisoo later. Jeonghan likes his arms, and he would very much like them to remain where they are. He’d be a pretty useless vet without arms.

But he manages to cut through the flesh and reach the second bullet with his arms intact, and then sets the scalpel down to fetch his tweezers to yank it out. He braces a hand on Seungcheol’s shoulder to tilt him back a little, and his palm comes in contact with muck.

“Fucking hell—you’re a mess.” Jeonghan titters, knocking a handful of dirt off the fur. Seungcheol looks like he’s been rolling around in dirt—perhaps on purpose.

Classic Werewolf.

He’s so caked in the stuff, the only clean thing in the dark is the glint of his teeth, all ten million of them, if Jeonghan is any judge.

The tweezers go in and with a little wiggling he pulls the bullet out, letting it drop to the ground. It’s silver—and hollow and clearly designed to kill a vampire—which poses a new question, but the important thing is that it’s out.

Seungcheol’s low bass growl that had been going continuously drops low, and then stops completely and Jeonghan watches as the Lycan’s body ejects the molten silver from the wound and rapidly regenerates new tissue over it.

It’s not the first time he’s watched that particular trait in action, but it’s always damn fascinating.

“There we go,” Jeonghan can’t help the shaky little noise of relief he makes, “And just in time too, you almost healed over them.”

He snaps his gloves off and tosses them to the side, reaching down to pick up one of the bullets from the floor.

“Has this got something to do with your baby vampire?” He asks the Lycan, holding the bullet up in demonstration.

The Lycan suddenly tenses, motionless. Wherever his mind is at, it’s not in that room.

But Jeonghan isn’t a fool, and his marriage to Jisoo has had its fair share of rough patches.

“Hmm—had a fight did you? Did you hurt him?” He asks.

The expressions on the Lycan’s face flicker too quickly for him to parse. A no—a maybe.

It doesn’t answer his question. But, then, maybe it does.

“He found out what you are, didn’t he? And I’m guessing he didn’t like what he saw.”

The Lycan whines high in his throat, but it trails off as his shoulders drop in a signal of defeat. He drops his gaze to the floor and looks savagely miserable.

“Oh, Cheol. I’m so sorry.” Jeonghan says helplessly, because he has no idea what you’re supposed to say when you find one of your...werewolf patients sulking about their unrequited love for a baby vampire. It’s not exactly something you come across in Veterinary school.

“I know it’s probably the last thing you want to hear, but I truly believe everything happens for a reason. If my car hadn’t broken down that day on the highway, I wouldn’t have been ambushed by
those shapeshifting Coyotes and you would have never saved my ass. We’d never have met, and I wouldn’t have been introduced to the wacky, wonderful world of werewolves. So—trust me when I say—it will get better.”

The heavy, empty look he gets in response puts chills up and down his neck.

Jeonghan risks reaching out, putting his hand on Lycan’s shoulder. The touch is light at first—nonthreatening—but he grips just a little tighter when he feels how Seungcheol trembles.

“There’s a change of clothes for you—when you feel like changing back, come upstairs for breakfast. Only if you’ve changed. We just had the floors polished and I can’t have you scratching them all up with your claws.”

The Lycan’s eyes snap open then narrow on him in resentment.

Jeonghan levels him a sheepish look. “Have you ever met Jisoo? He’ll kick my ass if we have to get those floors polished again.”

Seungcheol’s memories of leaving Jeonghan’s house are a haze.

He’s wearing clothes that are far too tight, but there’s food in his belly which suggests he stayed for breakfast.

It’s not unusual for there to be some memory loss when he shifts back, especially when he hasn’t shifted fully in so long—but he’s sure he didn’t commit any atrocities in that time. Though he vaguely recalls some kind of argument about table manners, and Jeonghan may or may not have pulled a gun on him when he attempted to take a tumble dryer with him as he left.

He’s got a single red sock in his hand though—and his Lycan side is pretty happy about that for some reason.

Guilt, habit, and a compelling, unspeakable need has him walking in the direction of home even though there’s nothing for him there anymore. He’ll just have to pack when he can carry on his back and move on.

It won’t be the first, or possibly the last time he’ll have to reinvent himself.

He doesn’t know what he’s going to do, where he’s going to go—but he’s certain he can’t stay in Seoul anymore.

The world is full of options. With safe houses, contacts, and favours owed on six continents, Seungcheol can literally go anywhere. He has no idea how long this self-exile of his is going to last, but he’s going to need some supplies if he’s going to get through even one day with his sanity intact.

Stopping by a 24/7 convenience store, he stocks up on some ‘essentials’.

The early morning crowd give him odd looks and he can only imagine what he must look like; wild eyed and dishevelled, skin grey and washed out; dressed in clothing two sizes too small and carrying a shopping basket filled with dubious items.

This should certainly help his reputation in the neighbourhood as the strange weirdo that people
When he gets home, he locks the door and drops his shopping bags in the living room, minus one key item. Settling into a stool in the kitchen, Seungcheol contemplates the bottle of vodka in his hands. Top-shelf stuff, no point in fooling around. And if he’s planning on getting shitfaced, he might as well do so with class.

It’s the most effective way of getting over a broken heart he knows. His father gave him his first glass when his mother died. He drained whole bottles of the stuff when he destroyed his pack, and now he’ll swallow down shot after shot to rid himself of Jihoon and his scent and his baby fangs and his adorable scowl and everything that made Seungcheol’s heart glad to see him.

The phone starts ringing with an incoming call as he cracks open the lid. Seungcheol mutes it without checking the display and then, on second thought, rips the line out of the wall entirely. Nobody he wants to talk to right now.

Nobody can make him feel better.

He’s just lost the best thing that’s ever happened to him and even if something tells him it’s for the best in the long run, the pain is worse than anything he’s ever felt.

Jihoon’s been the one constant in his life for the past few months, an anchor, a goal, more than just his friend because Seungcheol loves him in a way he’s never loved anyone.

The crush of disappointment is staggering. The silence of the house is stifling. Only then does he realize how much he had hoped Jihoon would be here when he got…

“Cheollie?”

Seungcheol jerks and nearly drops the bottle. But all the frenzied energy he’s being carrying under his—now raw—skin settles down at the first sound of that voice.

Setting the bottle down, he looks up to find Jihoon standing in the doorway.

Seungcheol’s breath rushes from his chest in a sudden flush of shock that sends alternating waves of cold and hot through his body.

His baby vampire is standing there, face pale and ashen and his clothes a mess, but there’s no fear in his expression.

He’s all right. He’s all right and he’s…here?

“Oh god—you’re home!” Jihoon gasps, padding forward, his expression shaking between happiness and surprise and relief.

Seungcheol can only blink in mute shock. His vision washes into an over-exposed, brilliant image for a few seconds as his head spins and then steadies again.

“Jihoon.” Seungcheol says, stupefied.

In the space of a heartbeat, Jihoon’s there, right there, touching Seungcheol everywhere, like he’s afraid Seungcheol might vanish from under his hands.

“You’re okay—you’re okay. Oh, God—thank fuck you’re okay!” He says over and over, voice thin and worried.
Bare footed, he’s light as a feather as he steps on Seungcheol’s boots to hug him.

Seungcheol’s heart is beating too fast, and he has his hands in Jihoon's shirt without realising it, dry material under his fingers, warm and crumpling under his palms.

When Jihoon pulls back, he cups Seungcheol’s face and stares up at him, his eyes red with fatigue and misery.

“I was so worried. I saw that you got shot—I thought you were bleeding somewhere. I tried to follow you when you ran, but you were too fast. I had to come home when the sun started rising.”

“You’re here.” Seungcheol breathes. The words don’t sound real, just like this moment doesn’t feel real.

“Yes, of course I’m here Seungcheol—” Jihoon says, stroking his jaw tenderly before rearing back to thump in the shoulder.

Which—ow.

“I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU DIDN’T TELL ME YOU’RE FREAKING WEREWOLF!” Jihoon yells, heedless of the neighbours or Seungcheol’s super sensitive hearing.

Oh, boy—does he look pissed now. Though the way he goes from concern to petulant rage so quickly is almost funny.

“I—I was—uhm.” Seungcheol boggles at him, there's no other word for it.

His inner Lycan is scratching its head as well because Jihoon’s anger seems to stem from ‘not knowing’ as opposed to ‘finding out and not liking it’. There’s a complete absence of disgust in Jihoon’s expression, like he doesn’t care Seungcheol severed a man in half earlier, only that he would have liked to be informed in advance.

It’s an unexpected reaction, and honestly—kind of comforting.

Though Seungcheol finds himself ducking his head, hunching his shoulders and whining anyway because Jihoon’s now doing the ‘What do you have to say for yourself young man’—arm crossing, foot tapping, head shaking combo that says Seungcheol might find himself sitting in the naughty corner in a minute.

Getting relegated to the naughty corner is abject humiliation for a 400+ year old Lycan, but Seungcheol’s going to have to go along with it or else Jihoon won’t let him have ice cream after dinner or something.

“I’m sorry. I wanted to tell you—I just couldn’t find the right time.” Seungcheol murmurs, gaze focused on the linoleum floor where Jihoon’s still tapping an irate beat with his foot.

There’s a disappointed tutting that on anyone else would sound ridiculous.

“We spend so much time together.” Oh crap, there’s finger waving now too. “You’re telling me there wasn’t a single opportunity for you to come out and say—Hey, I’m a bad ass Werewolf by the way. Check this out.” Jihoon huffs.

Seungcheol lifts his head a fraction. “I didn’t know how you’d react. At first, I didn’t want to alarm you by showing you what else was out there. You were having a hard enough time adjusting to just being a vampire. Every time I thought about telling you, something would crop up—you ran away,
you got shot, Soonyoung came into our lives. Then things started to calm down a bit and I thought about telling you again. But you freaked out when you saw that news report and—"

Seungcheol makes himself stop talking when Jihoon stiffens noticeably.

“Oh my god, that was you!” Jihoon gasps.

Seungcheol lifts his head to look at him. There’s still no disgust, just quiet awe. Jihoon’s eyes darken warmly, and if Seungcheol didn’t know better he would think his baby vampire looks impressed. Impressed at what, Seungcheol has no idea.

“I needed to protect you. I told you I wouldn’t let anything happen to you.” He wants that to be firm, but he sounds harried, he sounds winded.

Jihoon deflates a little, tucking away some of his anger. “You still should have told me.” His voice is soft and insistent. “I didn’t even know werewolves existed, I nearly crapped my pants.”

“You’re right. I should have.” Seungcheol says, much more calmly then he feels.

“Damn right I’m right.” Jihoon snaps, right back at the crossed arms, foot tapping combo again. He still has some anger to work through obviously. The naughty corner is still on the cards.

“And where did you get those clothes?” He gestures impatiently. “Last I saw you, your hairy ass was hightailing it down the street. Did you go shopping in the nude while I sat here and worried about you?”

“No—no,” Seungcheol chokes back hysterical laughter, gesturing awkwardly at his ill-fitting ensemble. “Jeonghan gave them to me.”

“The Vet? Why did you—oh.” Jihoon’s face falls, jaw flickering. His eyes surge with tears and he blinks repeatedly to hold them at bay. “So you did get shot. Oh—fuck, I knew it. Let—let me see.”

He whimpers, tugging Seungcheol’s shirt up hurriedly.

“There’s n-nothing there—it’s—it’s healed.” Seungcheol stutters through lips that feel numb. But Jihoon’s already got his T-shirt hiked up, fingers stroking frantically over warm skin, searching for non-existent bullet holes and sliding down ribs.

Seungcheol reaches down to grip his wrists gently, stilling them. “I’m fine Jihoonie. I hardly felt them.” He whispers.

It must be enough because Jihoon’s hands slide out of his grip, then reach up to settle on his shoulders. His expression twitches with a brief twinge of something that’s either regret or sorrow and then smooths out again.

“Don’t—don’t run away from me again Cheollie. I don’t want to feel like that again.” It's nothing and everything like Jihoon’s voice, and who knew the guy could sound so fucking commanding when he wanted to.

Seungcheol clears his throat, fighting back the embarrassing upwelling of emotion in his chest, and then rasps, “I won’t. I promise.”

“Good.” Jihoon breathes, dropping his head forward against Seungcheol’s chest.

Seungcheol huffs a laugh and he blames the dizziness, blames the surge of happiness, blames everything for how he dips his head, just enough, just far enough to kiss Jihoon’s head.
It's barely a kiss, just a brief instant of pressure.

Jihoon goes very still, sighs against him, and makes no move to pull away.

Seungcheol probably should've seen it coming, but he's completely blindsided when Jihoon suddenly lets him go, only to follow-up with those lovely long-fingered hands cupping his face and dragging him forward into a searing kiss.

Oh, God. Oh—fuck yes.

Seungcheol doesn't recognize the strangled sound from his own throat, but he’s surging forward, grabbing Jihoon and holding him tight.

There’s heat and wet and teeth sinking into his lower lip. There’s an eager body pressed against his, and fingers spearing in his hair. Exquisite friction through infuriating layers of clothes and desperation snapping tight in his chest as their noses bump and their tongues press deep.

This isn’t a first kiss, it’s a claiming.

Seungcheol breaks the kiss with a shudder but doesn’t pull back, instead pressing their foreheads together and panting past Jihoon’s parted lips.

“Thought I’d lost you,” Seungcheol pants, and despite the joyous hope suddenly tightening his throat, he has to say, “Though I’d scared you away forever. Thought you were afraid of me.”

“No, Cheollie,” Jihoon murmurs, fingers clutching Seungcheol’s hair and stroking down his chest. “Never.”

Seungcheol’s chest goes suddenly, unbearably wide and light, but it isn’t enough to stop him from reaching up and touching the vampire’s face.

“Jihoon, fuck. You don’t know how much I’ve wanted this. Wanted you. I’m not a good guy—I shouldn’t be allowed to have you.”

The words slip through the tide of lust and adrenaline they've been riding, and he looks away, abruptly unable to meet Jihoon's eyes.

An instant later the strong hands framing his face force his head up, forcing eye contact and Jihoon just looks at him, swollen mouth and hungry dark eyes.

“Yes, you should. You can have anything you want.” He says, biting gently at Seungcheol’s lips.

This time, when Jihoon pulls him into a kiss, Seungcheol is ready for it.

It’s beautifully needy and eager. Seungcheol sinks in with his tongue, slanting his head to push in deeper. More.

He wants more. He wants everything.

His hands are restless points of contact, heated intent with no solid sense of direction, and Jihoon groans into the kiss as Seungcheol’s hands find their way up beneath his shirt to touch the skin beneath.

Jihoon is sucking on his tongue, tugging at his hair, moaning in a filthy way that does things to Seungcheol’s cock and even with so many other distracting sensations vying for his attention, Seungcheol doesn’t miss the heated line of Jihoon’s erection against his thigh.
One of Jihoon’s hands slips away from Seungcheol’s hair, and Seungcheol has all of a moment to feel bereft before Jihoon is manoeuvring that hand between them, finding Seungcheol’s fly with nimble fingers.

Seungcheol’s not too proud to admit that the next sound out of his throat is a whimper, but Jihoon swallows it like an offering and feeds a moan back into Seungcheol’s mouth instead.

Seungcheol’s sure—so goddamn sure—he could find release this way, but he wants to move this to the bedroom, somewhere where he can spread Jihoon out beneath him.

His hands sweep down, blind and grasping, and find Jihoon’s hips, holds them with a grip guaranteed to bruise. Jihoon must have the same thought because now he’s crying out into the kiss, broken whimpers that empty the remaining blood from Seungcheol’s brain and sends it south. And still he keeps pushing, eating the wanton sounds off Jihoon’s lips while he presses forward with his hips, making his intentions clear.

Jihoon responds with frantic little thrusts, so Seungcheol gathers him up, gripping bruises into his hips as he lifts him off his feet.

The vampire hooks his legs behind the small of Seungcheol’s back, breaks the kiss with a frustrated moan, body squirming for more friction. “Cheol, please. Want you.”

“Yeah, mine;” Seungcheol growls, scraping his teeth down Jihoon’s throat. “You’re mine.”


Seungcheol’s eyes practically roll up into the back of his head when he feels their cocks rubbing together through their clothes.

It’s almost too much. Jihoon—his Jihoon, his baby vampire—in his arms again and begging to be fucked.

Looks like he can have everything he wants after all.

Chapter End Notes

1) BLUE BALLS!
2) Sorry, but if I hit the smut right then, that would have been a long chapter. And I really want to take my time with the smut :)
3) The colour red will feature in other ways in future chapters (hint)
4) I like to think Seungcheol has three sides. His human side, his tame wolfy side and his angry wolfy side. The angry wolfy side is what he used to be, but it’s hard to maintain a balance between that and his tame side when he’s wolfed out. So hence, why he avoids wolfing out all together, if that makes sense.
5) I’m thinking of Jihoon trying to coax ‘tame’ wolfy side out to play....but would that make him a furry? More importantly....Would that make me a furry?

Hope you enjoyed this update! Thank you for reading, and feedback always appreciated!
SMUT
Pure SMUT. If you're one of those readers who doesn't read SMUT...you should just skip this chapter entirely ^ω^

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

It’s not easy, walking through the house when there’s two people who are unwilling to take their hands or mouths off each other, even for a second, but they manage all right.

Okay, yes—there are two dents in the wall along the corridor and a door knocked off its hinges—but who gives a shit. All Seungcheol registers is a clash of lips and teeth, frantic and messy and altogether too fast.

Jihoon is practically vibrating when Seungcheol brings his hands up, cradling his face and trying to slow the kiss to an easier pace.

"Slow down Jihoonie," Seungcheol manages, with what he thinks is a heroic amount of coherence.

Jihoon's having none of it, though, huffing a frustrated breath through his nose and curling his hands into fists in Seungcheol’s shirt, murmuring words into the kiss that sound like 'stupid' and 'sexy' and 'werewolf.'

Seungcheol's helpless to do anything but grunt agreement while Jihoon’s fingers work frantically on his belt buckle. The belt falls somewhere near the door and Seungcheol ends up shoved against the wall trying to drag air while Jihoon bites the side of his neck with more enthusiasm than kindness.

Seungcheol hisses in a way that Jihoon seems to think means 'do it again'

Maybe it does.

His pulse is roaring in his ears and Jihoon's hands won't stay still, sliding and catching on every part of Seungcheol they find. Greedy and fascinated.

His own hands are busy, trying to push under Jihoon’s T-shirt, but then Jihoon takes a sudden step back to grasp for the hem, pulling it slowly up and off.

And now—now he wants to go slow?

Seungcheol tracks every inch of bared flesh as Jihoon's stomach, his chest, his collarbone all become visible. He mistakes the slow pace for hesitation at first, but when Jihoon tosses the shirt aside and reaches for the button of his jeans, there's a twinkle in his eyes that makes Seungcheol reassess.

 Fucking tease.
So Jihoon had caught him drooling for those gradual inches of skin. So Jihoon knows he’s been having dirty, lustful thought about him all along. So Seungcheol doesn't have sole monopoly on the balance of power after all.

He finds, to his surprise, that he doesn't mind in the slightest.

Jihoon's movements are a deliberate tease, calculated and measured as he pops the button on his jeans and then slowly, slowly, slowly pulls down the zipper to reveal extra inches of the flat planes of his stomach, and finally the black fabric of the boxers beneath.

Seungcheol doesn't breathe until Jihoon has finished stepping out of the denim he leaves pooled on the floor, and the sight of his vampire standing there in his boxers really shouldn't be hitting Seungcheol this hard.

Lord knows he's seen Jihoon parade around in the tiniest of shorts hundreds of times before.

But this is the first time it's been all for him. This is the first time Jihoon has stood there looking at him like that, goddamn smouldering at him, and Seungcheol flushes hungrily. It's all he can do not to tackle Jihoon to the bed right this second.

Jihoon approaches him with new confidence when Seungcheol finally manages to lift his eyes to the vampire’s face. He steps close and raises his hands to Seungcheol's chest, resting them there for a meaningful moment before attacking the buttons of Seungcheol's shirt with smooth, skilful grace.

Seungcheol just stares at him, feeling suddenly famished for his touch, and so goddamn eager, fuck, he's ready to burst out of his skin.

He cooperates when Jihoon urges him out of his sleeves, and then lifts his arms obligingly when Jihoon moves to tug Seungcheol's t-shirt up and over his head. He's probably supposed to hold still longer, let Jihoon's reach for his pants, too, but the Lycan beneath Seungcheol's skin is growling impatiently.

Jihoon is close enough to taste, close enough for his sweet scent to wiggle past Seungcheol's defences, and instead of standing still like he's supposed to, Seungcheol growls and drags his baby vampire against him.

He grabs blindly for the waistband of Jihoon's boxers, yanking at them once he has hold, and his blood thrills at the taste of Jihoon's surprised curse against his lips.

Jihoon actually breaks the kiss to gasp a loud, startled, "Cheollie!" when Seungcheol hoists him up and carries him three feet to the bed. They go down in an undignified topple, landing in a sprawl of limbs, but Seungcheol comes out on top, and he pins Jihoon to the mattress with licks and kisses and claiming hands.

Jihoon obviously doesn't mind. He twists his body cooperatively when Seungcheol moves to divest him of his boxers, and writhes just right when Seungcheol licks a stipe up the hot, heavy weight of his pretty cock.

"You're beautiful," Seungcheol says, and he doesn't need much light to know there's an eye-roll happening across from him.

"You're biased."

"Biased doesn't mean I'm wrong."
Seungcheol lets his fingers trace and retrace the fine lines of Jihoon's skin, the quivering muscle of his stomach, the squishiness of his inner thighs. He drops a delicate line of kisses down Jihoon's sternum all the way to his belly, pleased with the fully hard cock that rises to greet him.

Jihoon's hands drift over his hair, the back of his neck. All their touches feel lazy now, as if each is as important as any other, and Seungcheol thinks maybe this is what true arousal is, touches so profoundly adoring that every nerve in the body is singing with it.

He thinks it's entirely possible he could come just from touching Jihoon like this—learning the subtle shifts of his skin, the small moans and stuttering breaths. Seungcheol wants to touch and kiss and lick, and he smiles when he sucks Jihoon’s cock lightly. It's enough to make the man beneath him arch into the touch without reservation.

"Wait," Jihoon gasps as Seungcheol swipes his tongue over the head. "Cheollie, wait, fuck, what about you?"

And yeah, Seungcheol's own erection is a straining, uncomfortable pressure in the confines of his jeans, but he's got Jihoon laid out and writhing, bucking in anticipation, and he can't be bothered to shift his attention just now.

He breathes hotly, a little cruelly, given the circumstances, and then takes him in just far enough to tongue under the crown. He sucks gently, rolling his tongue round the smooth, salty-slick head. Light and teasing, all velvet softness and tender suction.


Seungcheol smiles and sinks down further, pursing his lips loosely round Jihoon’s shaft. He pulls off to suck sloppy open-mouthed kisses where Jihoon’s cock meets his body. His hand moves up to pinch and twist at Jihoon’s nipples, then back down to thumb the crease of his thigh whilst he licks up the length of Jihoon’s shaft, tongue pointed, tracing the throbbing vein.

He could do this for hours, happily, but it’s not in the cards, not today.

Already, Jihoon is wound tight, shuddering uncontrollably. Too soon, the shudders start to escalate into straining tension, and Seungcheol pulls off, not wanting to work Jihoon beyond the last of his control just yet.

“Cheol—please.” Jihoon murmurs, soft and vulnerable, and from any other vampire that would seem practiced, a ploy, but Jihoon isn't any vampire, and want clenches Seungcheol's belly, hot and undeniable.

He has to leave the bed entirely to snatch the lube from the bathroom.

He tries to be quick about it, before Jihoon can shape a vague thought of coming after him, but he’s not quick enough.

"Seungcheol," Jihoon calls out roughly - impatience maybe, or just an accusation of abandonment.

“I can’t find the fucking lube!” Seungcheol growls, upending the contents of the bathroom cabinet in his search.

When he comes storming back into the bedroom, he’s greeted with the sight of Jihoon fingering himself. The irascible little shit is nuzzling his face into Seungcheol’s pillow, inhaling his scent and clearly getting off on it.
Seungcheol tuts. “Hey—no having fun without me.”

“You took too long.” Jihoon says, sounding out of breath.

“You stop that right now,” Seungcheol says, putting his hands on his hips. “Cause I am this close to wolfing out again, and fuck knows you don’t want that side of me to join the party.”

“Oh?” Jihoon’s legs fall open in tacit permission. “Is that supposed to be scary?” He adds and the tone is low, approving and vaguely obscene.

Interesting.

Strike that.

One hell of a turn-on.

"Jesus." Seungcheol breathes, chucking the lube on the bed so he can fight free of his jeans entirely.

Jihoon watches with quiet laughter when one leg snags at the ankle, still smiling when Seungcheol kicks both pants and boxers off the side of the bed and slides on top of him.

Mission Get Naked Right Goddamn Now apparently accomplished, and Jihoon groans approval when Seungcheol settles between his thighs.

Their chests slide sweat-slick together with every jostling movement, and Jihoon throws his head back against the pillows when Seungcheol starts working along his collarbone in quick, nipping kisses. He whispers Jihoon’s name, ragged and rattling, and slides his hands up Jihoon’s thighs, drags them along his flank to skim the smooth firmness of his belly.

Seungcheol loves the look and feel of Jihoon's skin, unblemished, every curve and angle firm and perfect. Everything is pale under his hands, pale and slender and touchable, touchable in a way that's fragile and Seungcheol is suddenly afraid to….

"Just a heads up,” Seungcheol says, his voice is a mess and the words run together, come out breathless. “When I get really excited during sex my dick does this—thing.”

"Ejaculation? It's okay Cheol—don’t be embarrassed to use big words. It’s totally normal.” Jihoon snickers.

“No, no, not that. It’s a wolf thing.” Seungcheol huffs. He drops his voice at a murmur, with a tone of confiding something he trusts Jihoon with. “It kind of gets larger and seals me inside you. But not forever—just around twenty minutes or so. Though it’s been a while so—let’s just say thirty minutes to be safe.”

Jihoon offers him the slowest, slow blink of all time.

“Your dick—gets larger?” Jihoon’s voice is now pitched equally low.

“Yeah.” Seungcheol exhales shakily.

“Larger than it already is?”

“Yes.”

Jihoon’s breathing has changed; Seungcheol can sense that his skin has grown warmer, that his
sweat has taken on a scent that hits Seungcheol’s nose like a shot of oxygen. He has to bite his lip.

“And you want to keep it inside of me…after we finish…for forty minutes?”

“Yes please. Though, technically—we won’t be finished….because I’ll still be coming.”
Seungcheol cuts himself off and looks suddenly, blushingly away.

All this talking is bringing vivid images into his head and making his body feel hotter. It’s hard to concentrate on explaining things to Jihoon when he just wants to inhale his scent, mark him; taste him, and take him. No explanations, just his driving eagerness and Jihoon’s willing body....

Seungcheol looks up suddenly, needing to see Jihoon's eyes, to convey some kind of reassurance, but now Jihoon’s face is a mask of uncertainty.

He wishes he could give his baby vampire the blanket reassurance of words like, ‘It won’t hurt, I do this all the time’ but he doesn’t.

Knitting is reserved for intimacy, and he doesn’t want to make guarantees that could still fall flat and prove disastrous. This is all too new, and Seungcheol doesn’t want to jinx it.

“We don’t have to. I can pull out before I come.” Seungcheol says, voice sounding tight even to his own ears.

The moment is tense and weirdly expectant, but then Jihoon laughs, a soft, ragged sound that brings them back down to a steadier reality.

"Yes, we do." says Jihoon, running his fingers idly through Seungcheol's hair. "I’m just struggling to imagine your dick getting any bigger. It’s kind of huge already. But I want this, all of you. I want to feel you for days."

Seungcheol looks at him critically—at least, as much as he can manage. Jihoon is nervous, yes, but excited, interested. Eager.

“You sure?”

“Yeah.” Jihoon says, just that syllable almost sounding like a pant. His lips part, and Seungcheol has to kiss him again.

Jihoon makes a soft sound as he swoops back in for another kiss, accepting the intrusion of Seungcheol’s tongue easily, hands pulling him closer and closing the distance between every inch of their bodies. Skin on skin on skin, and what higher brain function Seungcheol might’ve been capable of flies straight away.

His world constricts to this, to the perfect, grinding pressure of Jihoon's hips against his own, Jihoon's hands along his back, Jihoon's dick hard and hot as his own between them. He groans so far down in his throat that it's a wonder sound comes out, slides one hand down between Jihoon's thighs to his ass, one finger finding and teasing that tight ring of muscle.

Jihoon whimpers so beautifully at that, Seungcheol has to fight hard not to come in a pre-emptive sticky mess between them.

He cracks open the lube impatiently, slicking his fingers up and trying to breathe through how frantic he feels, at least to an extent.

Despite how much he wants this, he’s quietly freaking out. It’s been quite a while since he’s
fucked anyone that wasn’t Lycan because it never seemed worth the trouble, holding 80% of himself back. There’s a special pleasure that comes with not having to be careful of his strength, but at the same time—this is Jihoon. Jihoon is young and inexperienced and Seungcheol’s been called reckless more than a few times in his life, not without good reason, but he’s not prepared to take unnecessary risks with his baby vampire.

He bends low, placing Jihoon’s legs on his shoulders and pushes one flinger in slowly, curiously, watching the way Jihoon reacts, the way his hips twitch and his breathing goes short and messy. The way he tightens around him and groans.

"You don’t know how much I’ve thought about this, touched myself thinking of you." Jihoon says, and his voice comes out thready and soft. Like Seungcheol has wrecked him already.

“Fuck, Jihoonie.” Seungcheol groans, because he does know, he just doesn’t know why he waited so long to do something about it.

No more waiting now.

He adds a second finger, scissoring Jihoon open until Jihoon spreads his knees further apart and starts to rock his hips back.

The third finger is a tighter fit. Seungcheol strokes the stretched rim with his thumb, sucks the head of Jihoon’s cock into his mouth to distract him from the burn. Jihoon moans brokenly, face turned into the sheets. His thighs tighten against Seungcheol’s shoulders, muscles quivering around Seungcheol’s fingers, clamping down hard at the slightest push or twist.

Seungcheol swallows. “It’s been a while. Tell me if I’m being too rough, if I’m going too fast for you baby.” he says.

“You’re fine, it’s good.” Jihoon breathes.

Just to make sure, Seungcheol works his fingers deeper, distracting Jihoon with his kisses and the light scrape of teeth along his throat. Soon Jihoon’s head is thrown back on a breathy gasp as Seungcheol works him open with four slick fingers, impatient to replace them with his dick.

"Enough," Jihoon groans. "Fuck, want your dick in me already."

Which is all the invitation Seungcheol needs to slide his fingers out and slick his cock up, smearing the precum gathering at the tip down his shaft.

One knee on the bed, one foot planted into it for leverage, he grips Jihoon’s hips and sinks into him like a dream, whining low in his throat at the sensation of Jihoon's ass surrounding him, muscles working around him as Jihoon shifts to accommodate.

Jihoon muffles a scream beneath him, eyes squeezed shut and fingers grasping Seungcheol’s shoulders.

Seungcheol presses in as deeply as he can, hissing at the feeling, at the deliciously tight fit. Jihoon writhes and pitches his body forward slightly as Seungcheol bottoms out.

“If I hurt you, really hurt you,” Seungcheol grits out, voice tight as he draws out and slides back in, smooth, “you have to tell me to stop.”

“I can take it!” Jihoon gasps back, rolling his hips.
Seungcheol gives a groan of his own as he takes what Jihoon is offering, pumping his hips to a new, hard rhythm as Jihoon writhes beneath him and meets him halfway.

"Oh god." Seungcheol leans in, hands braced on either side of his head, folded over Jihoon and for a minute Seungcheol forgets, forgets everything but Jihoon's skin under his fingers, the tight squeeze of his thighs and the way his head is bowed into his shoulder, groaning into the skin while Seungcheol gets lost, completely lost in every push.

He’s not gentle; any thought for patience and consideration has become subsumed by the urge to mate, to mark his territory, to claim Jihoon as his and take.

He fucks Jihoon fast and hard, in all the way to the hilt and only sliding out an inch before pushing back in again harder, again and again, in a rapid, frantic rhythm.

"Fuck yes, fuck me—fuck me, fuck me." Jihoon groans, arching against Seungcheol in a lewd stretch that bares his throat and makes it impossible for Seungcheol to slow down.

From the way Jihoon's moaning softly in time, Seungcheol’s nailing his prostate with each thrust.

The windows are open, and the air is silent but for the sounds of birds, and Seungcheol and Jihoon's gasping, groaning pants, heavy breaths echoing in uneven staccato.

It’s too good, too perfect—Seungcheol thinks in a daze, Jihoon’s body taking him—tight as anything, his scent—hitting Seungcheol like a drug. They move together so well, made for each other.

"Mate," Seungcheol breathes, and Jihoon hiccups on his next moan.

Seungcheol wants to kiss Jihoon again, but he's pretty sure he doesn't have the coordination for it, so he mouths along Jihoon's throat instead—easy to do, since Jihoon has his head thrown back on the world's longest moan, leaving the pale, slender line of his neck right there and so deliciously vulnerable.

Seungcheol has to taste him, has to bite him.

He's careful not to break the skin as he sucks at the flesh between his teeth, worrying at it and claiming it, leaving what he hopes will be a spectacular hickey come tomorrow. Jihoon freezes for a moment and then moans louder. Seungcheol moves faster, and harder, driving into him.

God he never wants this to end—but just like that it does.

There's wetness sliding over his chest and stomach and Jihoon’s clenching down around his dick, breathing a strangled mess of a words in his ear. “Cheol—oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck.”

Everything is suddenly hot and white at the edges and so good he can't breathe.

He gasps Jihoon's name as he orgasms, swallows his own name from Jihoon's lips in a kiss. The tell-tale swell at the base of his cock grows bigger, and Seungcheol slams himself in as deep as he can go, one final time. He needs this, he needs to spurt his come deep inside Jihoon, needs to own him.

“Cheol, are you..” Jihoon gasps, a thread of beginning panic in his voice.

“Bear down,” Seungcheol says, surprised he can even speak at this point. “Bear down and it’ll stop.”
His knot continues to swell, stretching Jihoon so wide it feels obscene, all warmth and pressure and Jihoon’s thighs trembling around him.

Jihoon’s body finally reaches the limit of what it can take and clamps down hard, fighting the intrusion. It’s enough for Seungcheol to stop swelling, his cock firmly seated and locking them together.

Seungcheol moves in close, plastering his body to Jihoon’s, turning to nose at the sweaty hair at his temple. He can smell the spike of adrenaline and pleasure from the vampire when he continues coming, hips grinding in short rolls that send pleasure licking up his spine.

“Oh—wow, so much,” Jihoon breaks off suddenly, gasping, and Seungcheol can tell he is squeezing his cock, tightening around Seungcheol again. “Too much! Ahnn—Cheollie!”

“Shhh, I’ve got you,” Seungcheol says automatically, voice raw.

The words seem to have a calming effect, so he goes on talking, more for the sound of it than anything. He pets Jihoon as he speaks, long soothing strokes up and down his thigh while his body steadily pumps him full of his semen.

Jihoon slowly, slowly relaxes, tension leeching gradually out of him until his muscles are slack under Seungcheol’s hand.

“I’m so full.” Jihoon says, shuddering. “I’ve never felt so full before.”

His face is flushed pink, glistening with sweat. Seungcheol licks at his throat, presses his mouth to Jihoon’s skin, nuzzles him. Gentles him, really, out of instinct. But although Jihoon’s eyes are shut and he’s panting harshly, it isn’t due to pain; there is no spike of pain in his scent.

“I can’t pull out until it goes down,” Seungcheol murmurs, unnecessarily. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be,” Jihoon replies hoarsely, shifting his hips, as if to feel Seungcheol’s knot better.

After a stuttering moment of uncertainty Seungcheol’s left watching the way Jihoon's belly twitches under every pulse of his cum, which Seungcheol thinks is going to be a fetish for the rest of his life. Watching anything else leaves him in danger of losing the frayed edges of what control he possesses. So he forces his eyes not to stray to where he’s swollen inside, to what he’s doing because he thinks that just might kill him.

Jihoon breathes in when Seungcheol's hand flattens on his stomach, then presses back into him, hard enough for Seungcheol to feel his knot where it’s twitching inside.

Jihoon groans, hands fisting into the pillows.

"Cheol—oh, God! I’m—I’m-" Jihoon snares his attention by tightening, maddeningly, impossibly around him and coming again.

The coughed-out sob sounds like praise to Seungcheol’s ears, and he pets down Jihoon’s flank, over his thighs as the pulsing of his own cock begins to abate.

“Gonna be hard for me to get soft if you keep turning me on like that,” Seungcheol groans, but Jihoon just smiles softly.

Seungcheol’s finished his spill, but he’s still too large to slip out easily, so he shifts them to a more comfortable position, turning them over so Jihoon is sprawled over him, speared on his dick.
The sheets underneath them are cool, and Jihoon curls into him like a cat as Seungcheol holds him close, buries his nose in his hair and breathes him in.

Seungcheol doesn’t know how long it’s been when his knot relaxes, but forty minutes seems like a good enough estimate.

He’s not certain which sound he likes best: the wet, obscene noise his cock makes as it slips from Jihoon’s ass, or the tiny mewl that leaves Jihoon at the same moment. He immediately puts a hand to Jihoon’s taut belly, rubbing soothing circles and massaging the trembling muscles.

Rolling Jihoon on his back again, Seungcheol spreads him open with thumb and forefinger, watching wetness drip out of him, smearing his cheeks and the insides of his thighs.

There’s a lot of come—a whole lot of it. Jihoon’s a small guy and Seungcheol can’t help but feel guilt churn low in his belly even as his Lycan gives him a mental thumbs up and offers him a post coital cigar.

Jihoon lets out a shuddering breath as Seungcheol rubs gentle fingers around the puckered skin, red and swollen.

Seungcheol doesn’t realise he’s whining guiltily until Jihoon laughs and pets his hair. “I’m fine.”

“Yeah?”

“Yes, it was awesome Cheollie.” Jihoon's got a softer expression on his face now, warm and appreciative, and the look is already melting Seungcheol to goo.

Carefully, Seungcheol holds Jihoon open again for inspection, brows furrowing.

"Jihoon, can I -?" Seungcheol starts. He doesn't know how to finish the sentence, doesn’t know how to ask. But he’s already leaning in and lapping gently because he’s sure Jihoon won’t mind. The vampire just let Seungcheol enthusiastically fuck him, he's pretty sure they can work everything else out.

Seungcheol spreads Jihoon’s thighs wider and sinks down to run his tongue where Jihoon is still warm and sore, and slick with his come. He’s half expecting the vampire to protest, but he doesn’t; he’s spreading his thighs, and making choked noises in his throat as Seungcheol cleans him.

"This is a werewolf thing, isn't it?" Jihoon says hoarsely. Smugly?

Seungcheol rewards him with a hot stab of tongue for his smirk.

Jihoon yelps. “Not complaining, so not complaining.”

Chapter End Notes

1) Phew. Had to get that out.
2) Hope you enjoyed smutty chapter.
Feedback always appreciated, and have we...decided about the Wolfy Cheol playtime?
I slept so long

When Seungcheol wakes up, it’s not by choice.

It’s because the glaring red numbers on the bedside clock declare it to be well past midday and edging into the evening.

“I don’t want to go to school.” Seungcheol cries out to nobody in particular.

“Isn’t that your work alarm?” Jihoon grunts, sleep-rough, but with a hint of humour.

Seungcheol’s eyes pop open so fast his forehead twinges.

It is his work alarm, but he really doesn’t want to leave. They’ve been in a hazy, pleasant bubble of sex and kissing and napping all day, and Seungcheol isn’t quite ready to drag on clothes and work an eight-hour shift.

“You know what?—I don’t care. I don’t give a shit. Fuck work, fuck all of them. What are they gonna do—fire me?” Seungcheol grumbles into Jihoon’s hair, realising immediately that it’s absolutely a possibility.

“Actually, I should probably phone them and say I’ll be running late or something.” He chuckles sheepishly.

“But I’m comfortable.” Jihoon mumbles sleepily against his sternum.

“I’ll only be a few minutes.” Seungcheol smiles, rolling out of bed.

He finds his mobile in his jacket pocket, returned safely to the coat hook in the hallway by Jihoon last night. It’s out of battery, so he hooks it up to the charge and turns it on.

Right away the screen lights up with notifications. Over thirty missed calls and messages. The first third or so are from Namjoon, no doubt provoked by his warning yesterday. The rest from work.

Even as Seungcheol stares at the screen, the phone comes alive with an incoming call and he swipes to reject it, opting instead to fire of a message to Wonwoo to ask him to swap shifts.

When he pads back into the bedroom, Jihoon hasn’t budged from under the blankets.

There was a time when Seungcheol assumed Vampire’s were austere souls used to sleeping face-up on top of the covers, arms crossed over their chests with their shoes still on and heads resting on the pillows as neatly as complimentary mints.

Jihoon, however, is adept at challenging stereotypes even unconsciously it seems, and happens to be something of a hedonist when he sleeps.

Seungcheol finds him snoring softly, curved into the groove of the bed where Seungcheol lay, covered by the comforter except his feet and the top of his head; a sitting duck for all manner of nefarious folk who could conceivably come bursting through the door.

Seungcheol perches back on the bed and curiously trips a fingertip along the sole of one foot, watching as Jihoon giggles sleepily, toes curling a bit in response.

Seungcheol smirks and slides his hand up beneath the covers, inching the blanket a little higher.
He lets his fingers run across Jihoon’s ankle, down the back of his heel, feather light. Jihoon laughs and squirms, leg jerking reflexively. He doesn't try and pull himself free, and it encourages Seungcheol to lift one foot up and kiss the dip of the joint, letting his teeth drag against the bone.

Above him, there’s a muffled groan as Jihoon lifts his head enough to muzzily say, “Cheollie—it tickles.”

“Good,” Seungcheol says blithely, tugging the blanket to the side so Jihoon’s completely exposed, sleepy and bare and stretching.

Jihoon’s nose wrinkles when Seungcheol kisses along his calf, shivers as Seungcheol bites there gently. Gradually, Seungcheol kneads upward with both hands, enjoying how ticklish Jihoon is at the back of the knee and even more so when Seungcheol brushes his fingers along the inside of one thigh.

Seungcheol tracks the same path with his mouth and Jihoon lets him, sprawled there with his eyes half closed and his cock half hard, rosy and curved. He squirms a bit when Seungcheol dips his tongue into his bellybutton and then blows cold air into it, but he’s also subtly lifting his hips, pressing into Seungcheol’s hand.

Seungcheol groans in response; if anyone ever showed their belly to him in a sweeter way, he can’t remember it.

Just to make him twitch, Seungcheol gives a little nip to the arch of his ribs, then runs his hand up his flank, tripping his fingers over his ribcage to skim the tightness of his nipples.

When he finishes his tender exploration, the baby vampire is awake, watching him contemplatively with a vague, tender smile on his face.

Seungcheol shifts to hover over him and gives Jihoon a single, judicious kiss. Mostly because his eyes are a soft, morning blue, and his hair is a mess, but a little bit because he's him.

Running impulsive fingers through the fringe of hair drooping over Jihoon’s eyes, Seungcheol whispers, “What are you thinking of?”

“I was just thinking about how many clues I missed.” Jihoon murmurs. He reaches up with his free hand and smooths Seungcheol’s own errant curls back, dragging his fingertips over his face. He traces the outer shell of Seungcheol’s ear, then drops his hand.

“Now when I look back, it should have been so obvious with some of the weirder stuff you said and all the hints Soonyoung kept dropping about petting and belly rubs. I always thought it was strange how you weren’t scared of me when we first met. You were so chill about a vampire trying to feed on you—it makes sense now.”

Seungcheol stretches out next to him on the bed, “Yeah—you are a little slow on the uptake.” He admits, earning an insincere glower.

“Hey, I’m still kind of new to all of this, jerk.” Jihoon protests, albeit half-heartedly as Seungcheol chooses that moment to reach out and drag him against his chest again.

“It’s not your fault. Lycans blend in a lot better than vampires. It’s not unusual that people don’t pick up on it. And you’d never been taught what to look out for or had a chance to recognise our scent. Even some older Vampires haven’t had experience with Lycans. There isn’t that many of us around anymore—and we’re pretty spread out.”
Jihoon raises his head, from where it’s pillowed on Seungcheol’s shoulder, and frowns. “Why’s that?”

Seungcheol sighs at the ceiling and runs his hand lightly, teasingly, down Jihoon's spine. “Lots of factors. Our conversions are more complicated for one; there’s a fine line between biting someone and—killing them, and we sort of struggle to straddle that line. Also, Lycans aren’t the most sociable people. Lone wolf isn’t just a saying, it’s a state of mind for us. Unless we have a pack—we don’t really interact with each other. Two or more Lycan in the same area can get—messy. We’re pretty territorial, as you may have noticed.”

“No—I haven’t.” Jihoon nudges at Seungcheol's nose, barely brushing their lips together. “Not with you anyway. I mean—you let me into your home pretty much straight away. And you share things with me and you’ve never complained about it. I live in your closet—Cheol. That doesn’t strike me as something a territorial person would allow.”

Seungcheol's eyes flutter shut briefly, and then he frames Jihoon's face in his hands “It’s different with you. You’re special.”

Jihoon blinks at him, his lips parting in surprise. “Why?”

“I don’t know. I’ve thought about it, and I don’t know. Maybe it’s because you’re still a baby, and not a threat.”

Jihoon arches an eyebrow, as if it say, Seriously?

“No a threat?” Jihoon echoes incredulously. “I can kick your ass.”

Seungcheol holds back a snort.

“Of course you can. So dangerously deadly with those little, precious, baby fangs.” Seungcheol coos, smiling wryly at the playful frown on Jihoon's face.

He silences Jihoon’s grumbling protests with a kiss, then wraps an arm snugly around his waist to hold him close against the length of his body. Crooking his other arm around Jihoon, he threads his fingers absently through his hair, rubbing at his scalp, which makes Jihoon murmur happily and arch into his touch.

For a while they lie snaked comfortably together, Jihoon’s head resting against Seungcheol’s shoulder, his hands running up Seungcheol's sides, over the dips on his abdomen, as if memorizing the geography of his body.

“So, are we like mortal enemies?” Jihoon asks suddenly.

Seungcheol bursts out laughing. “What?”

“I mean—our species.” Jihoon elaborates.

Seungcheol attempts a shrug, but only succeeds in jostling Jihoon with the movement.

“Meh, once upon a time, sure. We used to compete for the same food source, and territory. I’m not sure why our species specifically disliked each other when there are a lot of other non-humans out there to fight with. But whatever origin of the feud, it’s even older than me. Now there’s so many laws regulating our movements and restricting violence, we mostly just try and get along by staying out of each other’s way as much as possible.”
Jihoon is staring up at him now, deep and pensive and, not scowling exactly, but his eyebrows are
drawn tightly together. “What do you mean by ‘older that even me’? How old are you?”

Seungcheol stifles the urge to look away. “Uh—let’s not go there.”

Seungcheol’s age is apparently not a dodge-able topic, since Jihoon moves to straddle his waist,
using Seungcheol's shoulder as a chin rest so they can have this conversation face-to-face.

“Oh, now I have to know.” Jihoon says, mouth set serious while his eyes sparkle with smile.
“Based on appearance, I would have pegged you as twenty-six—maybe late twenties. But now I’m
guessing you’re even older. Not gonna lie—that’s pretty hot.”

And heaven help him, Jihoon grins. It’s a mischievous, slightly evil grin, but there nonetheless.

Seungcheol reaches up to finger a dimple and actually sighs. “Yeah—well I’m glad you think so.
Cause I haven’t been twenty-six in a long time.”

After Jihoon's had a moment to consider it, his mouth curves up knowingly. “So—what? Are you
sixty…seventy?” He asks, propping himself up on an elbow.

Seungcheol snorts laughter. “I wish. Those were the days.”

Jihoon quirks a brow. “Oh wow, older? A hundred?”

Seungcheol shakes his head, laughing.

“Tell me.” Jihoon needles, pinching him. “Am I even close with a hundred?”

Seungcheol smiles under Jihoon's scrutiny. “Yeah—only if you multiply it by four.”

Jihoon gasps, eyes widening briefly, before narrowing with heated interest. “Grand-daddy.”

Seungcheol should have felt insulted, but Jihoon is looking at him with something a little bit more
like awe than anything else.

“No—don’t. Please don’t call me that.” Seungcheol groans, secretly pleased. He wonders if there
was anything about him that Jihoon wouldn’t like.

He hopes there isn’t.

It gives him hope to think that someone can like him despite everything—even if he doesn’t think
he deserves it.

“Grand-daddy Cheollie.” Jihoon coos, stroking a hand down his chest.

Seungcheol pushes his lips out to form a pout. “Stop. I don’t like it. That’s not even that old for
us.”

Jihoon smirks down at him, eyes bright and amused. "Oh, shush. You’re such a baby.” He says,
rubbing Seungcheol’s stomach in soothing circles. “Werewolf my ass—giant puppy more like.”

The loud, drilling tones of the door-bell in the silence of the house cut into Seungcheol’s smartass
remark. He can’t stop himself from tensing all over even though he knows it’s transparent as hell.

Seungcheol’s rolling Jihoon to the side and on his feet in seconds, filling the room with
expectation.
Jihoon blinks at him, drawing the bedsheet up over himself. “Cheol, what’s wrong?”

The frantic pounding at the door gives Seungcheol a feeling of dread in his stomach, heightened by the fact that the scent he detects outside is familiar.

Seungcheol grabs his jeans off the floor and tugs them on. “Go wait in your den. Don’t leave it till I come back.”

“Why? Who do you think it is?” Jihoon asks. He draws his knees to his chest and watches Seungcheol button his shirt. “It’s probably Soonyoung.”

“Now, Jihoonie.” Seungcheol says sternly, an order.

Jihoon pouts but acknowledges the request and ducks into his den to throw on something besides bedsheets.

When Seungcheol swings the front door open, it’s Mingyu standing outside, his eyebrows arched like question marks.

“Mingyu?” Seungcheol squints, just in case there’s some sort of sinister reason, because he might be on friendly terms with Mingyu, but the guy knows not to show up to his house uninvited. Unless he’s come to challenge him—which seriously, it’s too early for running around and naked Werewolf wrestling.

“Dude—where were you? Why aren’t you answering your phone?” Mingyu asks him, with a flare of anger that says he’s been worried.

And—oh shit. Of course, he’s worried—because Seungcheol called him in a panic last night then promptly forgot to show up.

“Oh—shit. I totally forgot about you.” He admits in a rush.

Mingyu’s mouth draws into a tight line. “You ring me in the middle of the night, sounding crazy, ask me for help—then you forget? Wonu told me you’re swapping shifts with him—are you injured? You smell different. Why do you smell different?” He asks all at once.

Seungcheol shakes his head and tries to stay patient. Mingyu’s one of the few Lycan’s he’s friendly with, but there are still times he’d like to gag him.

Mingyu’s a baby Lycan, so it’s like spending time with an excitable puppy—with ADD, on speed! Except more so. Seungcheol should probably introduce him to Soonyoung.

Mingyu slaps a warm hand on Seungcheol’s forehead and looks at him with concern. “Are you sick? Should I get a doctor? Or Jeonghan? Chicken soup?”

And Seungcheol remembers why he routinely stops himself from strangling Mingyu. Because Mingyu’s just about the sweetest guy there is, and he cares with all his giant puppy heart.

Seungcheol lets out an exasperated huff. He brushes Mingyu’s hand away gently. “No, no I’m not sick—or injured. I’m sorry, I forgot I was meant to stop over. Something came up—and, that problem I needed your help with kind of resolved itself now.”

It’s the truth. Seungcheol likes to think of it as the Reader’s Digest version; he’s giving Mingyu the
“Resolved how?” Mingyu tilts his head, wrinkling his brow. “You said you needed me to look after someone—said it was super fucking important. I’ve been waiting up all night for you to show, and calling you non-stop.”

Seungcheol throws his hands up in the air. “It was important—but I sorted it out. No need for your help anymore. Thanks for stopping by, buddy.” He says, starting to shut the door.

“Oh, no you don’t” Mingyu scoffs, pushing the door open again. He steps right up close to Seungcheol, his face grave.

“Look, I know you’re one of these traditionalists who likes to keep to themselves—won’t let anyone in and enjoys their own space. That’s cool—annoying, but cool. But something’s different about you Cheol, and it’s not just me who’s noticed. What’s going on?” Mingyu huffs. It's half worry and half hope, like he's afraid Seungcheol might have joined some secret league of evil, but he secretly hopes that he's made a new friend instead.

“Nothing is going on Mingyu.” Seungcheol lies.

That makes Mingyu’s frown deeper. “I’m not buying that, Maybe I’m not the best person to be in your space right now, but please, let someone in dude. Share what’s on your mind—speak to someone or-”

Mingyu pauses suddenly, then doesn't say anything else. Perhaps he thinks the pause makes him sound mysterious.

“What?” Seungcheol prompts, watching as the other Lycan steps further into the house, nose twitching as he sniffs the air. He looks like a bloodhound on a scent.

Mingyu’s nostrils flare, then makes a noise in his throat, curious. “Do you smell that?”

“Smell what?” The moment the words take shape, realization registers on what exactly has Mingyu’s Wolfy senses tingling.

“Uhh—listen Mingyu, you’re absolutely right—I’ll take you up on your advice and I’ll speak to someone about my—problems. Thanks for caring. You can go now.” Seungcheol smiles, aiming for innocence and probably only arriving at panicky.

Mingyu’s not buying it though.

He pushes past Seungcheol and into the house proper, sniffing the air in a tragically unsubtle way. And yeah, Seungcheol thinks that probably isn't going to help, because the smell of baby-vampire has to be pretty much all over the place.

When Mingyu turns to face Seungcheol again, his eyes are blood red.

“Dude, I can smell—vampire. This whole place smells of one. Was there a vampire here?” But Mingyu must be able to answer that for himself because he’s quick to offer his two cents on the matter. “Jesus Cheol—is there a vampire here now?”

Seungcheol huffs, knowing this isn't going to die down on its own.

“Yes. Okay, don’t freak out—but my housemate is a vampire. A baby one. He’s a stray actually. I
kind of imprinted on him.”

Oh wow, it’s really not getting better, no matter how many words fall out of his mouth.

"What?” Mingyu yelps, and Seungcheol hadn't known Mingyu was that good at incredulous. "You're shitting me, seriously? How is that even...No—it’s not even possible. I know I’m still in my Lycan infancy or whatever, but I know that’s not possible."

Seungcheol rubs his hand across his mouth, a habit he’s picked up when he’s not sure how to say what he’s about to say. He doesn’t know how to explain it—because technically Mingyu’s right. He shouldn’t have been able to imprint on a Vampire. Even a stray baby.

But he has always been fond of Jihoon, since the beginning, for reasons that he’s never understood. This is going to be a hard sell, even if he can get Mingyu to listen to him.

Seungcheol shuts the door and leans back against the wall. He’s got every bit of Mingyu’s attention now and doesn’t want it.

“Look—it all started when I came home one day and found this baby vampire lurking outside. He tried to feed on me—and wasn’t successful.”

“So what? You let him inside to try again?” Mingyu’s exasperation is clear.

Seungcheol crosses his arm - which, yes, defensive is probably not a good way to go, and he feels guilty, because this isn't something he wants to have to defend, because there is nothing to defend.

“He’s got baby fangs, okay. They’re tiny, so he can’t pierce skin—can’t feed on anyone. He lives on bags of Pseudoglobin and BLT’s and hot chocolate.”

Mingyu looks suspicious, but kind of hopeful, too, as if he wants to be convinced.

Seungcheol tugs off his shirt, and turns around once, slowly, with his arms out-stretched. "Look, no bites. No bruises. It wasn't even worth mentioning."

Yanking his shirt back on, he notices Mingyu still isn’t quite convinced. “He was really malnourished when he showed up here, and I don’t know what possessed me to do it, but I brought him inside. I found out he was a stray, that he didn’t have a consensual conversion and he’s been living on the streets for months trying to survive. He’s just nineteen, Mingyu—he’s harmless.”

"Wow," Mingyu whistles between his teeth. "That's some story."

Irritation spikes through Seungcheol. He blows out a breath through his nose.

“It’s not a story. I know how weird it may seem to you, but it’s all under control. He’s just one baby vampire.” Seungcheol assures, just as there’s another knock on the door.

Seungcheol is only half paying attention when he answers it, busy giving Mingyu the ‘Trust me’ look over his shoulder.

“Seungcheol, oh goody—you’re home. I was hoping to catch you.” Soonyoung chirps the second the door opens. He’s standing on the bottom step with not one, but two other vampires.

Seungcheol groans in disbelief, which Soonyoung takes as his cue to start the introductions.

“Guys this is Seungcheol, the cuddly wuddly werewolf I was telling you about. Seungcheol—this is Jun and this is Chan. They’re baby vampires too!”
Seungcheol shares his thoughts on that information with a heartfelt curse. He’s fairly sure this could be described as incriminating.

One of the baby vampire’s squints at him suspiciously, like he’s still not sure if he’s in danger by showing up. “Soonyoung told us you were really nice and would give us hot chocolate. Is that true?”

“I like hot chocolate.” The other baby vampire blurts out from his hiding spot behind Soonyoung. He ducks his head when Seungcheol looks at him, then lifts it again to say: “And I like dogs also.”

Soonyoung puts his hand between the door and the frame in the mistaken assumption Seungcheol won’t slam it on his hand. “So, can we come in? I promise I’ll behave this time, we just wanted somewhere safe to chill.”

Seungcheol flounders for a second, and then deflates.

“Alright. Come in—make yourselves at home.” He drawls, gesturing them inside, lips pursed in defeated anger.

Mingyu slants an inscrutable glance at him from under his brows as the three baby vampires file past them down the hallway and Seungcheol wonders when he stopped having some control in his own home.

“Thanks Daddy.” Soonyoung grins as he passes, giving Seungcheol a friendly pat on the cheek which makes Mingyu choke.

Seungcheol rolls his eyes; he’s just grateful Soonyoung didn’t squeeze his ass this time.

“Cheol—” Mingyu begins.

Seungcheol lifts a hand to pre-emptively demolish any arguments Mingyu throws his way. “Okay, so maybe there’s more than one. But I can explain.”

“Oh, boy—I can’t wait to hear this.” Mingyu drawls with thick sarcasm.

“Fuck sake, just come in here.” Seungcheol takes Mingyu proprietarily by the arm and pulls him into the bedroom, since the living room is now occupied with three baby vampires.

He pushes Mingyu down to sit on the edge of the bed and begins pacing in front of him. Pinching the bridge of his nose, he thinks very carefully about how to phrase what he wants to say next.

“Okay, so—I know we don’t have the best history with Vampires, but Jihoon, Soonyoung—they’re different. They’re young and inexperienced and they have nobody to guide them. I don’t know why I have taken it upon myself to be that person—but I have. I feel responsible for them now.”

“Why?” Mingyu asks, quiet behind genuine confusion.

“I don’t know, I just do.” Seungcheol says simply. “And isn’t it better for it to be me, showing them what not to do, instead of letting them run wild—or worse, get brainwashed by some coven? I’ve made a lot of mistakes in my life Mingyu, a lot you don’t know about and I hope you never will. But I reached a turning point one day, when I just—couldn’t kill…."

Seungcheol shakes his head, wiping the images flashing in his mind away. “Couldn’t do it anymore, and things changed for me forever. I don’t want them to get anywhere near the stage I was at. I want them to be better.”
Mingyu looks at him, that steady considering look and Seungcheol thinks maybe there's a chance he's convincing him, just a little bit.

There’s a quiet creak from the closet as the door pushes open ever so slightly.

“Cheollie?” Jihoon whispers, poking his head out.

Seungcheol smiles, waving him out. “Yeah, Jihoonie—It’s okay. You can come out.”

Mingyu raises an eyebrow as Jihoon shuffles out, dividing a look between them.

He comes closer, looking almost tentative. “Uhm—you look like you’re busy. I’ll be in the living room.” He stabs a thumb in the direction of the door, but his eyes don't leave Seungcheol’s face. He grins at Seungcheol, almost bashful, and Seungcheol can’t stop himself from giving Jihoon’s lips a soft quick kiss.

All right, maybe not that quick.

There’s some tongue action and the sound of Mingyu’s jaw dropping is audible when Seungcheol smacks Jihoon on the ass as he scampers out of the room.

“You—I—he—” Mingyu tries to speak twice and fails both times.

“Use your words.” Seungcheol intones.

“You have one living in your closet?”

Seungcheol decides to ignore the faintly accusatory tone. He can already feel the beginnings of a migraine settling in

“Yeah, that’s Jihoon. The one I was telling you about. I built him a den.” Seungcheol stares Mingyu down and dares him to complain. He doesn’t care anymore. It’s sharing season.

Mingyu, mostly stunned, diverts the conversation to: “But you kissed him. He’s wearing your shirt. He smells of you. A lot!”

Seungcheol snorts, rubbing a tired hand over his face. “Well—he fucking better, we just has sex.”

Sharing season.

Mingyu gives him a long look.

Seungcheol sighs and takes a seat on the bed next to him. “I accept this is a lot of information to take in. You’re a Lycan, and you’ve been following the Lycan way, and it’s hard for you to picture a vampire from a sexual point of view—“

“Oh—I think they’re plenty sexy. I absolutely see the appeal.” Mingyu interjects casually.

Which—was totally not what Seungcheol expected him to say.

Well, shit.

“You’re kidding.”

“No.” Mingyu coughs awkwardly, “Depends on the vampire obviously, but I’ve found myself checking them out on occasion. The Barista in my local coffee shop is a vampire. Minghao I think
is his name—he’s pretty fit. I asked him for his number once and he ran away. Now he’s conveniently on his break after time I stop by. I think he thinks I want to eat him. And I do—but not in a bad way. If you know what I mean.”

Mingyu’s blushing to the roots of his hair, and Seungcheol can feel his own face growing hot. He can’t believe they’re sitting in his bedroom discussing sexy vampires.

Jeez, he didn’t even want to know Mingyu had a sex life. Though it’s reassuring to know he isn’t the only Lycan that’s attracted to vampires.

“Oh—well, I’m happy you’re okay with this.” Seungcheol says, scratching his head.

Mingyu nods. Then shakes his head. “No, I’m still pissed with you Cheol. You mislead me.”

“What?”

Mingyu’s forehead creased, mouth going soft - and then suddenly firm, like he's steeling himself for something.

“When I asked you before, whether you had a pack—you said you did once, and you had no interest in ever forming one again. Now—I come here and find you’ve built a pack, and it’s full of baby vampires.” Mingyu says, with enough weight behind it that Seungcheol winces.

“They’re not my pack.” Seungcheol stresses.

Mingyu shakes his head, an inch away from pouting. “Well they certainly look like they are—wearing your clothes, sleeping in your territory and drinking your hot chocolate.”

Seungcheol swallows back a mouthful of excuses and mollifications and develops a sudden interest in the floor. “What do you want me to say Mingyu?”

“I want you to say I can be part of your weird ass pack.” Mingyu says petulantly.

Seungcheol snaps his head up and stares. "What?"

Mingyu's expression falters. "I want to be part of your pack--"

"No, I heard that," Seungcheol interrupts. "You want to be in my pack? You?"

“Yeah.” Mingyu says, his brow wrinkling in consternation. “I’ve been patiently waiting for you to build one, waiting for you to get over whatever made you so butthurt about your last pack. I figured, being one of the few Lycan you stay in contact with, you wouldn’t mind me joining. I really look up to you Hyung.”

"Me?" Seungcheol says, stunned.

He blinks a few times, but Mingyu is grinning from ear to ear. He seems completely, totally serious about this.

Seungcheol sighs and drops his head into his hands.

People tend to view Seungcheol with suspicion, terrible suspicion. He's been wanted for murder at least a hundred times, and he's been a person of interest more times than he can actually remember, and he's been 'a person we just have a few questions for,' about twice as many times as that. It's not surprising that people aren't exactly handing out the Birthday Party invites or asking to join his
fucking pack.

He wasn’t looking to build another pack, if he’s being honest. Not after that disastrous ending to his old one—which was mostly his fault.

Okay, totally all his fault.

Not that he has any regrets. They deserved everything they got.

But now he seems to have built a pack without even trying—and Gentle Mingyu wants in. He’s even giving Seungcheol the tragically sad look of a dejected puppy, which Seungcheol should be absolutely immune to by now.

He’s ashamed to say he’s not.

“Okay—fine. You can be part of my pack.” Seungcheol says, with a little lopsided shrug.

“Really? Are you sure?” Mingyu gasps in surprise. He grabs Seungcheol by the shoulders, levelling a heartfelt look in his eyes. “This is all a bit sudden. I—I don’t know what to say.” He whispers, like he wasn’t expecting it, even though he practically puppy eyed Seungcheol into agreeing.

“You just said--”

“Okay—I’m in. Fuck—I’m so excited.” Mingyu interjects, giving Seungcheol a little shake to reinforce his words. “I always wanted to be part of a pack. I’ve been waiting for this for so long. I’m so happy!”

Mingyu’s vibrating in excitement, grinning from ear to ear like it’s the best news in the world.

Seungcheol can’t help but laugh. You’d never know Mingyu was fifty-four.

“This is awesome. I promise you won’t regret this Hyung—I’ll do my best. This is so huge. We should celebrate! Is there some kind of initiation ceremony? Don’t we have to lick each other?”

Seungcheol gives him a sour look, “What? No!”

Well—actually, that’s not entirely truthful.

“I mean, traditionally, yes we would.” Seungcheol backtracks at the lost face Mingyu levels him. “We’d strip down and wrestle. A friendly wrestle. Then we’d sniff each other’s asses and there might be some licking, if I was feeling generous. But that’s--”

Seungcheol’s cut off when Mingyu rests a firm hand on his knee, and says, very seriously, “Okay. Let’s do it.”

Seungcheol lets his face show everything he thinks about that idea, “No—let’s not. Some traditions are outdated for a reason.”

“I think you should stick with tradition. Tradition is important.” Soonyoung interrupts, suddenly leaning in the doorway. He glances between them, assessing. “I’d pay good money to see you guys be traditional with each other.”

Seungcheol shoots him a dark look. “Do you mind. This is a private conversation.”

“Then have it somewhere private.” Soonyoung shrugs.
Seungcheol waves a hand, desperately. “We are! This is my bedroom!”

Soonyoung looks around the room, realises that, yes this is in fact Seungcheol's room.

“The door was open.”

“No, it wasn’t!” Seungcheol says in irritation - no, a stronger word than irritation, if only he could think of one.

Soonyoung sighs, like Seungcheol has been disappointingly unhelpful. “Are you guys going to get naked and wrestle or not?”

“NO!”

Mingyu’s wearing an expression that says he’s never going to be happy again, unless they naked wrestle. But he soon shakes it off and steps forward.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t get to introduce myself earlier.” He says, holding a hand out to Soonyoung. “I’m Mingyu—I work with Seungcheol, and now I’m part of his pack.”

“Nice to meet you, Mingyu. I’m Soonyoung, Seungcheol’s best friend, belly rubber and aspiring lover.” Soonyoung says and there's that strange sense of humour, always inappropriate, occasionally terrifying.

Mingyu seems to approve, god knows why.

“Cheol, can I have more hot chocolate?” Chino, or Chan or who the fuck ever shouts from the living room.

“Forget hot chocolate—check out this Vodka!” Jun cuts in.

Seungcheol’s eyes dart towards the ceiling, asking for divine intervention. An earthquake, Tsunami or natural disaster of some sorts. God’s obviously skipped out for lunch or something, because the ground hasn’t opened up to swallow him yet.

“So,” Mingyu begins, rubbing his hands together gleefully. “What’s on the agenda for pack business today?”

“Nothing.” Seungcheol snaps.

“Since we have a lot of new members, we should probably take part in some bonding activities.” Soonyoung suggests, talking over him with ease.

It doesn’t take a genius to know Soonyoung is hinting at a giant Vampire/Lycan orgy of some kind. Seungcheol knows him well enough by now to read between the perverted lines.

“We should go bowling!” Mingyu suggests, and Seungcheol’s expression of disapproval is completely wasted, because Mingyu isn't even bothering to look at him.

Soonyoung drops his leer to grin manically. “That sounds awesome! And we can get pizza after.”

“PIZZA!” Absolutely everyone yells.

Seungcheol finds himself heading quickly into a much less accommodating mood.

He doesn’t know whether he wants to Wolf out, cry or tear out his hair in frustration.
He doesn’t have to do anything, because in the next minute—Jihoon’s stomping into the room, tiny fists clenched, and baby fangs bared.

“That’s enough! Soonyoung, Tall guy—living room—*now.*” Jihoon snaps, frowning seriously at them.

Soonyoung and Mingyu tense up, then scatter—bolting out of the room, leaving Seungcheol sitting on the bed, blinking in confusion, wondering if he’s in trouble somehow.

Jihoon shuts the door behind them, then pads over to the bed.

Seungcheol’s surprised when he immediately feels Jihoon’s palm on the nape of his neck, tugging him forward until their foreheads meet. “Is my big puppy angry with all the new people in his territory?” He coos with a gruff kiss to Seungcheol’s temple.

“No….Yes.” Seungcheol squirms awkwardly for a second. Sometimes Jihoon is almost telepathic. It unnerves him just a little. He tilts his head back and lets out a huge sigh. There’s no point even trying to hide his frustration. “It’s just a lot to take in. So many people in my space at once—asking for naked wrestling and butt sniffing.”

Jihoon watches with far too much understanding in his eyes. And a hint of amusement. “You want me to kick them out? I can do that.” He says, moving to sit beside him, petting his hair.

Seungcheol finds he’s pushing his head into the touch instinctively, seeking more of it. “No, it’s okay. They’re pack—I guess.”

Namjoon’s bakery looks like a tornado has been through it.

There are baking trays and saucepans and rolling pins on the floor, smashed cartons of runny eggs on the counters, bags of flour burst open and dusting every surface.

Seungcheol doesn’t think the hunter has actually been rifling through the kitchen—he suspects that this is how Namjoon’s workspace *always* looks.

This place is a health hazard.

Yoongi’s standing at a work bench taking his frustrations out on a piece of dough, not kneading it exactly, but beating it to death with a rolling pin. He clearly has no idea what kneading is or how to bake in any way—but he’s giving it a damn good go.

He stops when he notices Seungcheol, setting his rolling pin aside. “Boss is out the back—baking.”

Seungcheol raises an eyebrow in a questioning gesture. “What’s that code for?”

Yoongi pauses in the middle of wiping his hands to give him a squinty eyed look. “Nothing. He’s actually baking. He’s making cookies. This is a bakery you know—amongst other things.”

“Oh, right.”

When Seungcheol pushes into the smaller kitchen out the back, Namjoon is standing by the stove, dumping two pounds of evenly portioned butter into a saucepan. He’s wearing a frilly pink apron that reads: ‘Lick my frosting’.
Seungcheol wonders for a very long minute whether he's slipped on something and concussed himself.

Eventually he decides that that apron is very real.

He doesn't know whether to laugh, or just feel tragically, unbearably sad for Namjoon.

He steps into the kitchen soundlessly, crosses his arms and leans a hip against the counter. “Nice apron.”

Namjoon’s head snaps up, looking surprised and a little impressed to see him.

“Oh, thank fuck. You’re alright.” He replies. Signs of relief beginning to show on his face.

“Thanks for answering your phone by the way. And replying to my messages. I was in no way worrying about you all night, pacing the halls waiting to hear from you, or baking batch upon batch of brownies to relieve stress because you’re an illusive bastard!”

Namjoon’s hissy fit is much more entertaining thanks to the apron.

“Thanks for the heads up.” Seungcheol says, then remembers he’s pissed off with Namjoon for putting him in danger in the first place. “Though it’s your fault I needed the heads up in the first place, your security is clearly lax.”

Namjoon grimaces. He looks fatigued, restrained, as if he is working every minute to hold himself in check. Seungcheol resists the urge to ask if he is feeling alright.

“Yeah—I figured you’d say that. I guess I’ve gotten lazy and too comfortable, but this has definitely been a wake-up call. I know I messed up, but that’s why I’m going to do you an even bigger discount on the papers.”

Seungcheol doesn't allow a single muscle in his face to twitch. “You’ll do them for free.”

“Deal!” Namjoon nods magnanimously.

Seungcheol stares at him, stone faced. “That’s not a deal Namjoon, it’s a warning.”

The look of outrage on Namjoon's face is classic. “Aw—hey, now—hey. Don’t be like that. I didn’t know the guy would break in here. And the minute I realised what he knew—I was on the phone to you. I’m trying to set things right. Look—I even baked you cookies.” He says, adopting his most innocent look.

Seungcheol glances down at the table, where Namjoon has two dozen cookies laid out on a cooling rack. They look a little crispy around the edges and oddly shaped, but they smell good.

“What’s in them?”

Suddenly, Namjoon smiles broadly. He looks proud of himself.

“Butter, sugar, flour, a whole ton of chocolate chips. And a special ingredient--a little something extra, just for you.” Namjoon says, waggling his eyebrows. “Nothing says I’m sorry I accidentally lead a hunter to your doorstep like a batch of Joon’s famous cookies.” He boasts.

Seungcheol gives him the face that says, ‘You better not have laced those cookies with anything poisonous, or I’ll eat you and everything in this shop.’

Namjoon’s pouting now, which is not a good look for him.
“The special ingredient is love!” He sulks, and it is times like this when Seungcheol is grateful they know each other well-enough that threats can be delivered with a look. It makes things so much simpler.

Seungcheol sighs and waves his hand. “Alright—well hurry up and package them. I gotta get to work.”

He’s not about to turn down free cookies, despite how lopsided they look. He’s a single parent with a lot of baby vampire mouths to feed now.

Namjoon grins and stuffs a cookie in Seungcheol’s mouth before stacking the rest into parchment paper, and tucking them into a wicker basket.

“What’s with the basket? Don’t you have a box or something?” Seungcheol asks, tongue catching the dab of chocolate at the side of his mouth.

“I thought you’d prefer a basket. Tradition and all. Why do you think I’m wearing this apron?” Namjoon says, waggling his brows again.

“It’s not red though, it’s pink. Traditionally it should be red. It only works with red—you know what just hurry up and give me those fucking cookies!” Seungcheol growls.

Namjoon laughs and stuffs another cookie in his mouth.

When Seungcheol gets back, all the lights are dimmed and the whole apartment smells like roasted chicken. There’s a faint glow of candle light coming from the coffee table, and just as he rounds the corner he can see more pretty tea lights scattered throughout the living room.

Seungcheol’s first thought is, *Fire hazard*. His second is, *Power outage*. But realisation dawns on him when he steps into the kitchen to find Jihoon standing at the counter, basting a chicken.

It’s kind of *romantic*.

The vibe—not the chicken.

"You cooked?" Seungcheol asks suspiciously, shucking off his jacket.

"I can cook," Jihoon protests. He puts a hand on his hip, and Seungcheol’s eyes are drawn to the teeny tiny shorts he’s wearing. Possibly for Seungcheol’s benefit. "Well—I’m trying to anyway. This is the first time I’ve ever cooked roast chicken—but I followed this recipe I found on YouTube and it’s looking okay so far. I hope it turns out okay, and I don’t give you Salmonella poisoning or something."

“I can’t get Salmonella poisoning Hoonie.” Seungcheol pats his stomach and smirks. “Lycan digestion.”

Jihoon giggles and slides the chicken back into the oven. “True, but I still want it to taste good for you. I hope you’re hungry.”

It does smell good. Seungcheol's stomach rumbles, and he drapes his jacket over the back of a chair. But something else smells even better.

“T have something for you.” Seungcheol murmurs into Jihoon's ear, stepping into his space.
Jihoon pivots with ease, “Is it your big—” He pauses, glancing at the item in Seungcheol’s hand, visibly taking a deep breath. Seungcheol holds his as he hands over a black leather wallet, opened to reveal an ID card tucked inside, with Jihoon’s precious face on it.

Seungcheol nudges it into Jihoon’s hands and watches the Vampire’s eyes water as he clutches the wallet in a tight grip. “Cheol—I. You—”

He can’t seem to say anything else, because there’s a painful twist to his mouth, like he’s forcing himself not to cry. But his face is bright red, part emotion and part embarrassment, and he won’t meet Seungcheol's eyes and Seungcheol loves him impossibly.

Seungcheol puts his knuckles against Jihoon’s arm, runs them up and down. “There’s a birth certificate too, and a passport and a conversion record. You can take copies for your interview, but it’s best you keep the originals somewhere safe in your den. Okay?”

Jihoon nods silently. His bangs flop in his face, half obscuring the helpless quivering lip and watery eyes, but Seungcheol can still see them all too clearly.

Seungcheol grins and settles his hands on the vampire’s slim hips, pressing close to rest his forehead against Jihoon’s.

“You’re going to apply for that job, and you’re going to ace that interview. Soonyoung can be your reference. Hell—I’ll be your reference, nobody says I can’t be.” He grins, rubbing his thumb against the side of Jihoon’s cheek. “And I’ll help you prep for your interview too, and we’ll go out and buy you the cutest little suit. And when you get that job—and you will, cause you’re awesome—you better pet all the dogs.”

Jihoon grins at him, a wide happy smile that Seungcheol has to lean into, has to kiss like it belongs to him.

When they break apart, Jihoon tucks the wallet safely on top of the fridge, where Seungcheol keeps his too. As he turns around, he wipes his eyes and makes a noise in his throat. “Thank you so much Cheol. I don’t even know how I can begin to thank you properly, but I’ll try. How much did this cost you? I’m going to pay you back.”

Seungcheol chuckles and shakes his head. “It didn’t cost me anything sweetness.”

He’s surprised to feel a hand cup the edge of his jaw firmly. “Don’t lie Cheollie,” Jihoon’s tone turns serious. “I know nothing’s for free.”

“This was. I promise. Namjoon did it for free, cause it was sort of his fault the Hunter found out where you were.”

Jihoon mulls that over, testing the truth of it. “How much would it have cost you if that hadn’t have happened?”

“Not much.” Seungcheol says without missing a beat.

Jihoon’s eyes narrow and Seungcheol knows he’s biting back a formal protest. He leans in and brushes a thumb lightly across Jihoon's bottom lip. “It’s not important.”

His baby vampire flushes and ducks his head, shuffling closer, then closer still—nudging into Seungcheol’s chest lightly. The gesture confuses Seungcheol for a second, until he realises Jihoon wants a hug.
Seungcheol bends down and hugs him. Hard, almost picking the baby vampire up off his feet with the strength of it.

He can feel all of Jihoon’s fears and worries in that hug, all the insecurities he tries so hard to pretend don’t exist. Jihoon closes his eyes and leans into him, and Seungcheol offers his mouth, his tongue and his body in reassurance.

He lets his hands drift over Jihoon’s back in gentle strokes and without thinking about it, sticks his nose beneath Jihoon’s jaw, seeking out his scent along the vulnerable line of his throat.

Jihoon smells great—as amazing as he always does, though Seungcheol can detect a trace of Mingyu and Soonyoung and everyone else that’s been in his space today, and immediately decides to replace it with something else: Him.

Jihoon makes a low sound in the back of his throat when Seungcheol sucks on the side of his neck, just below the conversion scar. He tightens his grip on the sharp angles of Jihoon’s hipbones and begins rubbing his stubble ruff cheek against Jihoon’s pale throat.

When his head comes back up, Jihoon’s hands are on his shoulders, fingers digging in, eyes a little unfocused. “What are you doing?”

“Need to. Just—let me…” Seungcheol trails off as he tugs his baby vampire closer, rubbing his jaw over the top of Jihoon’s head, runs his hands down to Jihoon’s ass, listens for the small intake of breath.

It’s not enough—not quite enough.

Scooping the vampire of his feet, Seungcheol squeezes him tightly. Jihoon’s muscles coil in a way that means he’s about to protest, but Seungcheol is almost there, and he whines high in his throat.

Jihoon freezes. Then he slowly, and very noticeably, relaxes.

Seungcheol takes it for the permission it is and continues his exploration, nosing at the hinge of Jihoon’s jaw and the soft curls hiding behind his ear. Jihoon’s hands lower to his sides and he tilts his head back the barest amount, just enough for Seungcheol to register his exposed throat. He licks at the conversion bite there, over and over with the flat of his tongue until Jihoon’s all but moaning in his arms.

Seungcheol comes back to himself a moment later, humiliatingly aware that he’s been grinding against Jihoon, rubbing his baby vampire up and down his body like a human loofah.

When Seungcheol sets the Vampire down and pulls back, Jihoon’s face is flushed and his hair is wild; springing in extravagant leaps from the crown of his head, like it has some sort of undisclosed escape plan.

But he isn’t scowling like Seungcheol’s expecting him too, he’s just watching him back steadily.

Seungcheol clears his throat. “I realised you’d be out there on your own soon, and I needed you to smell like me,” he says instead of apologizing, because he can’t change what he is and he won’t apologize for it.

“Why?” Jihoon asks, gazing intensely into Seungcheol's eyes.

Seungcheol shrugs, embarrassed. “To protect you. It’s a Lycan thing okay, to ward off predators.” He replies inanely.
Competitors—would be more accurate. But he’s not going to tell Jihoon that.

Or maybe he doesn’t have to—because Jihoon draws his head back, an eyebrow raised knowingly with just the slightest curl at the corners of his mouth.

“Next you’ll be wanting to piss on me.” Jihoon say steadily, a thread of teasing woven into his undertone.

Seungcheol scoffs something offended.

He folds his hands in complicated ways until he finally rests them on his hips. “Well—is that something you’re likely to let me do? Hmm? Because let me tell you—that would save a lot of time Jihoon.”

He realises what he’s blurted out a second too late—but thankfully, instead of recoiling in disgust, Jihoon just bursts out laughing.

Seungcheol ducks his head shamefully, feeling his face heat.

“It’s good that you’re so cool with me being weird.” He mumbles. “I’m not trying to be—it’s just who I am.”

Jihoon slows his breathing and wipes a tear from the corner of his eyes. “You are weird. But it’s cute. You’re cute.”

The vampire closes the distance between then once more and loops his arms around Seungcheol’s neck, perching on his tip toes to rub their noses together. “But if you’re insisting that I smell like you—I’m sure there’s a much more fun way we could go about it.”

Seungcheol furrows his brows pensively. “I suppose I could shave a little of my fur off and—oh—oh! I get it. Yeah, let’s do that!”
The Wolf Pack

Chapter Summary

Jihoon starts his new job, and the pack bonds.

Seungcheol wakes up to the sound of something crashing.

It comes from the bathroom, where – it turns out – Jihoon just managed to dump a whole array of various toiletries into the sink, probably by first knocking the shelf above the sink off its holders.

Jihoon turns to look at Seungcheol. He's sleep-mussed, blinking owlishly, looking like a startled kitten.

Seungcheol pulls him close and presses a kiss against his temple. "Go get dressed," he says, pushing Jihoon firmly out. Sighing, he bends to put everything back in place. The first order of the day, it seems, is to get Jihoon properly caffeinated.

When Seungcheol finishes brushing his teeth, Jihoon's pacing the room. He's put his pants on, but he hasn't buttoned his shirt. Seungcheol is quite frankly torn between appreciating the view and remembering they have to grab the bus in an hour.

Jihoon stops and turns to look at him. His hair is wild, dishevelled. He'd wanted to trim it for his interview but Seungcheol convinced him not to, and right now he is selfishly glad of that.

"What is it?" Seungcheol says, after Jihoon keeps staring in silence.

Jihoon sits down on the bed with a thump. "Seungcheol," he says. "I don't think I'm ready." His perfectly level voice cracks on that last syllable, and Seungcheol is sitting on the bed next to him in a flash.

"You're going to be awesome Jihoonie." It's not empty praise. Seungcheol, admittedly, is nowhere near above flattery, but using that on Jihoon is not only foolish, but completely unnecessary. Jihoon knows everything he needs to know – well, most things.

Seungcheol has helped him prepare as much as possible. Whatever Jihoon doesn’t know—he'll pick up on the job soon enough. And besides—it’s an interview for a job at Petsmart, not NASA. It’s hardly rocket science.

The look Jihoon gives him is withering. "You said that out loud."

“Oh.” Seungcheol swallows.

He’s still half asleep to be fair. Jihoon had kept him up into the wee hours of the morning—roleplaying.

Unfortunately, not of the sexual variety, but of the ‘job interview’ variety.

There’s considerably less sex with that sort of roleplaying.
Actually—no sex whatsoever. Just generic interview questions and answers, back and forth.

Seungcheol claps Jihoon on the back before the baby vampire can get properly mad at him. "What on earth are you worried about, in any case?"

Jihoon opens his mouth, closes it, and gestures helplessly instead. This free-floating anxiety isn't like him; Seungcheol has never seen him behave like this. It's oddly upsetting.

"You should finish getting dressed, for a start," Seungcheol says, and Jihoon nods and stand up.

He's not sure how his hands made their way to button Jihoon's shirt up for him. He half expects Jihoon to bat them away in irritation. But instead Jihoon looks down at Seungcheol's hands making their way towards his collar, quiet, expression revealing nothing.

"There," Seungcheol says, once Jihoon is buttoned up. "All done." Then, on a whim, he opens his drawer and fishes out a tie.

Jihoon looks at him, sceptic. "Wouldn't I be a little overdressed? It’s Petsmart afterall."

"Not if it looks good on you," Seungcheol says with authority. "Then it's just making everyone else feel underdressed".

Privately he adds, 'And the suit makes you look older, and less of a precious baby-fanged kitten'. No reason to make Jihoon worry.

Jihoon looks at him askance. “You said that out loud again.”

“Dammit. Sorry—I’m still half asleep.” Seungcheol says, scratching his sleep mussed hair. “But you’re going to be fine Jihoonie.” He reminds him gently.

As Seungcheol suspected—Jihoon nails the interview and gets the job. And with that a uniform Seungcheol is careful not to comment on. Pressed khaki slacks, a bright blue polo shirt, and a black apron. Jihoon can at least wear his own choice of shoes, and decides to go with converse.

It’s a ridiculous, unflattering uniform that most jobs in retail have to suffer with, but the first time Jihoon tries the whole outfit on and does a little spin in front of the mirror, Seungcheol just... stares at him.

"What?" Jihoon asks grouchily.

Seungcheol smiles and gestures at the uniform, “You look adorable. I really didn’t expect you to look adorable in that. It should be impossible—yet, I want to cuddle you.”

Jihoon scowls.

Seungcheol rolls his eyes, “Oh, I’m sorry. You look like a dork.”

Jihoon scowls harder.

“Adorkable?”

Jihoon couldn’t be scowling to a higher degree right now.
Seungcheol regards him with an amused smile. “You know that just makes me want to cuddle you more.”

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On Jihoon’s first day of work, Seungcheol wakes up to find the other half of the bed empty. He allows himself an audible sigh before climbing out. He stumbles down the corridor to the living room—to find Jihoon sitting primly on the couch, wearing his Petsmart uniform, with his backpack sitting neatly at his feet. He looks like he expects to be named employee of the month at any moment.

“Jihoon—what are you—you’re dressed already?” Seungcheol pauses, checks his wrist watch, and has to work very hard not to laugh. “Oh, God. It’s only 3pm baby. Your shift doesn’t start for another three hours.”

“I’m too excited. I already packed my bag and made my lunch. I didn’t want to be late for my first day!” Jihoon says in an animated rush, jumping up from the couch.

He fidgets on his feet, then sits down again. Then stands, then sits. Then stands, then sits.

“I think I might be nervous. What if the animals don’t like me? I haven’t really interacted with many since I changed. What if they’re terrified of me?” Jihoon asks with a quiet sort of desperation.

Seungcheol smiles and decides on honesty rather than empty reassurance. “Of course, you’re nervous. It’s your first job, and that’s always going to be new and scary. Yeah, some animals will probably shy away at first—but they’ll love you if you stay patient with them. And I’ll be a phone call away if you need me.”

Jihoon swallows thickly, but nods in agreement.

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Jihoon’s enthusiasm for his first day at work drains as they get closer to their destination. By the time they’ve hopped off the bus and are standing outside the glass doors of the Petsmart building, he’s clutching Seungcheol’s hand so hard, Seungcheol can’t feel it anymore.

“It’s going to be okay. You’ve got this.” Seungcheol says. He doesn’t pry his hand free of Jihoon’s death grip—just waits till Jihoon composes himself and is ready to let go.

"Do you need me to come in with you?"

Jihoon scowls. "I'm not a baby."

Seungcheol holds up his hands and chuckles. "Okay. I'll see you tonight."

He’s glad Jihoon hadn’t said yes. He would of course, absolutely walk him inside and stay with Jihoon for a bit if he wanted, but he’s sure the Petsmart dogs would all howl and shit their pants with a Lycan was on the premises.
(Dogs don’t wear pants—his brain reminds him.)

Well—they’ll shit themselves anyway—and Jihoon might have to clean it up. Which would be a terrible first day on the job chore.

"My shift will be over at eleven pm," Jihoon says, with emphasis.

"I won’t be late."

Jihoon scrutinizes him and nods at last and turns to head inside, giving a sad little wave.

He only gets a few steps before he whirls around and runs back and flings a hug at Seungcheol, his face pressed against Seungcheol’s neck. “Bye, Cheollie.”

"Oh, hey," Seungcheol says, taken by surprise. He dips down and hugs back. "Have fun, okay?"

Jihoon nods, smiling, and runs off inside.

If Seungcheol has this gravity-defying sensation pushing against his ribs, it’s only relief that they’ve made it through Jihoon’s first hurdle on the job. This is what he tells himself as he walks the block to his own place of work.

Seungcheol keeps his phone on vibrate during his shift—just in case. But Jihoon doesn’t call—which hopefully means his first day has gone well and all the pets are still alive.

Seungcheol’s shift at the convenience store ends at 23:00 and after he clocks out, he makes his way over to Petsmart to wait for Jihoon to finish.

Jihoon emerges five minutes past, sprinting across the car park towards Seungcheol with the biggest smile on his face. He’s got his lunch box tucked under his arm and is wearing his back pack on both shoulders as he zooms over, excitement shining on his face.

He actually resembles a kid being let out of school.

Seungcheol half expects him to whip out a papier mâché cat or a picture he drew in class or something—of a dinosaur wrestling with an octopus. So Seungcheol can make a big fuss about it and then pin it on the fridge.

“So?” Seungcheol begins, when Jihoon is in ear shot. “How was—"

“It was amazing!” Jihoon answers over him, launching himself into Seungcheol’s arms. “Oh my god—I had so much fun! Everyone is so nice! I love my new job!”

“Aw—I’m so happy to hear that.” Seungcheol chuckles, ruffling his hair. “Was it just an induction or did you get to play with the animals?”

“It was a quick induction, and then I got down to work. I introduced myself to all of the pets. There were dogs, and cats, and kittens and puppies, and parrots and fish and frogs and lizards and—“

Jihoon continues to name every animal under the sun as they head towards their bus stop. He clings to Seungcheol’s arm as they wait for the bus to arrive, then plasters himself against Seungcheol once the climb on, rubbing the top of his head against Seungcheol’s jaw.
It’s the most domestic shit Seungcheol’s ever been a part of—and he loves it. He loves every second of it.

“Well—I’m glad you enjoyed it.” Seungcheol says, once Jihoon finishes naming animals from A to Z. “Did you make any non-animal friends?”

Jihoon nods with long, emphatic bobs of his head, “Yep—my supervisor, Sho, is really nice. They’re a vampire too! They showed me around and we had lunch together and talked about stuff. They’re cool.”

“Good, good. Do you have much homework?”

“Huh?” Jihoon blinks at him, confused.

Seungcheol shrugs one shoulder. “It’s just the uniform combined and the little lunch box and the way you ran out of there like the school bell had just rung…..”

“Hey!” Jihoon snaps, then pushes away to thump Seungcheol in the arm. “I was just so excited to see you again and tell you about my day. Don’t tease me for being excited.” He huffs.

Seungcheol grins and reels him in for a hug.

"I’m sorry, I’m sorry," Seungcheol says. He runs a thumb over Jihoon's brow. "You’re just so much fun to rile up. I love when you get that line between your eyebrows."

Jihoon frowns.

"There's the one," Seungcheol says triumphantly.

Jihoon bats his hand away. "Jerk."

Seungcheol chuckles again and gives him a quick, hard kiss. When he pulls back Jihoon is smiling again, gazing at him from hooded eyes, and Seungcheol feels a familiar heat building in his gut, already starting to get him hard.

When he looks up, he notices a female vampire seated a little ways down from them. Her mouth is slightly slack with surprise, and there’s a trace of something—else in her expression. Something tenuous and warm that makes Seungcheol uneasy.

Jihoon must notice her too, because he twists in Seungcheol’s arms and ducks his head into his chest.

“Why is she staring?” Jihoon says. He’s subdued, tense, the line of his shoulders tight beneath Seungcheol’s hand.

“Ignore her.” Seungcheol says, and goes back to petting Jihoon’s hair.

The next time he glances over, the female vampire is watching him, her eyes warmly amused, an almost-smile playing about her mouth. She stands from her seat, and moves towards the door—putting her even closer to where they’re standing.

Seungcheol pulls Jihoon tightly against him, a low snarl building in his throat at her approach.

“I’m sorry to bother you,” She begins, looking hesitant. “But I couldn’t get off the bus without saying—I think it’s great you’re both demolishing stereotypes. Honestly, some people are so stuck with tradition, but this gives me hope. And, if you don’t mind me saying, you guys are really cute
together.”

Seungcheol blinks at her in shock. He doesn't know what to make of that. “Uh—thanks.” He manages. The vampire nods and gets off at the next stop with a wave.

Jihoon ducks his face in Seungcheol’s shoulder, smiling.

"What do the orange stickers mean again?” Seungcheol asks, glancing over his shoulder, a perplexed wrinkle between his eyes as he surveys the newly organized kitchen shelves.

"Refined flour and sugar,” Jihoon answers as he assembles his lunch. For a guy who drinks his weight in cola every day, he’s strangely concerned about his diet.

"And what about the red stickers?” Seungcheol asks.

"That you should probably start looking into cholesterol medication.”

The corner of Seungcheol’s mouth turns up. "So the pantry now has a terror alert system for nutritional value.”

"Or lack thereof.” Jihoon says dryly.

Seungcheol laughs and grabs a level-orange breakfast muffin and settles in at the table. “Are you trying to tell me something? Do I need to go on a diet?”

“No. But you have to admit we eat a lot of junk food. Especially with these guys around.” Jihoon says, gesturing at the three baby vampires and Mingyu sitting glued to the television screen.

“Healthy habits start at home. We can’t live on pizza’s and ramen alone. We need to phase in fresh fruit and vegetables, maybe some non-meat-based protein and less Monosodium glutamate.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’ll try and cut down on the cup of Monosodium glutamate I have every morning.” Seungcheol offers matter-of-factly.

Jihoon crosses his arms and huffs through his nose. “It’s a flavouring Seungcheol. It’s added to a lot of processed foods to enhance flavour, especially Ramen. I love ramen just as much as the next guy, but studies show consuming instant ramen more than twice a week can have serious—”

“Okay—Okay.” Seungcheol interjects, raising his hands. He’ll not have the good name of Ramen sullied in his home. “We’ll go food shopping and buy healthy stuff. Save the sermon.”

"I don’t think this was a good idea,” Seungcheol says.

He stops just inside the automatic doors, suddenly enough that Soonyoung thumps into the back of him, bounces off and lands in a sprawl on the ground.

“Jesus—he’s like a brick wall.” Soonyoung groans, getting a helping hand from Chan.

“Why?” Jihoon asks, coming to stand next to him.
Seungcheol takes a breath and puts on the calmest voice he can manage. “People are going to wonder what a Lycan is doing—grocery shopping with a baby Lycan and four baby vampires. They’ll talk!”

“People aren’t that judgemental. This is the 21 century Cheol—unusual is in fashion. And you heard the woman on the bus. We’re breaking stereotypes. Also, you're being a good influence for the kids.” Jihoon says, tipping his head sideways.

To where the entire Pack is watching him like they're waiting to take social cues from him, so Seungcheol sighs and fixes some sort of less-than-murderous expression on his face.

"Okay—let’s make a start. Where’s the list?" He asks.

He's met with a sea of confused and blank faces.

Seungcheol presses a hand to his temple. They’ve only been here a few minutes and he can feel a headache coming on. “It took us three hours to write that list. Please tell me someone has it.”

“Here it is.” Soonyoung pipes up suddenly. He fishes out a crumbled piece of paper from his jacket pocket and hands it over to Seungcheol.

Seungcheol glances at it briefly, then scrunches it up in his palm. “This isn’t the list I wrote. This list just says—Hot Chocolate mix and Extra-Large condoms.”

“That’s all we need.” Soonyoung says affably.

“What-did-you-do-with-the-list?” Seungcheol articulates each word precisely, the kind of diction people generally fear. It doesn’t seem to work on any of his baby vampires.

“We left it on the kitchen table.” Mingyu remarks, unhelpfully.

“We don’t need a list. We can just go through our daily routine and determine what we use. It shouldn’t be hard.” Jihoon says, smothering the tense moment with hopeful enthusiasm. As if he's determined that this shopping trip will be the best day out ever. God help them.

Seungcheol sighs and drags a cart out of the bay, pushing it purposefully towards Jun, who just lets it hit him in the thigh instead of attempting to take hold of it.

“You can steer the cart.” Seungcheol orders.

“But—I wanted to ride on the front!” Jun says immediately, then pouts like a five-year-old.

Seungcheol squints at him. “What are you? Five? Nobody is riding on the front.”


Seungcheol rolls up his sleeves—in preparation to throttle him.

“Everyone just split up,” Jihoon interjects just in time to save Jun’s life. “Go grab some food and bring it back to the cart and I’ll decide if it gets to stay.”

Soonyoung takes Mingyu down one aisle, possibly in the hope that Mingyu will reach all the things on high shelves for him. Jun and Chan march off with purpose in another direction. Seungcheol suspects they are going to be helpful as fuck to make up for drinking his 100-year-old whiskey.
They're going to be so helpful that by the end of today Seungcheol may murder them just to escape from their guilty little faces.

“This is nice.” Jihoon says, when it’s just the two of them strolling down the aisle. He’s wearing just the slightest half-smile. The careful one that's meant to be reassuring.

“Shopping in a supermarket? Jesus—I really should take you out more.” Seungcheol says dryly.

“No.” Jihoon snorts, elbowing him in the side. “Us all hanging out together—like a family.”

“Families don’t usually go grocery shopping together Jihoon. They only do that in advertisements and lifetime movies.”

“But we’re bonding. That’s good.”

Seungcheol thinks Jihoon’s definition of bonding is very different from his own.

“I’ll hold my opinions on the matter till we get home and I have murdered anyone.” He says, and he doesn't have to look at Jihoon to know he’s rolling his eyes at him.

When they round the corner to the fresh fruit aisle, they find Soonyoung standing next to a huge pile of watermelons, fondling each one like he absolutely has to find the perfect one.

Seungcheol sighs. “What are you doing?”

“I need to squeeze em—to check if they’re ripe. I only like the ripest—juiciest—roundest melons. Yeah—this one’s good. Yeah.” Soonyoung purrs, which doesn’t sound creepy at all.

Seriously, that guy can turn anything into innuendo.

Jihoon makes the face he does when he’s trying not to laugh and Seungcheol just makes a face.

“Must you constantly push the boundaries of perversion? You’re making me never want to eat a melon again.” Seungcheol grunts.

Soonyoung looks more amused than anything else. “Who said anything about eating them?”

Seungcheol does not like the wink Soonyoung gives him as he strokes the melons suggestively.

They all agreed beforehand Soonyoung could come along on their shopping trip as long as he didn’t make any overt sexual gestures at Seungcheol, which he seems to be doing these days with increasing persistence, as if he senses that prolonged exposure might be wearing Seungcheol down.

It isn’t.

Seungcheol shakes his head and turns his attention to the neatly stacked apples on the other side of the aisle.

Should he just get two apples for everyone? He's never bought groceries for six people before. And there’s so many different types to choose from. Granny smith, Pink Lady, Braeburn, Royal Gala, Delicious red.....

There’s a splat sound from somewhere behind him and the next time Seungcheol looks over at Soonyoung, he’s is blinking melon juice out of his eyes, and holding the pulpy remains of what used to be a very large, very rounded, delicious fruit.
"That one was a little too ripe. Got a little too excited there." Soonyoung says, and he's not even trying to look embarrassed, wiping bits of melon off his cheek with his sleeve.

Chan wanders past the cart next—with a bunch of sad-looking bananas, which he seems uncertain about actually putting in the cart.

"Those ones are bruised," Seungcheol says, and puts the bananas Chan picked back on the display.

The look Chan throws him is somewhere between hurt and embarrassed.

Seungcheol sighs. “Just pick an unripe bunch, so they don’t go bad quickly.”

Chan nods then studies the selection of bananas once more. He picks a slightly greener bunch, and holds them out for Seungcheol’s approval, smiling uncertainly like maybe he's expecting to be licked on the head.

Seungcheol just nods, but that seems to be enough because Chan’s smile shifts into something that looks slightly less desperate. He settles his newly chosen bananas down gently in the cart.

They officially have groceries now.

That only took 20 minutes. At this rate—they’ll probably grow old and die in the supermarket.

They round the next aisle to find Jun and Soonyoung having a tug of war over a crushed selection of bread.

"Rolls," Jun hisses, his expression twisted with exasperation.

"Bread," Soonyoung says angrily.

"Rolls."

“Bread!”

“ROLLS!”

"You can't make sandwiches with rolls," Soonyoung says, as if he can't understand why that wasn't enough to win the argument outright.

"I don't like crusts," Jun complains.

"Rolls are all crust, the whole outside of a bread roll is crust," Soonyoung says, in a confused sort of way.

"No, it’s not. Let go," Jun snarls, and gives the bag another tug.

It's a hair away from ripping and showering everyone in dented slices of white bread. Seungcheol is pretty sure he will never bring them anywhere with him again if that happens.

“If you both don’t stop fighting this instant—” Seungcheol begins to threaten, but promptly gives up. They’re not listening. Nobody ever listens to him.

Jihoon intervenes then, stepping up to the bickering duo with a terrifying look on his face.

"We need sliced bread to make sandwiches," Jihoon says, grabbing the bread out of Soonyoung's hand. Jun looks horribly betrayed. "And we can get bread rolls for hot dogs too," Jihoon finishes,
and throws both in the cart with the air of a man who has made a decision and that's the end of it. "You think you can find something more pathetic to argue over?"

Soonyoung looks appropriately ashamed, while Jun's staring at his reflection in the glass cabinet and fixing his hair.

"Now, be useful and go find hot dogs and ketchup," Jihoon snaps, and they all squeak off across the shiny floor in different directions.

Seungcheol looks at Jihoon sideways. "How do you do it? How do you get them to listen to you? Why don't they listen to me when I yell?"

Jihoon shrugs, "I guess they don't expect me to yell, so it startles them. But you're like an—old man yelling at kids walking on his lawn or something." He offers, and Seungcheol throws him a glance that spells out exactly how unwelcome that comparison was.

"If you don't watch your mouth, I will put you in this cart," Seungcheol threatens. This surprises a laugh out of Jihoon who darts away before Seungcheol can grab him and make good on his threat.

Seungcheol adds potatoes and carrots to the cart, while Jihoon adds milk and orange juice, before they stop at a soft drink display advertising ‘Buy 1, get 1 free’. So naturally Jihoon adds six bottles of Cola to the cart without batting an eye.

Seungcheol picks up one of the bottles and examines the label. “No MSG—but look at all those E numbers, and all that sugar. That can't be good.” He tsks, shooting a sideways look at his baby vampire.

Jihoon grabs the bottle out of his hand and dumps it back in the cart. "Don't you dare sully the good name of Coca Cola in my presence."

"Hypocrite." Seungcheol snickers while Jihoon glares at him.

Seungcheol has been wondering where Mingyu went for a while, but he appears in the next aisle, face barely visible behind the armful of plunder he's carrying. He may have emptied the entire meat counter. That is a thing which may actually have happened.

"There wasn't enough bacon for six people, so I had to compensate," Mingyu says, and dumps all the chilled meat he's carrying (possible all the chilled meat in the entire store) into the cart.

"By picking up everything in the meat counter?" Seungcheol asks, because that is a shitload of meat. Some people may argue that that isn't an official unit of measurement—but he begs to differ.


Seungcheol doesn't miss the way Mingyu kind of looks like he'd be willing to go and find more meat if necessary. As much as it would take to make Jihoon happier with him.

Jun comes back next with two boxes of frozen lasagne, and drops them in the cart. Mingyu picks up one of the boxes and glares at it.

"This isn't meat, it got a ‘suitable for vegetarians’ label on it. You fool. This is QUORN!"

Everyone throws Jun a look of horrified betrayal.
"Jun put Quorn in the cart.” Mingyu points accusingly. “He put fake meat in the cart, he's trying to kill us all."

"I didn't know it was Quorn," Jun says testily. He picks the boxes up by the corners and takes them back where he found them, like he's touching something radioactive.

"Where are the eggs? Next aisle?" Jihoon asks, adding fruit loops to the cart.

"I already put eggs in," Mingyu says helpfully. "I did it when I got cheese."

"What, where?" Seungcheol peers in but he can't see any.

"Somewhere in there," Mingyu says with a frown.

"At the bottom?" Seungcheol asks carefully. "Underneath the meat and the potatoes and the six bottles of cola?" Seungcheol adds just to be sure.

Mingyu nods, expression pinched.

Seungcheol leans in and fishes around until he can find the box. He pulls it out - and ok, yes, now he has a slimy hand. The box dribbles pathetically, a mixture of snot-clear and canary yellow.

"You moron." He snaps.

"I thought it would be fine," Mingyu says helplessly.

"Just go and get another one."

Mingyu takes the box, makes a noise when the broken egg pools in his hand. "Umm, what should I do with -"

"Just hide it at the back," Seungcheol says, and absolutely doesn't clean off his hand on Mingyu's shirt when he pats him on the shoulder.

Further on down the aisle, Seungcheol gets distracted by frozen chickens and he allows Soonyoung to commandeer the cart.

Only for five minutes however, because in that time Soonyoung manages to: crush Jihoon into the cookie shelf, accidentally run into Jun twice—(Seungcheol doubts the second time was accidental)—run over an elderly lady's foot and knock over a display of cans.

"I think one of the wheels is broken," Soonyoung protests, when Seungcheol steals it back in the interests of public safety.

"What's in the next aisle?" Jihoon asks, adding a jar of peanut butter and jelly to the cart.

Jun's nearly there, he flicks his head round to see. "Toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner—toiletries I guess."

"We need more toothpaste," Jihoon says, from where he's now frowning at a jar of peanut butter like its doing something he doesn’t like.

Monosodium glutamating, probably.

Seungcheol wheels the cart to the next aisle andchunks a tube of teeth whitening toothpaste in. On second inspection—they do a brand specifically for vampires, so he adds that in too.
“Do we need anything else?”

"I need condoms," Jun says, adding three boxes to the cart.

"Condoms are not an essential item." Seungcheol says tightly, and tosses them back on the shelf.

Jun makes a pained face, “But what about Vampire Chlamydia?”

Seungcheol makes a pained face too. “There’s no such thing! And you’re a vampire, you can’t catch diseases.”

“But I can spread them around!” Jun’s voice is a whisper, faintly accusatory, “I knew a guy, who knew a guy, who knew a guy, who knew—"

“Stop humping everything that moves and you’ll be fine!” Seungcheol snaps, then realises there’s a family standing a short distance away from them, judging looks on their faces. The fun never stops.

"I want condoms too," Soonyoung says fiercely, as if the thought of people having sex without him is unbearable.

"If he's getting some then so am I," Chan mutters.

"I don't need condoms," Mingyu offers, in a rejected sort of way.

"No one is getting condoms!" Seungcheol snarls.

Which in no way makes everyone within a twenty foot radius turn and look at them.

"Seungcheol, pick your battles" Jihoon says and pats Seungcheol on the shoulder. “Think about it—if they’re busy elsewhere—they won’t be bothering you.”

Seungcheol mulls that over for a minute, and then tosses a box of condoms into the cart.

"You can all share." He says, pointing at the others.

That gets him horrified looks from at least three faces.

"Oh my God, I didn't mean it like that, you huge freaks."

Seungcheol has had about enough of this shit. He abandons the cart and the pack and storms off into the next aisle for a breather.

Which he immediately regrets, because the next aisle is full of cat food, dog food, leads, collars and squeaky toys in a variety of cheerful, rubbery colours. There’s a squeaky white bone, and a yellow quacky duck and a squashed, mutated pig creature in the most hideous shade of bright pink that Seungcheol has ever seen.

Seungcheol knows he really shouldn’t be in here—this can’t be good for his self-esteem. But he finds himself staring at the toys gloomily, occasionally squeezing one of them and giggling to himself. It’s dumb, it’s infantile, but each high-pitched squeaking feels like a tiny victory.

That is probably sad, but he figures as long as he doesn't say it out loud, he is okay.

“What are you doing?” Comes a voice from over Seungcheol’s shoulder.

He jerks his head around and finds Jihoon watching him, arms crossed over his chest.
“Uh—nothing.” Seungcheol says, hiding the squeaky toy behind his back quickly as he spins to face Jihoon. The squeaky toy won’t be silenced—and emits a traitorous squeak.

Jihoon glances sideways with a wicked smile and Seungcheol can feel himself blushing to the roots of his hair.

"Are you playing with the squeaky toys Cheollie?" says Jihoon, drawing the sentence out. His eyebrows are creeping up his hairline.

"No.” Seungcheol says stubbornly. He knew he should have left this aisle the moment he had walked in.

Jihoon just stares at him, caught between a laugh and something meaner. He reaches out and squeezes the squeaky duck hanging on the display hook, and it gives a high pitched quacky squeal of noise. Which is ridiculous and hilarious and so awesome and Seungcheol wants one.

This apparently comes through loud and clear in his expression, because Jihoon smiles indulgently, his eyes crinkling at the corners as he squashes the toy again and makes it squeak.

Seungcheol grins and then pouts at him. “Stop.”

"We can get you one." Jihoon says, with a wide-eyed sidelong glance. "If you want.”

Seungcheol glares at him. “Don’t be ridiculous Jihoon. Despite what you think—I’m not some kind of giant dog. I’m a Lycan; a noble, lethal, predatory species.”

Jihoon raises a placating hand. “Okay, okay. I’m sorry.”

“Good. You should be.” Seungcheol says, jerking his chin up and trying to look noble in the pet aisle with a squeaky toy held behind his back.

“Maybe I should get one for the puppies at work.” Jihoon says, scrunching his mouth thoughtfully as he peruses his options. “Their toys are really chewed up and the petsmart ones are so damn expensive.”

Seungcheol stuffs the toy he had hidden behind his back, back on the shelf and makes an effort not to sound flippant. “Okay, fine. Let’s hurry it up though—I want to get out of here.”

Jihoon taps a finger against his chin, "Hmm—but which one. What do you think, squeaky duck or squeaky bone?" He asks, and reaches up to grabs two off the shelf. He squeaks them both as if he's seriously contemplating their abilities to entice someone into playing with them.

The corner of Seungcheol's mouth flickers. “The bone.”

“Are you sure?” Jihoon says, eyebrow raised as he squeezes the duck toy in his other hand.

“Yes, definitely. No. Yes. No—the duck! Wait—yes. The bone! Wait—I can’t decide. Please don’t make me choose—this is too much!” Seungcheol blurs out, eyes darting between each toy in panic.

“Shhh—hey, it’s okay.” Jihoon consoles, stroking Seungcheol’s arm. “We can get both.”

“Yes!” Seungcheol jumps. “Lets get both!”

Jihoon’s mouth quirks up.
“Do you want to hold them till we get home?” He offers, holding both toys out. “Just so they don’t get lost amongst the other items in the cart.” He adds quickly when Seungcheol shoots him an affronted pout.

“Okay. Just to keep them safe.” Seungcheol says taking one in each hand, knowing he sounds begrudging and triumphant at the same time.

They walk together to the top of the aisle, until Jihoon stops at a bay housing a variety of pet collars.

“Oh look, they do collars too. Maybe we should get you one.” He snickers.

“I already have one at home somewhere.” Seungcheol says absently, staring happily down at the two squeaky toys in his hands. He realizes what he’s said a second slow on the uptake, and when he looks up he finds Jihoon staring at him with a slack jawed expression.

“I was just kidding. But….You—have a collar? Why?”

Seungcheol can give any number of answers to that. It was part of a Halloween costume, belonged to a late pet, that Cosplay thing Jihoon is so fond of. What comes out, however, is something much closer to the truth. “It’s a suppression collar—to keep me in check when I go into rut.”

Jihoon tilts his head and contemplates that for a moment. “Suppression? Rut?” he repeats slowly.

Seungcheol shrugs. He’s gripped by the urge to shuffle his feet. He suppresses the urge. “It’s uh—this thing that happens to Lycan’s twice a year.” At Jihoon’s raised eyebrow, he elaborates. “I kind of wolf out and try and hump everything.”

Jihoon’s eyes widen with understanding and a spark of something that might be interest or possibly that’s only Seungcheol’s wishful thinking. “Sounds like fun.”

“It’s not.” Seungcheol scoffs, blushing. “It’s embarrassing. I totally lose control, and nobody likes an out of control Lycan humping their leg and whining and licking them all over.”

Jihoon gives him a slow once over that says he wouldn’t mind. He curls his fingers around Seungcheol’s wrist, bites his lower lip and whispers, “Maybe you can show me sometime?”

His face is a little pink, and Seungcheol gapes, fascinated.

It does suddenly occur to Seungcheol that it’s the one line they haven’t crossed yet, and there have been many strange, awkward lines that they’ve stumbled, tripped or walked blindly over in their friendship.

He's still getting used to sharing his space, to sharing his space with someone that he doesn't have to carefully keep at arm’s length. With someone he can say exactly what he's thinking to and not earn himself some sort of horrified expression that would have him back-pedalling and desperately trying to steer the conversation somewhere safe.

Seungcheol likes the fact that he can say what he's thinking, it's one of the parts that's comforting about this fairly new arrangement.

He just never really expected for Jihoon to be so okay with the Lycan side of him. Or even to be mildly turned on by it.
“Really? Cause….I’m due soon…”

“Jihoon?” A voice calls out from further down the aisle, interrupting him mid sentence.

Jihoon turns to face the stranger walking towards them, a dark-haired, freckled youth, who looks to be about Jihoon’s same age. Jihoon must recognise them, because he’s smiling and embracing them in the next second. “Hey Sho.”

“Hi, I didn’t know you shopped here? Are you buying squeaky toys for the pets at work? You’re so sweet—” Sho trails off as they glance over Jihoon’s shoulder and catch sight of Seungcheol.

Seungcheol watches as the loose, easy smile on Sho’s mouth fades and their eyes widen.

“Oh, s-shit!” Sho stammers out, backing up. Seungcheol sees them exchange a quick, shocked glance with Jihoon, and swears he sees fear there. “Jihoon—r-run!”

“No—no. It’s okay.” Jihoon says hurriedly, grabbing at Sho’s hand. “It’s okay. Relax. This is Seungcheol—he’s my boyfriend.”

“Boyfriend?” Sho says with something between horror and amusement.

“Yeah, we live together. I was telling you about him—remember?” Jihoon says, moving to stand next to Seungcheol to emphasize how non-threatening he is. “Seungcheol—this is Sho, we work at petsmart together.”

Sho leans in and whispers to Jihoon, not quietly, "You do know he’s a Lycan—right?"

Jihoon nods. “Yeah, I like Lycans.” He assures, then both vampires stare up at Seungcheol, and, yeah, that still hasn’t stopped being creepy.

“Hi.” Seungcheol says, lifting a hand in what he hopes is a non-threatening gesture.

He hopes he doesn’t look threatening. It probably helps that he’s holding two squeaky toys in his hands.

Sho smiles thinly in Seungcheol's direction, which is a good sign—but they’re also backing away down the aisle, which is less so.

“I—I—I gotta go.” Sho stammers, stepping away cautiously before spinning and fleeing in the opposite direction.

Seungcheol laughs. It’s slightly humourless, but he laughs. “Sorry Jihoon. I can’t say I’m surprised. I hope this doesn’t make things awkward for you at work.”

“Don’t apologise,” Jihoon says, his voice surprisingly tender. “They were the one that was being weird.”

Seungcheol smiles back; if Jihoon’s unbothered by it—so will he.
Chapter Summary

Seungcheol faces an unknown quantity.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Choi Seungcheol hasn’t gone out of his way to socialise with vampires; it’s them who seek him out. It’s important to be clear about these things, he finds.

This doesn't keep an invite from appearing in the mail, on cream-colored stationery, with an old-fashioned wax seal, the handwriting decidedly self-important:

Mr. Choi,

No doubt you know who I am.

At least you do if you're not hopelessly idiotic.

It would seem we have certain interests in common, and therefore I must discuss these interests with you at once.

Come to the address printed at the bottom of this letter tomorrow at sunset.

Bear in mind that I have many more important things to do than wait around for impertinent Werewolves, so don't be late!

Moon

South West Seoul Coven Leader

Seungcheol frowns down at the letter.

When he flips it over, the other side is blank.

"What, no RSVP?" Seungcheol says dryly.

Well, this is a first.

During his lengthy time on earth, this is definitely the first time Seungcheol’s been invited to have a sit-down with a Coven leader. Though he probably shouldn’t be surprised, as he hasn’t exactly made it a secret that 80% of his current social circle is baby vampires.

Someone was bound to notice the strangeness in that.
And someone did: Coven Leader Moon. Whoever the hell that is.

What kind of name is Moon anyway?

Namjoon can’t give him much information about the guy, except that he’s really old and really vampire. Which is absolutely useless information in Seungcheol’s opinion, and he tells Namjoon as much.

Older vampires are an obstacle on their own—but this guy has an entire coven backing him, and that’s an unknown quantity. There can be anything from three—to several hundred members, and Seungcheol really doesn’t want to get on the wrong side of that.

It soon becomes apparent—he doesn’t have a choice.

He sits down at the kitchen table and reads over the letter again, weighing his chances of being invited in for a friendly parley against the chances of being knocked unconscious and sucked dry the minute he steps through the door.

It’s about sixty-forty in favour of an assault on his person, Seungcheol figures, so he’ll make sure to add extra garlic to the food he eats that evening. As pre-emptive strikes go, it’s tragically Classic, but Seungcheol has never been uncomfortable being a cliché.

Seungcheol’s office is tucked away at the back of the store, a small-sized room that he keeps largely empty, just a plain, industrial-style metal desk with hard edges and two chairs, uncompromisingly straight-backed. The walls are painted such a stark white it’s a form of aggression, and corporate insists he leaves them startlingly blank, without even a hint of colour or texture.

Because they’re assholes.

It’s the interior-decorating version of sensory deprivation, but Seungcheol finds it soothing as he wrangles with the stores invoices and sales tax records, the tedious price that comes with being accepted into human society and having a job.

Not for the first time, he longs for the good old days of hunting and pillaging.

“I’m clocking out Boss.” Mingyu says, his bulky form filling the doorway, “Need me for anything else?”

“Yes, I do actually. But it’s not related to work.” Seungcheol says, not looking up from his purchase orders.

Mingyu steps further inside and closes the door, turning around with an eyebrow raised in anticipation. “Oh? Is it—Pack related?”

Seungcheol glances up quickly from the form he's filling out in triplicate to find Mingyu watching him with the insistent, half-crazed look he gets whenever ‘Pack Business’ is the topic of conversation.

Seungcheol thinks Mingyu needs new hobbies.

“Kind of. I need you to come over to mine later, watch over the others while I go out.”

"The local Coven leader wants to meet with me," Seungcheol tells him, cutting to the chase. "Sent me a formal invitation and everything. I don’t like the others being alone if anything happens to me. They’re like sitting baby vampire ducks." He explains—then promptly frowns at his own explanation.

He really needs to stop comparing things to other things. It never ends well.

“An invitation?” Mingyu raises an eyebrow. "That’s unusual."

“I know.” Seungcheol continues his work, conscious of the restless eyes that are following his movements, "Usually their traps are more elaborate than that. I wonder what they’re up to."

"Who says it’s a trap though? Maybe he’s just looking to chat, maybe it’s a dinner invite." Mingyu says cheerfully.

Seungcheol makes a face. "Unlikely. Vampires that old only have a liquid diet. If it is a dinner invite—I’m probably dinner."

"Maybe—he just wants you?" Mingyu deadpans.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

Mingyu closes his eyes and mutters something under his breath that sounds suspiciously like ‘Got to be blind not to have noticed’.

"You gotta admit Cheol, Vampires do seem to have a thing for you.” Mingyu offers with a shrug. “You attract quite a few without trying and most of them want to ride your dick.”

Seungcheol scoffs, waves the suggestion off. “That’s a massive exaggeration. I only know four vampires personally.”

“Yeah, and half of them want you. Sexually.” Mingyu waggles his eyebrows, not paying the least bit of attention to the hard stare Seungcheol throws at him.

“Okay. One of them is Jihoon, and he doesn’t count because he’s my boyfriend, and the other is picnic short of a picnic.” Seungcheol clarifies, pointing a finger at his own head and twirling it. And honestly, that’s the politest way he could have described Soonyoung.

Mingyu snickers. “Hey, Jun’s not that bad.”

“Jun?” Seungcheol echoes in confusion. “Who said anything about Jun? I was talking about Soonyoung.”

“Soonyoung has the hots for you? Huh.” Mingyu looks skyward, scratching his chin thoughtfully. “He hasn’t mentioned anything.”

“Whaddya mean he hasn’t said anything!” Seungcheol growls, throwing his hands up in the air. “He constantly says thing. Inappropriate things. Just the other day he—.”

Seungcheol pauses as a thought occurs to him. He has to rewind through the conversation and play it back in his head before he can ask, “Wait….why did you think it was Jun?”

Mingyu goes bright red in the face and takes a sudden interest in his shoes. “Oh—uhm—it’s not my place to say. Best if you forget I told you that. Jun’s still kind of shy about it.”
Well—that’s great.

*Just great.*

If Soonyoung wasn’t enough to handle, now Seungcheol has to worry about Jun sneaking glances at him while he’s in the shower too.

“So, what are you going to do?” Mingyu asks quietly, once Seungcheol has stopped glaring a hole into the ceiling. “You gonna go see what the guy wants?”

Seungcheol sets his jaw. “Probably. The invitation didn’t sound optional.”

“What does Jihoon think about it?” Mingyu asks.

“I still haven’t told him yet.”

Stress looks good on Jihoon. It sharpens the youthfulness of his face.

It also makes him stubborn and a right pain in the ass, which Seungcheol doesn’t need right now; he’s an expert at self-doubt and guilt trips already.

“I’ll go with you.” Jihoon says, face lined with genuine worry.

“Absolutely not.” Seungcheol shakes his head emphatically. “You’re staying here—you’re all staying here. With Mingyu watching over you.”

The rest of the pack nods, but Jihoon frowns, hard enough that it veers perilously close to a pout. It vanishes a moment later, to be replaced by something more considering, something braver. “I don’t need a babysitter. I can protect myself.”

“Jihoon—there isn’t a single moment in our history that backs you up on that point. Remember what happened when I let you go out into the big bad world all alone? *Hmm?* You came back one night with a copy of *twilight*. I refuse to let that happen again. And also—you got shot. I refuse to let that happen again either.”

Jihoon’s tone goes down to moody at that. “You can’t go alone. What if it’s a trap?”

Seungcheol puts his hands on Jihoon's shoulders and squeezes. “All the more reason why I *have* to go alone.”

Jihoon lifts his chin, sets his jaw, “Seungcheol—”

Seungcheol holds up a hand before his baby vampire can get insistent. “We’re not discussing it Jihoonie.” He interrupts quickly.

For a moment, Jihoon looks hurt, but it passes so quickly Seungcheol thinks he must have been mistaken.

“I can handle myself. But if you’re there—I’ll be distracted. If anything goes wrong I won’t be able to focus, worrying that you’re in danger.”

“If you’re so sure it’s going to be dangerous, don’t go at all.” Jihoon huffs, determined and impatient, the way he so often is.
Seungcheol squeezes his shoulders again before letting go. “I have to.”

“Why?” Jihoon asks plaintively, and it is clear he doesn't understand any of this. The danger this invitation poses.

This is still new to Jihoon after all, and though he’s a vampire—he’s also just a boy who wants his life simple and happy.

“Because if I ignore this—they might see it as a slight. They might show up here instead, and they already have my address. These older vampires hold grudges. They’re dangerous. They haven’t gotten to the top of the undead food chain for nothing.” Seungcheol is matter-of-fact in his assessment.

Jihoon says nothing, but the line of his shoulders and the set of his jaw are more than articulate enough.

“Let us come with you Cheol. We can gang up on them—whoop their asses.” Soonyoung blusters, like a child in grownup's clothes.

“Yeah!” Chan adds.

“We’ll burn down their coven!” Jun pipes in shaking his fist. “Down to the ground!”

“Oh, God.” Seungcheol mutters, although he's oddly touched they'd do something highly illegal for him. “I appreciate it, truly, but—no. None of you have any combat experience. You could get killed—again. I would never forgive myself for that.”

“Because you love us?” Soonyoung asks, staring up at him beseechingly.

Seungcheol snorts. “No. Because I’ve gotten used to your sorry, little faces. And Jihoon is sort of attached to you—I wouldn’t want him being upset about your untimely deaths.”

The pack shares a look amongst themselves. “He loves us.” They say in tandem.

Clearly the message isn’t getting through.

“No—” Seungcheol begins.

“Group hug!” Chan yells.

“No!”

A Lycan and a coven of vampires walk into a bar…

Seungcheol isn’t sure how the joke goes but he’s fairly certain it ends with the Lycan getting eaten.

And yet, somehow, here he is, trekking across town to meet with the local Coven.

The closer he gets, the stronger the scent of vampires becomes.

Really old Vampires.

Older than him.
Honestly, he doesn’t care much for the scent—never has. Not even in a predatory way. It makes his nose wrinkle and his throat itch and his stomach gurgle unpleasantly.

You’d think he’d be used to it by now, especially considering how he had to extricate himself from a literal doggy pile of vampires earlier. But his babies smell different, better. They smell of sunshine and chocolate and the orange juice they steal out of his fridge and then replace with an empty carton.

When Seungcheol arrives, he stares up at the frankly, fucking massive door from the driveway; it is imposing and intimidating and Seungcheol considers fleeing back the way he came, running all the way back to his territory and calling the whole thing off. Sending Vampire Moon a nice letter: Thanks, but no thanks.

He’s held his ground against powerful vampires before, sure, but that was one on one.

Now he’s facing several, and in vampire territory no less.

The odds are not in his favour.

At the house, he rings at the door and pulls the invitation out of his pocket while he waits for it to be answered.

The door swings open, and Seungcheol tenses when he comes face to face with a familiar person.

“Sho, isn’t it? Jihoon’s friend—from petsmart.” Seungcheol says, staring at the short vampire in the doorway.

Now the vague wording of the invitation is starting to make sense.

Sho doesn’t nod, but they smile a little, tiny and controlled, “Yes, that’s right. Welcome.”

Seungcheol barely holds back a sigh. “I guess you’re the reason why I got this invitation in the first place, huh?”

“Uhm—yeah.” Sho shuffles from foot to foot, looking nervous and apologetic. “Sorry, but I had to inform Moon about my concerns.”

“Concerns about what?” Seungcheol asks, forcing a smile on his face. He’s not gritting his teeth, no matter how he wants to.

Sho lowers their voice to barely a whisper. “I—can’t talk about it. It’s not my place to say really. Please, just follow me.”

Seungcheol’s shown into an elaborately decorated receiving room, with a vaulted ceiling and gilt-edged trim, but without a single piece of furniture. This coven leader ‘Moon’ clearly prefers to keep his supplicants standing while they wait. The jackass.

Sho leaves him there—telling him he’ll be ‘seen to’ shortly, before sliding out a side door.

Seungcheol doesn’t see them leave, because he’s distracted by how eerily pristine the place is.

It’s cleaner than any legitimate hospital he has been to.
There's the inevitable smell of death and decay around the edges, certainly. But someone has clearly spent a great deal of money giving this place a look of not just respectability, but affluence.

Or maybe it’s just an illusion.

Seungcheol resists the urge to go around poking at no doubt priceless artefacts. Fidgeting won't do anything to quiet the anxious feeling in his chest or speed this moment along.

But time ticks by, and the overpowering sense of wrongness builds.

Seungcheol kind of regrets wearing his good shirt—in case he has to rip it off to shift or wrecks it all to hell with vampire blood and guts.

What’s he doing wearing his good shirt to meet strange vampires anyway?

Fuck. Are his priorities skewed or what?

He should have worn an apron. Would that have given off the wrong idea?

Or maybe he should have just come naked—with an apple stuffed in his mouth, lying on a silver platter decorated with parsley?

No. That would have definitely given off the wrong idea.

See—this is the kind of tangential overthinking his brain does when he’s left alone for too long.

WHERE THE FUCK IS EVERYONE?

Another Vampire saunters in at long last, sweeping into the room with the kind of determined nonchalance that sets every instinct Seungcheol has on edge.

Though the Vampire doesn’t introduce himself immediately, Seungcheol is pretty sure it’s the Coven leader, Moon.

Older vampires have a certain flamboyance about them. They tend to favour long hair and billowing sleeves and occasionally even a cape, as cheesy a cliché as that is.

This one, though, is attempting a more modern sort of flamboyance, and has chosen to dress like a Hollywood version of a French aristocrat.

Moon’s a handsome man, with the tall, slim build you’d expect of a vampire. His shirt has the billowing sleeves of old, with silver thread decorating the intricately tied collar. But unlike traditional vampires, his hair is neatly cropped and he’s donning black leather pants tight as skin, the fly laced like a corset.

What stands out most about him are his eyes, bright green, sharp with a reptilian sort of calculation that lingers even as he shakes Seungcheol’s hand.

“Mr Choi,” Vampire Moon begins, with a sweetness to his tone that Seungcheol's learned the hard way to be wary of.

“Seungcheol’s fine.” Seungcheol offers curtly.

Moon tips his head humbly, or at least with his best impersonation of it. “Thank you for coming.”

“The invitation didn’t sound optional.”
“Ah—well.” Moon smiles at him crookedly. “That was my secretary, Satu. She’s a little abrupt with her words. But I assure you—I have no intention of making your visit unpleasant.”

“Awesome, cause I really like this shirt.” Seungcheol says, with all the stern, careless confidence he can muster.

Vampire Moon seems amused by him. Hopefully amused enough not to eat.

Moon rocks back on the heels of his feet, his mouth thinning. “I gather this is your first time at a coven? At least, your first time under amiable circumstances. Would you like a tour?”

Seungcheol sighs inwardly. "Not particularly. I’d rather just get this over with."

“I understand. But my office is at the other side of the house—so we can fit in a tour as we walk.” Vampire Moon retorts genially, unbothered by Seungcheol’s lack of enthusiasm. “Besides, it’s not every day a Lycan gets a personal tour of our glorious coven. Follow me.”

Vampire Moon proceeds to give him a tour of the mansion; the library, the swimming pool, the gym, the private cinema, the dining hall—chattering mindlessly as they stroll.

Seungcheol is only half-listening, nodding his head every now and again to make it seem like he is paying attention.

The truth of the matter is, Seungcheol’s too busy.

He’s not busy planning an escape route, or busy fearing for his safety or anything.

He’s busy feeling poor.

He feels like a pauper—even in his good shirt. He feels like his home in woefully inadequate compared to the coven, and he should redecorate immediately.

The place is deceivingly smaller from the outside, possibly to discourage thieves, but inside is another story entirely. Each room they enter is larger than the last, with high ceilings and towering displays of ornamental plants tastefully arrayed around velvet couches that clearly nobody has ever dropped pizza on.

Seungcheol’s jaw almost drops on the floor when they walk in to a room that's primarily black and gold, the gold leaf wallpaper reflecting the light of what feels like a thousand bulbs from the golden chandelier above.

Seungcheol’s seen cathedrals that weren't this ornate.

Did they have the Vatican advise on decor?

Was there a sale on gold plate?

Jesus.

Even the bathroom looks like there should be a guy in it named Jeeves waiting to draw your bath.

It’s a bit much—Seungcheol thinks, as Vampire Moon leads him through the portrait gallery.

There are portraits—portraits (what is this place)—lining the walls of a long corridor.

Seungcheol makes a show of admiring the Rococo-like frescoes starring Vampire Moon in wide-
brimmed hats and shirts with voluminous sleeves, cavorting with well-dressed aristocrats in scenes of bucolic bliss, glistening and sugary, as if they've been painted with icing.

"It’s—erm—pretty swish." Seungcheol tells Vampire Moon as he strolls further down the corridor.
"I wasn’t expecting it to be this—extravagant. I thought covens were just houses filled with soil and a few coffins. Maybe a chaise lounge or two.” He chuckles, then wonders briefly if that’s one of those old stereotypes it's impolite to bring up.

Vampire Moon’s green eyes fasten on him intently. “Oh no, no. I may be an old vampire Seungcheol, but I appreciate modern luxury. As do my members. Speaking of which—why don’t I introduce you to them.” He adds, pushing open a set of double doors.

Seungcheol holds his breath as he’s lead into another room reeking of vampire, decorated pink and white like a frosted cake.

He’s not entirely sure what to expect—but he's caught off guard by the six vampires waiting inside. They're not waiting to attack, nails sharp and fangs bared, they're just simply lounging about.

Except for the blank expressions and pacifying postures, they seem unphased by the presence of a Lycan in their coven.

Seungcheol doesn’t know whether to be worried or assured by that.

“This is Abi, my first born.” Coven Leader Moon says, gesturing to a blonde haired, female vampire wearing a pink confection of a dress that rather alarmingly matches the interior décor.

She smiles carnivorously at Seungcheol, all glinting eyes, wine lips and bared teeth from where she is draped on a chaise lounge like a very dangerous painting.

Abi stands from her seat swiftly, the hem of her dress making a sibilant snake hiss as it topples on the marble. Closing in on Seungcheol, she circles around him, lifting a lock of his hair curiously and letting it fall, taking an extravagant sniff.

Her expression doesn't change, Seungcheol strives to make his the same.

“Is he staying for dinner?” Abi asks in a dreamy voice.

The question sounds casual, but Seungcheol senses it's not.

"Dinner?” Seungcheol echoes. His spine tightens, ready for a fight.

“Abi—behave.” Vampire Moon cautions her lightly. “He’s our guest.”

Abi pushes her mouth into a pout, like a spoiled child. “Oh, fine. You’re no fun.”

Moon smiles indulgently, before swiftly moving on to introduce Seungcheol to the rest of his followers.

“This is Raez and Chaez.” Moon says, motioning at the two vampires seated in front of the fireplace, shoulders squared imperiously. “They’re my lawyers.”

Seungcheol quirks a brow. They really don't look like lawyers. They look like maybe they could have eaten a couple of lawyers at some point.

Seungcheol offers a closed lip smile in greeting. He doesn’t know why he bothered, given that neither of them have done nothing but look blank and unmoved since he walked in.
“And this is Sha, she works in real estate. And you’ve already met our youngest, Sho.” Moon continues, waving at Sho and the other Vampire seated by the window.

This vampire give him a sideways glance that might be considered friendly—or at least non-threatening, if Seungcheol squints and gives her the benefit of the doubt.

*Raez* and *Chaez*?

*Sho* and *Sha*?

Sometimes Seungcheol wonders if all the vampire progenitors got together at some super-secret meeting and made a pact: Let’s give our vampire followers matching names. And then shook hands and went their separate ways.

It would make about as much sense as anything else.

“And this is Julio.” Coven leader Moon finishes, waving at a vampire rifling through books on a shelf and making notes. “Julio is our archivist.”

Seungcheol raises a questioning eyebrow. “Why does your name not match with anyone else’s?”

Julio makes a disgruntled face that suggests they’ve thought much the same, but have been promptly dismissed because nothing rhymes with Julio. Nothing that doesn’t sound *ridiculous*.

Once the introductions have ended, Moon leads the way into another room—a private sanctum of sorts, that looks less like and office and more like something out of a museum.

Bookshelves, and antiques and paintings line the walls.

Seungcheol is no art historian, but they appear to be old, expensive and quite possibly by Leonard fucking da Vinci.

“I’m sure you’re curious as to why I have invited you here today.” Moon says, gesturing with a wide hand for Seungcheol to take a seat, before he lights a cigarette and leans back into the elegant Louis XVI-style sofa.

“So, it wasn’t to show off your palatial mansion and make me feel poor?”

Moon smiles. He has an odd smile, it's genuine but also stiff, Seungcheol doesn't think he's had much practice.

“Not at all. But I’m glad you approve of our home.” He says, puffing on his cigarette. “I’m sure the vampires you have under your charge will also approve of what we can offer—once you hand them over to my care of course.”

It’s impossible for Seungcheol to keep the shock off his face. “Excuse me—what?”

Moon looks at him shrewdly. “You have four vampires in your care—do you not?”

“Uh, yeah.” Seungcheol admits, although Moon certainly doesn’t need confirmation. It’s why Seungcheol is here, after all.

Moon leans forward, taps the ash of his cigarette into a tray. “And you’re a Lycan.”
“Yeah.”

“So,” Moon pauses to take another drag of his cigarette, “I insist that you hand them over. I’ll make sure they have a rich, full life right here with their own kind.”

A short, surprised laugh bursts out of Seungcheol.

He composes and dismisses several dozen replies before settling on an incredulous: “Fuck off. You’re not getting my puppies.”

Oh wait, no. What the hell did he just say?

That wasn’t what he was planning to say at all.

Did he just call Jihoon, Soonyoung, Jun and Chan his puppies?

Moon’s green eyes narrow sharply in either confusion or disapproval—Seungcheol honestly can’t tell which. He grinds the stub of his cigarette into the ashtray on the coffee table, and Seungcheol watches the flickers of hot ash flare and go out.

“So, it’s true then. You’re attempting to overthrow my rule. You’re recruiting young vampires and building a coven of your own to wage a war against me and my coven!”

Seungcheol is certain he must be gaping stupidly. He can’t seem to make himself stop. “What? I’m—I’m not doing any of those things. I’m not recruiting anybody, I’m not building a coven. I can’t build a coven. I’m a Lycan.”

Moon’s incredulity slides into scepticism.

“Oh?” He questions. He moves over to the large mahogany desk dwarfing the corner of the room and produces a white envelope that he tosses down on the coffee table. “Then how do you explain this?”

Seungcheol blinks and sits up straighter to reach for the envelope. Thumbing it open he tips out the contents on the table.

There’s an array of grainy photographs inside.

A few of Seungcheol shopping in the grocery store—surrounded by baby vampires; Seungcheol at the bowling alley, teaching Chan how to get a full strike and high—fiving Mingyu; Seungcheol in the park chasing a frisbee (Oh, that’s humiliating); Seungcheol walking home from the cinema giving Soonyoung a non-consensual piggy back; Seungcheol leaving the dentist’s with a glum looking Jun in tow, holding a lollipop; Seungcheol opening his front door in one shot, only to be doggy-piled by four baby vampires and a baby Lycan in the next.

And if that wasn’t bad enough, there’s a positively incriminating shot of Seungcheol standing in the crowded subway, locked in a less-than-fraternal embrace with Jihoon whose face is hidden against Seungcheol’s shoulder. Seungcheol’s hands are clearly visible against the ass of Jihoon’s black jeans. While the smile on Jihoon’s face looks shy, the smile on Seungcheol’s could only be classified as predatory.

“Okay—I can see how these may have mislead you.” Seungcheol says, pointing at the pictures. He’s surprised how rough the words sound now that they’ve actually clawed their way to the surface. “I appreciate that out of context, these pictures would look amazingly bad. But I assure you I am not building a coven. We’re all just friends, believe it or not.”
“Not!” Moon says, eyes flashing darkly over the scattering of pictures on the table.

He picks up a photograph and holds it up until it’s eye level.

It’s a shot of Seungcheol and Jihoon on their recent night out at a carnival. In it Jihoon is literally spoon-feeding Seungcheol soft-serve ice cream, while Seungcheol is beaming at him, as though Jihoon has just provided the answer to all of life’s questions.

It’s so fucking domestic. It’s couple goals. It’s cheesy as hell.

“Can I get a copy of that?” Seungcheol asks, trying to reach for the photograph. He looks half decent in it actually.

Moon swipes it out of reach, leaning back in his seat with an exasperated huff.

“In my lengthy time on this planet—I have never, ever seen a Lycan willing to discard custom and tradition to socialise with our kind like this. Not without sinister intent, anyway.” Moon snarls.

There’s an edge to his voice. A warning.

Seungcheol doesn’t like to be threatened any more than the next guy, but he doesn't know how to show Moon that’s not what’s going on here.

“I don’t know how to prove to you that I don’t have ulterior motives, and frankly—I don’t give a shit if you believe me or not. I’m not going to stop hanging out with them just because you think it’s weird. I’m not going to hand them over either—because unlike what you have with your coven—I don’t own them. They came to me willingly.” Seungcheol leans forward in his seat, radiating anger as he points a finger at Moon.

“I came here to avoid creating a problem—but if you want a problem on your doorstep, you’re asking for it.”

Moon’s eyes grow wide for a moment.

Seungcheol can tell he is trying to decide if he's just been handed information or threatened.

To be honest, Seungcheol isn't entirely sure of his own intention, but the statement is out there now, and there is nothing he can do about it.

It’s only then Seungcheol notices that his claws have extended, that his outstretched hand has partially shifted with a dusting of fur over his knuckles.

Seungcheol retracts his hand and shakes it out, deciding to take control of the conversation before things get even more out of hand.

“Look—” He begins, sitting back in his seat and resting his hands on his knees. “They’re baby vampires. Nobody wants them, or cares for them and they just come over to mine to chill. We hang out and bond and shit, like a pack. But instead of hunting together—we order pizza and watch movies. And instead of ordering them to pillage, I tell them to go to work and stop stealing my food. I’m not trying to turn them into anything. I didn’t wake up one morning and decide I wanted another pack. I’m just the guy who holds their hands while they take their first vampire baby steps cause nobody else wanted to.”

The weight of that settles between them, and Moon seems consoled in some way.
A weighty silence passes, in which Moon studies him carefully.

“So—you’re not attempting to build your own coven and overthrow me?” He summarises.

“No. Up until I got your invite I didn’t know you existed. I don’t have a plan to do anything.”

Moon seems to weigh that answer for a moment, a hand ruffling his short hair as he considers.

“And your relationship with—the small one.” It doesn’t take a genius to know who Moon’s talking about. “It is of a sexual nature?”

Seungcheol’s first instinct is to lie.

He’s a private person and it’s never been anyone’s business what he has with Jihoon. But Moon seems to want assurance here, not deceit. And there’s half a dozen pictures on the coffee table that indicate Jihoon gets more ‘personal’ treatment than the other Vampires in Seungcheol’s care.

“We’re in a relationship, yes. Sex is involved, sure. But what we have is more than that—more than just sex.” Seungcheol says pointedly.

It’s the easiest thing to convince Moon of because it’s true.

Moon’s face softens slightly. “And how did you meet exactly?”

Seungcheol isn’t sure why he suddenly feels like a contestant on The Dating Game, or why his love life is so important to Vampire Coven Leaders, but he takes a deep breath to answer nonetheless.

“In a dark alley at night.” Seungcheol says, making sure his face gives nothing away. He has to be careful. Not give too much away, not appear to be holding back either. “You know, that classic vampire romantic cliché.”

Moon makes a face that suggests he can’t in any way be considered a romantic.

“And you just—decided to pursue a relationship? Despite your differences.” Moon asks, still looking somewhere between determined and curious.

“Not right away.” Seungcheol snaps, irritation spiking through him. He licks his lips, considering how best to phrase his answer. “We got to know each other first, made heart eyes at each other over BLT sandwiches and hot chocolate. We have a lot in common when you look past the obvious differences.”

Moon seems to consider that point and files it away for future reference.

Seungcheol hopes it won’t come back to haunt them. That there won’t be some BLT/Hot chocolate related trap looming somewhere in his future.

Moon is silent again for a spell—and just as Seungcheol expects more intrusive questions about his love life or perhaps what position he favours in bed, the vampire switches the conversation.

“Are you aware there has been a massive influx of baby vampire’s in the city in the last year?” Moon says.

His tone is testing, as though he expects a certain answer.

“That explains the massive influx of baby vampires in my life.” Seungcheol says dryly.

“I’m talking about non-consensual conversions. It’s rampant at the moment, and the government is
doing nothing about it. In fact, the mayor seems to be *profiting* from the whole thing.” Moon says, a note of contempt in his voice. “The Man’s even struck up a deal with a group of hunters to eradicate them.”

“And?” Seungcheol intones.

He doesn’t give a fuck who’s in the government—it’s not like the law applies much to him in any case. And he’s always hated the intricate interplay of politics, the chain of favours going around.

Moon seems unsatisfied with his response, and he meets Seungcheol’s eyes, gaze intent.

“Don’t you think it’s strange? *Concerning* even. Someone is converting vampires in mass, and the official stance is to kill them instead of striking pre-emptively at the source?”

Seungcheol considers that for a moment.

There’s nothing new about a little political behind-the-scenes dirty play. But Moon actually sounds worried, and that has Seungcheol's attention.

“Why are you telling me this? What’s that got to do with me?” He asks.

Moon sighs like Seungcheol is the stupidest person on earth. “I just thought you should know, seeing as your boyfriend is a stray.”

Seungcheol’s jaw snaps shut, eyes narrowing dangerously.

How the fuck did Moon find *that* out?

More importantly, what is he planning on doing with that information?

Is he *threatening* him? Is he threatening to report Jihoon?

The thought of another hunter on Jihoon’s tail—just when things are settling down, makes Seungcheol feel vaguely nauseated.

It must show on his face, because Moon sighs and says, “Relax, I wasn’t trying to threaten you. Not all vampires see strays as a blight on the community, you know. That’s just government propaganda to rally the masses. Create something for people to *fear*, instead of focusing on the *real* issues. Our coven doesn’t discriminate. In fact, some of our members were strays once, and we helped them get on their feet and build a life. Just like you have done with—Jihoon. Though I’m still confused as to why you—a Lycan—would go out of your way to help a stray.”

Seungcheol lowers his eyes, lets silence fill in for what will only come out wrong if he tries to explain.

“Though it seems you hardly know that answer to that yourself.” Vampire Moon finishes, a sly smile returning to his face.

He stands up suddenly and leans toward Seungcheol’s chair. He's the same height as Seungcheol and not quite as broad in the shoulders, but he can loom with the best of them.

“I think our business is concluded here. I’m satisfied that you have no sinister plans afoot, though until I can convince the rest of my coven—I will still have my people watching you.”

Seungcheol grits his teeth and stands. “If anything happens to my puppies—"
Moon waves off the insinuation. “I have no interest in harming your pack, or to put my coven in danger. I’m not an idiot. You go about your business, I’ll go about mine. I see no reason why any of this should end in a blood bath.”

There is something viciously sincere in his tone, and Seungcheol is startled to find he believes him. Completely.

“Agreed.” Seungcheol nods. Then he points to the pictures still spread out on the table. “So in the spirit of cooperation, maybe you can destroy those pictures of me playing in the park.”

There’s a hint of a smile at the edge of Moon’s mouth. “Oh, no. I’m afraid I can’t do that.”

Seungcheol lets out an exasperated huff. “Why not?”

“They amuse me.” Moon laughs delightedly. “I’m thinking of having a few framed.”

Seungcheol, miraculously, resists the urge to flip the coffee table and send the photographs flying. Can’t a guy enjoy a game of Frisbee in the park in peace without all this judgement?

He’ll just have to be careful about how much fun he has playing with frisbee’s in the future.

Instead, he smooths an imaginary wrinkle on his shirt and turns towards the door. “I’ll be on my way then. Back to my shack. Thanks for the tour.”

“Before you go.” Moon says, laying a hand on Seungcheol’s shoulder and immediately retracting it when Seungcheol glares at it and makes a face. “I have one more question for you—of a more personal nature.”

“You’re a very intrusive species, huh?” Seungcheol says, stuffing his hands into his pockets. “Alright—shoot.”

A long pause follows.

Seungcheol might be mistaken, but Moon seems to squirm uncomfortably as he gives Seungcheol a long, evaluative look.

“Is it true what they say about,” Moon begins, then drops his voice to a lower register, “Werewolf anatomy?”

“Uh—what?” Seungcheol blinks, confused at the change in subject. “What do they say?”

There is another moment of silence, before Moon clears his throat awkwardly and continues. “Well, I am told Lycans are—well endowed. That they possess special abilities when it comes to intercourse. An enlargement occurs that can be extremely pleasurable to their partner.”

It’s only long practice that allows Seungcheol to keep his expression bland. “I’ve never had any complaints.”

This makes Moon’s expression light up. His eyes lecherously slide down Seungcheol’s body, greedy and carnivorous and more than a little interested in him. And as much as Seungcheol is distressingly used to that by now, it still makes his ears burn

“Perhaps I could judge for myself?” Moon says, practically purring.

Seungcheol frowns, because he cannot bring himself to respond to these baiting flirtations with
anything like warmth.

He finds his goodwill towards Moon, his entire coven and his ridiculous wealth rather in short supply as it is, abruptly gone. “I’m going to go now, and I’m going to pretend we didn’t have this conversation.”

Moon rubs the back of his neck, looking abruptly embarrassed, “Yes, uhm—that would be wise. Forgive my bluntness.” He says tightly.

He shows Seungcheol out, mumbling apologies and looking down at his shoes a lot. It’s all very embarrassing and Seungcheol is very glad to be done with it.

Maybe Mingyu had a point.

What is it with all the Vampires trying to get on his dick all of a sudden?

Seungcheol pushes through the front door of his home quickly, wanting—*needing* to check up on his pack. Needing to make sure they’re okay.

He can hear them arguing over the TV remote even before he reaches the end of the corridor. It’s the sweetest sound Seungcheol has ever heard, and the knot in his stomach uncurls.

He forces himself to stop, take a breath, and compose himself into something casual, less frantic.

“What are we watching?” Seungcheol speaks from the doorway.

The entire pack are across the room and jumping into his arms before Seungcheol can even blink, asking him questions and poking him to check if he’s okay.

Well—not all of them.

Jihoon’s still seated in one corner of the couch, scowling with his arms crossed over his chest. There’s a sullen tilt of his chin when he spots Seungcheol, the spoiled-milk scent of frustration coming off him in waves.

Seungcheol holds his gaze for several seconds before he finds enough of his voice to say, “You okay Jihoonie?”

Jihoon’s expression visibly softens, and he nods.

“I’m fine.” A deliberate, unhappy silence. “Welcome back.”

Seungcheol frowns at the glacial greeting, but he doesn’t have time to question it as the rest of the pack vies for his attention just then.

“What was it like?” Chan asks, poking him in the chest

“What was it like?” Jun practically yells in one ear.

“That shirt looks amazing on you by the way.” Soonyoung whispers in the other.

“Jesus Christ, give him some space.” Mingyu nudges them out of the way to step closer. “So, tell us. What did he want?” He asks.
Seungcheol scratches the back of his head uncomfortably. “He wanted to see my dick.”

“Oh my god.” Mingyu gasps, before muttering under his breath, “I told you so.”

“I know.” Seungcheol laughs, taking a seat in the armchair. In his peripheral vision he sees Jihoon giving him a steely look, and he sores immediately and tries to explain, “I didn’t show him, obviously. He was just curious. He was mostly worried that I was building a coven.”

“Well—are you? Technically.” Jun says, gesturing to himself and the other baby vampires in the room. “Seeing as us vampires outnumber you, shouldn’t it be a coven?”

Seungcheol shakes his head. “No—this is a pack. You can’t have Lycans in a coven, and a coven is built by the lead vampire converting followers. Lycan packs are less strict about who joins, though I doubt there has ever been one with vampire members before.”

So maybe this mixed pack thing—whatever it is—isn’t the smartest thing he’s ever done, but it’s not the stupidest either. That would probably be his old pack, and he’s certainly not looking for a repeat of that level of trauma.

“So, while we’re on the topic of pack dynamics. If we’re all pack, and you’re the Alpha,” Mingyu begins with a squinty expression, “Who’s your second in command?”

“I am.” Jun says so confidently, sounding like he’s already added it to his CV and made business cards.

Seungcheol must resist the urge to walk over and slap him upside the head.


Jihoon, a conflict-avoiding opportunist, escapes to the kitchen.

Jun looks briefly insulted that he has to defend that statement. “Because I’m the second oldest… after Seungcheol. Wisdom trumps anything you’ve got to offer.”

“That’s not how it works!” Mingyu snaps. He’s standing in the middle of the room now, like a seriously pissed-off Doberman Pinscher. “I should be second in command—because I’m the only other Lycan.”

Soonyoung scoffs. “That’s racist.”

“How is that racist!” Mingyu gasps.

Jun hold up a placating hand. “Okay—maybe not racist. But it’s definitely elitist.”

“No, it’s not.” Mingyu waves him off. “Having another Lycan as second in command makes sense. It will help with the verisimilitude of our pack.”

“Verisimilitude?” Jun echoes.

“Yes, verisimilitude. It means—”

“I know what ‘verisimilitude’ means, jackass.” Jun snaps back—face scrunched up in a way that says he’ll be googling that word later. He takes a sharp breath. “Look, no offense, Gyu,” he says, in the tones of one about to give offense, “But weren’t you wearing your jeans the wrong way round earlier, till I pointed it out? I don’t think you’re cut out to lead people if you can’t put your pants on properly.”
Mingyu’s face morphs into a sullen scowl. “I was in a rush to put them on.”

Jun smiles mirthlessly at him. “And what about when you asked me to talk to that vampire in the coffee shop on your behalf the other day? Remember that? You asked me, cause you were too scared to.”

“I wasn’t scared!” Mingyu snaps. His voice veers a pitch closer to hysterical. “I was trying not to scare him! He kept running away every time I—”

Jun is shaking his head before Mingyu manages to finish. “Then why were you shaking so much when he gave you his number?”

“I should be second in command—because I’m the youngest.” Chan pipes in—stupidly.

Mingyu throws his hands up in frustration and collapses on the couch, rubbing his brow. “That makes even less sense.”

“Guys, please.” Soonyoung says, taking centre stage with his arms held out like a human sacrifice. “Let’s not fight. We all know there’s only one person Seungcheol wants to have at his side for an eternity—me.” Soonyoung says, batting his eyelashes.

Seungcheol can’t entirely mask the horror on his face.

“You’re the last person I would consider.” He chokes, then looks at everyone to make sure that everyone in the room understands how much he objects to that idea.

For a second, Soonyoung’s expression turns stormy. Then it shuts down into stiff formality.

“I knew you’d say that.” He says solemnly. “That’s why I prepared this power-point presentation, to highlight my qualities.”

Everyone groans.

“What?” Seungcheol says, stunned. “You’re not serious.”

But, oh no, Soonyoung is deadly serious.

He’s got a cheeky, little smile on his face as he pulls out a laptop and sets it up on the coffee table. The screen lights up with the Microsoft Office logo—and, yep—he’s actually prepared a slideshow.

Worst of all, the entire presentation looks to have been written using ‘Comic Sans’.

Seungcheol has too much respect for his eyeballs to look at it.

“Kill me now.” He sighs.

“Hey!” Chan says suddenly, as if he’s just remembered something vital. “Is that why you borrowed my laptop? You said it was for a life or death situation!”

“Quiet please.” Soonyoung says flatly, dimming the lights.

He clicks on the mouse and smiles broadly when the title slide appears.
He looks proud of his slideshow, and doesn't click to the next slide until he's sure he has everyone's attention.

"I'm very loyal." Soonyoung says, reading out the bare sentence on the first slide.

Mingyu guffaws. “Are you suggesting the rest of us aren’t loyal?”

“No, but—I’m ready to take one for the team.” Soonyoung says in a voice that's filthy with promise.

Seungcheol rolls his eyes. The darkness can't convey the intensity of his eye roll, but Seungcheol figures Soonyoung will get the idea anyway. He’s seen the expression aimed at him often enough.

“Smut?” Jun questions.

“Oh,” Soonyoung squints at the screen. “That’s a typo. It’s supposed to say smart.”

No. Smut says it all, really. It’s a more fitting description of Soonyoung than smart anyway.

“Moving on.” Soonyoung says, flicking to the next slide.
“I’m good with animals.” Soonyoung reads out, nodding at Mingyu and Seungcheol.

Thankfully he’s chosen a picture of Mingyu as demonstration. Possibly because Seungcheol refuses to pose for any photographs alongside him, in case Soonyoung photo-shops them into sexual positions.

“Skills is not spelled with a z.” Chan says, waving a finger at the screen.

Soonyoung stares at him, stone-faced. "Next slide," he says flatly, clicking the mouse.

“Well, I have many skillz.”

“Dear god.”
“What the hell?” Seungcheol voice rises indignantly. “Are those pictures of my ass?”

Soonyoung tries to look innocent, but it doesn’t work. “Please save all questions to the end of the presentation.”

Seungcheol leans back and crosses his arms over his chest. If he doesn't, he thinks he might be tempted to reach across and wrap his hands around Soonyoung’s neck.

Knowing Soonyoung, he’d probably get off on it or something.

Thankfully there’s only one slide left.

When it’s over, Soonyoung gazes at him eagerly, like he’s expecting Seungcheol to offer him a fucking knighthood for his power point.

When Seungcheol doesn't say anything, he looks around the room and offers, "Any questions?"

“How long did that take you to make?” Jun asks.

“Twelve hours.” Soonyoung answers seriously, dropping his hand from the mouse.

Chan’s arm shoots into the air. “When can I get my laptop back?”

Soonyoung purses his lips. “When I clear all the viruses off it.”

“What!” Chan yells indignantly.

“Who’s putting empty juice cartons back in the fridge?” Jihoon interrupts angrily.

The entire room stiffens at his tone, and slowly turn their heads to look at him.

Jihoon’s standing with his arms folded across his chest, and Seungcheol wonders if he should tell him he looks fucking hot when he does that.

He decides against it.

Jihoon taps his foot against the carpet, turning his gaze to each person in turn. “Nobody wants to come forward huh? Fine—but this better be the last time I find one, I’m warning you. If it’s empty—it goes in the trash. If I find one more empty juice box in the fridge—you know what will happen.”

“Yes, Jihoon.” They all mumble sheepishly.

Seungcheol grins as he watches his baby vampire storm back into the kitchen.

Jihoon isn’t a leader. Not a natural one, at any rate.
But Seungcheol thinks he could become one, given the right training, the right guidance. There’s
something inherently trustworthy about Jihoon; an air of earnest reliability that would lend itself
perfectly to a second in command.

The others must be thinking along the same lines—because the bickering over who should be
picked stops.

“Well—can I at least be bursar or something?” Soonyoung huffs.

It’s late when Seungcheol kicks the pack out and goes to his bedroom, but apparently the night is
still young for Jihoon because he isn’t there yet. He’s probably in the kitchen, grabbing a glass of
water or something—Seungcheol thinks.

Seungcheol takes a shower and crawls into bed, suddenly aware of how big the bed is when there’s
no one else in it.

He thinks about the week they’ve had, about his conversation with Coven Leader Moon and part of
him wonders why the guy divulged the information he did.

Why is he so worried about who’s converting baby vampires, instead of just being happy the city is
hiring hunters to take them out?

It’s unusual to say the least, but the guy had made it clear he had no intention of reporting Jihoon,
and that’s all that matters to Seungcheol really.

Ten minutes of introspection later and Jihoon still hasn’t come to bed.

Come to think of it—why is the vampire den door closed over?

Seungcheol sits up on the bed, that mild niggling of concern from earlier suddenly blooming into
outright worry as he stares at the closed closet door and Jihoon’s scent drifting from behind it.

It has been a long time since Jihoon has slept in his den, and that’s usually when he’s pissed off
with Seungcheol or just wants to escape from the others for a bit.

Seungcheol kicks the sheets away and climbs out of bed, stalks over to the closet and yanks the
door open.

Jihoon’s lying on the futon with a grey blanket wrapped around him, Seungcheol can see blonde
hair sticking out in all directions from the top of the blanket.

“What the fuck? What are you doing in here?” Seungcheol laughs.

“Trying to sleep.” Jihoon says. He sounds suspiciously coherent, like he’s just been lying there
waiting for Seungcheol to notice he’s missing.

Seungcheol isn’t in the mood for this melodrama. Not tonight. Not after a day that already seems
longer than waiting in line for ice-cream in 100 degrees.

“But—why aren’t you sleeping in my bed—with me?” Seungcheol huffs.

“Didn’t feel like it.” Jihoon mumbles back.
He’s clearly pissed off, though Seungcheol can’t read his face in the dark. He’s not sure it would help him anyway; Jihoon’s always managed to confound him.

Seungcheol fumbles for the light switch and flips it on, throwing the small closet space into yellow light. Jihoon winces as the shock of light assaults his eyes, and then grudgingly opens his blue eyes and blinks at him.

“What’s wrong?” Seungcheol asks quietly.

Jihoon sits up, blanket falling around his waist as he shifts to lean against the closet wall.

“Nothing. I’m just—” There’s a pause in which Seungcheol can practically hear the gears whirring in Jihoon’s head and he waits, body tensing, for whatever Jihoon needs to say. But then Jihoon’s face shifts abruptly as calm and as blank as a mask—as a vampire.

The blank expression doesn’t look right on Jihoon.

Seungcheol's too used to seeing him amused, to seeing him irritated, mocking, faking terrible long sufferance. The nothing on his face makes it look like he's someone else, like he's some other Jihoon, some faraway freezing cold version.

"Don't do that," Seungcheol says on a whim, forgetting everything he might have said instead. "That's a vampire face not a you face. When you do that, it's weird."

Jihoon lets out a long breath, emotionless expression crumbling. “Fine. If you really must know—I’m angry with you.” He says evenly.

“Why?” Seungcheol gasps.

“Because you went to that coven even though I didn’t want you to. And you went alone, despite how I felt about it. You could have been injured, Seungcheol, and I’m angry about it.”

“But nothing happened.” Seungcheol huffs. The futon springs squeak as he drops down next to Jihoon. “I wasn’t injured. It was an okay-ish visit, enlightening even. Except for the weird bit at the end when they guy came on to me.”

Jihoon crosses his arms and huffs a breath through his nose. “What if something had happened? Huh?” His voice is steady, not betraying the tiny tremor in his hands. “You make these executive decisions that put you in danger, and you dismiss what I have to say every time.”

Seungcheol rubs a hand over his face. “That’s because you’re a baby, and I know more than you about this kind of stuff.”

Oops, he didn’t intend to actually say that part aloud. Too indignant and provoking. This isn’t how he meant this moment to go.

The glare Jihoon is sending him right now could melt the polar ice caps.

“Well—do you know how much I worried about you? How much I panicked, thinking you weren’t coming back. I do everything you tell me to Seungcheol—but you just dismiss how I feel about things because you’re older, or because you know more. It’s not fair.”

Jihoon’s voice is raw, and Seungcheol wants to reach out and touch him, but he isn't certain Jihoon would allow it anyhow.
“I may be younger Seungcheol, but I’m not stupid. Anyone could see what you did tonight was dangerous. But you just did it anyway—like you don’t care that I’m here waiting for you to come home.” Jihoon’s eyes squeeze momentarily shut, the first tears streaking twin paths down his face. “You say you want to keep me safe—but what’s it worth if you’re not around.”

Seungcheol swallows noisily around the lump in his throat, guilt and shame throttling him quiet.

Jihoon is crying harder now, silently and in earnest, and Seungcheol hates that his dismissive attitude is the reason.

He reaches out, gently at first, holding Jihoon's face between his hands, sliding his fingers through soft hair. He traces a thumb over a salt-slick cheek—wishes he hadn't when the touch makes Jihoon close his eyes and turn his head away.

“I—I didn’t think of it like that.” Seungcheol says eventually.

“That’s because you’re like a giant puppy—chasing after Ice cream vans.” Jihoon huffs. He’s trying for sarcastic, but it comes out broken and terrified instead, and Seungcheol remembers Jihoon has lost just as much as he has in his life—and he’s centuries younger.

Seungcheol snorts quietly, “Hey, I only did that once.”

“You have a pack, you have us. We should protect each other.” Jihoon says gruffly, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand. “I know we’re weak compared to you, but we can still be useful. Strength in numbers.”

Seungcheol scoots closer to his baby vampire and leans in to kiss him, not quite tenderly, a hand catching the curve of his cheek.

When their lips break apart, he pulls Jihoon against him and presses his face into Jihoon’s neck. He breathes in the skin under Jihoon’s jaw, relishing the familiar scent of him.

“You’re right, I’m sorry. And you’re not weak, Jihoon. I don’t see you as weak.” Seungcheol murmurs against his skin, and it isn't a lie. “I guess I just got used to doing things alone, not having anyone at my back that it’s hard to trust people with my life again. But that will change.”

Jihoon pulls back and searches his face. “You’re just saying that.” He pouts.

Seungcheol can see the tension settling in Jihoon’s shoulders again, so he reaches across to take his hand.

“No. I’m serious.” Seungcheol says, pulling Jihoon's hand to his mouth and kissing his knuckles. “I wasn’t lying when I said it before—I’m going to train you. All of you—so you can defend yourselves, and …so you can back me up if we face something in the future.”

“Really?” Jihoon says, smiling hopefully.

Seungcheol looks into his eyes and nods. “Sure.”

He’s already got willing members, and the only real obstacle is going to be training the guys to defend themselves without attracting attention. But he’s an Alpha. He’s relatively sure he can manage it.

Especially now that he’s got something to prove.
1) Puppy play next. :) 
2) BRANCHY!!! 
3) These updates will take longer and longer to churn out. Sorry, I have switched jobs and I don't have as much time to write anymore :( 
Feedback always appreciated! Let me know what you think!
The hardest thing about training a group of baby vampires (and one baby Lycan)—is discretion.

Seungcheol can’t exactly train them in the park without raising a few eyebrows, and perhaps a few police sirens, so he needs to scope out a location. Somewhere hidden and out of the way, unassuming enough that if some stranger were to happen to fall upon it, they would move on, non the wiser.

A Vampire/Lycan gym would be the perfect place—if such a thing existed.

Seungcheol vows to start one, one day.

Possibly with the money from his success with the World’s first Vampire football team.

He’s getting there, slowly but surely, one baby vampire at a time.

Jihoon is meant to be helping him scope out suitable locations today, but instead of meeting Seungcheol outside of work as planned—Jihoon sends him a message:

‘Can’t meet—at home. Emergency.’

And then gives him no other details whatsoever. Which isn’t exactly doing a good job for Seungcheol’s anxiety levels right now.

He isn’t sure whether it’s a ‘call for reinforcements, rush home with your claws drawn’ emergency—or whether it’s ‘I shaved off my eyebrows by mistake’ sort of emergency. Detail would be nice.

Maybe the emergency doesn’t involve Seungcheol at all, hence the lack of detail. Although, usually Jihoon’s emergencies are part of Seungcheol's emergencies, or the pack's emergencies anyway.

They at the very least involve some sort of menace, or being chased somewhere, angry hunters, sometimes shifting Lycans and more often than not—nakedness.

But when Seungcheol bursts through the front door, the current emergency is….

…….surprisingly fluffy, as emergencies go.

“When you said emergency—I expected gunshots and hunters. Or Mingyu wolfing out and chewing Jun’s arm off. Not this.” Seungcheol puffs, eyeing the sight that greets him with a confused sort of surprise.

“Sorry—maybe emergency was too strong a word.” Jihoon explains, sounding amused at his
surprise. “I was typing out the message pretty fast. Kind of had my hands full, *as you can see.*”

“Yeah.”

Seungcheol can see.

*Unfortunately.*

He can see the four kittens playing around on the rug—a *fifth* held in Jihoon’s hand as he feeds it kitten formula from a tiny bottle.

Under his continued scrutiny the kittens meow and squeak and paw at each other uncoordinatedly and Seungcheol immediately wants to know where they came from, so he can send them back.

“What—uhm—what happened? Why do you have kittens?” He asks in his most innocent tone, aiming to sound genuinely curious instead of down right cagey.

“I found them in a cardboard box, dumped behind a trash can in the alley. I could hear meowing as I passed and decided to investigate.” Jihoon’s tone is—*infuriatingly*—light and unworried. Easy. Like he doesn’t care that there are five meddlesome kittens in the house. “Can you believe some jerk just abandoned a litter of kittens in the street to fend for themselves? They were so cold and hungry.”

“Hm, yeah—people can be cruel.” Seungcheol murmurs.

It’s sad, to think of something so small, so forgotten. Although he’s also thinking maybe the ‘jerk’ that abandoned them had good reason to.

These kittens are probably *evil* kittens.

Granted, that’s highly unlikely, seeing as the litter currently treading over his living room rug are a few weeks old at most and are approximately the size of Jihoon’s hand.

Which is really, *preciously* small.

The most threatening thing they’re doing is pawing lightly at Jihoon’s leg and meowing, but Seungcheol’s not taking any chances.

Not with felines. Oh no.

*When in doubt, always scale the danger up*—his father taught him. So, *essentially*—he has five Royal Bengal tigers in his living room.

What is his life?

“So, you’re adopting them?” Seungcheol asks, voice rising uncontrollably at the end. He doesn’t know how to feel about that; kittens in his home. He doesn’t need more things to supervise—supernatural, furry or otherwise.

“No, of course not.” Jihoon shakes his head. He uses an old towel to mop up a stray dribble of milk. “I don’t have time to take care of kittens. I called the local animal shelter, but they’re overburdened at the moment and can’t take them. So—”

“So, you are adopting them.” Seungcheol interrupts, doing his best to look relaxed while using that befuddled puppy expression that Jihoon teases him for so often.
“No.” Jihoon intones, narrowing his eyes. “The lady on the phone said she’d ring around and find another shelter to take them in, so I’m just looking after them till she calls me back.” Jihoon corrects. His voice is quiet now, like he's reacting to the sudden, erratic slam of Seungcheol’s heartbeat.

“Why don’t you take them to Petsmart? Couldn’t they sell them or something?” Seungcheol asks, forcing his voice to stay steady, to ask them like they're casual questions.

Unfortunately, he misses his mark.

Jihoon’s brow furrows, and not in his adorably confused or ‘why are you being weird?’ way, but in his very suspicious, ‘You’re hiding something.’ way.

“Because Petsmart is a pet-shop, not an animal shelter. They’re not equipped to handle four-week-old kittens. But they did provide me with the details of the shelter, and my manager was generous enough to give me this kitten formula to feed them. Free of charge.”

Seungcheol smiles weakly. “Aw, that’s—that’s sweet.”

Jihoon quirks and eyebrow at him and waves him over. "You can come closer you know, they're not going to attack you."

“Okay.” Seungcheol says, but then doesn't really move any closer. He mostly continues to hover at the door and look uncertain, battling with a desperate desire to go hide in the bedroom.

"I can stand between you, if you're afraid of kittens," Jihoon adds.

Seungcheol scoffs. “I’m not afraid. I just don’t want to make them uncomfortable. They can probably smell me—they’re probably terrified right now.” He tries, with a completely straight face.

Finally, he comes further into the room, boots squeaking on the floor.

The kittens stop pawing at Jihoon’s knee and turn their heads to look at him. All at the same time.

It’s like something out of a horror movie and Seungcheol lets out a little involuntary whimper.

Jihoon’s mouth falls open soundlessly. “Oh my god. I was just teasing before, but—you’re actually afraid.”

“Pfft. No, I’m not,” Seungcheol laughs nervously, waving off the suggestion. “I’m just not used to them. We’re very different species, and I don’t know how my Lycan side will react. I don’t want to wolf out suddenly and gobble them up.”

One of the kittens that has ventured to the edge of the rug, makes a squeaky hissing noise and Seungcheol’s super awesome, top of the food chain, predator instincts have him leaping back in shock.

Jihoon’s laughing now—full blown laughter. He's throwing his head back, really getting into it.

“Oh god—oh my god. You’re scared. I can’t believe this!” He chokes out, breathless with hilarity. “Why is there nobody here to witness this. The big, bad wolf is scared of four-week old kittens. I can’t—I can’t.”

Seungcheol reigns his fear in enough to point at the offending kitten angrily. “It hissed at me.”
“It just sneezed, Cheollie.” Jihoon swallows back his laughter, wiping a tear out of the corner of his eyes.

“Sneezed. Yeah—probably because it’s allergic to wolves. As I suspected. I’ll just sit up here out of the way. It’s for the best.” Seungcheol says, circling around the carpet towards the couch.

He takes a seat and immediately pulls his feet up, just in case the kittens get some crazy ideas and try and climb his legs and claw out his eyes.

Not today Satan.

A mischievous grin catches the corners of Jihoon’s mouth, and he lifts the kitten he’s just finished feeding off his lap, then holds out the squirming, wriggling, uncoordinated little bundle of limbs up for Seungcheol to take. “Don’t you want to hold them?”

Seungcheol’s already shaking his head, staring at it like it's an alien, one who possibly means him terrible harm.

"No. No, I’m good thank you very much. I think I might be allergic actually. My throat feels kind of itchy, and my eyes are watering and I think I feel a sneeze coming on." Seungcheol wrinkles his nose, no sneeze forthcoming.

“Right.” Jihoon drawls, rolling his eyes. “I was hoping you’d help with feeding them…."

Seungcheol shakes his head again. “No—I’ll probably do it wrong.”

Jihoon looks down at the kitten and makes a noise like he’s agreeing with him. “I could show you. It’s not that hard.”

“Nope—no. No.” Seungcheol says resolutely, determined not to make even more of a fool of himself than he already has.

“Okay, okay.” Jihoon sighs, setting the kitten down on his lap again. “Suit yourself.”

Jihoon doesn’t sound upset, but Seungcheol figures his chances of every getting laid again have rapidly decreased.

Jihoon finishes feeding one kitten and sets it down, then selects another and picks up another bottle.

Seungcheol watches him pinch its chin between his thumb and forefinger, then expertly bottle feed it. All the while Jihoon keeps shooting him little looks. Little amused looks, like he knows a secret Seungcheol isn’t privy too.

After he finishes feeding a second kitten, he stands up and starts padding towards the door.

“Woah, woah. Wait—where are you going?” Seungcheol blurts out, wanting to rush after him, but also wanting to remain elevated.

Jihoon turns his head to glance at him over his shoulder. “To the bathroom. I’m dying for a piss. I haven’t been able to leave them alone since I found them.”

Seungcheol hesitates, fortifying himself with a deep breath as he worries about his response.
“Okay, fine.” He sighs eventually, then gives Jihoon a sort of worried look, which he’s pretty sure is translatable.

“Don’t panic. I’ll be back soon. You just keep them entertained while I’m away.”

Seungcheol flails in response. “Uh—how!?”

“I’m sure you’ll think of something.” Jihoon offers in a voice that’s far too pleased.

He leaves the room cackling, which is always a good sign, or a bad sign, Seungcheol doesn’t even know.

He didn’t sign up for this. He didn’t sign up for kittens.

They’re looking at him now—like they expect entertainment, or food—or possible bloody human sacrifice.

They don’t seem to noticeably freak out about being around a werewolf. Which is puzzling.

He figured they would be able to tell he’s not exactly human right off the bat—which, they must be able to because animals can smell each other. So Seungcheol must smell different to normal people. He must smell like a predator, in some way, and yet…the kittens don't seem bothered by him.

In fact, as the only living, breathing heat source in the room they have migrated towards him and are now pawing at the bottom of the couch—trying to climb up.

Luckily, they're not very coordinated yet, so that seems to mostly involve falling on top of each other and meowling in displeasure.

Seungcheol shifts in his seat to look down at their big, round eyes.

Nostalgia washes over him then, a long-buried memory of soft brown eyes and tear stained cheeks...

Seungcheol ruthlessly cuts that thought off before it can finish itself—before it even registers in the conscious part of his brain. He doesn’t want to remember that. It’s old history, buried in a trunk in the depths of the forest.

He shakes his head to clear it, and glances down again.

The kittens are still there, futilely pawing away at the couch with their tiny claws and even tinier toe beans.

“I guess you guys are kind of cute.” He can’t believe he just said that. It’s got to be the fear talking.

“You’re Mingyu.” Seungcheol tells no one in particular, pointing a finger at one kitten. It’s noticeably larger than the others, all floppy ears and uncoordinated mouthing at the kitten next to it.

It starts meowing insistently, like it thinks being the loudest will prompt Seungcheol to pick it up.

Yep. this one is definitely Kitten! Mingyu. Though Kitten Mingyu is apparently a girl.

"Oops, never mind, I won't tell anyone," Seungcheol says.
“You’re Jun.” Seungcheol says next, pointing at the confident looking brown one, which is currently trying to claw it’s way up the arm of the couch, because it has yet to learn about high surfaces and fear.

It succeeds in getting a quarter of the way up, before flopping down on top of it’s brothers and sisters.

“Oh, no!” Seungcheol gasps and reaches down to check if it’s okay.

It appears to be unharmed, and Seungcheol allows himself to run an affectionate finger over the back of it’s head; Kitten!Jun pays him no mind, content with chewing on the rug.

He pets it until a tabby-eared black one wriggle-flops its way closer, and falls against his hand with a odd, squeaky-grunt noise.

Seungcheol can appreciate determination, so he laughs and reaches down to pet it lightly on the head instead.

This kitten doesn’t seem interested in being petted, too busy investigating whether Seungcheol's fingers are edible. Or maybe he just thinks that licking everything within reach makes it his. *That’s mine, this is mine, this one's mine too.*

It's kind of hilarious to watch.

"I'm going to call you Soonyoung," Seungcheol decides. Because there's a certain, vague resemblance there.

The smallest kitten pushes past it’s siblings then, to make its own attempt at climbing the couch. It’s clearly the runt of the litter, all small and floppy with the squeakiest meow you’ve ever heard. It doesn’t get very far off the ground, because it has all the coordination of a ball of yarn with legs.

Seungcheol beams at him. “And you’re Jihoonie, cause your so teeny but you’re not afraid to play with the big cats. Isn’t that right.” He coos.

He loves Kitten Jihoon best, just now.

There’s the sound of someone pointedly clearing their throat, and Seungcheol looks up to see actual, not cautical, Jihoon has returned and is watching him.

For his part, he doesn’t look the least bit surprised.

“I was gone five minutes and you already named them.” Jihoon drawls, leaning against the doorframe.

“Hey. You told me to entertain them, I didn’t know what else to do.” Seungcheol huffs. He points at the newly christened Kitten!Jihoon, that is now looking up at him with huge eyes, mewling pitifully. “And this one looks like you. Look how small and adorable he is.”

Jihoon narrows his eyes and crosses his arms. He looks like he’s trying to be angry—but the amused twist of his mouth is giving him away. “Well, seeing as you’re feeling braver—I’m absolutely putting you to work. You can help me feed them.”

Seungcheol scoots back into his seat again and stammers, “No, no—I can’t.”

“Yes, you can.” Jihoon asserts. He leans down and scoops Kitten! Jihoon off the floor with a
reckless abandon that makes Seungcheol’s chest tight, nestling it easily into the crook of one arm. “Besides, I have two hands, and there’s five of them. It’s math really, very sensible math.”

“It’s not a good idea. What if I—”

“You won’t.” Jihoon interrupts quickly, though Seungcheol can’t be certain they mean the same thing. The panic must show on his face, because Jihoon looks at him and laughs. “For pity’s sake, it’s a kitten, not a bomb. I’ll be here. Don’t worry, just come sit down on the rug.”

Seungcheol surprises himself by actually sliding off the couch and adopting a cross legged pose on the rug.

Jihoon throws a towel over his lap and settles the kitten he's holding in Seungcheol’s fingers.

Seungcheol reflexively curls his hand around it, so it doesn't flop straight out again. But he's being way too gentle and Kitten!Jihoon is kind of winning this round, managing to weakly flail its way out of his grip to flop onto the towel.

"You've got to hold him a little tighter," Jihoon says helpfully, repositioning the kitten in the cradle of Seungcheol’s palms.

"I'm going to crush it," Seungcheol says, genuinely afraid of doing exactly that. The kitten looks even smaller now when held in his palm then it did in Jihoon’s.

"No, you're not," Jihoon reassures him, grabbing a warming bottle and handing it over. "I thought the same thing. Just hold it tight enough so he can wriggle, but not wriggle away."

Seungcheol sighs and curves his hand round its body, then tries to introduce the bottle. Kitten! Jihoon doesn't seem interested. No matter how many times Seungcheol shows it to him, or drips it near his face, or pokes it at his mouth.

The stubborn, furry, adorable bastard is too busy wriggling and bashing its nose into all of Seungcheol’s fingers. Trying to heave its pink stomach over the curl of his palm and escape into the unknown.

It seems to think adventure waits beyond!

“Why won’t he stop wriggling?” Seungcheol says, quietly frustrated.

Jihoon appears next to him, without making a sound, “Because he’s hungry.”

“Then why won’t he take the bottle!”

“He just needs some encouragement.” Jihoon explains gently, and Seungcheol wanders what he’s done to deserve this kind of patience from a man who’s notoriously lacking in that particular virtue.

“Here, let me help.” Jihoon giggles and plasters himself to Seungcheol's back, grasping the back of Seungcheol's hand and closing it, so the kitten can't move its head away. And then he's pushing his little finger in until it has its mouth open, then replaces his finger with bottle.

“There we are.” Jihoon says, slowly sliding his hands away, fingers dragging up Seungcheol's wrists. “You're a natural.”

Seungcheol demurs with a wrinkling of his nose. “You did it all. I’m just a vessel.”
Jihoon sighs, leaning his head over Seungcheol’s shoulder to peck him on the cheek. “Just hold the bottle like that and you’ll be fine. I’ll make a start on the next one.” He says, moving to sit across from Seungcheol.

At least he’s not leaving Seungcheol alone with them again. It's always reassuring when there's someone around to tell you if you're doing everything wrong.

"I’m sorry you’re stuck with me," Seungcheol tells Kitten!Jihoon who's currently squirming in his hand.

The kitten makes an odd little gurgling noise, and Seungcheol stops feeding him for a second, just in case it's a bad noise. They hadn't exactly got far enough to cover the bad noises. Seungcheol doesn't know anything about bad noises. He's not prepared for anything unexpected in general. Also, there's now a dribble of milk working its way down his arm. That can't be good.

On closer inspection Kitten!Jihoon has lost the bottle and is now attempting to drink milk through its nose.

Seungcheol pulls the bottle away and tries the finger trick he saw Jihoon pull off.

*It doesn’t work.*

The kitten's entire mouth is dripping milk, and its tongue doesn't seem to know where to go.

"I'm sorry, ok, I’m new to your….species. We're both flying by the seat of our pants here. Please be patient with me." Seungcheol tells it.

But the kitten isn’t listening, he’s wriggling and pawing at the bottle—under the misconception that flailing his head around will get him fed faster.

Seungcheol tries to hold him still, with varying degrees of success.

“Hold still, dammit.” He mutters.

Kitten!Jihoon meows.

“Hey—I’m trying my best.”

Eventually, Seungcheol sighs and sets the bottle down.

He’s not giving up that easily—no. Not when there is a tiny, demanding, wriggling thing in his hand, which expects Seungcheol to provide delicious sustenance.

Taking a deep breath, Seungcheol lifts the kitten and props it on his chest, readjusts his grip on its tiny head before grabbing the bottle again. Then, carefully, he pokes his baby finger in, until the kitten opens its mouth and replaces it with the top of the bottle.

*It works* this time.

"Told you we’d get there," Seungcheol tells Kitten!Jihoon, rubbing his stupidly soft fur with two fingers.

When he glances up, Jihoon is watching him from his spot on the rug, holding a kitten of his own. His eyes look glazed over, and his mouth looks somewhere between amused and...*affectionate* maybe?
It's an amazing expression.

Seungcheol could take Jihoon looking at him like that all the time.

“What?” Seungcheol huffs, feeling defensive.

Jihoon shakes himself out of his dazed look. “Uhm, nothing. I just…didn’t think you could get any more attractive. Clearly I was wrong.”

Seungcheol makes a face at that.

What’s attractive about a guy bottle feeding abandoned kittens?

There's another gurgling noise from the kitten, and Seungcheol glances down to find the bottle's now mostly cloudy plastic, there's no milk left. The kitten yawns, a brief bright flash of pink tongue and sharp little teeth.

“Oh—he finished the bottle.” Seungcheol says, elated.

He doesn't know whether to gesture with the kitten he's holding or not. It's mostly squirming against his chest, paws flailing at his chin.

Jihoon dimples at him. “Yeah, see—I knew you could do it.”

Seungcheol practically feels himself relax.

He laughs, tickling Kitten!Jihoon behind his ear. The kitten opens a leisurely eye, fixes his gaze on him, then seems to decide he's no threat, because he closes his eyes again and starts to purr.

Seungcheol can't resist leaning down to kiss it on the head, petting it gently as it continues to purr.

It falls asleep sprawled out against his chest, dribbling on his shirt, ears twitching, back heaving on every breath.

“He fell asleep—on me.” Seungcheol whispers in awe.

When he looks up, Jihoon is staring at him, again with that unnerving look in his eyes, and now there's a smile, too, and oh god, Seungcheol is not going to blush. He's not.

“Because he feels safe. Good job Cheollie.” Jihoon says, low and warm. He picks up the kitten he’s finished feeding and takes it back over to the makeshift pen in the corner, places it in a nest of towels, before moving over to where Seungcheol is sitting with his sleeping kitten.

Seungcheol feels lips brush his ear, and there’s a husky whisper against his skin, “Who’s a good boy? Huh?” Jihoon says, threading his fingers through Seungcheol’s hair, scratching behind his ear.

“Who’s a big brave puppy that’s not scarred of the tiny kittens anymore. You are Cheollie. Yes, you are. You’re my big, brave puppy.” He says, with a lot of exaggerated cooing and petting.

Seungcheol can feel himself blushing to the roots of his hair and fixes his face with an expression that conveys an appropriate amount of disapproval and seriousness. It’s slightly ruined by the fact that he’s tilting his head into Jihoon’s touch and there’s a kitten now sleeping on his chest.

Jihoon levers himself up, using Seungcheol’s knees as a brace, and says, “Want me to put him in the box with the others?”
Seungcheol lets out a big yawn. “Leave him for a bit,” He smiles, settling back more comfortably against the foot of the couch. “Don’t want to disturb him just yet.”

He’s just going to pet Kitten!Jihoon for a few more minutes, then he’ll put him back. It doesn’t matter that the kitten is was a warm, comfortable, purring ball of fur on his chest, or that Seungcheol’s eyelids are feeling heavy.

He’ll stop in a few minutes. Really.

Seungcheol startles awake when he feels a wriggling weight against his chest. He blinks his eyes open to find that he’s fallen asleep on the rug, a cushion tucked under his head.

Kitten!Hoon is still sleeping on his chest, but now so are the four other kittens. They’re curled together, somewhere between asleep and awake, a jumble of fur and warmth and digesting noises.

“What the hell?” Seungcheol mumbles sleepily, glancing down at his kitten dotted chest.

“I needed to change their bedding.” Jihoon’s voice comes from somewhere above him.

Seungcheol shifts his head without disrupting the napping kittens to catch a glimpse of his boyfriend.

Jihoon’s lying on the couch, head propped up his arm as he looks down at him. “And your chest is nice and warm to sleep on—I know, from experience.”

Seungcheol smirks and stares down at the five sleeping bundles. They look stupidly tiny on his chest. And the picture he must make is something that girls would probably lose their shit over.

Only girls, obviously.

“This is ridiculous.” He says, letting his eyes slide shut again. “I’m a Lycan. I can’t sleep all night with kittens on my chest.”

He does.

“Do you have a certificate?”

“A certificate?” The woman asks.

“Yeah—some kind of proof that you can handle kittens safely.” Seungcheol asks.

The suspicious woman scratches the back of her head sheepishly. “Ah, well—no. We don’t need one to work in the shelter. Mostly we’re just volunteers who help out in their free time. But the shelter has a licence, and we get training and everything to do our jobs right.”

Seungcheol frowns at her, feeling a surge of protectiveness. “So, what you’re saying is—you could be anyone.”

“I—uhm, huh?” The ‘growing more suspicious by the moment’ woman flounders for an answer, looking between Seungcheol and Jihoon in confusion.
“Seungcheol, enough.” Jihoon reprimands. He’s frowning, but it's a new, reluctantly serious sort of frown.

“I don’t like the look of her Jihoon.” Seungcheol whispers harshly, taking the box of Kittens and Jihoon aside. “She could be some kitten serial killing psycho. Like that bitch from that Disney movie that tries to make a coat out of puppies! There’s death in her eyes, I can see it. Do you want that for our kittens?”

Jihoon squints and looks up at him, like that's a weird thing to say, and Seungcheol has to play it back to make sure he hadn't said anything he never meant to. Which he hadn't.

“I would never do that!” The ‘possible kitten serial killing psycho’ gasps in affront.

“Nobody said you could speak Cruella!” Seungcheol growls back at her.

“Seungcheol!” Jihoon scolds, looking at him with the kind of disapproval Seungcheol’s certain he only uses for the most disobedient puppies at Petsmart. “This isn’t a Disney movie, this is real life. We called her, remember. Now—hand over the kittens.”

“No!” Seungcheol growls, holding the box up high. “I’m the alpha!”

Seungcheol suspects there’s a certain amount of irony in the fact that he’s whining like a dog whose favourite toy is about to be taken away.

This isn’t going to end well. He knows it.

The kittens are meowing now—like they’re afraid of heights, or the evil woman from the shelter—or maybe just Seungcheol’s protective growling.

Jihoon turns towards the door, a sheepish expression on his face. “Look—I’m sorry about this. My boyfriend—he’s uhm—he’s protective over anything that sleeps on his chest. If you could just give us a moment, I’ll talk to him.” He says.

The woman nods and steps back to allow them some privacy.

Jihoon pushes the door over slightly and turns to face him, hands lowered at his sides. His voice is low and determined when he speaks again.

“Seungcheol—the last thing I want to do is take those kittens away from you, but you know we lead a life that isn’t suitable for rearing baby kittens. There’s a lot going on right now and we’re both working a lot, so it wouldn’t be fair on the kittens. They need constant attention, a big space with sunshine to grow and play. They’d hate being cooped up here. The shelter can take care of them, find them suitable homes.”

Seungcheol sighs, lowering the box again in resignation.

Jihoon knows some things about him, about his past; things you share when you’re in a relationship. Some deep, some trivial. But then there are other things—things that Jihoon probably should know, but that Seungcheol has never shared with anyone.

Fears, thoughts, memories…

Almost twenty years later and Seungcheol still has a weak spot for the things that other people leave behind.
“I know. I just—I don’t have a lot of people in my life that aren’t afraid of me.” Seungcheol says, struggling to keep the emotion out of his voice. He looks down into the box, at the five pairs of eyes blinking up at him and grins. “So, when I find something that doesn’t run away the minute it sets eyes on me—I want to keep it close.”

Jihoon smiles warmly and steps forward to grasp him by the shoulders. He looks into his eyes as if he’s making very sure Seungcheol is listening.

“You’re the sweetest guy I know, Cheol. Anyone who’s afraid of you just doesn’t know you very well, or is a jackass that deserves to be scared shitless. Being a badass wolf has its benefits too. Remember that—it keeps us safe.” Jihoon says gently, and Seungcheol knows he’s right.

“Can I—just say goodbye to them.” Seungcheol murmurs, even though he’d already said goodbye half an hour earlier when the doorbell rang.

“Sure.” Jihoon nods.

Seungcheol sticks his head in the box to see the kittens better, and swallows around the knot in his throat. “Bye guys. Look after each other and stick together. Don’t let the other cats push you around, okay? I hope you have a nice life, and if you ever run away or get bored—come and visit me. I’ll make sure you—Mingyu! Stop rolling all over your brothers you giant idiot. You’re gonna crush Chan!”

When the nice lady from the shelter is finally on her way with the kittens, the sun is rising over the horizon and they retreat inside and draw the curtains.

“Someday—in the future,” Seungcheol begins, climbing into bed next to Jihoon. “When things settle down and I have more money. I’ll buy us a house in the country side and get you a cat. One of those spotted tabby cats, with small ears that brings us dead squirrels as gifts. We’ll call him Marbles.”

Jihoon rests his head on Seungcheol’s chest and stares at the wall with a fond and faraway look. “That’s sweet Cheollie. Although, I’m more of a dog person actually.”

“Well—” Seungcheol shrugs, looping an arm around the baby vampire’s waist. “I’ll get you a dog then. A golden retriever that barks when the sprinklers go off and fetches the mail for us. We’ll call him….actually Marbles makes a pretty good dog name too.”

Jihoon snickers into his shoulder, then reaches up to touch his face gently. “You know, you don’t have to do any of that. I’m happy now, and I already have a big, sweet puppy right here.”

Seungcheol’s answer is to roll them over, pinning Jihoon underneath him so he can nuzzle happily at his neck.

“Wait.” He says, leaning back so he can look at Jihoon seriously. “When you say stuff like that, that I’m a good boy and stuff, you mean me—right? You don’t mean Mingyu or someone other good boy—right?”

Jihoon rolls his eyes, and reels him in for a kiss. “Of course.”

Chapter End Notes
1) Yes, I know I promised puppy play. But I swear that's next. I just got this idea in my head of Seungcheol being terrified of kittens.
2) Also, it was a good opportunity to do some character background info drops....which I hope people will remember further down the line. XD
3) I JUST WANT A PICTURE OF SEUNGCHEOL SLEEPING WITH A KITTEN ON HIS CHEST AND JIHOON LOOKING ON FONDLY OKAY.
Stains on my sheets and stains on my soul

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Are you sure nobody is using this place?”

“Yes.”

“There’s a wasp nest on the ceiling.”

Seungcheol glances up, squinting.

He’d thought that was a chandelier, but on reflection—of course it’s not.

“Well—just don’t go around poking it and we should be fine.”

“This place smells weird.”

“And everything’s layered in du—du—du—DUST!” Chan erupts into a sneeze.

Seungcheol sighs. “Guys—this is the best location I could find.”

He thinks that comes out sounding more like an apology than an explanation, so tries again.

“It’s large and sturdy enough to sustain damage, but discreet enough for privacy. Jihoon and I have been searching for weeks, and we’re limited with choices. We’re not going to find anything better in the city limits.” He explains at last, casting a pointed look around the warehouse, which—although mostly empty—currently looks like one part serial killer’s hide-away and one part meth lab.

No one else seems to be seeing any of the bright sides though.

Mingyu is eyeballing the massive wasp nest hanging from the ceiling, Jun looks bored, Chan is on his 4th round of uncontrollable sneezing, and Soonyoung’s swivelling round and round on an office chair.

And why is there always at least one chair and desk, left in abandoned warehouses?

Like a sacrifice to the gods!

“Come on guys—it’s not like we’re going to live here. It’s just for training.” Jihoon says, trying to rally the masses.

It must be hard being the voice of optimism all the time.

“But why?” Jun says, from where he's sitting on a stack of pallets, arms hung between his knees.

“This training sounds pointless. Who’s going to try and hurt us?”

His expression couldn't be more unconcerned. It's a wonder, really, that he's lasted as long as he has.

Seungcheol fixes him with a sharp look. “Lots of people. You’re baby vampires. That in itself makes you a target, because you’re young and inexperienced. That’s why there are laws about
vampire conversions, why you should stay close to your progenitor for the first decade of your new life—because there is always someone who can profit from killing you. Do you want to die Jun? Huh? Do you want some Anti-fang psycho’s torturing you and bleeding you dry?”

Jun shakes his head like he understands the many, many ways in which that would be bad.

“Okay then—let’s get started.”

“First—I need to establish what level of self defence you already have. Some of you are probably more capable than others and need different training. So, one by one, I’m going to approach you in an attacking stance—and I want you to defend yourself. Got it?”

“Got it!” The yell in unison.

“Alright,” Seungcheol claps his hands together. “Mingyu, you’re up first.”

Mingyu holds up pretty well for a newbie.

He might be a baby Lycan, but some instincts are clearly inherited. He gets into a defensive stance as Seungcheol approaches, curls his shoulders in and holds his fists out in front of his chest; optimum positioning for a defensive punch. He’s anxious though, and whines quietly as Seungcheol get closer—fear lighting up his eyes. He manages to dodge Seungcheol’s first lunge, but fucks up his footing on the second and doesn’t spin fast enough to avoid the drop tackle Seungcheol uses to take him down.

Speed and confidence are his weak points. Easy enough to sort out.

As the oldest of the baby vampires, Jun does pretty well too, though his strengths and weaknesses are the exact opposite of Mingyu’s. Unlike Mingyu, he’s more agile on his feet and dodges a fair few swipes, darting fluidly away. But he’s too confident—and starts Monologuing like a supervillain about how perhaps he could teach Seungcheol a thing or two.

Seungcheol replies to that suggestion by punching him through a wall.

Overconfidence is dangerous.

Jun must learn.

Soonyoung is up next, and as Seungcheol expected—he has zero finesse and all the bravery. He drops his pants as Seungcheol steps closer, effectively derailing Seungcheol’s manoeuvre.

“What the fuck?”

Soonyoung laughs like a cartoon villain. “First mistake Seungcheol—you let yourself become distracted. Now I’ve got you where I want you.”

“That’s your technique? Distract your attacker by flashing them?” Seungcheol says after a moment of incredulous gawking.

Soonyoung gives a cheeky grin, a one-shouldered shrug, and announces with unconvincing bravado, “It worked on you—didn’t it.”

Seungcheol rolls his eyes and strides forward. “Momentarily. Say it doesn’t work and they keep
approaching?”

“Well then—I just give them one of these—HIYA—” Soonyoung attempts to raise a leg in the air, belatedly realising his pants are still down, at which point he loses his balance and faceplants into the cement.

He’ll make a good distraction if they need one, but everything else needs a lot of work.

When it’s Chan’s turn, he backs off, hunches down, and launches himself at Seungcheol without waiting for him to approach.

Bad start, Chan, very bad.

Chan’s got the element of surprise on his side. sure—but he’s also yelling at the top of his lungs, like a charging anime hero and Seungcheol has plenty of time to side step him and trip him up.

Combat outside of anime and movies is completely new to him and he’ll need to develop a more realistic tactic.

Jihoon is an example of why you should never underestimate small people.

“Don’t hold back—just cause it’s me.” He says, circling the area Seungcheol has mapped out with chalk.

Seungcheol, naturally, underestimates him.

“Don’t worry my precious baby fanged kitten. You’ll get the same treatment as everyone else, regardless of how cute you look clenching your fists like that. Oh, you’re just so adorable—I’m going to cuddle the hell out of you later.” Seungcheol coos.

Jihoon scowls—then moves.

With his lithe frame, it’s not surprising that Jihoon is fast and slippery. But his right hook comes out of nowhere.

He is so quick that Seungcheol has no time to plan, only react, jerking his head to the side to avoid a fist to his face.

He catches Jihoon's right hand by his wrist as he swings again, but before he can put it in a lock, Jihoon shoves Seungcheol's chest, hard.

Seungcheol stumbles back a few places. His heel catches the edge of the recessed floor and he stumbles, throwing an arm out for balance. Jihoon kicks him in the back of his supporting leg and Seungcheol gives a cry of surprise, falling to his hands and knees.

He has only time to think, ‘What— ’ before he takes another brutal kick under his stomach which sends him to his side, curled up, gagging for air.

Strong hands flip him onto his back and before he knows it, Jihoon is on him, knees pinning his arms and his long fingers wrapped around Seungcheol's throat.

The fight has taken no longer than twenty seconds from beginning to end.

Jihoon isn't even breathing hard.

"Told you not to go easy on me." Jihoon's fingers tighten, momentarily cutting off Seungcheol's air
before relaxing.

Seungcheol’s mind is reeling. This isn’t possible.

He has spent most of his life fighting heavier, bigger men. He’d tussled with Jihoon before, when he was manic on Wolf blood and had pinned him easily enough. He’d been holding back, sure, but clearly so was Jihoon.

“Jesus. How did you—”

“Got picked on a lot in high-school, so I learnt how to defend myself.” Jihoon interrupts. He leans over Seungcheol again, hands pressing down on his shoulders until they’re eye to eye. “Guess I still remember a few things.”

“I’ll say.” Seungcheol grins. "You kicked my ass.”

The observation earns him what he assumes is a sceptical look—it’s difficult to tell under the circumstances—and a gruff, “You were holding back.”

“It doesn’t matter—you’re a baby.” Seungcheol jerks his head to indicate how Jihoon is still pinning his arms down with his knees. Jihoon's legs are practically a lethal weapon, milky and slim, yet strong and flexible in a way that boggles the mind. “This is still pretty fucking impressive.”

Jihoon shrugs, looking away. “I had my turn last—got to watch you take down the others. I knew what to expect.”

Seungcheol gives him a pointed look. “That’s even more impressive. Searching for patterns, identifying your opponent’s weaknesses, acting quickly before they can switch their strategy—you’re a natural Jihoonie.”

Jihoon gives a wry snort, but there's a hint of smile on his face, and a proud blush on his cheeks.

“Shut up—I wasn’t that great.” He murmurs, kneeling over Seungcheol’s torso and squeezing his arms immobile. He doesn't even look uncomfortable, straddling Seungcheol like that, and Seungcheol is definitely not complaining.

“No one has ever outmanoeuvred me before. I’m not going to lie, I’m a—” Seungcheol pauses. Wets his lips. “I’m a little turned on right now.”

Jihoon's fingers twitch over his own, tongue pressing against the corner of his mouth, expression amused.

Slowly, slowly he leans back again, dragging the curve of his ass against the bulge in Seungcheol’s pants. His eyes never leaving Seungcheol’s.

“Me too.” He whispers.

Seungcheol been interested since they started wrestling. But now, with the low tone of Jihoon’s voice, his surprising strength, his body shifting minutely over Seungcheol’s, his scent…. It licks embarrassed heat along Seungcheol’s skin—not to mention raising a complicated host of other feelings that he refuses to examine too closely.

Seungcheol’s never gotten turned on to such thoughts, but now when he imagines Jihoon fixing a collar on him, ordering him around—mounting him, his brain shorts out, a bright surge and then
nothing.

He can't remember the last time he felt this helpless, and he loves it.

“Jihoon—” He doesn't even know what to ask for. How to start. “Do you think you could—"

Someone clears their throat.

“Uh. Hello—fellas. Did you guys forget that we were here?”

Jun’s voice startles Seungcheol from his disjointed thoughts, bringing his awareness back to
warehouse and the half-finished work before him.

And honestly, Seungcheol had kind of forgotten the rest of the pack was there.

Mingyu's staring back at him with a bright red flush on his cheeks, Chan has his eyes covered with
one hand, and Jun seems to be looking anywhere but at the two of them.

Oops.

Seungcheol shares a sheepish look with his baby vampire, and they scramble to their feet.

“Aw, dammit Junhui!” Soonyoung groans. “Why did you interrupt them? We could have had front
line seats to the sex show.”

The warehouse echoes with the sounds of rapid-fire thumps and sharp, harsh exhalations at each
movement.

_Thwack_

Jun’s left hook lands squarely on the pad, a perfectly concise, laser-focused punch that channels all
of his power into one economical motion.

“Brilliant. Chan—your turn again. The whole combination this time. Remember to block my
uppercut,” Seungcheol is authoritative but not shouting.

He knows from experience that you don’t learn from someone _yelling in your face_.

Chan nods, his face is a frown of pure intense concentration.

Seungcheol puts the pads up again, ready to meet each strike with choreographed precision.

_Punch—punch—kick—swipe._

“Better. Keep up your speed next time. Soonyoung—you’re up. Remember to keep your hands up
and body protected. And for fucks sake, keep your pants on.”

_Punch—punch—kick—swipe._

When the combination has been repeated past the point of the pack losing focus and getting sloppy,
and back to them reigning in their bodies out of sheer force of will, Seungcheol finally lets them
stop.

“Okay—that’s enough for today. We’ll be training twice a week, _every week_. Fit it into your life—
it’s important.”

Jihoon and Jun nod—to too out of breath to answer verbally. Chan lies down next to Soonyoung on the floor, and Soonyoung twitches in response.

Even Mingyu is showing his own signs of fatigue, slumped heavily against the warehouse wall.

Seungcheol was tough on all of them, having worked with them for the better part of the last two hours practicing manoeuvres, working on their speed and heavy bags, and finally putting them through the paces on the pads.

Seungcheol grabs a few bottles of water from his duffle and hands them out, patting each member on the head as he goes. “Don’t drink it all at once. Take the water in sips, careful not to drink too quickly or too much.”

He leans next to Mingyu on the wall and takes a breath, wiping the stray droplets off sweat from his face with the hem of his T-shirt and decidedly not grimacing at the touch of his smelly and sweat-sodden fabric.

He looks over to where Jihoon is standing with his shoulders slumped, chest heaving. Sweat soaks through his grey hoodie, leaving broad dark splotches that threaten to bleed to every last inch of the material.

He uncaps his own water bottle and takes a sip—then promptly spits it out when Jihoon unzips his hoodie to reveal a dark, red—T-shirt underneath.

The pace of his heartbeat is not entirely to do with adrenaline, in fact it occurs to him that it is instead almost entirely to do with the way Jihoon looks in red and he needs a moment to get a handle on that, a moment to process that thought.

He just needs a moment. 

Red.

Red.

Red.

“Cheol—calm down.” Mingyu says from somewhere to his left.

Seungcheol can’t even turn his head to look at the other Lycan, too fixated on the alluring colour before him.

A ravenous heat inches up his spine, and he can only imagine how brightly flushed his face has become. He is suddenly aware of the fur sprouting over his knuckles, how his jaw feels tighter with extra teeth.

He usually has better control than this—but maybe it’s because it’s Jihoon wrapped in red that captures his attention so tightly.

A truly delicious sight.

“Jihoon! Put your Hoodie back on!” Mingyu yells across the warehouse.

Jihoon stirs at the suggestion, locking Mingyu in a curious look. “What? No—It’s all sweaty.”
“Just do it!” Mingyu snaps back.

“What’s your problem Gyu—” Jihoon stops talking abruptly, staring at Seungcheol with impossibly wide eyes.

If it weren't for the cluster of anxious sensations twisting in Seungcheol's chest, the look of incredulous horror could almost be funny. As it is, hunger shivers along his skin.

Abruptly, Seungcheol realizes he is growling on every exhale, his eyes taking on a red tinge. He wants to stop, tries to but all it does is make a snarl come out.

After a long, long moment, where Seungcheol's heartbeat triples in his chest and his dick takes an unholy interest in the proceedings, Jihoon finally yanks his hoodie back on and zips it up.

Seungcheol immediately relaxes, tension leaving his body in a blink.

Disaster averted. Except, everyone is staring at him now.

Awesome.

“So, what was that? Are you allergic to the colour red or something?” Soonyoung asks, completely oblivious to how close a call that was.

“Allergic?” Mingyu laughs nervously, biting his thumbnail. “More like—the exact opposite.”

Jihoon makes a noise that's half laughter and half interest. He opens his mouth to say something—but doesn’t.

Seungcheol would pay good money to know what that was going to be.

Lycan’s possess full control over their shifting capabilities. Normally. But everything is always just that little bit tauter the night before the full moon, and by unspoken agreement Seungcheol and Jihoon never do anything particularly interesting, or social...not that they're social, at all really.

So they're on the couch, sharing the space and occasionally popcorn and watching the Discovery Chanel attempt to increase their love of lizards.

Seungcheol loves lizards about as much as he loved them half an hour ago, when the documentary started. Probably because he is only half concentrating.

This close to the full moon his attention is falling from one distraction to another; tiny sounds, smells, the way his sleeves irritate his wrists. But he's watching the television anyway, because watching the television is what you're supposed to do, it's normal, and he can do that. Even if his skin and his nose and his ears are determined to drive him mad by pointing out every little thing...and when Jihoon’s curled up against him, there are a lot of little things.

“Cheol?” Jihoon murmurs slow and lazy, dragging Seungcheol's attention away from the screen. “I’ve been meaning to ask you something.”

“Yeah?”

“The other day—when I wore that red t-shirt in the warehouse and you got—wolfy. What was up with that?”
Seungcheol’s breath shudders out of him at the memory. “Uhm, well. Red is a very—delicious colour. Lycans are drawn to it.”

Jihoon doesn’t say anything for a minute, just stares at Seungcheol’s face like he’s trying to decipher what Seungcheol really means by what he’s not sharing.

“Then how come Mingyu didn’t react?”

Seungcheol raises an eyebrow at him, a not entirely happy one. “Were you looking for him to react?”

Jihoon wrinkles his nose at the suggestion. “No. I was just curious as to why you wolfed out and he didn’t. If it’s a Lycan thing—why were you the only one freaking out?”

Seungcheol works his jaw until he can get words out.

“I—I don’t know.” He murmurs, raking a hand through his hair. “Maybe cause Mingyu’s a baby Lycan and hasn’t shifted before?”

At Jihoon’s quizzical look, Seungcheol swallows and forges on.

“Every time a Lycan shifts they lose some of their humanity, some of the strength that keeps them grounded as they give in to the baser instincts of the animal. I’ve lived entire decades in my full Lycan form, so I guess it’s understandable that I would react more strongly to the colour then a baby Lycan that’s never shifted.”

“Oh, I see.” Jihoon says. His face flows between curious and uncertain and it’s clear there’s more. “So, the colour makes you shift?”

Seungcheol tilts his head, not quite sure how to answer that, “Yes, and no. I usually control when I shift—that’s what sets Lycans apart from traditional werewolves. If I was a traditional werewolf, I’d shift at every full moon, whether I wanted to or not. As it stands, the full moon just sets me on edge, heightens my senses and intensifies my cravings. The colour red has the same effect—it just distracts me. If I saw someone wearing a red scarf—I’d pay attention to them till they left my eyesight. If I saw a red ball—I’d want to play with it….More than I regularly want to play with balls. So the colour just makes me drop my human defences a little, makes me lose focus and that can make me shift under the wrong circumstances. It think it was doubly distracting when you wore it—probably cause it’s you and you’re distracting enough as it is.”

Jihoon smiles at that explanation, quiet and a little pleased.

“So, what were you feeling when you saw me in that red-t-shirt?” He says, and unless Seungcheol’s eyes are misleading him, the tips of his ears are turning pink.

Seungcheol shrugs. “I thought it looked nice. I liked how it complemented your skin tone. I wanted to—”

Eat you.

Seungcheol takes that thought, boxes it up and puts it away carefully.

“There’s gotta be something better on television that this!” He blurts out, lunging for the remote and scrambling to change the channel.

He needs a diversion and fast.
Flicking through the channels, he finds something suitably distracting and ramps up the volume. Jihoon gives him a look that’s all narrowed eyes and piercing scrutiny, but turns back to the television willingly enough.

*Phew.*

When Seungcheol walks through the door after his shift on Friday—the house is suspiciously quiet.

That’s something he never thought he’d associate with quietness. But the pack chooses to spend their free time here more often than not, and coming home to silence is down right worrying.

When Seungcheol had bought this house, he had bought it specifically because it had just the right amount of space for him without being too spacious or expensive. Now, it’s starting to feel tight, confining, instead of just right.

There are little pieces of his pack scattered around the place. Jun keeps a box filled with all his valuables on the bookshelf because he doesn’t trust his housemate. Chan and Mingyu have stacks of DVD’s and CD cases jammed in every corner. Soonyoung leaves his monthly subscription to ‘Furry Loving’ in the most random location, winking slyly when Seungcheol finds it. There are more pairs of tennis shoes than Seungcheol has ever seen in his life littering his floor, and his couch never seems to be free.

He’d expected to be more annoyed by the regular intrusions into his personal space. But, the pack is family now.

A strange, complicated family, but still a family.

Seungcheol sighs and checks his watch. It’s too early for Jihoon to be asleep, so he calls out, “Jihoonie?”

“I’m in the bedroom.” Comes Jihoon’s answer, drifting down the corridor.

Seungcheol kicks his shoes off and hangs up his jacket, tossing his keys in the dish by the door.

“Where are the others?” He asks, picking up the mail to rifle through it; just bills, bills, coupons and more bills.

“I kicked them out.” Jihoon calls out. “Gave them some money and told them to entertain themselves for a change because we needed some—alone time.”

The mail lands with a thud on a side table, and Seungcheol feels an anticipatory smile pull at his lips.

“Alone time huh? Is that code for what I think it is?” He asks, following Jihoon’s sound and smell towards the bedroom.

“*Come here and find out.*” Jihoon purrs.

Seungcheol grins and pads down the corridor, unbuckling his belt as he goes.

The bedroom door is slightly ajar, and he can smell Jihoon on the other side—but when he pushes
the door open, the room is empty.

Where is Jihoon?

Is he in his den?

“Where are you hiding kitten?” Seungcheol asks, stepping in.

The door clicks shut behind him, and Seungcheol hears the lock turn.

He spins to find a figure in a dark red cape standing behind him, hood pulled over it’s head.

Oh, no.

The figure lifts a hand to push the hood back, and now Jihoon is standing there, staring at Seungcheol in his smug little vampire way.

Oh. Shit.

Red.

Red.

RED.

A growl, deep and primal, is trapped in Seungcheol’s throat. He feels gooseflesh rise on his arms and legs with the uncontrollable surge of adrenaline.

He tries to speak twice and fails both times, but finally manages a choked out: “Oh—god! What are you wearing?”

Jihoon smiles and chooses to ignore the comment. “Oh, Hello there Mr Wolf. I'm surprised to find you here.”

Seungcheol’s nostrils flare. This is new. Interesting.

No. Scratch that.

This is a monumentally bad idea.

“What do you mean you're surprised? You just called me in here and locked the door!” Seungcheol says, though his mouth and throat are suddenly dry.

Jihoon ignores him again, then puts on a coy look, “But I’m very happy to see you anyway. You see, I was just walking through this dark, scary forest all by myself, and I seem to have lost my way.”

He bends down smoothly and picks up a wicker basket placed at his feet. “Will you help me take this basket full of treats to my ailing grandmother?” He asks, looking up innocently. “I’m sure I can find some way to repay you.”

Seungcheol’s stomach tightens with sudden lust at the rasp of Jihoon's voice, the quick dart of his pink tongue licking those soft lips.

Something in Seungcheol wants to go automatically Yes to anything Jihoon says in that tone of voice. Seungcheol’s trying to constrain it, though; being unable to refuse Jihoon is seriously bad
for his big, bad wolf image.

“Jihoon—this isn’t a good idea.” Seungcheol says, backing away till his back hits the wall.

“I’ll give you a very nice treat if you help me.” Jihoon continues over him, patting the basket—though they both know he means something else entirely.

Seungcheol recognizes that he's a slightly kinky son-of-a-bitch, no disrespect meant to his poor sainted mother. Although if Seungcheol is slightly one, goodness knows what he can say about Jihoon.

“Jihoon.” Seungcheol intones.

It's meant to be a warning, honestly. Only Jihoon’s developed too high a tolerance for risky situations, and warnings just sound like invitations to him.

He sets the basket down and rounds up on Seungcheol, who is now pressed so tightly against the wall, he's denting the plaster with his shoulder.

“What’s the matter Mr Wolf? You don’t like my hood?” Jihoon says, eyes comically wide.

And oh, Seungcheol isn't sure he possesses enough mental facility to articulate an answer. He's potent distracted by the contrast of dark red against snow white skin. Anticipation sings in his blood, shivers beneath his skin.

“You d-don’t understand. T-that co-colour. It—m-makes me…. Seungcheol shakes his head, trying to control the red edging into his vision, the sharp ache in his incisors. “Please, Jihoon. It will make me do things you won’t like.”

Jihoon seems to think it over for a second and then a slow, smug smirk curls across his face.

“Oh dear.” He says with feigned concern. “We can’t have that. Guess I should take it off.”

“Yes, yes. Take it off. Quickly!” Seungcheol pants.

Jihoon reaches up to untie the string around his neck, letting the red velvet fabric slip off his shoulders and pool on the floor. And—holy shit.

That is so much worse.

Seungcheol is abruptly breathless. More breathless.

He’s panting for oxygen actually, gawking at Jihoon, because now he has a baby vampire in blood red, lacy lingerie to contend with.

Jihoon really went all out for this role play. Seungcheol can't believe he actually bought lacy underwear and all.

Jihoon's normal undergarments of choice are generally more utilitarian, manly, shapeless. They certainly don't disappear into the crack of his ass like that.

It’s all making it a little hard for Seungcheol to concentrate because—red panties, smooth, milky baby vampire skin—is Jihoon trying to kill him?

Seungcheol averts his eyes, briefly, just to make sure he can still do it. When he looks back he’s sure to meet Jihoon’s gaze, which he doesn’t think he’s done since Jihoon first slipped off the red
cloak.

“Is that better?” Jihoon purrs, smoothing a hand down his naked hip.

His gaze is hooded, and he’s smirking—and perhaps there’s something a little knowing around the corners of his mouth, something roguish.

And then realisation dawns on Seungcheol.

Everything about this scenario is a test. All of it is designed to throw Seungcheol right off track and take him right back to the ‘bad times’, to the wolf he was before he’d cleaned up.

Jihoon wants him to shift.

“No!” Seungcheol snarls, fur growing on the tips of his ears. “Whatever you’re playing at Jihoon—stop. It’s a b-bad idea. A really bad idea.”

Jihoon suddenly looks serious, and not at all a lost Little Red Riding Hood, brow furrowed in thoroughly-Jihoonian fashion. “I’m not Jihoon—I’m little red riding hood. If we’re going to roleplay Seungcheol—you need to commit. Now—come over here and ravish me.”

Seungcheol holds himself stiffly, all muscle and bone, refusing to reach out and take what Jihoon's offering.

He screws his eyes shut, trying to erase the image of Jihoon in red lacey pants from his mind, trying to calm himself.

It helps, but not by much. Jesus—not by much.

Jihoon breathes a wry sound and Seungcheol hears him inch closer, so that very suddenly there's no space at all between them

“Do you know what time it is Mr Wolf?” Jihoon purrs in his ear, and Seungcheol feels the slide of Jihoon's cool hand against his cheek.

“No. And I don’t want to know.” Seungcheol whimpers.

Jihoon tuts, nips Seungcheol’s bottom lip playfully. More quietly, he says, “Don’t be like that. It’s your favourite time of the day—Dinner time. And I know you’re very, very hungry Wolfy. So I’ve prepared a nice treat for you to eat.”

Seungcheol shakes his head, gasping when the vampire pushes a hand up under his shirt to toy with a nipple.

“Mr Wolf isn’t here now. Can I take a message?”

Jihoon huffs his disappointment, his breath cool on Seungcheol’s chin. It's impossible to guess his expression with no way to see his face, but Seungcheol suspects he’s probably pouting right now.

He’s glad he’s shut his eyes; Jihoon’s really unfairly attractive like that.

“Mr Wolf better stick to the storyline and eat me or I’m going to be very sad.” Jihoon snarls, more animal-like than Seungcheol for a moment.

Seungcheol slips out from under Jihoon and flees to the other end of the room. It’s no easy feat with his eyes still clamped shut, but he doesn’t dare open them. He’s really too close to the edge
now, he’s almost in wolf mode.

Jihoon is a persistent little shit though. Ten minutes later and he’s still trying to coax Seungcheol to open his eyes and come “Play”.

“Come and look at all the treats I have in my basket.”

“I’m not falling for it Jihoon.” Seungcheol whines from his corner of the room, where he’s situated himself facing the wall so he doesn’t wolf out and devour his baby vampire.

Managing not to eat people he cares about with will be the new high point of his day.

“Come on puppy. I think you’ll like what I have.”

“No. Put some clothes on.”

“Please Cheollie? Just give it a chance. I spent ages preparing all this for you.” Jihoon says, an edge of hurt frustration in his voice.

Despite his earlier stance, Seungcheol finds himself looking over his shoulder out of curiosity.

Jihoon’s standing there, half naked, staring at him like – something complicated: like a disobedient puppy and a delicious meal with ingredients Seungcheol can’t pronounce (mar—joram? Marjoram? How the hell do you even say that? The word just sticks in Seungcheol mouth like mush)

He watches warily as Jihoon opens the wicker basket and pulls out…

“Branchy!” Seungcheol gasps.

Jihoon grins, baby fangs white in the dim room. “That’s right. I brought Branchy.”

“How dare you bring Branchy into your sordid sex games! Branchy is innocent.” Seungcheol says crossly, or as crossly as he can manage anyway. His voice may waver off into a high pitched yelp at the end, but he can’t help it.

Jihoon laughs, a gentle thing devoid of mockery. “Branchy wants to play with you—as do I.”

Somehow Seungcheol keeps himself in line. Holds himself back even when desire runs so thick he can taste it at the back of his throat.

“You’re asking for a lot more by dressing like that. You’re asking me to lose control Jihoon. You’re going to make me wolf out.”

Something hot seems to flash through Jihoon’s eyes, something filled with hunger.

Seungcheol feels himself respond, like a primal part of him echoing the lust and hunger, wanting it just as badly.

The vampire drifts closer, his eyes never leaving Seungcheol’s until he’s pressed up against him, trailing his nose up the rough edge of Seungcheol’s cheek.

“So what if I am? What’s wrong with wanting to have fun with that other side of you? He’s you, isn’t he? Just a little bulkier and ….a lot hairier.”

“He’s also a complete jackass, okay. I’ve met him—trust me on this, you don’t want to play with
him. He’s rude and aggressive, does what he wants and doesn’t give a shit about the consequences.” Seungcheol says, new gruffness sneaking into his voice.

Jihoon murmurs amusement, drags his mouth across a curve of jawbone. “Sounds like fun to me.”

Seungcheol grunts, tearing his gaze away from the distracting sight of his baby vampire. “No, Jihoon—not fun. Not fun at all. You have no idea what you’re asking.”

Jihoon’s mouth turns down at the corners and his brow is furrows. Determination flashes in the striking features of his face. “So, you’re saying no because you’re afraid of traumatizing me? Is that it?”

Seungcheol inhales deeply, grounding himself with difficulty. Tuning out his frantic pulse, his spinning senses, his half-hard cock. He focuses on Jihoon's question and genuinely, deliberately considers his answer.

“That part of me isn’t my kindest, Jihoon. It’s the reason I spent so much time alone before you came, it’s the reason I don’t have many friends. I—I don’t want to hurt you too.” Seungcheol concludes, heart beating faster, face hot, neck prickling.

It’s getting harder to control himself the longer he keeps Jihoon in sight, but there’s no turning away from him either. His baby vampire is tenacious.

In the next second, he cups Seungcheol's face in his hands and kisses him, free of pretence, of anything but genuine desire and a hint of exasperation. They hit the section of the wall beside the window and Jihoon may be shorter and leaner than Seungcheol, but he's a fucking immovable force when he wants to be.

Right now, he seems to want Seungcheol against the wall where he can lean his whole body flush against Seungcheol's, wedging a thigh between them.

“You know what I see when I look at you Cheollie?” Jihoon whispers into Seungcheol's ear, and Seungcheol shivers and listens, head bowed.

“I see a guy, wound up so tight—he’s seconds away from snapping. Someone who’s so painfully repressed, just the sight of his boyfriend in a red t-shirt pushes him to the brink. I don’t believe for a moment that this colour would bother any other Lycan the same way as it bothers you. It affects you so much because you’re pushing back every little glimpse of the animal underneath, and you’ve been doing it for years because you don’t want to scare people away. Now I’m telling you, you don’t have to do that anymore. I don’t want you to hold back that side of you—let him out. He’s you at the end of the day and ….I love every part of you.” Jihoon speaks the words like the easiest truth in the world.

The burst of affection in Seungcheol's chest nearly overwhelms him.

He gazes at his baby vampire, feeling his Lycan side war with his human side.

“He’s not pretty.” He says quietly, and it shivers out in one stream.

Jihoon's chuckle is almost musical. Eloquent and soft and impossibly fond. It tightens a different sort of pleasure beneath Seungcheol's ribs, alongside the certainty that they are doing this.

“I don’t care, I want to see him. Let him out.”

Seungcheol’s heart is beating faster now, but he nods.
There's something hot and hungry twisting low in his gut, and he is suddenly confident: he couldn’t stop himself from shifting even if he tried.

Seungcheol closes his eyes, feels his muscles morphing, expanding, tearing his clothing at the seams. His hair grows thicker, his teeth get sharper, his eyes glow red—while his bones begin to painfully stretch and shift. With that pain comes a feeling of raw power, of a beast being unleashed. Sight, smell, all sharpening into the edge yielded by a predator.

One moment, he is thinking clearly, if a little panicked, and wondering if Jihoon is going to bolt the minute he sets eyes on his new form. Then the lucidity disappears, and he is gripped by raw emotion.

Instinct.

It really has been too long.

He stretches, luxuriating in the heaviness of his bones, the power in his legs and jaws, the warmth of his fur. He’s running a few degrees hotter than normal and so sheds the rest of his tattered clothing without ceremony.

He sniffs the air, smelling the murmur of excitement and the unmistakable scent of a young vampire.

*Prey,* he thinks, vicious and joyful with it.

No.

Not prey.

*Jihoon.*

Jihoon is there—*he’s still there*; a little startled, certainly, but undeterred by Seungcheol’s half-form transformation; not quite a wolf, but very far removed from human.

Seungcheol can see Jihoon’s pupils dilate, but it isn't fear he can smell in the air. Of course not. Jihoon is never *scared of him.*

“Told you it wasn’t pretty.” Seungcheol says, and his vocal cords protest. His voice is rough and grating even to his own ears.

“Not pretty. No.” Jihoon murmurs under his breath, following the line of Seungcheol’s neck, dragging his eyes down the length of the corded forearms, visibly bulked up from earlier and thick with dark hair. A slow, flirtatious smile spreads across his face. “But hot as fuck.”

Seungcheol quirks an eyebrow.

Jihoon’s *still* wants this.

Lycan’s mouths are not made for smiling, but Seungcheol does anyway, predatory.

Jihoon gasps. “Jesus, Cheol—your *teeth.* They’re so—sharp.” he says wonderingly, eyes widening.

Seungcheol just laughs, a low, slow rumble, and touches his tongue gently to the tip of one sharp
incisor.

“All the better to eat you with.” He says, words slurred through his fangs.

Subtlety is for stalking prey, not for when you’ve already caught it, so Seungcheol doesn’t bother playing coy when he stalks forward into Jihoon’s personal space.

In his half-form his claws are vicious, but he still has hands, and they wrap securely around Jihoon’s shoulders, shoving him back until he hit the wall.

He stands nearly two feet taller than Jihoon like this, could overpower him so easily, but Jihoon moves with it willingly, already tilting his face up for Seungcheol’s kiss and making no protest as Seungcheol all but mauls his mouth. He submits even as Seungcheol wraps his hands around his waist to haul him up higher, presses him against the wall like he weighs nothing and drags bruising kisses on his throat.

“Hnn—Cheol.” Jihoon groans, making the muscle under Seungcheol’s teeth roll and move.

Seungcheol bites on instinct, sinking his teeth and groaning as he tastes the metallic tang of blood. Jihoon shudders in his arms and goes limp, just melting into Seungcheol's embrace in a way that sends his blood thrumming.

Seungcheol pulls back, licks the skin he has just abused before moving up to kiss Jihoon again.

"You like that?" He grunts against the vampires lips.

Jihoon’s breath hitches and he nods, frantic, one hand coming up to press gentle fingers to the indentations left by Seungcheol's canines.

The Vampire looks dazed and a little out of it, but his erection is pressing against Seungcheol’s hip and there is no mistaking the heavy scent of pheromones peppering the air.

Jihoon had wanted the Lycan to mark him, had been eager for it. It makes Seungcheol desperate for him, makes him travel down the vampire’s body and shove his nose into Jihoon's crotch; sniffing in sharp, measured bursts of hot air.

Jihoon’s cock is leaking, of course he's already wet, and he tightens a hand in Seungcheol’s fur as he explores the ridges of his hips and the covered length of his erection with quick sniffs and...

"Fuck," Jihoon hisses when Seungcheol licks him through the lace of his panties. "Don't, I don't want to come in my fucking pants."

Seungcheol suspects he could, far too easily, with the way he’s trembling, twisting Seungcheol’s hair between his fingers.

The look Jihoon gives him as he backs off seems to say thank you, but Seungcheol isn’t stopping for his sake.

In what must be a disorientating blur, Seungcheol tosses him on to the bed and pounces.

Jihoon barely gets his knees under him before Seungcheol’s tongue is sliding along the exposed curve of his ass, a slow, exploratory lick that touches nothing delicate but promises so very much.

He can smell the adrenaline coming off Jihoon in waves. But not panic. He’s calm in the way of someone who has lived through enough life-and-death situations to automatically control his own
instincts.

“I don’t follow orders, Jihoon. But lucky for you I found something else I want.” Seungcheol growly wetly, nosing against the lace over Jihoon’s hole. “Think I’ll eat you out first.”

Jihoon moans, face pressed into the bed covers. He rests his head on a forearm and shifts his knees further apart, reaching back to tug the lace aside for Seungcheol to get a good look at his pink, puckered hole.

Seungcheol doesn’t take the obvious invitation. Instead he licks again, on the other side of Jihoon’s cleft, until Jihoon shudders in desperation.

“Do you want me to beg for it?” Jihoon whines, muffled. “Is that what you’re waiting for?”

Seungcheol grunts amusement. He should feel guilty for enjoying it so much, but somehow he cannot manage the trick.

“Fuck, Seungcheol, put that tongue to good use and eat me out like you mean it.” Jihoon lifts his hips higher before adding, “please.”

Seungcheol nips him on the shoulder, quick and sharp enough to say, "my pleasure," and it's an effort to tug those little red panties down Jihoon’s legs without shredding them with his claws, but amazingly he manages it.

Jihoon’s ass is tight when Seungcheol kneels down to mouth at him, closed up on itself and defensive. That’s okay. Seungcheol has experience getting Jihoon to open up to him, although usually more in a metaphoric way.

He starts by trailing his tongue round Jihoon’s beautiful, pink rim. He's sloppy about it, making no attempt to venture in. Just lapping lazily, detouring to take Jihoon’s balls in his mouth then breathing hotly on the shaft before switching back again.

Jihoon’s hips jerk and thrust with each swipe, each lap shocking happy little moans out of him, like Seungcheol's tongue is the best thing that’s ever happened to him.

Sooner than he expected, Seungcheol has to hold him still, letting his claws bite lightly into flesh and even snarling when Jihoon doesn’t stop wriggling against his hands.

“Stop moving.” Seungcheol growls.

“I can’t—it feels—ahhnmm--”

Jihoon’s words break off into hot little gasp as Seungcheol pulls his ass open and jabs his tongue all the way inside.

The sudden, sharp burst of sensation has the vampire arching beneath him, milky thighs spreading beautifully wide and giving Seungcheol free rein to work.

Seungcheol dives in further, lapping in broad strokes from Jihoon’s perineum to his hole, tongue working insistently against Jihoon’s rim until he’s teasing inside on every firm push.

He loves how Jihoon feels inside, slick and soft, hot enough to scald, tight enough to make Seungcheol work for every small fraction of progress. His cock is pulsing in anticipation, hurting, but he doesn’t care. He's licking into the vampire firm and wet and unrelenting. Not that Seungcheol isn’t usually fucking amazing with his mouth, but the rough texture of a Lycan’s
tongue is clearly intensifying the experience for Jihoon.

“Please – stop.” Jihoon begs and buries his face in the pillow. “I can’t—I need your dick. Please. Please.”

Instead of answering, Seungcheol leans back briefly to bite hard on Jihoon’s ass.

The Vampire yelps, but moves up into the pressure of teeth.

“Do that again,” he says breathlessly.

"Shut up!” Seungcheol snarls with too many teeth, and Jihoon stiffens under his hand.

He banishes the faint, guilty voice at the back of his thoughts—then softens his harsh reply with a kiss to the dip of Jihoon’s spine.

Jihoon spares him a quick look over his shoulder, a smile tugging on his lips as if to say—you’re such a sap.

“I haven’t finished.” Seungcheol intends to sound smug but it comes out hoarse. He can’t tear his eyes away from Jihoon’s hole, winking open and shut, dripping with his saliva.

He buries his face between those soft cheeks and shakes his head, moaning as Jihoon’s ass quivers around him.

It’s not the first time Seungcheol has licked Jihoon open like this, but half-shifted as he is, Jihoon’s scent is more potent, it’s... God. Makes Seungcheol's mouth water, makes him raise red angry line on Jihoon’s cheeks as he spreads them wider to stick his tongue in deeper.

“Cheol—please. You’re killing me.” Jihoon is panting now, arching his back and pushing into Seungcheol’s face.

Seungcheol growls when the vampire reaches between his own legs, tongue still laid flat against his hole, and the vibration is enough to make Jihoon’s hips buck reflexively.

“Fuck me then,” Jihoon sobs, releasing his cock. Anticipation adds to the tight quiver of his skin as he waits, spine arched, offering himself up to the beast behind him. “Come on. I’m ready. Please Cheollie.”

Apparently the Lycan in Seungcheol agrees, giving one last lick before pulling back.

Seungcheol mounts Jihoon easily, furred muscled pressing against the backs of thighs and roundness of his ass.

“Yes,” Jihoon hisses at the first slick touch of Seungcheol cock. “Fuck yes, fuck.”

Seungcheol’s half Lycan form is not made for gentleness, not really. There's nothing kind about the heft of his cock like this, nothing sweet about the way he pushes into Jihoon, forces Jihoon’s body to make space for him. Moving inside him like it's Seungcheol's birth-right.

Jihoon hums, letting his body melt into the bed as Seungcheol fills him up, fucking him relentlessly. He's clamping down on Seungcheol’s cock, responding to Seungcheol's need and his scent. Readying himself for Seungcheol's knot.

“You want it, huh? Want me to wreck your little hole with my knot? It’s going to fucking hurt.” Seungcheol speaks the words in a rumbling purr. It's a unfamiliar tone. An opening volley full of
threat and promise.

The vampire responds to it beautifully. “Yes! Fill me—*please*. I want to feel you for days.”

Seungcheol's chuckles is a dark rumble.

“Slutty little vampire.” Seungcheol’s voice is thick as he says that, blurring into another growl.

Seungcheol stretches lazily, luxuriating in the post-coital hum running through his muscles.

He thinks he'll probably be able to convince his insurance provider that some sort armed robbery took place in the bedroom. That, or claim a wild bear broke into his house and tore up the place.

Either is plausible, because there are two smashed lamps, numerous torn pillows, a large dent in the wall, a trail of shredded clothing, and Seungcheol's relatively certain they just broke an oak headboard.

It was worth it.

Jihoon's sprawled out in an exhausted puddle beside him. He's covered in scratch marks and love bites and his entire inner thighs, nearly up to his balls, are mottled with red tooth marks, skin purpling in their midst.

Seungcheol hopes Jihoon doesn't freak out when he sees them.

He hadn't realized he'd been quite that, um, thorough, considering it had felt a little like having sex at warp speed.

Seungcheol's a little unclear on the exact sequence of events, but there had been Jihoon's ass, Seungcheol's tongue, Jihoon's moans, Seungcheol's hard cock, Jihoon taking his knot with unadulterated bliss and Seungcheol licking him out after and quite frankly, order isn't important. Seungcheol's still reeling from the fact they just had oak-cracking sex, and he wonders if he'll be able to convince Jihoon to have more of it in the future, because his Lycan side has *never* been happier.

"You're staring at me," Jihoon says, eyes closed.

"Well it’s either you or a bunch of broken furniture—and you're much prettier." The smile that brings is a reward in itself, and Seungcheol mentally pats himself on the back.

"Did we break the bed?"

"Just the headboard." Seungcheol says.

He can see the crack in the wood above his head, and he knows his Wolfy self is stronger than he is, but he's totally blaming Jihoon for that one.

"I really thought we broke the bed." Jihoon sounds almost disappointed, and Seungcheol leans over to kiss his smug mouth. It's perfect, warm and relaxed, and Seungcheol could kiss Jihoon like this all day.
“Next time,” Seungcheol promises, pleased when there's an arch to Jihoon's back, and a definite show of interest from other parts. "It's good to have goals."

He shifts position against the headboard to give Jihoon more space to curl close, and Jihoon sighs happily, hitching a leg over Seungcheol’s hip so he can nuzzle under his jaw.

“All the way?”

“Yeah.” Jihoon smiles impishly, patting his chest. “The big guy—when do I get to see him?”

Seungcheol isn't sure whether to be angry at Jihoon’s lack of self-preservation, or to gape in disbelief. Either way, what the hell?

“Are you actually fucking insane?”

Jihoon is quiet for a long time and then says, “I don’t think you’d hurt me.”

The laugh that slips out sounds just shy of hysterical, and he's got Jihoon's full attention now. Perfect.

Jihoon struggles to lean up on one elbow. His expression is serious, not the playful petulance Seungcheol expected.

”What's wrong?” He asks, resting a cool hand against Seungcheol’s forehead. "Are you feeling okay? Thirsty? Hungry? You’re hungry, aren’t you. I figured you’d get hungry after all that, so I prepared snacks. I wasn’t kidding when I said I had treats for you.” Jihoon says, moving to roll off the bed.

Seungcheol grabs his wrist before he manages to and reels him back.

“Do you realise how huge my dick would be when I’m fully shifted? I would tear you in half. Literally.” Seungcheol blurts out.

Jihoon eyeballs him for a second, then bursts out laughing.

Seungcheol pouts and waits for him to finish, watching him laugh himself out with his shoulders thrown forward and his stomach contracting in rhythmic, powerful pulses. When he finally settles, he is breathless, and his face is lit with warmth when he reaches to steady himself on Seungcheol’s shoulder.

“Oh my god.” He wheezes, bursting into another short peal of laughter and squeezing once. “I’m not saying we should fuck. Jesus—I know I’m kinky and all, but even I’m not brave enough to try and ride a dick the size of my leg!”

“Oh. Okay.” Seungcheol chuckles, sheepish yet infinitely relieved that no one will die on his monster werewolf cock.

A hand tangles comfortingly in his hair, and Jihoon pecks him on the lips. “I just wanted to see you fully shifted. You were so cute and fluffy all wolfed out—when you weren’t ripping that guy to shreds then running off into the woods and making me worry. I thought it would be cool to see your full form, maybe pet you a little.”
Seungcheol sighs and flops back down on the bed. “I’ll think about it Jihoonie, okay? Not today.”

Jihoon frowns. “You’ll *think* about it? Might as well just say no, because that’s obviously what you mean.”

Exasperation kicks bright and unpleasant behind Seungcheol's ribs. “Seriously? Haven’t you had enough wolfy theatrics for one day? What we did tonight should have been enough wolfy theatrics for a *lifetime*.”

Jihoon’s eyes flash, narrowing to piercing slits. “I just don’t see why you’re so reluctant to be yourself. What are you so afraid of?” There is genuine confusion in his tone.

Seungcheol sighs and rolls to look at the ceiling, afraid to see Jihoon’s face as he explains.

“There’s a reason I don’t shift fully Jihoon. The Lycan’s *completely* in control. There’s no human thought process at all and it’s dangerous. There’s huge gaps in my memory after I shift back and most of the time I’m covered in someone’s innards and I don’t know how it happened. You may have handled my half form pretty well—but the big guy’s different. You’ve seen what he’s capable of. He’s a monster.”

Jihoon entwines their fingers, stroking Seungcheol's soothingly. “I don’t believe that. It’s still *you* underneath.”

Seungcheol sighs.

The fact that Jihoon has faith in him is an awesome thing that Seungcheol isn't entirely sure he deserves. But he's not going to say it.

He opens his mouth to protest against the idea some more, but Jihoon talks over him quickly.

“You shifted to protect me.” Jihoon reminds him. “I know it’s not something you do unless you *have* to, but after you killed that guy—you had an opportunity to hurt me too, and you didn’t. Give the big guy more credit—he deserves it.”

Seungcheol gets a good look at Jihoon’s smug little face and immediately knows he's going to cave, he *knows* it.

He really only has himself to blame.

He should be harder to talk into things, especially things of a dubious and supernatural nature.

“You really, really want this huh?” He says, in a half annoyed and half defeated sort of way.

“Yes. I think I’ve demonstrated I’m more than capable of handling whatever you throw at me.” Jihoon says, giving Seungcheol a look that dares him to protest.

“I hope you’re right.” Seungcheol says, climbing off the bed.

He moves to the centre of the room and takes a deep breath, then hesitates.

“You better put some clothes on,” He says, gesturing vaguely at his naked baby vampire. “Wouldn’t want him getting the wrong idea and—*yanno*.”

“Oh.” Jihoon giggles, darting into his vampire den.

He remerges a few minutes later in shorts and a hoodie, thankfully a nice, safe, dark green colour
this time.

“You ready?”

Jihoon’s eyes sparkle. “Yes. Uhm, wait. Is there anything I definitely shouldn’t do? Any advice?”

Seungcheol opens his mouth to say, ‘Yeah—try not to run screaming. He’ll think it’s a game and chase you on principle.’ but he can’t form the words quite like he wants because he can feel his entire body rearranging itself.

The last thing Seungcheol is thinking, in that hectic, confusing moment, before the Lycan takes full control, is that this was a really, really bad idea.

Transforming into his full Lycan form radically changes Seungcheol’s features, as well as significantly increasing his size—and he was already a pretty big guy to begin with. Now he’s completely covered in dark brown fur and almost double the width he was before.

He’s big enough that Jihoon could probably use him as shelter in an earthquake, and he’s so tall standing upright on his hind legs that his head knocks against the ceiling, sending the lampshade swinging back and forth.

He’s basically a giant puppy now.

A curious giant puppy.

“Seungcheol?” Jihoon asks, tentative, trying to draw the Lycan’s attention away from where he’s pawing the lampshade in wonder.

He wasn’t sure Seungcheol would answer to that, but the Lycan jerks his head in Jihoon’s direction at the sound of his name, and Jihoon sees a flicker of recognition in his eyes.

“Oh, wow.” Jihoon says, looking slightly dazed as the Lycan towers a good five feet over him by his estimate. “I almost forgot how big you are like this—”

He stops talking when the Lycan snarls at him, lips curling in warning and eyes glowing a blood red shade of oh, shit.

The growl that follows reverberates through Jihoon, enough to rattle his bones. He’s feeling the urge to roll over and show his belly, and he’s not even an actual wolf.

“Woah, big guy. Easy.” He says, taking a few steps back and raising a placating palm before he thinks better of it.

The Lycan turns his head, slow and conscious as he follows Jihoon’s movements, then with a ferocious snarl, he eats up the distance with a single gliding stride.

Jihoon doesn’t dare move a muscle as the Lycan leans down, inches from his face. His teeth are bared in a growl, saliva dripping from the sharp tips of his canines.

Jihoon feels his toes curl unbidden into the carpet, every muscle in his body is squeezed tight, trying to pull himself as small as possible.

He winces as a set of razor sharp teeth close around his throat, understandable, Seungcheol’s teeth
are bigger than Jihoon’s fingers in this form, and while they’re not piercing skin yet, that’s clearly an option.

He swallows on reflex and immediately regrets it when it makes the jaw holding his throat tense the slightest amount, a clear warning to keep very, very still.

Just as Jihoon is certain his Lycan is going to rip his throat out in a tragic, bloody mess—the Lycan eases back, emits a soft whine and then…. licks a single stripe up his forehead.

“Uhh?” Jihoon says eloquently.

He feels the Lycan’s lip curl on his chin, that broad soft tongue, impossibly large, laps at his cheek, soft smacking sounds loud this close to his ears. It's that more than anything that eases the paralyzing fear.

Okay. This is good. There’s no biting—so it must be good.

The Lycan continues to groom him, and Jihoon can only stare at him in dumb silence. Watch as the red bleeds out of Seungcheol's eyes, and back into soft hazel he’s so familiar with.

There's a wavering noise in the Lycan’s throat now, like he’s not sure whether he wants to eat Jihoon alive or not.

It seems not.

Maybe he doesn’t taste very good?

And, no, that shouldn’t disappoint him.

The Lycan hunkers down to nose at Jihoon’s throat for a moment, and Jihoon knows there’s no point in denying his fear, but another instinct has him lifting his chin, exposing his neck to the Lycan’s exploration even as he trembles.

“Hey big guy. You know me, right? I’m Jihoonie.” Jihoon says, though he has no idea how much of his words get through to Seungcheol when he’s transformed.

If the Lycan does understand, he gives no sign, just continues sniffing at Jihoon.

Jihoon tries to remain still while the Lycan spends long moments nudging his nose into his neck as if fascinated by his scents, but this close Jihoon can’t resist petting him a little.

He carefully lays a hand on the curve of the Lycan’s shoulder, and when Seungcheol doesn't react to it at all, he lets his fingers spread and move up to the scruff of his neck, squeezing, just a little.

“Hey Cheollie.” Jihoon’s voice is half the volume he means it to be.

A low rumbling growl gusts hot breath over his neck, and then suddenly Seungcheol's so much closer. There's a hot rush of breath, and then wet, biting pressure against Jihoon's jaw, and the corner of his mouth, that makes him flail away with the shock of it.


The side of his own mouth is now covered in wolf drool and he carefully wipes it off with his sleeve.

He wants to glare at the Lycan so that he knows he's not amused. But then the Lycan is—Jihoon
can’t believe it—rolling over on to his back and stretching out.

“Oh my god.” Jihoon gasps, eyeballing him. “Are you—do you want your belly rubbed?”

The Lycan yips and his tail starts to wag.

Jihoon holds very, very still for a minute. Then his knees give and he’s kneeling on the floor at the Lycan’s side, digging his fingers into the thick, fluffy fur over Seungcheol’s chest and scratching.

Seungcheol’s fur is really soft. Like, magically soft. Jihoon buries his fingers in it and rubs with vigour until Seungcheol’s hind leg starts to twitch.

Jihoon watches, entranced, keeping up the patter lest Seungcheol realizes how undignified he’s being and withdraws. When the Lycan butts his head against Jihoon’s knee, Jihoon takes it as an invitation to pet there too. So, he rubs his hands over the Lycan’s head, sinking his fingers into the fur behind Seungcheol’s ears.

"Do you like that puppy?” Jihoon says softly, ridiculously, getting the grate of stubble under his nails and scratching.

The noise Seungcheol's making changes completely.

His eyes drop half shut and, oh my God, this is officially the best thing ever.

Jihoon ramps up the lazy scratching, and there’s a soft rumble that's not quite a purr, but something like it, something deep, and warm and pleased.

“Who’s a good boy? Who’s the bestest boy?” Jihoon coos, scratching under the Lycan's chin.

Were Seungcheol in his human form, he’d let out a long-suffering sigh at this sort of treatment.

Instead, the Lycan simply chuffs proudly, and raises a solitary paw.

“Yes! It’s you. You’re so good! Aww, my big puppy. You may look fierce, but you’re just a big softie,” Jihoon says, fluffing the fur on the Lycan's belly with both hands. “Aren’t you, boy?”

At this point the Lycan’s muzzle falls unto Jihoon’s thigh, and his tongue is lolling and leaving drool stains against Jihoon’s shorts, and Jihoon does not care one bit.

The Lycan may recognize him as friendly, but he doesn't recognise the room evidently.

After his enthusiastic 'hello, would you like to pet me?', he just prowls the confined space of the room, occasionally bumping into furniture as he investigates his surroundings.

The curtain rings fascinate him, and he spends an age pushing them back and forth along the curtain pole until his attention shifts to something else.

He's sniffing the air now, in a curious and completely non-threatening way, ears perked up.

Jihoon doesn’t know if it’s good sniffing or bad sniffing, if the Lycan’s just being curious or scenting out a threat. But to be safe, he just stands still and lets him do his thing. It’s not as though he can ask Seungcheol what's up. 'What is it Lassie, who's out there?'
After a moment, the Lycan seems to have found what’s he’s looking for, and he pads on all fours towards the wicker basket laying on the floor.

Of course, Jihoon thinks with a smile—food.

Seungcheol begins poking insistently at the basket with his nose, then tries opening it with his paw, but only succeeds in crushing the lid down and denting one half of it.

“Cheollie!” Jihoon reprimands, stomping over and swiping the basket away. “Don’t crush it! I was going to open it for you. Naughty!”

The Lycan growls at him then, but it’s more of a brief, perfunctory growl, which turns into a thick little noise of complaint, when Jihoon levels him a critical look.

The Lycan clearly doesn’t appreciate being scolded, because he whines—he literally whines at Jihoon before slinking off and trying to hide under the bed.

Needless to say, he’s not very successful.

He’s so huge he only manages to hide his head under there, while the rest of his ginormous body sticks out and his shoulders push the frame up off the floor.

“Get out from under there! You’re going to crack the bed frame.” Jihoon berates, trying to pull the Lycan back with no success.

The Lycan whines softly in response, somewhere between grumpy and defensive.

Jihoon throws his arms up in the air. “Fine. I guess I’ll have to eat all these treats myself.”

He pads over to the dented basket and pries it open, pulling out a bag of chips.

He doesn’t intend to eat them, but he hopes it might tempt Seungcheol out from his poor hiding spot.

“Hmm. Delicious.” Jihoon hums, making the appropriate nom-nom noises as he pretends to munch on the snacks.

The Lycan must be curious enough—or maybe he's just bored of whining under the bed, because when Jihoon next looks over, the Lycan’s standing up and staring at him over an upturned snout that eloquently says: ‘What’s that you’re pretending to eat? Are you planning on sharing?’

Jihoon holds the basket behind his back. “These are mine.”

The Lycan whines, ears flicking back and forth uncertainly.

“Oh, you want some now, do you?”

The Lycan’s response is to give his tail a slow wag, which Jihoon takes as a good sign.

Jihoon closes the last distance, placing a hand flat against the Lycan's chest, stretching just a little to make up for their size difference.

“Okay, then—sit.”

The Lycan flicks an ear in annoyance and raises his snout in the air. His irritation at the command a clear sign of Seungcheol tugging on the reigns a little.
Jihoon rolls his eyes.

“I’m not trying to belittle you. It’s just you’re so tall like this, I can’t feed you when you’re towering over me. Come on.” Jihoon waves him down to the floor again, more aggressively, until it almost looks like flailing.

Seungcheol chuffs and takes a seat on the floor, begrudgingly. It doesn’t do much to remedy the size difference, if anything it only highlights it further because even sitting, Seungcheol’s snout is still eye level with Jihoon’s face.

“Guess I’m going to feed you standing up.” Jihoon giggles, reaching into the basket to pull out the first treat.

He had debated on what to buy for his giant puppy, because he wasn't sure Seungcheol would agree to this at all. But he'd finally decided on a Giant T-Bone steak as they could at least make use of it if Jihoon's little experiment failed.

The Lycan clearly knows he's brought steak, because he's suddenly on high alert, chuffing and pawing at Jihoon’s shoulder with clumsy enthusiasm.

“Uh, uh!” Jihoon tuts, smacking the Lycan’s paw lightly. “Patience Cheollie, I have to unwrap it for you first. Unless you want to eat it, Styrofoam and all.”

The Lycan does the forehead licking thing again, because he thinks that will get him all the treats.

It works.

Jihoon giggles and pats him on the head. “Well, since you asked so nicely.”

He tugs the steak out of its packaging and then tosses it in the air, watching with a sort of horrified fascination as the Lycan’s jaw clamps down around it.

“Wow. You guys are top of the food-chain for a reason.” Jihoon mumbles, reaching up to scratch up behind the Lycan’s ear as he chews.

The Lycan makes a horrible noise, as if to remind Jihoon that if he even thinks about trying to get his half-eaten steak back he'll eat him as well. The noise stops when Jihoon pulls another one out of the basket, and the Lycan’s expression turns into that 'hopeful dog,' one instead.

It makes Jihoon snort messy laughter through his nose and start unwrapping the second steak. “Yes, this one is for you too.”

The Lycan demolishes the remains of the first steak in one gulp, then chuffs quietly until Jihoon offers him the second.

Jihoon is quick to pull back his hand as the Lycan bites into one side of the steak, but instead of gobbling it all up, the Lycan sinks his claws into the other side and rips it in half. He demolishes the half in his mouth, before nudging the other half towards Jihoon, in a gesture of sharing.

Jihoon gets the feeling this is kind of a huge deal.

"No, you eat it puppy. Raw meat’s not really my thing." Jihoon laughs.

As Seungcheol chews contently, Jihoon rests his hand on his head, smiling as the Lycan leans into his touch. The Lycan finishes the steak, then sticks his nose against Jihoon’s other hand, nuzzling
into it, and yeah, they don’t get much tamer than this.

The Lycan is restless and playful after he eats all his snacks, and that presents a problem.

Jihoon’s all up for some playtime, but the wrestling game Seunghcheol is trying to instigate is probably not a good idea.

Jihoon isn't entirely sure that the Lycan remembers Jihoon isn't as strong as him, even though Seunghcheol is painfully aware of that fact. Jihoon's trying to avoid any awkward moments where he's broken accidentally. But it's hard to occupy a five hundred pound werewolf, who wants to playfully hunt things down, and pounce on people.

So Jihoon says, fuck it, and breaks out the bag of doggy toys he’s been hoarding secretly behind Seunghcheol’s back.

“Now, I hope you won’t remember this—because I know you’ll be all embarrassed by it later. But I couldn’t resist buying you some toys to play with.” Jihoon explains, pulling out a rubber ball from the bag.

The moment the Lycan sets his eyes on the ball his ears stand up to attention.

Jihoon chooses to believe that he’s impressed.

And so he should be.

The ball is big and red and beautiful and…….lasts all of five seconds.

The Lycan gets to play with it for just enough time to sink his teeth in it, pierce the rubber and watch it deflate.

“Erm, I should have seen this coming.” Jihoon mumbles, watching as Seunghcheol nudges the deflated rubber with his snout. He whines quiet, angry confusion and there’s a longing look in his eyes, like he hopes the ball will bounce back to life if he persists.

“It’s okay! I have other toys for you.” Jihoon is quick to assure, digging inside his bag for another toy.

He pulls up out the little green, squeaky frog he picked up from work yesterday and tosses it on the ground in front of the Lycan.

Seunghcheol sniffs the frog curiously, then squashes it with a paw.

The shrill squeak it emits must scare him, because he immediately retaliates by swallowing it whole.

“Cheollie No!” Jihoon yells out, trying to stop him.

But it’s too late—the squeaky frog is gone.

“You big idiot! Don’t eat the toys!” Jihoon snaps.

Seunghcheol gives a disagreeable little chuff, like he doesn’t know what Jihoon is so worried about, because he clearly just saved the day by eating the menacing squeaky frog.
The Frisbee Jihoon pulls out next lasts a fraction longer than the ball, but ultimately shatters to pieces under the strength of Seungcheol’s teeth. As does the tether tug, and the knotted rope bone and even the supposedly indestructible rubber goose for aggressive chewers.

Jihoon’s beginning to think nothing is made to withstand Lycan strength.

Nothing from Petsmart anyway.

Seungcheol looks devastated each time he destroys a new toy, like he accidentally broke something priceless and has no idea where the glue is. When Jihoon has emptied the bag of toys, the Lycan starts sniffing at the bag, a hopeful look on his face.

“I’m sorry puppy. I’m all out of toys.” He says, tipping the bag upside down in demonstration—just so Seungcheol gets it.

The Lycan’s staring at the floor now, shoulders slumped, and there’s something human about the expression. Something dispirited, resigned.

It makes Jihoon's heart clench. “Aw, no, don't look like that.” His hands go up to frame the Lycan's big, furry face. “It's not your fault. They’re just not made to withstand your strength.”

Jihoon thinks he understands his sadness a little; it must be frustrating to want to enjoy things that ultimately break under your strength.

He can see how hard Seungcheol works to control it, how determined he is to never be the thing in people’s nightmares, how much he sacrifices to make sure he never, ever hurts anyone. Jihoon has been watching him try so hard to be a good person, a good man, and Seungcheol can’t see that he already is. Jihoon has never met a better man, a stronger man, and that knowledge is all wrapped up in everything Seungcheol is, in everything Jihoon feels for him.

“I’m sorry Cheollie.” Jihoon murmurs, pressing a kiss to the Lycan’s snout. “Next time I’ll get you something sturdier to play with.”

The Lycan hunches in on himself further, ears flicking back against his head, and Jihoon feels guilty. He never thought he’d have to apply the words existential angst to a werewolf, but it seems apt.

Maybe the doggy toys weren’t such a good idea.

Seungcheol needs something that can withstand his wolfy strength. There's got to be something....

“Oh, wait!” Jihoon says, jumping up and running around to the other end of the bed.

He rummages around the heaps of bedsheets until he finds what he’s looking for.

“Look what I have Cheollie.” Jihoon says, cajoling.

He waves Branchy into view and the Lycan immediately perks up when he sees the stick. His tail thumps rhythmically on the floor and he makes a sound that comes out half bark and half whine, short and a bit plaintive.

“That’s right. Branchy.” Jihoon grins, offering it to the Lycan who immediately hugs it close, like welcoming a long-lost friend.

The adorable way Seungcheol plays with Branchy is officially on the list of things that Jihoon can
not react to without losing coherence, like baby bats and kids in homemade Iron Man suits. The room is in no way large enough for him to play fetch, but Seungcheol still manages to entertain himself by tossing it in the air and catching it with his teeth.

He also manages to misplace it on three separate occasions, and whines pitifully until Jihoon fishes it out from behind the wardrobe and hands it back.

When he’d first seen it in the attic, he’d branded it as junk, but now watching Seungcheol walk Branchy over the floor, he supposes it’s misshapen edges and gnawed off twigs resemble the shape of a wolf in some way.

“You love Branchy the most, huh?” Jihoon grins at Seungcheol as he nuzzles the branch.

The Lycan regards him for a quiet moment, Branchy clasped in his paw, then he’s tossing the stick away, wrapping his large paw around Jihoon and bringing him closer.

“Oh… Me?” Jihoon murmurs, feeling his face heat as he climbs into the Lycan’s lap.

He is no fool; he knows how much he and Seungcheol have come to mean to each other, but he wasn’t expecting Seungcheol’s Lycan side to recognise him in that way too. But here he is, curling an arm around Jihoon and nuzzling against him affectionately.

For all his size and strength, he’s incredibly gentle. With his free paw, he strokes Jihoon’s cheek, claw pressing down softly enough not to break skin.

Jihoon tucks his head into the Lycan’s chest and snuggles against him, burying his face into the warm fur and taking solace in the protective bulk of him. “You’re so sweet Cheollie. The sweetest.”

The Lycan smells nice, Jihoon thinks, dazed. All pine-like and earthy.

Seungcheol had explained beforehand that his full form isn’t made for talking, lacking a human voice box or the appropriate thought processes for speech.

Even so, the Lycan's snarled Mine comes out perfectly clear to Jihoon, and it sounds like comfort. Like home.

There is an odd disconnect between the cuddly werewolf currently looking down at Jihoon adoringly, and the man Jihoon knows to be lingering behind those eyes. It’s impossible for him to forget this is still Seungcheol, and yet…

“You know, it’s weird, but I feel like—I know this side of you. It’s familiar in some way. I feel like I’ve known you for years.” Jihoon murmurs, surprised at how breathless he sounds.

The Lycan’s eyes flash.

He chuffs in answer, and then rests his muzzle into Jihoon’s hairline, breathing deeply and ruffling Jihoon’s hair on his exhale.

The warmth, the soft fur and the steady rhythm of his breath, all lull Jihoon to a deep and restful sleep.
Jihoon stares up at him, silent, unguarded, his shields shattered, with a wistful look in his eyes.

“You know, it’s weird, but I feel like—I know this side of you. It’s familiar in some way. I feel like I’ve known you for years.”

The Lycan stares back, and for the first time since he’d met the baby vampire, Seungcheol can sense something familiar.

In the back of his mind, like a soft pull, like something that has been there for a long time and he has never really recognized it. It’s a presence that has come and gone, emotions and colours and images and a bond so close it couldn’t really be possible, but it had been once. Then it had disappeared, like a ghostly touch he has never been able to pinpoint.

Normally he’d blame this feeling on the proximity of the full moon, or on being out of touch with his Lycan side for so long.

But if he’s truthful to himself, it has been there for a lot longer. He’s just never made the connection until today.

A few stray images flash behind his eyes. Not thoughts. Just… like memories.

In a dense, dark forest, with fingers clenching into his fur and a shrill cry ringing in his ears—that’s when he’d felt it last. In that moment the sensation had been all-powerful, a need projected into him, a hunger that wasn’t just fuelled by blood.

“I feel like I’ve known you for years.”

Seungcheol wakes, gasping and gropping blindly. His hand knocks into something warm, and he feels familiar fingers wrap around his wrists.

"Shh. You're okay. We're okay." Jihoon’s voice murmurs in his ear.

"Jihoon," his voice is panicked. One of the hands lets go of his wrist to smooth his hair back.

"Yes, it’s me. Relax."

Seungcheol sucks in a deep breath and exhales slowly. He turns his head to take in Jihoon’s relaxed profile.

"Are you okay? Did I hurt you?"

Jihoon doesn't move away, like Seungcheol expects him to. The hand resting on his forehead smooths his hair back, and Jihoon smiles warmly. “Of course you didn’t. You were so good. So well behaved, like a werewolf angel.”

Seungcheol makes a face. “Really? An angel? You mean I didn’t do anything crazy?”

Jihoon hesitates a long moment before answering. “Well—there is one thing I need to tell you about….” He looks abruptly conflicted, like he doesn’t want to share.

After what Seungcheol considers is a pause that's just a shade too long he smacks Jihoon on the shoulder.
“What happened?”

Jihoon winces. “It wasn’t your fault, Cheollie.” He says. And then, in an almost hesitant tone, “It was mine, okay. And it was a bad idea.”

Seungcheol’s eyebrows both go up. “What did I do?”

Jihoon shakes his head, grimacing. “I should have stopped you, but you were too fast.”

“How have you stopped me from what?”

“You—you,” Jihoon holds a hand over his mouth and looks away.

It sounds…..it sounds like he’s trying very hard to smother his laughter.

The bastard.

Seungcheol considers smothering him for one, brief happy moment, but it occurs to him that if Jihoon’s laughing, it mustn’t be all that bad.

“Just tell me Jihoon, the suspense is killing me!” Seungcheol huffs, because he still needs to hear it.

“You swallowed a squeaky frog. Okay. I’m sorry—don’t be mad.” Jihoon blurs out, running quickly from the room.

Seungcheol watches him flee, blinking in surprise until the gross ramifications occur to him.

“Dammit Jihoon. I’m gonna have to poop that out now.”

In the hustle and bustle that follows Mayor Chun Ho-Jin’s speech, the Mayor’s chief of staff catches his eye with deliberate gravity. There’s concern etched on her features, which means something is about to derail his evening.

Carefully extricating himself from a conversation about global economics, Mayor Chun turns towards his Chief of staff as she approaches his side.

“What is it?”

The woman clears her throat, before leaning in to whisper discreetly. “We have a slight issue, Mr Mayor—Mr Dokgo is here. He would like a word with you.”

Mayor Chun frowns a little in surprise. “Can it wait? I’m in the middle of something.”

His chief of staff shakes her head minutely. “He says it can’t.”

Ho-Jin has no idea how to reply to that.

He’s not sure what Dokgo even wants, although the suspicion is creeping in on him.

Excusing himself from the cluster of attendees he’d been entertaining, Ho-Jin follows her and the security team out of the main room.

He’s lead through the lobby, past a gaggle of reporters, to an empty conference room at the back of
the building.

There’s a guard just inside the doorway, another on the other side of it, just out of sight. They step aside as Ho-Jin and his entourage approach, but only permit the mayor to enter.

Dokgo is already sitting at the table, a brown envelope at his side.

He’s a bulky man with hair silverying at the temples and too many years of hardship apparent on his face. He has inherited his position as the head of the Seoul’s largest vampire tracking agency from his father and his brother, and has held on to it by being more ruthless than the two of them combined. These days, he likes to pretend he's retired, but everyone knows the truth; in practice, Young-jae Dokgo hasn't given up an ounce of the power he'd fought to keep.

Ho-Jin respects his success on principle, but detests his company from experience.

Nothing good can come from socializing with a man who turns killing into a sport, but Mr Dokgo’s agency was one of his re-election campaigns biggest donors, so as Mayor, he has no choice but to make time for these inconvenient meetings.

Dokgo stands when Ho-Jin enters and offers him a firm handshake and a cold, empty smile.

“Mr Dokgo,” Mayor Chun says politely, smiling his own crocodile smile, “What a pleasant surprise this is. Please—sit. How can I help you?” he adds, as they both take a seat.

Finally, after what feels like a damningly long pause, Dokgo says, “I’ve just spent the day in the middle of a forest, digging up the remains of one of my most experienced hunters.”

Ho-jin presses his lips together tightly in irritation.

It sounds like an accusation, mainly because Ho-Jin has an idea of what the answer is and he doesn’t like it one bit.

“My condolences. But I hope you don’t think me rude for saying, but isn’t that an occupational hazard of people in your profession?”

Dokgo narrows his eyes, his fingers tapping against the surface of the table once, twice.

“No. Not usually. Not with the years of experience the hunter had.” He pauses to open the envelope sitting on the table between them, pulling out a thick stack of photographs. “And definitely not like this.” He finishes, tossing the photographs down.

Ho-Jin can’t make his gaze focus on any one picture long enough to assess the damage.

He’s too horrified, too sick and revolted and numb to process what he’s seeing.

The corpse in the photographs has been torn apart, shredded in half—vertically. The head is misshapen by force, one eye missing and the other protruding from the socket. The man’s—he’s guessing it’s a man—chest and stomach are ribbons, his limbs precariously attached (if at all—Jesus Christ, his leg is hanging by a tendon) and he can’t look at it anymore.

He flicks his gaze away from the gruesome photographs quickly, grabbing the corner of the table for balance. “Jesus.”

“Horrible, isn’t it?” Dokgo says, glancing sidelong at the photographs. “His name was Byung-ki Kim. He was one of our best vampire hunters. I trained him myself.”
Ho-Jin only *just* stops himself from gagging at the pictures. “Yes, well—I am sorry for your lo—”

“I didn’t come here for your sympathies.” Dokgo interrupts fiercely. “I want *answers.*”

That brings Ho-Jin short.

He bites the inside of his cheek to stop himself from saying anything really enraging.

Shifting in his stiff-backed chair to offer Dokgo his full attention, he parries, “And you’re expecting *me* to give you them? Don’t take this the wrong way, but *how* has this got anything to do with me?”

Dokgo’s oily-slick veneer hardens for a moment—offense or surprise, impossible to say which—but the stiff expression quickly transitions into something softer, friendlier: a macabre imitation of warm understanding.

A moment later, Dokgo gestures at the guard at the end of the room, who nods—then steps outside.

Ho-Jin is glad for the privacy; he’s not sure he wants anyone knowing his interests aren’t as conservative as they should be.

The second the guard leaves, Dokgo leans forward in his seat and meets his eyes steadily.

“Because Byung-ki Kim was killed while tracking the vampire you wanted taken out. So, I’d say—that it has *a lot* to do with you, *Mayor Chun.*”

Ho-Jin keeps his expression bland with difficulty.

There are too many things racing through his head, from *What have I gotten myself into* to *That stray did this? Are you sure?* He shakes his head and fishes through all of them to the important question.

“I propositioned you for that job months ago. Are you telling me that stray is *still* out there?”

Dokgo looks calm, but Ho-Jin catches the minute tightening of his lips, a tiny twitch in his fingers.

“I presume so.” Dokgo says, inclining his head. “Byung-ki never reported him captured or killed and, he has been missing for a few months now.”

Months?

*Months?*

Ho-Jin was sure this little ‘problem’ had been dealt with when he stopped getting updates. Now Dokgo is telling him otherwise. *Months later.*

Ho-Jin wants to tear out his hair in frustration. This is *not* going as planned.

Resting his hands on the table, he gives Dokgo his best challenging look.

“One of your hunters has been missing for months and you just fucking noticed?”

There’s a glint of impatience in Dokgo’s smile, subtle but pointed, like he’s grown tired of explaining the intricacies of his work to laymen.
“It’s not unusual for hunters to disappear when they’re tracking someone. Sometimes you need to lay low to avoid startling them. When Byung-ki didn’t report back to HQ, we just assumed he was going under the radar to set a trap. But then last night I get a call, telling me a family on their camping holiday came across a dismembered corpse half buried in the woods, and it’s Byung-ki. Byung-ki who had a streak of 284 successful hunts and a career spanning 12 years. Byung-ki who should have had this job in the bag with his level of experience hunting strays. So, as you can imagine, I start to question: what’s so special about this stray that the Mayor wanted him killed so badly? Why would a politician such as yourself need the services of a hunter in the first place, and why did you insist I put my best hunter on this particular stray’s trail?”

Ho-Jin feels the nagging thrum of something unpleasant in his chest.

He is not, as a rule, a skilled dissembler, but he doesn’t like where this conversation is headed. He knows that if Dokgo is questioning his motives now, then he’s already started researching the stray’s background, trying to ascertain who his progenitor was.

And that is information Ho-Jin cannot afford to share.

“Listen.” Ho-Jin says, purposefully keeps his voice level and quiet as his mind grapples with the enormity of the situation.

“I employed your services as a favour to an old friend, and I assured him you would handle the situation with discretion. Now, I never met the stray personally, but from what I’d been told about him, he’s young, alone, inexperienced—he’s incapable of doing this. Perhaps he had help—another vampire even. Don’t strays stick together when they feel threatened? Maybe your hunter set a trap for one stray, and was ambushed by several.” He finishes, glancing over the photographs again only absently.

Dokgo laughs, which is so unexpected that Ho-Jin’s eyes zoom back to his face.

Dokgo’s forehead is lined and there’s a small scar across his right eyebrow and Ho-Jin can’t look away. He’s smiling, which is so incongruous that Ho-Jin has to comment on it.

“What’s so funny?”

Dokgo watches him silently for several seconds before shaking his head, tension easing from his shoulders.

“How naïve you are to think a vampire was capable of this.” He chuckles, gesturing to the photographs scattered between them; the severed spine, the shredded innards, the eye torn out of its socket.

There’s a different quality to his voice that takes Ho-Jin’s attention by the throat.

“Well, if not a vampire—then what?”

There’s another lengthy pause, this one more sombre, before Dokgo concludes, “This is the work of a Lycan.”

Ho-Jin opens his mouth, and no sound comes out.

Well—Shit.

Chapter End Notes
1) Mammoth chapter because I took so long to update, and also, splitting it would have been confusing storyline wise. Some things just needs to follow on smoothly without a cliffhanger I guess.
2) I debated about the level of furriness in this chapter. REALLY DEBATED. Because it's not my thing and I know it's not a lot of people's things. So I compromised a little. Seungcheol is half wolfy when they fuck, but in his huge ass Lycan form I decided to keep it fluffy because....well....monster werewolf cock would have been ridiculous for Jihoon to ride tbh. Not to mention, hard to write XD
3) Anyway, I hope the smut worked.
4) Also....Cheol wearing a collar? ;)
5) Hope you enjoyed reading! Feedback always appreciated.
"Be quiet! You're going to wake him up."

"Isn't that what we're planning to do anyway?" Jun whispers.

"Oh, yeah—good point," Mingyu snickers.

Seungcheol peeks one eye open, not moving. He can hear all of their shoes scraping in the corridors, the rattle of a cup and saucer, and the smell of maple syrup and pancakes charred on one side floating gently towards him.

What the fuck are they doing?

Suddenly, the door swings open and….

"Happy Father's Day!" they scream, bustling into his room.

Seungcheol almost shifts into his full Lycan form right there and then. "What the—"

Chan jumps on his bed, followed by Jun and Soonyoung. Mingyu places a tray in his lap when he sits up, starring at them with wide eyes.

"We made you breakfast," Mingyu chirps, looking sort of accomplished and worried at the same time. "I hope you like extra crispy pancakes."

The plate contains an interesting selection of beige and black, with the occasional splash of milk or dot of flour. There isn't a single pancake which isn't black on at least one side, and there's so much maple syrup poured on top that Seungcheol suspects his tragic pancakes will have to learn to swim.

But that's hardly what's important.

"Wow, this, this looks delicious." Seungcheol murmurs, throat tight with emotion—because his pack made him breakfast.

"We got you presents too!" Chan smiles, waving a shiny bag in view.

"And I masterminded the entire thing," Soonyoung beams.

Seungcheol looks at each of their excited faces in turn, then at Jihoon leaning in the doorway with a small teasing smirk on his face.

"This is... uhm. Unexpected." He says, his voice a little rougher than he'd like it to be.

He feels it well up in his throat, that sticky tightness that makes it hard to breathe, and his hands shake when he accepts the gift bag Chan’s now poking him in the chest with. He glances down at the plate of sloppily assembled pancakes knowing that they’re probably twice as crisp on the underside, and knowing it is still going to taste better than anything he’s ever had.

"Thanks," he coughs, trying not to let his voice shake. “But, uhm…Father’s day?”
"Well," Jun says awkwardly, "We know you’re not our dad. But you do so much for us. You don’t even have to. You just do it... because you want to. And, um, we appreciate it—"

“The unconditional-ness of your love.” Mingyu puts in, Chan and Soonyoung nodding along.

“What they’re trying to say is—" Jihoon interrupts from the doorway. “You’re the closest thing they have to a father figure, and they thought it was fitting to celebrate Father’s day with you.”

Seungcheol’s touched. He really is. But more importantly, he’s relieved Jihoon used ‘they’ and not ‘we’ because the idea of Jihoon seeing him as a father figure with all the sex they’re having would be really fucking weird.

"We love you daddy!" Soonyoung says, taking his free hand and rubbing it across his cheek. No prizes for guessing Soonyoung’s idea of ‘father figure’ means something completely different to everyone else’s.

“I thought we agreed we’d not use that word.” Jun says, pointing a finger at him.

Soonyoung pouts like he agreed to no such thing.

Seungcheol clears his throat again, brushing away a few errant tears he isn’t about to admit to. “I—uh, you're welcome guys. I’m really honoured. And thank you—this, this means a lot.”

Once upon a time, Seungcheol used to think that isolation was going to be the only way he could gain control of the wolf. Funny that he has finally found a place where he can belong again, and it isn't amongst his own kind, but with a bunch of baby vampires. Oh, and Mingyu.

“Open your present!” Jun snaps excitedly, yanking the tray away from him before he even has a chance to dig in.

“Ah, alright.” Seungcheol laughs, prying the bag open. There are two parcels inside; a small box and something that looks suspiciously like a poorly wrapped bottle of wine. Seungcheol unwraps the bottle first, grinning in delight when he sets eyes on a bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue Label Scotch Whiskey. “Woah, guys—you shouldn’t have.”

“Yes, we did.” Chan grins.

“To replace that seriously old bottle of whiskey we drank.” Jun adds sheepishly.

Seungcheol smiles fondly, “You didn’t ha--.”

“C’mon, open your other one!” Soonyoung interjects loudly, prodding him with the second parcel. “We wanna show you something.”

“Alright, alright.” Seungcheol laughs, setting the bottle off to the side carefully and reaching for the wooden box.

Under the tissue paper is a wallet, buttery smooth black leather with brown stitching, and of an ideal weight and size for his back pocket. It’s beautifully made, with his initials in silver thread and a little coats of arms stamped on one corner. It is exactly something that Seungcheol would like, and indeed likes a great deal, and exactly something he would never buy for himself. The tag inside says it was made in Italy, and Seungcheol doesn’t often buy nice things, but he certainly recognizes them, and he can easily see that this probably cost a fortune.

Seungcheol chokes back another embarrassing wave of emotion. He coughs to clear his throat, then
glances up to find his entire pack watching him carefully, anticipation on their faces. If he didn’t
know any better, he swears they’re doing all this just to see him cry. The bastards.

“It’s beautiful.” Seungcheol says, blinking a few times to clear his vision.

Mingyu flops down behind him, throws an arm over his shoulder. “Look inside.”

Oh, God! If there’s a picture of a kitten inside, Seungcheol won’t be able to hold back the tears.

Tentatively, he flips the wallet open. Inside the clear plastic window is a photograph of himself,
Mingyu and his four baby vampires, all smushed inside a photobooth. Seungcheol’s wearing a
mildly tolerant expression, and he remembers vividly protesting to the idea of being forced into the
small box for a ridiculous photograph. But everyone else is grinning wildly for the camera, so
happy just to be there with him.

“You looked kind of homicidal in the other shots, so we picked that one.” Mingyu says, resting a
chin over his shoulder.

“And because it’s bad luck to gift someone an empty wallet—” Soonyoung trails off and winks at
him pointedly.

Quirking a surprised eyebrow, Seungcheol thumbs through the wallet until he comes across a small
coloured piece of paper. He pulls it out, only to find it’s a coupon—for 1 free kiss.

“What the—” He glances up to see Soonyoung’s puckering his lips, waiting with his eyes closed.

“Can I exchange it for something else?” Seungcheol says, tone as dry as paper.

Soonyoung manages to look mildly insulted while still making a kissy face. “It’s non-refundable.”

Beside him, Chan rolls his eyes. “I knew we shouldn’t have let Soonie wrap the gift.”

“Quick. Better use it up before it expires.” Soonyoung says, undeterred, pursing his lips together
again.

Emotional moment aside, Seungcheol’s tempted to just toss an extra crispy pancake in his face, but
suddenly Jihoon’s coming to the rescue, snatching the coupon out of his hand and planting a wet
kiss on Seungcheol’s lips.

“There. Coupon redeemed.” He smirks.

Soonyoung’s protests are loud and immediate and Jihoon shoves him aside to take a seat directly in
front of Seungcheol. His hand hovers, like he kind of wants to put it somewhere naughty, but he’s
resisting because he knows the children are watching.

Eventually he rests it on the bedsheet over Seungcheol’s knee, stroking lightly. “We’ve all got the
day off. So, we’re taking you out for dinner too.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah, it’s this all you can eat BBQ place that caters to everyone.” Mingyu pipes in excitedly.

“Supernatural or otherwise. Jun knows the guy who owns it.”

Jun nods in agreement. “They serve the best ribs. You’ll love it.”

Seungcheol grins. “Sounds awesome.”
The taste of burnt pancakes follows Seungcheol for most of the morning. Jihoon wrangles the pack together to help Mingyu clean up his great pancake experiment because it actually looks like a breakfast flavoured bomb was let off in his kitchen.

Seungcheol does briefly help; he rolls up his sleeves and makes an attempt at washing the dishes before they all kick him out. Of his own kitchen.

Someone ushers him into a seat, shoves a kick-stool under his legs and hands him the remote and a cup of tea.

They’re really taking this Father’s day thing seriously.

It’s on the tip of Seungcheol’s tongue to protest, but it’s been ages since he could just sit around and do nothing. So he throws his arms over the back of the couch and contends himself to just watch.

By 6pm, they’re all ready to head out for dinner, and Seungcheol’s just locking up when his phone buzzes in his jacket pocket.

If it’s work, he honestly plans on telling them to fuck right off, but it’s not. It’s a message from Jeonghan, and worryingly urgent in tone.

‘How fast can you get over here? I really, really need a favour’

Seungcheol frowns down at the message for a moment, then glances up at his pack, all waiting patiently for him.

“You guys go ahead without me for now—I gotta do something and I’ll catch up with you.” Seungcheol says, in a casual way he probably doesn't get away with.

He gets nothing but frowny half looks from and concerned eyeballing, before Jihoon’s at his side in a flash, his eyebrows raised. “Why? What’s wrong?”

Seungcheol shows him the message, “It’s Jeonghan, and it sounds urgent. And I kind of owe him one. Or two. I’m sure it’s nothing. But I hate to keep the guy waiting in case it is. You guys go ahead, stay with Mingyu, and I’ll just check in with him. I’ll be as fast as I can, I promise.”

Jihoon blinks at him, eyes wide and dark as he processes his words. Then he nods, “Okay. Don’t be long. I’ll order for you.”

It’s a little surprising that when Seungcheol gets to Jeonghan’s address, a quaint suburban house, there’s a crowd of nosey neighbours gathered on the sidewalk, whispering amongst themselves.

Seungcheol stands there and takes his bearings.

There’s nothing immediately alarming; no crime scene tape or police presence, but the front door is standing open and there are broken plates in a box on the sidewalk.

Someone’s inside shouting, a man who isn’t Jeonghan.
Seungcheol, treading carefully up the front steps, catches a few words and feels simultaneous relief and astonishment: this isn’t a supernatural-related threat. This is Jeonghan’s life. Something smashes inside the place and he hesitates, then pokes his head through the door and into a front foyer, the hardwood littered with clothes.

“How can you be so relaxed about this,” a man is saying inside, his tone vicious. “Don’t you care at all?”

Indistinctly, Jeonghan replies. His voice is much quieter, and he doesn’t say much.

“Only you would be this self-righteous!” the other man says.

Aha, Seungcheol thinks. He’s torn for a moment—he should probably hold back and wait outside or ring the doorbell, then pretend nothing’s happened when Jeonghan emerges. Except he’s got reservations, his pack is waiting for him and he tells himself there isn’t really time to tread lightly. Also, he’s insanely curious.

He steps carefully over a pile of clothes—a few of shirts and jackets that he recognizes, a red tie his Lycan side would like him to sniff—and into a small living room.

There’s a long, comfortable-looking couch, the seat filled with a tumbled pile of electronics. Speakers, cables, battery chargers, a cracked laptop case. The drawers of one cabinet have all been yanked out, contents strewn all over the rug and there’s a few medical supplies spilling out of a bag on the coffee table. Black Gladstone, Seungcheol notes. Probably Jeonghan’s.

He’s just going over to the opened window, to judge the size of the crowd building outside, when a man walks into the room. He’s tall and good-looking in a fairly generic way, with high cheekbones and light auburn hair styled to frame his face.

The man is fully dressed except for his jacket. He’s got his carry-on over his shoulder and his suitcase in his hand. He stops short and stares at Seungcheol.

“Who the hell are you?” he asks. He’s clearly already pissed off, and doesn’t seem pleased to have discovered a strange man in his living room.

Seungcheol smiles. “I’m looking for Jeonghan,” he says.

“Aren’t we all,” the man says bitterly. Then he turns his head and shouts, “Hey, asshole! You’ve got a visitor.”

Seungcheol holds onto his smile for the few seconds it takes Jeonghan to emerge from the next room. It’s a bedroom, if Seungcheol is any judge of the few feet of crumpled sheets and rucked-up rug he can see from where he’s standing.

Jeonghan looks exhausted, like he’s been arguing all day. When he steps into the living room, he looks pleadingly at Seungcheol.

“Shua, please—Seungcheol’s here now, if you just talk to him he’ll tell you it’s not a Lycan—”

“I don’t care what he has to say.” ‘Shua’ snaps.

Seungcheol looks back and forth between them awkwardly. He really wishes he would have stayed outside with the crowd.

“So that’s it,” Jeonghan sighs. “You’re just going.”
“Yes,” Shua says. He goes to the wall closet and opens the door, spends a second sorting through what’s inside, then pulls out a coat and shrugs it on.

Jeonghan laughs incredulously. “And where are you going to stay?”

Shua takes a minute to straighten his collar, then turns and looks at the Jeonghan. He looks weary. “My mothers.” There’s a pause, and then he adds, “Until you can decide what’s more important to you.”

Jeonghan’s eyes widen—then narrow with irritation. Shua’s expression doesn’t change, but he walks straight to Jeonghan, grabs him by the shirt and kisses him on the lips, muttering a quiet ‘I love you’ before stalking out of the open front door.

As domestic arguments go—this is one of the weirder ones Seungcheol’s been privy to.

Seungcheol and Jeonghan stand in the silent house. Outside on the street, a car starts up, an expensive-sounding engine. BMW, probably. It pulls out with a squeal.

Jeonghan takes a deep breath, and seems about to say something, then doesn’t. He slides his hands into his pocket and looks around the room. His expression is bleak. There are circles under his eyes.

“What was that about?” Seungcheol asks, after a moment.

Jeonghan swipes a hand through his hair. “We just got back from Holiday and discovered that someone broke into our house while we were away.”

“Oh, shit. Sorry man.” Seungcheol offers, brow furrowing. That certainly explains the state of the place. “Have you, uhm, called the police?”

Jeonghan makes a noncommittal movement, not quite a shrug. “That’s the thing. They haven’t stolen anything. They just messed the place up and rifled through my records.”

“And your husband thinks it was a Lycan?”

“Well—,” Jeonghan crosses his arms. “They were private medical records I keep for my undisclosed patients. Who else would be interested in them? And if you recall—you kind of did break in once and tried to take our tumble dryer with you.”

Seungcheol grimaces. “Sorry. If it’s any consolation, it wasn’t a Lycan. I can’t smell anything off in the air. Nothing supernatural anyway—not that my word is likely to appease your partner.”

“I know what you’re thinking,” Jeonghan protests and there’s a flare of irritated accusation there. “But Jisoo’s not prejudiced about Lycans or anything.”
Seungcheol raises an eyebrow for Jeonghan to continue, because clearly there's more.

“He just thinks my job puts us in danger. Doesn’t understand why I can’t just be a regular boring vet, with a regular boring clinic and a regular boring routine.”

“Well—why can’t you?” Seungcheol asks, because it’s a fair question.

He watches Jeonghan’s mouth pull down at the edge. “How many vets do you know that specialize in Lycans in the Seoul area?”

“Uhm—none.”

“Exactly. I have a duty Seungcheol.” Jeonghan says flatly. “To you, to the other Lycan’s who need medical care. Jisoo doesn’t understand you guys can’t just waltz into a hospital and expect fair medical treatment. Everyone likes to think they live in a non-prejudicial age, but the fact is there still is mass inequality, especially amongst non-humans. The government spins all these stories about unity, but half the laws they propose unfairly discriminate against your kind. A Lycan, a vampire, a shifter turns up dead—nobody bats an eye. I don’t think I’m crazy to see something very wrong with that.”

Seungcheol nods and doesn’t say anything else. He helps Jeonghan push the drawers back into place, but when he moves to pick the contents off the floor, Jeonghan stops him with a hand on his shoulder.

“It’s okay—leave it.” He pats Seungcheol’s shoulder. “I need to sort through it anyway. It doesn’t seem like anything is missing, but I just need to be sure.”

Seungcheol clears his throat and says, “Well, is there anything else I can do? I could wait a while if you don’t feel safe staying here alone. Or I could call your partner if you like. Explain things to him, gently.”

“No, it’s fine. My neighbours are nosey enough to check up on me if anyone where to come back. As for darling Jisoo, he’ll just have to get over it. No doubt a few days with his mother will remind him how much he misses living here—break ins or not.”

Jeonghan walks him to the front door, stopping to stoop down and pick up the clothing discarded there, and magicking the red tie out of sight before Seungcheol’s Lycan can get properly excited about it.

“You’re looking a lot better since I last saw you.” He says, folding a rumpled shirt under his arm. “And you’re looking pretty dressed up too. I hope I didn’t drag you away from something special?”

“Oh, I—uh, just had dinner reservations,” Seungcheol says. At Jeonghan’s guilty look he quickly elaborates. “Just with friends. It’s okay—we were just heading out when I got your message. I have plenty of time to catch up with them.”

“You? Friends?” Jeonghan echoes with some amusement. “Last I checked, you weren’t the most sociable of people.”

Seungcheol laughs, because 6 months ago that was painfully true.

“They’ve kind of beaten me out of my shell. It’s hard to stay a loner when people will literally drag you out of your bed to go see a movie with them.”

He’s not expecting the smile he gets at that. “Sounds like the kind of friends you need.”
“They’re great.” Seungcheol smiles wistfully, realising he doesn’t tell them that enough. “You can come meet them if you like. Join us for dinner. They’ve made a reservation at some all you can eat BBQ place in town.”

“All you can eat BBQ.” Jeonghan laughs and shakes his head. “Classic Lycan.”

“Well—only two of us are Lycans actually. The rest are baby vampires.”

Jeonghan narrows his eyes at him in a perfectly readable ’What the fuck have you been up to,’ kind of way.

“Oh, yeah—” Seungcheol chuckles. He feels inexplicably sheepish. “I guess a lot has happened since we last talked.”

“Yes, seems so.” Jeonghan drawls, looking doubtful. “Last time we talked—there was one baby vampire in the picture. One stray baby vampire that you inexplicably took an interest in, and you were sulking about him running away.”

Seungcheol blushes and ducks his head. “Turns out he didn’t actually run away. He was there, waiting for me at home when I got back. We talked it out and uhm, he wasn’t upset about the Lycan thing, just that I didn’t tell him about it.”

Jeonghan raises a surprised eyebrow at him. “How weirdly understanding of him.”

Seungcheol nods. “Yup. And we’re together now. He’s my boyfriend.”

Jeonghan looks bewildered.

“And we’re in love.”

Jeonghan raises his other eyebrow.

“And I kind of adopted three more baby vampires along the way.”

Both of Jeonghan’s eyebrows rise fractionally.

“And a baby Lycan.”

The eyebrows rise a little more.

“And started a pack with them all.”

Jeonghan’s eyebrows are firmly at his hairline.

“And I’ve been training them to defend themselves.”

The eyebrows have jettisoned into outer space.

Seungcheol slips a hand into his back pocket and pulls his wallet into view. “They even bought me this wallet for Father’s Day.”

It’s safe to say Jeonghan no longer has eyebrows. He’s not doing a good job of controlling his facial features at all really. Seungcheol can’t blame him because this has officially been the weirdest six months of his life. Not necessarily bad-weird just...really freakin’ weird, and he’s sort of just summed it up for Jeonghan in thirty seconds.
“That, uhm, certainly escalated quickly.” Jeonghan says, curious and amused, eyebrows finally returning to their rightful place.

“Yeah—I guess it did.” Seungcheol shrugs affably. “But I’m happy. Happier than I’ve been for as long as I can remember.”

Seungcheol wakes up after a gruelling 12 hours shift and it’s nearly noon. He shuffles towards the kitchen, and is halfway past the couch before he realizes the low piece of furniture is occupied.

He stifles a startled noise as he sets eyes on an unfamiliar vampire sitting there stiffly. He’s all angles and dark eyes, lank black hair falling across his forehead, face like a baby but so much more behind it, skinny but scrappy.

A quick sniff doesn’t make Seungcheol recoil like he normally would with a grown vampire, so this one must be young. Probably another baby.

Regardless, Seungcheol’s not taking any chances.

“Who the fuck are you?”

The strange vampire blinks up at him, in a slightly bewildered fashion—like this is his living room and Seungcheol’s the interloper.

“M-minghao Sir.” He says, shuffling to his feet.

“That wasn’t an invitation to tell me your name.” Seungcheol says in a firmer and unnecessarily loud tone of voice. “I’m asking you what the hell you’re doing in my house?”

“He’s with me Hyung.” Mingyu’s voice shouts from the kitchen. A second later his head appears in the doorway. “Seungcheol, this is Minghao—Minghao, this is Seungcheol Hyung—the dude I was telling you about.”

Seungcheol makes a rude noise of disbelief. “You’re the one who invited him in? Why is he here? And why were you telling him about me?”

Mingyu pads over, frowning. “Minghao works in the Starbucks across from my apartment. He wants to join our pack—and hopefully, become my future boyfriend.”

Minghao eyeballs him. “No, I don’t.” He scoffs. His expression insultingly incredulous.

“Why not? My pack not good enough for you or something?” Seungcheol says, pretending to be offended on Mingyu’s behalf.

Minghao’s gaze snaps back to him. “What I meant to say was, no—I don’t want to be Mingyu’s boyfriend. But I am here to join your pack.”

“Well too fucking bad.” Seungcheol dismisses, making his way towards the kitchen. “There’s no vacancy in the pack at the moment. Come back next week—maybe once of us will have died.”

“I’m a skilled hunter!” Minghao blurts out desperately.

The sudden change in topic makes Seungcheol stop in his tracks, startled. He turns around to look at Mingyu, who just looks as surprised as he is, then at Minghao, who looks serious.
“I don’t know what Gyu’s been telling you pal, but we’re not *that* kind of pack.” Seungcheol says roughly, voice horrified.

“Oh.” Says Minghao, scrunching up his face.

There is a long pause.

“Then what kind of pack *are* you?”

Mingyu shrugs. “We just hang out and eat food. Sometimes we watch movies or go bowling together. Friday’s unofficial chilli night.”

Minghao stares at both of them, like they might be playing some sort of elaborate joke on him.

“Oh—okay.” He says, shuffling his feet, like he’s not sure how to proceed. “Well, then I—I make a really mean chilli.”

Seungcheol regards him sceptically, crossing his arms. “Prove it.”

It’s very possible that he could be swayed by a good chilli.

Minghao’s eyebrows raise in obvious amusement. “But it’s not Friday.”

“Do you want to be in the pack or not?” Seungcheol huffs.

It’s an odd feeling, to say the least, sitting at the Kitchen breakfast bar while a strange baby vampire cooks up some homemade chilli. But with the rate of odd things happening in his life at the moment, Seungcheol’s rating this a 3/10? 3.5 maybe.

He has to admit though, it’s good chilli. Better than good—It’s great. The tacos are messy and spicy and scalding hot.

“So, how is it?” Minghao says nervously, biting his thumbnail.

“This—” Seungcheol says, finishing off his third taco. “Is some damn good chilli.”

Minghao flashes him a small smile. “Thanks. I taught myself how to cook after my progenitor disowned me. It’s important to have those kind of life skills—when you’re all *alone*.”

There’s a sob story there, just waiting to be told. Seungcheol would like to avoid it is possible. “Pass the guacamole.” He says dryly.

Minghao glowers a little at that, but passes the bowl. It’s homemade guacamole too—really good shit. If Seungcheol wasn’t masterminding his own baby vampire football team, he would open a baby vampire restaurant and Minghao would be his baby vampire Sous-Chef.

“So?” Minghao says, clapping his hands together. “Can I join your pack?”

Seungcheol pretends to ponder this notion while he layers up another taco, sprinkles it with cheese and salsa.

“Why’d your progenitor disown you?” He finally asks, taking the lime from the edge of his plate and squeezing it on his guac.
Minghao rocks back on the heels of his feet, his mouth thinning, “He found out I was still in contact with my human family—he considered it a betrayal or something. What he didn’t realise was—they’d pretty much disowned me too after I converted. I was just trying to reach out to them and ended up losing everyone.”

As sob stories go—it’s not the most heart wrenching. Seungcheol feels like he’s getting the abridged version and he’s grateful for that.

Seungcheol sighs, licking lime juice from his thumb “I don’t know what you’re expecting from me kid, but I can’t be your pseudo-progenitor or anything. I’m a Lycan—okay. Under normal circumstances, we’d avoid each other. So, if you’re expecting me to hold your hand when you go to the dentist, kiss your boo-boo’s and teach you how to ride a bike—you’re joining the wrong pack.”

His tone is far more unkind than he'd intended, but it does the trick. He can tell Minghao gets it by the way his eyebrows pinch and his mouth flattens.

“Didn’t you hold Jun’s hand at the dentists’?” Mingyu pipes in suddenly, pinching his wrist.

Seungcheol twists his hand away and glares at him. “Yeah, but that because he’s a giant chicken and hadn’t been in years. His cavities were ridiculous.”

Mingyu pokes him in the shoulder. “And you kiss Jihoon’s boo-boo’s all the time.”

Seungcheol holds up a hand to silence him. “Jihoon is my boyfriend. It’s different.”

Mingyu stares at him for a long moment. “You promised Chan you’d teach him how to ride a bike next week.”

Goddammit. Seungcheol knew that promise was going to come back and bite him in the ass. And now Minghao’s looking at him with a sincere, hopeful look, like his pen is already hovering over the adoption papers.

Oh, fuck. Who’s he kidding. He’s been picking up baby vampires right, left and centre. He knows he’s going to adopt this one too.

“I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to have one more baby vampire around.” Seungcheol sighs, watching Minghao’s eyes light up.

“On one condition.” Mingyu interrupts, like he’s in a position to set conditions here.

Minghao glances at him sideways, his eyes instantly suspicious. “I’m not going to be your boyfriend, Mingyu.”

Mingyu pouts. “Why not?”

Minghao holds his arms out to the side, in a ‘what can I say,’ sort of gesture. “Don’t take this the wrong way Mingyu—but you’re just not my type. I think you’re a really sweet guy and all—but you’re a Lycan—I’m a vampire. We’re just too different.”

Mingyu’s shoulder slump dejectedly.

Seungcheol shakes his head, his mouth curls downward in disgust. He waves his lime wedge at Minghao. “It’s that kind of close minded thinking that will get you kicked off the pack.”
Minghao narrows his eyes at him, “So—does that mean I’m in the pack?”

“No.” Seungcheol frowns. “You can’t be in the pack. Cause you hurt Gyu’s feelings.”

Minghao rolls his eyes like Seungcheol is intentionally being difficult. And to be fair—he was. “Fine. If I kiss him or something, can I be in the pack?”

Seungcheol exchanges a look with Mingyu. Mingyu nods.

“Yes—a kiss will do. But make it a good one. A proper kiss.”

“With tongue.” Mingyu adds, winking lewdly.

Minghao’s expression twists as he weighs his options. Then he sighs. “Fine. Let’s get this over with.”

Mingyu smiles as if he’s just won the lottery and quickly rounds the table to collect his prize.

It starts of slow, just a soft press of lips and a quick slide of tongue. Mingyu pulls back, smiling, happy with what he’s been given. Then suddenly, Minghao’s got his hands in his hair, pulling him down again, tilting his head firmly and sloting their mouths together once more. There’s another flash of tongue, and then Mingyu’s hands are grabbing Minghao’s ass, hauling him closer and moaning into the kiss.

“Yeah—that’s it.” Seungcheol claps, which only seems to encourage them.

They’re all over each other in an eyeblink, kissing messily, hands snaking under shirts, his hips rocking needily into each other’s.

They’re really getting in the spirit of things. Like really. Perhaps a little too much.

Seungcheol’s wondering if they’ve forgotten he’s here, trying to enjoy his chilli.

“Okay, now—that’s enough.” Seungcheol says warily, watching as their hands grasp at each other.

Minghao kisses Mingyu's neck, uses his teeth, makes Mingyu's skin bleed a little. Then Mingyu’s lifting him up onto the counter, knocking bowls and cutlery aside.

“Hey! Watch the chilli!” Seungcheol snaps, lunging to grab a bowl before it tips over. They nearly side swipe him as they roll against the counter, and he has to quickly balance a few bowls in his arms before they get swept up in their desperate, lusty tornado.

Minghao wraps his legs around Mingyu’s waist, and they’re all over each other again, kissing desperately, hands groping.

“Hmm—Mingyu.” Minghao moans, pants, groans as Mingyu sucks on his neck. “I take it back. I do want to be your boyfriend. Take me to bed.”

Mingyu pulls back long enough to say, “Yay!” before diving right back in.

“Jesus fucking Christ!” Seungcheol grumbles, carrying his bowl of chilli to safety.

Lycan’s have a solid immune system that wards away most human bacterial and viral diseases off.
Flu? Seungcheol’s never had it.

The common cold? Doesn’t exist as far as he’s concerned.

Food poisoning? Not really a problem when your gut is designed to digest raw meat.

But occasionally—and that’s every few decades in Seungcheol’s life span—he’ll come down with some unexplainable illness that makes him want to lie down all day for a few days. So, when Seungcheol wake up with the Hangover From the Black Lagoon one morning, even though he doesn’t get drunk and hasn’t been drinking—he knows he’s getting the Lycan sniffles.

Usually he suffers through it manfully, but now he has a boyfriend who fusses over him, takes his temperature every five minutes and scolds him for not looking after himself. So, on Jihoon’s terrifying insistence, he calls in sick at work, has Mingyu escort Jihoon to and from his shifts at petsmart, while he sweats it out at home for a few days.

On day three, he’s napping on the couch when the front door suddenly slams and the jangle of keys rings from the front of the flat, causing him to nearly jump out of his skin. He doesn’t know how long he’s slept, but when he glances down at his watch, it’s nearly a quarter after six.

When he turns his head, he finds Soonyoung standing over him, squinting down at him judgmentally.

“Hey Cheol—what are you doing home at this time?”

“Uh—this is my home. I’m allowed to be here whenever I want.” Seungcheol points out, sitting up. He rubs his eyes, but the surprise of seeing Soonyoung has startled him into full wakefulness. “Question is—what are you doing here? And how the fuck did you get in?”

“Jihoon gave me a key.” Soonyoung chirps, dropping his rucksack on the coffee table.

Seungcheol frowns and lurches up onto his feet unsteadily. “That doesn’t sound like something Jihoon would do. Jihoon loves and cares for me—he wouldn’t hand the spare key of my apartment to a guy who would likely molest me in my sleep the first chance he got.”

“True.” Soonyoung says simply. Seungcheol’s not sure which part of that sentence he’s confirming.

Shaking his head, Seungcheol heads for the fridge. He can't bring himself to look at food, let alone swallow it, but he thinks maybe he can safely handle a glass of orange juice at this point.

When he walks back into the living area with a glass of juice in hand, Soonyoung’s taken over the place like a one-man plague of locusts, sprawled out on the couch, resting his grubby sneakers on the coffee table. He has Chan’s laptop set up on his lap, and is staring at the screen with an expression of utter concentration.

“You still haven’t told me what you’re doing.” Seungcheol says, taking a seat in the armchair.

“Just borrowing your internet.” Soonyoung says, not looking up.

“Borrow implies you’ll be returning it at some stage. Will you be returning it?”

Soonyoung pouts. “Ok. I’m using your internet. I don’t have set up any at my place.”

“And you can’t use Starbucks’s WI-FI because…?”
“Because they kicked me out for *inappropriate* behaviour.” Soonyoung huffs.

Inappropriate behaviour could mean any number of things, but in Soonyoung’s case, Seungcheol suspects nudity was involved somehow.

“Why? What were you doing?” Seungcheol can’t resist asking.

Soonyoung stares at him blankly for a long moment, his usual expression of poorly practiced innocence. “*Nuthink*. I was just taking a selca. I don’t know what the big deal was.”

Seungcheol stares heavenward; nudity was definitely involved, he determines.

Raising his glass to his lips, he asks, “What’s the laptop for?”

“I’m setting up an online dating profile.” Soonyoung smiles, and it's all Seungcheol can do not to choke on his orange juice.

“Wh-what?” He blinks a few times, but Soonyoung is still grinning from ear to ear. He seems completely, totally serious about this. “You—*Dating? Really?*” He says, a little disbelievingly.

“Yeah, I am.” Soonyoung answers with a defiant tilt of his chin. He gives Seungcheol an all-too familiar lecherous look. “You jealous?”

Seungcheol pinches the bridge of his nose. It's way too early for one of these slippery slope conversations with Soonyoung.

“No, I’m not jealous. I already have a boyfriend.”

Soonyoung slants a sideways smile at him. “Sure, but maybe you’re realising what you’re missing out on. It’s never too late to catch a ride on the Kwon Soonyoung express you know.” He grins and looks far too pleased with himself.

Seungcheol suspects he's going to have to be more supportive about the online dating if it means he can get Soonyoung off his case once and for all.

“You should put that as your tagline on your dating profile.” He drawls.

Soonyoung snorts. Then he purses his lips, looking thoughtful. “You think that’s a good pick up line to lure guys with?”

“No. But it’ll give everyone an idea of just how *creepy* you are. Who the fuck uses the word lure? Sounds like you’re a predator searching for your first victim.”

Soonyoung seems to consider this, then nods. Seungcheol really hopes he’s not looking for advice from him about the dating scene, because most of his experience with dating his theoretical rather than practical.

It’s all theoretical actually.

There are no pearls of wisdom when it comes to Lycan mating habits.

“Out of interest, what’s brought this on?” Seungcheol asks, tilting his head inquisitively.

Soonyoung turns back to the screen and taps the keys more angrily than is probably warranted. “Seeing you and Jihoon, Minghao and Gyu getting all *lovey dovey* with each other makes me want a boyfriend too. I’ve never had a proper boyfriend, and I want something that’s more than just sex.
I’m not getting any younger—"

“You’re not getting any older either. You are technically immortal.” Seungcheol points out, because that’s a valid point.

“Yeah, but—what’s the point of immortality when you have nobody to spend it with.” Soonyoung breaks off abruptly, his face crumpling with more emotions than Seungcheol knows what to do with. He shrugs, “Jun suggested I sign up to PlentyofProgenitors, and I’m going to give it a shot. Can’t hurt—right?”

 Plenty of progenitors?

That sounds like bullshit to Seungcheol, but he carefully keeps his mouth shut. If Soonyoung wants a boyfriend then, hell, he should have a boyfriend. After all the shit he’s been through he deserves one, though not in a creepy lucky dip way, obviously.

Seungcheol grabs the remote and switches the TV.

“No, no, no!” Soonyoung mutters a few moments later, seemingly talking to himself.

Seungcheol pauses flicking through the TV channels only long enough to ask, “What’s wrong now?”

“I’m stuck.” Soonyoung huffs, plucking at the sleeve of his hoodie, frowning as if thinking hurts.

Seungcheol takes a sip of orange juice, staring at his profile, “Stuck on what?”

“Trying to describe myself in 300 characters.” Soonyoung explains. He drums his fingers on his thigh, thinking. “I’ve lots to say, but I don’t want to come across too desperate and needy.”

“Yeah—good idea. You should save that side of yourself for the date.”

Soonyoung pouts and returns to his typing. A moment later, he lifts his head again. “Is double headed one word or two?”

“Two.” Seungcheol says, finishing his glass of juice and setting it down. “With a hyphen in between the words.”

“Cool. Thanks.” Soonyoung smiles, returning to his typing.

Seungcheol’s ears prickle with curiosity. “Wait….Why are you using double-headed in your dating profile?”

Soonyoung levels him a flirtatious look over the screen that implies he is willing to demonstrate.

Seungcheol does not want a demonstration.

“Never mind. Forget I asked.” He says, turning back to the TV.

Half an hour later, and Soonyoung is still typing.

Occasionally he’ll stop to cock his head and wrinkling his forehead critically, but there’s still a lot of overly loud—perhaps purposefully loud—’tap, tap, tapping’ going on that’s making Seungcheol want to lob the laptop out the window.

“Jesus fucking Christ!” Seungcheol groans, throwing his hands in the air when the typing starts to
drive him nuts. “It’s 300 characters Soonie, not *The Tall Tale of Kwon Soonyoung*. Keep it brief!”

Soonyoung rolls his head on the back of the couch, frustrated. “I can’t! I need to highlight all my qualities or else I’ll never stand out. The vampire dating scene is fiercely competitive you know. And—I’m an ugly duckling compared to the competition.”

Seungcheol frowns. “That’s bullshit. You’re very handsome.”

Soonyoung looks at him shrewdly, like he might be joking. “Great, thanks.” He mumbles, in a tone of voice which indicates he thinks Seungcheol is lying.

Seungcheol realises that this might just be the first time he’s ever said anything complimentary about him.

He feels like a bastard.

Which is totally unfair.

Breathing out slowly, Seungcheol lowers the volume on the TV and turns to face Soonyoung. “I’m being serious. Yeah, you’re not my type, but I can’t deny that you’re a great looking guy. And you’ve got a great personality too, even with the sexual harassment lawsuit just waiting to happen, anyone would be lucky to date you Soonie. Don’t ever doubt it.”

To say Soonyoung is chuffed is an understatement. His face lights up, that maniac look he gets when he’s really happy, as if Seungcheol has just proposed to him or something equally ridiculous.

“Thanks.” Soonyoung murmurs, looking well flustered at the compliment.

“Just keep your profile brief and to the point.” Seungcheol suggest, leaning over to pat him on the knee. “Then you can reveal more of yourself when you actually score a date.”

Soonyoung flicks his thumb and index finger at him. “Good point.”

“How do you spell pulsating?” He asks three quarters of an hour later, fingers flying over the keyboard.

“P—u—l,” Seungcheol breaks off suddenly, looking at Soonyoung with suspicion. “No. You’re not allowed to use that word—ever.”

That makes the smile slide right off Soonyoung’s face. “Fine. I’ll just use another word…..Throbbing.”

Seungcheol pinches the bridge of his nose, then reaches for the laptop. “Let me look at that.”

Soonyoung snaps the laptop shut, narrowly missing his fingers.

Seungcheol glares at him. “Fine. But if you attract the wrong kind of people it’s your own damn fault.”

It doesn’t come up again until a few days later.

Seungcheol’s in the middle of typing up a strongly worded letter to Junhui’s landlord, demanding he drop the rent back down, when Jihoon smacks him on the knee.
“I’m worried about Soonyoung.” He says, as if worrying about him is something only right and sensible, “Have you seen his dating profile?”

“No,” Seungcheol says, hitting save before he loses his progress, again. “And I don’t want to either. I’ve had enough experiences to scar me for life—I don’t need anymore.”

“Well it’s really, really,” Jihoon pauses, for lack of a better word. “Suggestive.”

“So, an accurate description of Soonyoung then.” Seungcheol deadpans.

Jihoon bites his lip to stifle a snicker, then sighs out a breath and glances at Seungcheol pointedly “No, but seriously. Soonyoung asked me to help him with it a few days ago, but I was too busy at the time. Now he’s out on a date with some guy he met through this weird vampire dating site, and I’m kind of worried he’s attracting the wrong people.”

Seungcheol shunts his laptop off to the side and wedges himself as best he can between Jihoon and the back of the couch. “Where are they meeting?”

“Just some coffee shop in the city centre.” Jihoon says. He gets a bleak, desperate look. “I told him to message me when he got there, but it’s been an hour and he hasn’t texted back.”

Seungcheol loops one arm round Jihoon's waist and rests his other hand on Jihoon's thigh, rubbing soothingly. “So it’s a public place. Whoever Soonyoung’s meeting with will have plenty of opportunities to scream for help when Soonyoung goes weird on them.” He tells him calmly.

Jihoon smacks him on the arm. “It’s Soonyoung I’m worried about, not his date!”

Seungcheol makes a ‘Really? Really?’ face at him, “Is Soonyoung really who we should be worrying about in this scenario? Remember when he tried to climb into the shower with me last week? If anyone’s going to be running screaming from that coffee shop—it’s his date.”

Jihoon waves a hand dismissively and brandishes the phone in Seungcheol’s face, ‘Look how he’s described himself here—’Baby vampire seeking a Daddy for more than just a good time. Fun, cute and flexible—in more ways than one.’ —And that’s the most coherent sentence here. He’s just bullet pointed all his interests underneath—which is essentially just a list of his kinks. He’s even used the word ‘Throbbing’ in completely the wrong context. I mean, that’s just asking to be taken advantage of by some creep. We need to check in on him Cheol!” He says, with a rising edge of hysteria.

“Fine, let me see.” Seungcheol reaches for the iPhone, manages to break Jihoon's death grip on it.

He scrolls down the page, eyebrows raising as goes, then whistles softly. “Oh Jesus, that profile picture is pretty risqué. Wait—was this taken inside of Starbucks? No wonder he got kicked out!”

Jihoon tips his head back on Seungcheol’s shoulder to get a look at the screen, “Quite a few people liked that photograph, but only one guy left a comment. Lee Seokmin—27 years old—” His forehead scrunches up as he reads the comment out loud. “‘We should meet up. You look good enough to eat.’”

Seungcheol snorts and hands Jihoon his phone back. “Classy.”

Jihoon raises his head and sends him a probing look. “I’m pretty sure you said that to me once. In fact, I’m pretty sure you said that to me just this morning.”

“Aw, but it’s different when I say it. You really do look good enough to eat.” Seungcheol coos,
leaning down to nibble at Jihoon’s neck, Jihoon giggling all the while.

"Stop distracting me," says Jihoon, a little breathless.

"Mmm—not sorry," says Seungcheol, and nips him so hard there's sure to be a mark later. Jihoon moans helplessly and kisses him for real, wet and sloppy, and soon enough they're making out on the sofa, Seungcheol pressing Jihoon deeper into the cushions.

Ten hot and urgent minutes later, Jihoon’s shirt has ridden up under his arms and his jeans are open around his hips. Seungcheol’s sliding two fingers through the slit in his boxer briefs when there’s a buzzing noise from somewhere on the arm rest.

“Oh, that might Soonyoung,” Jihoon says, nearly clocking Seungcheol in the chin with his knee as he reaches for it.

He quickly swipes it open to read the message, eyebrows lifting in surprise. “It’s him. He says he’s okay. He’s having fun, and his date is a cutey. I’m sure that’s what he means—he’s just texted the letters Q and T.”

“See. Nothing to worry about.” Seungcheol says, finally managing to wrestle his underwear off his hips.

Jihoon smiles, pleased. He moves to set his phone down, except it buzzes again with another message.

“Okay, that’s weird.” Jihoon pants, frowning. “He says the guy lied about being a vampire. He’s actually a…Lycan.”

Seungcheol pauses, still in the middle of mapping Jihoon’s inner thigh with his tongue.

His stomach drops.

“What!” He yells, jumping off the couch and springing into action.

This is bad. This is very, very bad.

He’s already scrambling around the apartment, searching for his keys, his shoes, his jacket, zipping himself up, when Jihoon scrambles to sit up, looking worried.

“Cheol—what’s wrong?”

“Soonyoung’s in danger!”

Seungcheol can’t speed run to the coffee shop like he wants to, partly because it’s a public area and he can’t risk drawing attention to himself if he’s about to murder someone. Mostly he can’t speed run because Jihoon insists on coming with him. His baby vampire is still getting to grips with his super speedy skills, and can’t manage more than a few meters at super speed without tripping over himself.

Seungcheol can’t risk him getting anymore boo-boos on his precious knees, so they grab an UBER, like a bunch of pussy mortals on a night out.

The second the cab pulls up, Seungcheol’s jumping out, leaving Jihoon to handle the tip as he
sprints across the road, heedless of traffic.

He’s already scenting the air as he pushes the door of Starbucks’ open, picking up on the familiar scent of Soonyoung and the second, more overpowering scent of a Lycan.

He spots Soonyoung and his date at one of the back tables. They don’t seem to have noticed him. Their heads are bowed low together, and Soonyoung is making emphatic gestures with his hands.

As Seungcheol approaches their table, he catches the tail end of Soonyoung’s words. “-three, maybe even four dildos at the same time,” Before Soonyoung spots him and gives him a wide-eyed look.

“Cheol?”

“That’s right. Daddy’s here.” Seungcheol announces, a bit grander than he probably should.

Soonyoung chokes. “W-what are you doing here?”

“I’m here to save your ass you idiot.” Seungcheol snaps, then glares at the Lycan sitting across the table, squirming in his seat like a kid who has to go to the bathroom. “Is this the guy? Is this the bastard who thought he could eat one of my baby vampires. Come here you son of a bitch!” He growls, hauling the guy up by his shirt.

The man yelps as Seungcheol drags him to his feet, forces him back against the wall and grips his jaw in his hand, thumb beneath his chin, digging in. The human throat is a landscape of vulnerability. Just a few pounds of pressure here or there and it’s all over. It’s much harder with a Lycan’s imperviousness, but Seungcheol easily manages to choke all the air out of the man’s throat as he pins him to the wall, a foot off the ground.

“You thought you were so smart, huh?” Seungcheol snarls. The Lycan has the temerity to look startled. “Coming after a baby vampire. But you’re wrong. Soonyoung’s part of my pack! You lay a finger on him and I’ll break it. NOBODY HURTS MY BABY VAMPIRES!”

The Lycan manages to free himself enough to yell, “HELP!” Before Seungcheol clamps a hand over his mouth.

Which, honestly—screaming for help? What a pussy. Seungcheol’s embarrassed for all Lycan kind.

Suddenly, Jihoon has materialised next to them, scowling at the side of Seungcheol’s face like that’s going to make him stop. And it sort of works; Jihoon has a mean scowl.

“Seungcheol, put him down.” Jihoon says in the slow, deliberate, listen-to-me, listen-to-me-now voice that he reserves for the severely unhinged.

Seungcheol’s head ticks sideways.

“I can’t. He’s dangerous. He was going to eat Soonyoung.” He spits it out rapid-fire, leaning aggressively into the other Lycan’s space.

All the colour has left the Lycan’s face, it’s pale and sweaty now. He’s staring at Seungcheol with a horrified sort of panic. Seungcheol doesn’t understand why he hasn’t tried to shift yet, so they can fight it out and just get it over with.

“Does Soonyoung look like he’s in danger?” Jihoon demands, his mouth twisting in
disappointment. “They’re just having coffee.”

Seungcheol glances over his shoulder, trying to see if Soonyoung looks okay.

Weirdly. Soonyoung does look okay.

There are no claw marks, or missing limbs. Though he does have a wide-eyed look of shock on his face—like a baby vampire dear in headlights.

“Yeah, but what does this fucker plan on after the coffee, huh?” Seungcheol growls, snapping his head back to face the Lycan. He tightens his grip again, slamming the guy against the wall.

“What’s your plan you scheming piece of shit? Do you think I’m just going to stand idly by and let you eat one of my baby vampires? NOBODY HURTS MY BABY VAMPIRES!”

Seungcheol can hear chaos all around him, people fleeing the coffee shop in panic, Jihoon snapping at him to let go. Any moment now, Seungcheol knows, they’ll hear sirens in the distance, an armada of Seoul police descending on them.

Now Soonyoung’s materialized at their side too, trying to help Jihoon in easing Seungcheol’s deathly grip on the guy’s throat.

“Cheol,” He whispers in Seungcheol’s ear, fixing big, demanding eyes on him. “I’m touched by your concern. And frankly, a little turned on. I didn’t know you cared this much. But you’re kinda ruining my date.”

Seungcheol scrunches up his forehead. “I’m protecting you!”

Soonyoung snorts like he’d said something stupid. “From what? Seokmin wasn’t hurting me. We were just chatting, having coffee.” He says sensibly, and it’s really not fair that Soonyoung is the one with the sensible tone of voice.

“Then why did he lie about being a vampire? Huh?” Seungcheol sneers, arching an eyebrow.

“That’s a good point.” Soonyoung says slowly. His gaze flickers to Seokmin. “I guess I got so excited I didn’t think to ask. Why’d you lie about that?”

Seokmin wheezes out a single breath, he looks like he might be sick. “I—I can explain.”

Unfortunately, the explanation has to wait—because they’re all promptly kicked out of Starbucks for disturbing the peace.

Seokmin suggests another place just down the road, and Seungcheol reluctantly stops choking him, but only because this shouldn't be settled in front of witnesses. The coffee shop Seokmin recommends is some hipster hell hole that also serves liquor—or maybe it’s bar that serves espresso—who knows. But there’s a guy behind the bar/counter with a ponytail in his hair and beard that Seungcheol would like to punch on principle.

They take a booth in the corner away from everyone else, and order four flat whites. Because apparently a cappuccino is too pedestrian in this bohemian hell.

Seokmin can barely stay still in his seat, crossing and uncrossing his arms, his feet hitting the floor loudly. He’s clearly uncomfortable about being seated next to Seungcheol.
Soonyoung's looking pretty awkward too, staring at his coffee with the familiar air of someone who's tentatively brought their first boyfriend home, only for his family to behave like a bunch of lunatics. His expression keeps shifting between misery, confusion and embarrassment.

Not that Seokmin's his boyfriend or anything.

Over Seungcheol's dead body!

“I didn’t mean to catfish you,” Seokmin mumbles, rubbing his palms on his knees. He’s looking everywhere but at Seungcheol. “It’s just—it’s hard you know, to be a Lycan who’s attracted to vampires. Vampires usually won’t give me the time of day, and they definitely don’t want to date me. I pretend to be a vampire online, and hope I’m charming enough in person that they’ll see past the whole Lycan thing.”

“How’s that been working for ya?” Seungcheol asks stiffly, a millimetre away from Seokmin’s face.

Seokmin sighs, with a certain overblown sense of frustration and pointedly moves a good inch away. “Not good. Usually my date takes one look and runs away. It doesn’t matter how long we talk online, or how close we get. They can’t see past the Lycan part of me.”

Jihoon reaches across the table and settles a hand on Seokmin's arm. He gazes at him with big, sympathetic eyes. “Aww.”

“Don’t aww him.” Seungcheol interrupts incredulously, glaring until Jihoon yanks his hand back. “He doesn’t deserve your awws.”

Jihoon makes a face that is clearly supposed to be a furious grimace, but it falls rather short. “Cheol, be nice.”

“I nearly gave up.” Seokmin continues undeterred. He breaks into a ridiculous smile. “But then I came across your profile Soonyoung, and you seemed pretty open minded.”

Soonyoung blinks, a starry-eyed deer caught in the imaginary limelight.

“I am open minded.” Soonyoung tells him. In that slightly overly-earnest way that's more than a little creepy.

“There was just something about you. When I saw your picture. It just—clicked.” Seokmin says, like every bad cliché.

Of course, Soonyoung is the audience bad clichés are made for. "Wow."

Slowly, their hands slide across the table towards each other—but Seungcheol’s hand slides between theirs first, stopping all attempt at contact.

No hand holding on his watch.

Across the table, Jihoon pulls a face of disapproval at him. “So—Seokmin.” He says, leaning forward intently. “Tell us more about yourself. What is it that you do?”

“Oh, uhm—I’m a freelance journalist.” Seokmin says, then doesn’t stop talking about it.

Seungcheol does his best impersonation of listening like he cares, which he’s terrible at. He’s mostly just glaring at the side of Seokmin’s face while his coffee grows cold.
“Wow, that’s really interesting.” Jihoon chimes in when Seokmin finishes blabbering, breathless and a little fawning, no doubt on purpose. That could really start to get on Seungcheol's nerves, not that he's planning to let Jihoon know it.

“Freelance.” Seungcheol scoffs. “Well—that doesn’t sound like a very stable job now, does it.”

Seokmin’s grin fades instantly, as if he’s has had cold water thrown in his face, which was the point.

There is a flurry of sensation under the table, and then Jihoon kicks him in the leg, jostling his half-empty coffee and throwing Seungcheol a sour look for good measure.

Seungcheol ignores him to focus on Seokmin, “Freelance means you’re unemployed most of the time. How do you plan on supporting my Soonie with a shaky income?”

Soonyoung looks vaguely disturbed over his coffee.

Seokmin has a look on his face that says, as plain as day, ‘What am I getting myself into?’ “I was under the impression Soonie had his own job and could support himself. What are you—his dad?”

Irritation spikes through Seungcheol. He’s half tempted to pull out his wallet—his father’s day wallet and show it off. But he blows out a breath through his nose instead. “Let’s get one thing straight here—Seokmin. I don’t like you. Don’t give me more reasons not to like you.”

Seokmin opens his mouth to reply, but Jihoon cuts in with, "Enough."

He looks at Seungcheol fiercely, then sighs and thumps a hand on the table. “Seungcheol and I will take another table—let you guys continue your date in peace.”

The sounds of the coffee shop buzz around Seungcheol; normally it’s a comforting sound, but right now it’s giving him a headache.

He uses his heightened Lycan hearing to eavesdrop as Seokmin tells Soonyoung a little about himself. His hobbies, interests, and how he grew up in a hippie commune with his free spirited, respect all living things, parents who didn’t tell him about his Lycan abilities until he was 15. Which makes sense in a way, cause he doesn’t exactly fit into the Lycan mould.

For one, he dresses too primly for a Lycan, and he inexplicably wears both a wrist watch and a pocket watch. He’s also smart and articulate and focused, and he has lots of interesting stories about normal, non-supernatural things, has Soonyoung nodding along to every word like a bobble-head doll.

If there is a born killer there, and Seungcheol’s not so sure about that anymore, Seokmin’s doing a good job of hiding him behind wincing white smiles.

“It looks like they’re really hitting it off.” Jihoon says, interrupting his thoughts.

“I am not happy.” But Seungcheol recognizes this as the petulant nonsense it is the minute it leaves his mouth, and amends by saying, “Something doesn’t feel right about him.”

He doesn’t like the way Seokmin is looking at Soonyoung for instance, like how someone else might look at a sixteen-ounce ribeye or hot fudge sundae, like he can already taste him.
Jihoon sighs, and it's a warm burst of long suffering annoyance across the table. “Honestly Cheollie. You're like a possessive dog, growling at the newcomer because he stole your favourite ball.”

“What!” Seungcheol whips his head around, “Who stole my ball!”

Jihoon stares at him, eyebrows raised.

“Nobody Cheol—geez.” He smiles dryly, dropping his chin into his hand. “Your spidey senses aside, Seokmin seems like a nice guy. And most importantly, Soonyoung likes him. That’s all that should matter here.”

Seungcheol can only shake his head, taken aback by Jihoon's—his what, his naïveté? His gall?

To be perfectly honest, he thinks Jihoon is a shit judge of character. After all, he's chosen to shack up Seungcheol, hasn't he?

“Soonyoung doesn’t have the necessary self-preservation instinct to make that call, okay. The guy looks friendly on the outside, but I don’t trust him.”

Jihoon wrinkles his nose delicately. “Why? Cause he’s a Lycan?”

“Yes.” Seungcheol grits out.

Jihoon sighs, as if Seungcheol makes a habit of worrying about things which aren't particularly important. “Listen, Cheollie, I know you have trust issues, I just figured you’d be more trusting of your own kind.” He lectures, clicking his tongue.

Seungcheol takes a deep breath. “You really have no idea—do you.”

Jihoon scowls, and for once, it isn't cute. “You know I hate it when you laud your experience over my head, make me out to be some kind of naïve kid.”

“Well, when it comes to this—you’re still pretty fucking Naïve.” Seungcheol tells him.

Jihoon sits there studying him, as if Seungcheol’s failed to say something important.

Seungcheol pinches the bridge of his nose. His temples are throbbing again. “I know how you see me, like I’m some overgrown puppy you can pet safely. But 20 years ago—I was a very different person Jihoon. I wouldn’t have hesitated to rip out anyone’s throat. And I’d lived like that for over 400 years until one day, something happened and I changed. So yeah—I have trust issues when it comes to other Lycans—cause I know how they think. How they’re born to think. I’d protect you with my life, same goes for anyone else in my pack. If that makes me a giant, paranoid douche, well, I’m sorry to disappoint you—but that’s not going to change.”

Jihoon glares at him for what feels like a full five minutes, and Seungcheol stares back, until Jihoon breaks eye contact, dropping his gaze.

“Just so you know Cheol..” He licks his lips. His fingers twitch around his cup. “When we get home—”

“Yeah, yeah—I know.” Seungcheol interjects, rubbing a hand through his hair. “I’m sleeping on the couch.”

“No.” Jihoon says slowly, eyes meeting Seungcheol’s across the table, “When we get home, I’m
Seungcheol jerks back in his seat—stunned.

“Huh.” He says. His throat feels suddenly dry. “I—I thought you were angry with me? Are we going to have angry sex?”

Jinhoon smiles, humouring and warm, and says, “No—I’m not angry with you. Although I should be angry, because you dragged me out here, threatened a perfectly nice guy and almost ruined Soonyoung’s date. But I can’t be mad at you when you get all protective and stuff. It’s why I fell for you in the first place and it’s still a huge turn on for me actually. So—yeah, hope you weren’t planning on an early night, cause I’m planning on riding you till your dick falls off.”

Seungcheol blinks at him. It’s amazing how Jihoon can make sex sound like a threat.

Jinhoon smiles with dimples. Evil dimples. “Maybe I’ll finally get to use that collar I bought.”

Seungcheol’s ears burn. “You—” He gulps audibly, “Bought me a collar?”

“Yeah.” Jihoon says, slouching down in his seat and smirking. “It’s personalised too. Got a little metal disc on the front that reads ‘Property of Lee Jihoon.’”

Seungcheol feels a pressure on the inside of his foot. Jihoon’s own shoe nudging against his. When he meets the other man’s eyes there is laughing mischief there. Butterflies flutter in his stomach. He shifts in his seat and tries to smile winningly.

“Tying me up and a collar too. That seems excessive. I’ll be at your mercy.”

“Hmm, maybe I’ll make you wear the matching muzzle too.” Jihoon continues. He snags a finger of froth from his empty coffee cup and licks it casually. “So you’re completely helpless. Nobody will be able to hear you—so I can play with you all night long.”

Seungcheol stifles a whine and reaches under the table to adjust himself. He loves how deep Jihoon’s voice gets when he’s turned on, how it turns low and dry almost like a purr.

“You like the sound of that—huh, puppy?” Jihoon asks, voice lowering. His eyes flicker up and down Seungcheol’s body with interest, clearly enjoying the way he squirms in his seat. “Do you like being all tied up and helpless while I ride your cock?”

Seungcheol feels a flush creeping up the back of his neck. He never knows what to make of Jihoon when he talks to him like that. “Maybe we could switch it up.” He says, gesturing between them, “We haven’t tried that yet.”

Jinhoon’s playful expression falters.

Seungcheol waits, sitting as still as he possibly can, but Jihoon is silent long enough for an unfamiliar feeling of alarm to begin clawing its way up his throat.

“Okay, you’re not saying anything. Throw me a bone here, Hoonie,” he huffs.

Jinhoon laughs awkwardly, and that terrible feeling in Seungcheol loosens into something that makes him want to laugh, too. “Sorry, I’m just—not sure what you mean. I thought we were already pretty adventurous in bed, so I guess I’m a little surprised there is anything to switch up.”

Seungcheol laughs, rubbing a hand over his face. “I don’t mean switching it up with roleplays and
kinks, Hoonie. I mean reversing positions. I— I dunno— I’ve never submitted before. With Lycan’s it’s a status thing that determines your place in the pack, and once you’re on top—you never bow down to anyone else. But with you….” He trails off, leaving the rest unsaid.

"With me— what?" Jihoon responds, though there's too much awareness in the words. He's being evasive, like he thinks Seungcheol will shy away from crossing that line.

Seungcheol's done enough shying away to suit him a lifetime. He raises his eyes instead— locks Jihoon in a bold stare—and says the words neither of them expects to hear.

"Do you want to fuck me?" he says.

The silence that settles between them is instantaneous and stunned.

Jihoon's eyes flash wide, his jaw drops in disbelief, and Seungcheol feels a guilty thrill at the fact that the man clearly has no idea how to respond.

Seungcheol quickly realizes that Jihoon was never really expecting this, probably never considered it to be an option. Jihoon has probably had an exhausting career as a gay man, being small and delicate-looking and basically incapable of not coming off as some sort of inexperienced, uptight, barely legal twink.

Or at least that’s what Seungcheol surmises from the way Jihoon bites his lip in an attempt to hide an expression that can only be described as delight, presumably that he’s never going to have to fight Seungcheol about this issue.

"I’d let you," Seungcheol says into the raucous silence. "Hell, I wouldn't just let you. I'd beg you to do it."

He would. He fucking knows it. He'd beg Jihoon to fuck him, and he'd mean every desperate word.

Jihoon looks sharply away then. The fingers of the hand he's got resting on the table tighten into a fist, and his throat works in a swallow, his jaw twitching in what Seungcheol recognizes as surprise.

Of course he's surprised. Hell, Seungcheol is surprised, too. He didn't come to out tonight to break of Soonyoung’s date figuring he’d be asking Jihoon to top later. He mostly just planned on kicking some Lycan ass, stumbling home and trying to catch a few winks before work tomorrow.

"I never expected you to be up for that," Jihoon says without raising his eyes.

"I could put it in writing if you like." Seungcheol laughs.

He briefly considers slipping out of the booth, slipping into place on Jihoon's side of the table. They've got enough privacy here. Seungcheol could get his hands on Jihoon without drawing unwanted attention. He could prove just how serious he is. He could make Jihoon give him a straight answer.

But before he can do any of that, Jihoon’s pushing his way out of the booth and standing.

“Soonyoung, we’re leaving—" Jihoon announces, peering at Seungcheol in what he swears is excitement. “Enjoy the rest of your date.”
The doors are dark mahogany, open like a lion’s jaws. Tastefully patterned carpet muffles the hard scuffed soles of his shoes. Mayor Chun Ho-Jin waits until the doors are closed behind him, impenetrable and opaque, before stepping forward.

Not long ago, in this very room, a deal had been struck. This much he knows. A foolish endeavour that has plagued him since. Ho-Jin had been at the start of his campaign trail, struggling along and coming up short at every turn, and desperate for financial backing he was suddenly willing to indulge in unsavoury company. A meeting was arranged by a shadowy third party, a price and a predicament had been waved under his nose until he finally agreed to lend a hand.

‘I’ll scratch your back—if you scratch mine.’

And now Ho-Jin’s choices are catching up with him.

Ezra is standing in the open window, moonlight streaming in, streaking his dark hair blue. An unusually absent expression on his face, his eyes fastened on some distant horizon beyond Ho-Jin's imagination.

He turns as Ho-Jin approaches, but doesn’t speak—just levels a long, unreadable look at him. The silence is more unnerving than yelling ever could be.

“Mayor Chun, what an unexpected yet pleasant surprise.” Ezra finally speaks, a glint of malice flashing behind his eyes even as his lip curls into a threatening smile. “Aren’t you a little early to be lobbying for election funds?”

Something in his voice—or maybe it's that look in his eyes, malice mixing with an eager curiosity that Ho-Jin is at a loss to explain—slithers uncomfortably beneath his skin and he takes a jerking step back.

“That’s not why I’m here.”

Ezra considers him for a moment—cocks his head to the side and regards Ho-Jin like a particularly interesting specimen in a petri dish. There’s a small seating area close by, and Ezra drapes himself in a fauteuil, like a monarch indolently sprawled in his throne.

“Sit, please,” He says, a formality from a man who makes requests out of politeness but never out of any actual need. And Ho-Jin does, eyes carefully scanning the man seated opposite him all the while.

Ezra’s hands are steepled, eyes at lazy half-mast, body completely relaxed. On anyone else the posture would look casual, attentive and harmless. But he might as well be clawing the wallpaper for all the reassuring air he doesn't give off. Though Ho-Jin has to wonder if that's physical or psychological.

They’ve only met a handful of times, but once is enough for any lifetime really.

At first glance Ezra had been beautiful. Possibly the most handsome man he’d ever seen. Every line and curve was in exactly the right proportion. Every angle new and striking, and Ho-Jin knew it should’ve been wrong, that nothing is ever perfect. He'd seen enough beautiful things split open to reveal rotten, festering insides.

Maybe because Ho-Jin was looking for it, and maybe because he had been staring so intently that day, it was suddenly there.

Long angles of bone that didn't fit, rows of sharp teeth and bulging blue veins, and the smell of
freshly dug earth. The eyes were wrong, they were green and alien and remote as the stars. And when Ezra smiled it was strange and grotesque, like his jaw wasn’t hinged quite right, like he wasn't made like anything Ho-Jin had ever seen.

Just like that, pretty had morphed into vicious, and Ho-Jin had finally understood from that first meeting he was making a deal with death; a nightmare passed down generation by generation, like the fear of the dark.

So he never lets himself forget, that this pretty thing that looks like an angel and smells like the forest, could snap his neck and empty his veins without even blinking.

Ho-Jin clears his throat, and wastes no further time. “I’ll just cut right to the chase, shall I.”

“I’d appreciate that.” Says Ezra. His voice is deceptively light. Quiet mockery runs beneath the words.

“We’ve had a little complication regarding a matter you asked me to take care of. One of your latest converts seems to have slipped the net.” Ho-Jin explains tentatively. Tentative because he expects a meltdown from Ezra, but what he gets is a smile that just keeps growing wider and wider.

“Can you be more specific?”

Swallowing thickly, Ho-Jin retrieves a photograph Young-Jae Dokgo’s reconnaissance had provided, pushes it across the desk, fingers holding it to the polished surface. It’s a picture of the young stray vampire, taken months ago when he was first being hunted.

Ezra’s face briefly twitches into something deeply unhappy when he glances at it. But then it's gone, and his expression is calm again, measured. He sighs, like Ho-Jin's disappointed him. Though it sounds more than a little forced, as if he's forgotten how to do anything sincerely.

“This stray was supposed to be taken care of months ago. You assured me he had been dealt with.”

Ho-Jin nods, “And according to me he had been. I too had been assured that Dokgo’s agency had their best hunter on his trail and the matter had been resolved. It’s only recently that Mr Dokgo himself approached me with new information that suggests otherwise.”

Ezra raises his eyebrows curiously, “What information was that?”

“The hunter responsible for tracking and killing him was found dead.” Ho-Jin explains. A series of images flash behind his eyes, grotesque scenes of the hunter’s mutilated corpse he’d seen in the pictures. “And not just dead—he was butchered, severed in half and buried in the middle of the forest.”

The expression of blank curiosity turns to a wry, humouring smile, and Ezra waits a long moment before responding. “This hunter’s fate is of no consequence to me. We have an arrangement you and I, Mr Mayor. I donate heavily to your ludicrous party policies and you take care of my little—indiscretions. Now, I have maintained my side of the arrangement and I expect you to maintain yours.”

“It’s not that simple-.” Ho-Jin begins to protest, but Ezra glares him into silence.

“Of course, it is. Find another hunter willing to take the bounty and take care of him.”

Ho-Jin takes a deep breath. Speaking to Ezra is like conversing with a brick wall, and Ho-Jin knows he's probably going to have to do a lot of talking without any sign he might be getting
through. So he decides to jump in with the best defence he has right now. “There is a Lycan involved.”

Ezra’s eyes widen briefly. A hairline crack in his mask, Unrehearsed and genuine. For the first time Ho-Jin has ever known him, he looks genuinely fearful.

“How involved?”

Ho-Jin lays his hands on the table.

The chair creaks quietly underneath him.

“Mr Dokgo is certain that a Lycan is responsible for the hunter’s death. The body has been tested and the remains all bear the tell-tale signs of a Lycan attack. At first, we thought it was a coincidence, that the hunter in question had unknowingly trespassed on a Lycan’s territory and paid the price, but we now know that’s not the case.” Ho-Jin pauses, only long enough to pull out a second photograph; one of the Lycan in question, following a group of vampires into a restaurant.

“Mr Dokgo was able to locate the stray, but he is hesitant to make a move as it appears he is now under this Lycan’s protection.” He explains, tapping the photograph for emphasis.

The Vampire blinks at him as though he's just said something completely implausible. “That’s not possible. Lycan’s don’t—”

“I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t have proof.” Ho-Jin interjects quickly.

Ezra's expression gives nothing away, and Ho-Jin decides he should probably clarify.

“Dokgo’s men have been tailing the stray on and off over the last week, and they’ve discovered a few interesting things. Your convert has somehow managed to obtain a set of new identity papers, a birth certificate and even a conversion certificate. They’re all falsified of course—but they’re high quality forgeries only the best money can buy, and probably the reason he’s managed to go undetected for so long. He even has a job now, at petsmart of all places, but the most baffling thing is—whenever he ventures out in public, he’s always accompanied by this Lycan.”

There's still no anger, and Ho-Jin doesn't know if Ezra’s been around long enough to be beyond it or whether his anger is a fine, low-simmering, thing that's hard to provoke.

“I’ve never seen a Lycan before,” Ho-Jin continues, swivelling the photograph back around to look at it himself. “And I’m not quite sure what to look for—but a background check on the man confirms that he openly identifies as one.”

“They conceal themselves much more effectively than we do.” Ezra murmurs almost thoughtfully.

“As you can see, this complicates things a little.” Ho-Jin says, staring over the desk at Ezra, daring him to tell him otherwise.

Ezra doesn’t admit or deny anything, just stares at the picture with a quizzical tilt of his head. “Why would this Lycan break with centuries of tradition to protect one of us? It doesn’t make sense.”

Ho-Jin tips his head in acknowledgement, “I agree, it doesn’t. But he’s young, and Mr Dokgo says these new generation Lycan’s are more rebellious in nature. Not so duty bound to follow with tradition. According to Mr Dokgo it’s become more common to see younger Lycan’s expand their social and even intimate circles to include vampires.”
Ezra pulls a face, it looks insulted from the side but it could just as easily be disgust. His face is strange and not always reliable.

“How young is he exactly?”

Ho-Jin doesn’t see why that information would matter, but he answers anyway. “According to his documentation—he’s 26 years old.”

“Only 26 years old?” Ezra makes a noise which sounds a lot like a laugh, but at the same time isn’t one. “That means he’s still an infant in Lycan terms. That’s hardly a threat.” He adds. Smug and cold.

Ho-Jin levels him a firm look, “To you maybe, but he’s still a Lycan. Mr Dokgo is not prepared to risk the lives of his men and—.”

“Are you implying I should take care of him?” Ezra is more than comfortable interrupting him, without raising his voice.

“No, I wasn’t.” Ho-Jin is quick to respond, raising a hand in a placating gesture. He licks his lips, considering how best to phrase his suggestion. “I’m just wondering if this stray is worth going to such lengths for. Forged documents aside, he hasn’t broken any laws. He doesn’t pose a threat to public safety and considering the new risk this Lycan poses—is it worth attempting a second time?”

Ezra looks briefly furious, before he quickly and obviously forces it away. “Yes—it is.”

“Why?” Ho-Jin asks as anxiety twists in his stomach.

Ezra leans forward suddenly, a hair away from invading Ho-Jin’s personal space. Ho-Jin stays exactly where he is, ignoring the curling of the vampire's fingers.

“This Lycan may be ready to break with tradition, but I am not. The strength of my coven relies on the purity of my conversion line. For centuries I have selected my followers wisely, choosing only the healthiest, strongest and most noble blood lines in the country. When I fed from this—thing, I had no intention of converting him. It was blind luck that he was able to survive the experience and human ineptitude that allowed him to escape. I cannot have his continued existence tainting my bloodline—therefore,” Ezra spreads his hands, and says nothing else.

It was impossible for Ho-Jin to keep the shock off his face. “But he’s just a kid.”

Ho-Jin expects Ezra to look angry, to at least look as if he's been accused of something horrible. Instead the expression on Vampire's face looks a lot like amusement. He crosses his fingers in front of his face, a too relaxed gesture for the heavy subject matter.

“So were the others you brought me to feed on—why should he be any different?”

Ho-Jin presses his lips into a tight, unhappy line and doesn't respond.

He stands from his seat and turns away from still and unbendable man in the chair. Heads for the door, resigning himself to the inevitable.

This isn’t the outcome he was hoping for, but if capturing a one Kim Mingyu is what he needs to do to avoid pissing off one of the most powerful vampire elders in the country, it has to be done.
1) Apologies for the delay in updating. I was working on other fics!
2) I asked people on twitter what name I should give Jihoon's progenitor, and some GENIUS suggested Ezra and....I had to go with it. It works in my head, especially when you check out these pictures. He just reeks super old, stylish vampire. Shame he's such a dick.
3) Cheol adopting more baby vampires tho. He's going to need a bigger house soon.
4) So, uhm...some puppy play next. I was going to include it in this chapter but it was already long enough and I'm still editing the puppy play :)
"Bedroom, now," Jihoon says the second they step through the front door, and Seungcheol does not need to be told twice.

For once Jihoon doesn't make him wait, comes on right behind Seungcheol. Shutting the door and the world behind them. Walking up to Seungcheol for a kiss, deep and wet but nowhere near as hard and possessive as he expects it to be. Just lips and tongue and it keeps going and going, until there's no more air in Seungcheol but what Jihoon lets him have, and that's fine. That's plenty.

Honestly, Seungcheol hadn’t expected the night to involve much kissing. But kissing’s nice—he likes kissing. Though he suspects it’s just misdirection for what Jihoon truly has in mind for him; if Jihoon’s bought a collar and a leash and intends to use them….that can only really mean one thing.

Punishment.

The hands in his hair tighten suddenly, and Seungcheol braces himself to be dragged to the floor by a punishing grip.

Instead, Jihoon’s fingers thread carefully through his hair, gentle—almost reverent.

“Good boy.”

Seungcheol opens his mouth to protest, to say that he is absolutely not good boy by any definition of the phrase, then remembers what they’re doing and clamps his jaw shut. There’s no telling if Jihoon’s in the mood for disobedience tonight. If Seungcheol defies orders or speaks out, it could be several more hours of torment before he’s allowed release—assuming Jihoon lets him come at all.

Seungcheol could nod or he could say yes, but he just makes this sound that comes out like a bark or a whine, short and a bit plaintive.

Jihoon’s expression breaks into a smooth, satisfied smile at that, and the hands in Seungcheol’s hair slip lower.

Jihoon begins unbuttoning Seungcheol’s shirt, saying nothing more. He's quick about stripping him down, not stopping to linger. He takes everything off Seungcheol but remains dressed himself, which inexplicably leaves Seungcheol off kilter.

It’s a little unfair he’s the only one standing butt naked on the bedroom carpet.

Can’t they both be naked for this?
"Hands and knees," Jihoon says, giving a small pat on the thigh when Seungcheol doesn't obey immediately.

Seungcheol sinks down, still looking up at Jihoon.

Jihoon crouches so they're looking each other in the eye, and pets Seungcheol's hair. "Are you ready for your present puppy?"

Seungcheol only nods, then watches intently as Jihoon moves across the room and begins rummaging through the bottom dresser drawer. He removes a single item, holding it casually in one hand as he crosses back to Seungcheol's side and drops smoothly to his knees.

Seungcheol blinks at the item in Jihoon’s hand—and then raises his eyes and says, “Uhh.”

When Jihoon said collar, this isn't what Seungcheol had in mind, because the collar Jihoon has produced is not some sturdy leather and metal contraption designed to subdue him, no. It's pink. And very frilly. And okay, it does have a little metal disk dangling on the front that reads 'Property of Lee Jihoon', which is hot, but it also has a white lace overlay and tiny gemstones for crying out loud.

But hey—appearances can be deceiving, Seungcheol knows that better than most. And technology has come a long way since he was last forced to wear a collar, so maybe it’s just designed to look…well…delicate? Or maybe Jihoon has some Lycan issue cuffs hiding in that bottom drawer too.

Before Seungcheol has a chance to voice his reservations, Jihoon’s reaching forward with efficient purpose and pulling the length of collar taut around the nape of his neck. It’s about two fingers’ wide with a silver buckle and a single silver link in the back, and the lace is cool and smooth, settling against Seungcheol's skin more like a kiss then a shackle.

When Jihoon fastens it in place, it takes Seungcheol’s breath away how close it is, how it fits exactly. He wants to ask Jihoon if he measured his neck in his sleep, but he can’t stand to break the moment.

Jihoon gets to his feet and hooks a finger in the link at the back, gentle. “How’s that? Too tight?”

“No, it’s fine. Could be tighter…. if you wanted.” Seungcheol says, swallowing thickly.

Jihoon levels him a look, and Seungcheol, realising his mis-step, ducks his head shamefully.

“Sorry, I forgot. Uh—I mean, uhm…” He trails off, then barks.

Jihoon’s odd look doesn’t waver, but he steps away for a moment, then there’s a clink of chains and his quiet footsteps returning to his side, before he clips something—a chain, Seungcheol feels its cold length against his spine—to the back of Seungcheol’s collar, fussing with the clasp for a second before pulling it taut.

“There—how does that feel?”

Seungcheol lifts a hand to trace fingers along the back of the collar warily—and okay, now he’s officially confused because the collar just doesn’t look delicate—it feels delicate too. At least, too flimsy and superficial to withstand his Lycan strength.

And yeah, he’s supposed to be playing the quiet, subservient Lycan here, but he has to say
something. He’s terrified he’ll tear the collar apart if he moves too carelessly.

“Isn’t this a little flimsy for a collar? I mean—I could tear it off pretty easily.”

“Obviously,” Jihoon snorts quietly, “It’s not exactly designed for rough handling.”

That knocks Seungcheol off-balance, off the rails of the expected conversation.

“But I thought—” He begins uncertainly, trailing off when Jihoon releases his hold on the leash and takes his face in his hands, forcing Seungcheol to look him in the eye.

“What do you think is happening here Cheollie?” He asks, his voice patient.

Seungcheol ducks his head, lets the hair fall into his eyes, a needed distraction.

“I—I honestly don’t know. I thought you were gonna tie me down and fuck me. Slap me around a little first. Maybe use some decent restraints to keep in place or something.”

He hears more than sees Jihoon suck in his breath and hold it. “Slap you around? Why on earth would I do that?”

Seungcheol jerks his head up in surprise, “Uhm—to establish dominance. To punish me.”

Jihoon tilts his head, kind of non-committal. “Is that what you want?”

“I thought that’s what you wanted.” Seungcheol says, his voice rising testily. He sits back on his haunches and immediately feels ridiculous sitting there, naked, in a frilly pink collar that is not keeping him there. “Why else would you put a collar on me?”

Jihoon’s face breaks open with understanding and he shakes his head, “Not to punish you Cheollie. That’s not the point of the collar—it’s not what’s keeping you here. I bought you it because I thought it was cute and you would look so pretty in it. And you do—so pretty in nothing but your frilly pink collar. So edible.” The words come out low and rough, almost like a purr.

Seungcheol’s pretty sure he shouldn’t enjoy it as much as he does.

“So, I’m—I’m not being punished?” He asks uncertainly.

Jihoon laughs, dry and disbelieving, and says, “Of course not. You’re such a good puppy for me Cheollie, and a good Puppy doesn’t get punished—I had something else in mind for you.”

Seungcheol can’t help but be a little suspicious.

“Like what?”

This is torture. Pure torture. There’s no other word for it.

He can’t believe he agreed to this.

If he had known this is what Jihoon had in mind, he would have flat out refused. He should still refuse—because the collar is just for show and this is just terrible on so many levels. He’s a Lycan, okay—a proud Lycan with majestic Lycan pride flowing through his veins. Generations of his people have fought and died to prevent this indignity and here he is—just letting Jihoon rub his belly.
God—he’s so ashamed.

“You’re so cute like this.” Jihoon murmurs.

“I’m a born killer.” Seungcheol huffs, because he thinks Jihoon forgets that sometimes.

He feels Jihoon stiffen. The hand stroking up his flank pauses a moment before resuming its gentle ministrations. “No, you’re not—you’re the bestest boy.”

Seungcheol continues to stare stubbornly at the ceiling. “I’ve razed entire villages to the ground you know. I’m a big bad wolf.”

“Such a good boy for me though.” Jihoon purrs, one hand moving to rub his scalp in small, tight circles.

Seungcheol wrinkles his nose and rests his cheek against Jihoon’s thigh, stifling his sigh of contentment. Above him, Jihoon continues his strange pilgrimage across his body, never spending too long on one area. His fingertips skate over the seam of Seungcheol’s hip, making the muscles in his thighs tremble, and when they trail higher, brushing over Seungcheol’s nipples, the touch is coy—teasing, and Seungcheol’s whole body tenses, trying not to arch up into the touch.

His eyes are closed, but he can hear Jihoon's amused huff clear as day.

“I know you’re trying very hard to not like this Cheollie—but I can see that you are.”

Seungcheol doesn’t have a good argument for that, because he’s undeniably hard as a rock—cock red and straining against his belly.

It’s crazy, it’s pathetic how he’s reacting to a simple petting—but there is no resistance in him, just shuddering pleasure and a straining in his muscles, as if a string has been threaded through the core of his body and Jihoon is pulling on it each time his hands brush over his skin.

He bites back a moan when Jihoon pushes his fingers low across his stomach, over the tuck of his belly and takes his cock in his hand. Seungcheol shudders beneath him and instinctively rocks into it—but Jihoon’s not stroking, not pleasuring, just holding him—trying to make Seungcheol understand how hard he is, how much he’s enjoying this though he’s stupidly determined not to.

“Look at this—” Jihoon whispers in his ear, hand stoking over his length idly. “You’re so wet already and I’ve hardly touched you. I bet I could make you come by just rubbing your belly real slow like this. We’d be here all night—but maybe if you want to be punished so badly, this could be your punishment.”

Seungcheol lets lose a long string of curses and arches against the mattress.

“Aww—what’s the matter my big Puppy? Don’t you want that?” Jihoon breathes, hot and damp against Seungcheol’s throat. “I thought you wanted to be punished.”

Seungcheol tosses his head against the pillows for a minute, then forces his eyes open to glare at Jihoon. “I want your dick inside me.” He huffs, unable to keep the driven, needy compulsion out of his voice.

Jihoon’s pupils dilate with lust. "Oh, yeah?” he says, unconsciously licking his lips.

He’s is on Seungcheol in an instant, claiming his lips in a possessive kiss.
Apparently, all this puppy play and patient petting could only go on for so long, and has left Jihoon pent-up and needy, and he pours out his want all over Seungcheol's skin, kissing and touching and practically consuming him.

Only a scant few minutes ago the power imbalance of dressed and not dressed had irked Seungcheol. But now, something about the scratch of denim, the slide of flannel against his own nakedness does something inexplicably erotic to him. He gets off on it: knowing that Jihoon has complete access to all his most tender places, feeling his hands stroking his naked cock, cupping his bared balls, while all he can manage is second-hand contact, through the barrier of Jihoon's clothes.

It finally dawns on him that he's been waiting all his life for someone with whom he can be totally vulnerable, the right someone. Jihoon.

"Jihoonie, please—can we..." Seungcheol moans between kisses.

"On your knees Cheollie," Jihoon murmurs against his lips, trying to push him over onto his back.

When Seungcheol resists with a petulant chuff, Jihoon’s eyebrows fly up and his mouth goes flat. Now, his face says, clear as anything.

Still huffing a bit, Seungcheol rolls over, head on the pillow and ass in the air, knees apart and his hands at his sides. He feels tremendously exposed, and while it’s a new sensation, he doesn’t mind at all.

Jihoon sits on his haunches next to him, slicking up his fingers. He must have had a tube of slick stuff lying around in the sheets, at the ready; Jihoon can be a planner when he's got good reason. Seungcheol can't complain, not when there’s a finger, wet and cool, working in slow, teasing circles around his hole.

"C’mon—I can take it." Seungcheol grunts, when it becomes apparent that Jihoon intends to take his time with this too.

Jihoon hums thoughtfully, almost like he’s thinking of calling Seungcheol’s bluff, but then he pushes two fingers into him, easy and aching and perfect. It takes only three slow thrusts for everything to melt into pleasure, steady pulses in time with his heartbeat up from his balls through his stomach and into his chest.

Seungcheol fists the bedsheets in both hands, arches his back and gulps air deep into his lungs.

"Shhh, puppy. It’s okay.” Jihoon murmurs, and Seungcheol realises abruptly that he’s whining—begging for more.

Self-conscious, he freezes, bites his lip, and tries not to breathe. But no matter how much he squirms, Jihoon will not be rushed. He takes his time fingering him open, first with one, then two fingers. He strokes them slowly into him and back out, a gentle rhythm, one that has Seungcheol soon shifting his hips, restless.

“Not getting any younger here.” He grits out.

“So impatient,” Jihoon titters, fingers slipping out. In their place comes something thick and curved, chilly against Seungcheol's heated insides, and Seungcheol thumps his head against the headboard in his desperate attempt to move away from it.

“Woah—what’s that?” He croaks, whipping his head over his shoulder.
Jihoon pulls back a little, blinking at him. "Uh—a dildo." He says, holding it up, "I thought I could….you’re still too tight for me just to stick my dick inside you Cheollie.”

Seungcheol licks his lips, uncertain.

He’s no stranger to sex toys, but they’ve always just been a super surprise sexy bonus he’s been allowed to use on other people. He’s never been the one to have it inside him. And yeah—it’s not obscenely huge and ridiculously painful looking or anything—it’s just an average sized dildo that’s perfectly featureless. It doesn’t even pretend to look like a real cock.

Nevertheless, Seungcheol regards it grimly, like a martyr facing his funeral pyre.

Jihoon must sense his hesitation, and smooths a hand up his sweat slicked spine, "Do you trust me puppy?"

Seungcheol flounders, bites his lip before shoring himself up.

"Of course,” he nods, then swallowing thickly, he turns his head back around and braces himself.

It’s not so easy at first.

Jihoon slides the dildo inside him by maddening degrees, slick and steady, stretching him wider. Seungcheol tries to relax his body and let it in, but he feels uncomfortably full already, not just where the wider base is beginning to force him even more open, but inside where the tip keeps pushing against something that makes him go—

“Oh fuck—oh fuck!” Seungcheol moans, his voice pitched high enough that it edges on hysterical.

“You really should relax, Cheollie,” Jihoon tells him, voice soft, lips bushing against the shell of Seungcheol’s ear; and he wants to – he wants to relax like nothing else, because then Jihoon could...could get on with whatever crazy, kinky, genius plan he’s got in mind and Seungcheol could stop the probably not at all subtle twitch of his hips as he tries not to rub his aching, swollen cock against the scratchy cotton sheets.

“I am relaxed!” Seungcheol lets himself sob, without even thinking about it.

“If you say so,” Jihoon murmurs, free hand running through his hair and down the back of his neck, steady and soothing. Before Seungcheol can growl his impatience, Jihoon twists the base of the dildo and it hums to life, and Seungcheol makes a sound he’s never heard himself make before.

Something almost like he’s dying.

“God—fuck!”

“Oh, did I forget to mention it vibrates too?” Jihoon says, with a little too much smugness.

The jolt of sensation, that powerful buzz scraping the edge of Seungcheol’s sweet spot and making his toes curl—Seungcheol’s body can’t decide how to react, stutter backwards trying to get more, or push forward into the mattress, rubbing against the damp sheets. It doesn't feel good exactly, the kind of pain—pleasure that's a white-hot shock to the brain, but he’s already so close to coming that he can barely breathe.

“Oh, such a good boy.” Jihoon purrs, smoothing a hand over his ass and down the backs of his thighs, before taking hold of the dildo again.
Seungcheol moans as it slides in deeper, and a bolt of pleasure runs straight through his body to his cock. His vision blurs with the sudden force of it, and he settles his forehead against the headboard as the buzzing sweeps through him, one pulse after another.

Jihoon kisses his shoulder. "Don’t come—not until I give you permission," He says, pushing the vibrator in deeper still.

Admittedly, this is going to be tricky, but Seungcheol is sure he can manage.

He rocks slightly back and forth, gritting his teeth against the sounds that want to emerge. His cock is very, very hard, and Jihoon hasn’t so much as glanced in its direction. That is, as far as Seungcheol is aware: he has no way of knowing what Jihoon is looking at right now.

All he can see when he opens his eyes, is the headboard, rocking quietly under their movements. But Jihoon's scent is all around him, familiar and safe.

Then Jihoon changes the angle of the vibrator and Seungcheol gasps, eyes fluttering shut again. "Please."

"Hush," Jihoon tells him. "It's all right." His hands are petting Seungcheol's hair, his neck, in gentle rhythmic strokes. It's a completely separate rhythm to the one he’s now using with the vibrator, fucking it into Seungcheol’s ass hard and fast, merciless.

His other hand is on Seungcheol's neck, exerting just enough pressure to let Seungcheol know he wants him to stay put.

There are times for pushing boundaries and playful disobedience. This isn't one of them. Seungcheol stays. Let’s Jihoon push the toy in and out, a burning focal point right where he’s most sensitive.

“That’s it—take it.” Jihoon purrs, voice warm with approval, and Seungcheol trembles. He's making low, shocky sounds now—rough staccato as he comes apart under the relentless touch.

After what feels like a decade later, Jihoon pulls the toy out with a happy sigh.

"Good boy. I think you’re ready." He says, shifting away from Seungcheol’s side.

Seungcheol hears the vibrator being switched off and set aside and stifles a whine; he already misses being full. His ass is open, slick inside. Aftershocks still lazily course through him, making him contract around the phantom thickness of the dildo Jihoon fucked him with.

“Hoon—” Seungcheol gulps for air and shakes, “Please.”

He feels Jihoon's smile against his neck. “What do you want, Puppy?”

“Fuck me,” Seungcheol gasps immediately. It’s not a command, but a plea.

“Since you said that so nicely.” Jihoon says, pressing up from behind, shirrtails brushing over his skin and making him shiver.

Jihoon’s still fully dressed, from what Seungcheol can feel, pants and underwear bunched low around his hips. Something about the way Jihoon’s clothes rub against the backs of his thighs make him squirm, but Seungcheol doesn’t have a moment to appreciate how hot that is before the slick head of Jihoon’s cock is pressing against his rim.
Seungcheol closes his eyes and braces himself to take Jihoon's cock, his strength, anything Jihoon gives him. But instead of pushing into him in a single thrust, Seungcheol feels Jihoon take hold of the leash and pull with one hand, the other squeezing Seungcheol’s hip and guiding him back onto his length slowly.

“Jihoon. Oh fuck.”

By the time he finally bottoms out, Seungcheol's heart is pushing against his ribs and his nerves stretched to the finest point of their endurance. The need to be fucked has grown beyond his ability to bear it. So much so that the searing, overstretched sensation of possession doesn't even strike him as pain, but as a remedy.

“That’s it, good boy.” Jihoon coos, as he begins to roll his hips experimentally.

He takes it slow for the first few thrusts, waiting for Seungcheol to get acclimated—then he picks up the pace.

Seungcheol spreads his legs wide as he can, lifts his ass up into each thrust and listens to the rough slap of skin to skin, god, it’s good.

Jihoon is good.

Jihoon is really good.

Seungcheol coughs out a first, surprised sound, and then he’s unstoppered and filthy and helplessly crying out.

Jihoon goes hard and steady and deep for a lot longer than Seungcheol expects him to, and then he pushes Seungcheol down by the shoulders, hauls his hips up even higher, and absolutely pounds into him.

Seungcheol can’t fuck back into it, now, he can only hold on and keep himself from clawing up the headboard.

Jihoon maybe be small, but he’s strong, fuck, he’s a force of nature, he’s — Seungcheol struggles, feels the insides of his thighs jumping, and swallows hard between rounds of faster fucks.

Then suddenly, Jihoon pulls out.

Seungcheol makes an animal noise of protest and throws himself backwards, or tries to, seeking to reclaim Jihoon inside him, but Jihoon has him pinned still, and Seungcheol’s only able to roll his ass up into the cool air, pleading wordlessly.

“Shh,” says Jihoon, and takes pity, maybe, pushing back inside slowly. It feels insanely good, that parting of flesh, that driving in.

Seungcheol grits his teeth and shudders around it. “Oh, fuck. Again,” he says, and though it’s awful, it’s terrible, when Jihoon pulls out once more, it’s even better when he pushes in. “Yeah,” Seungcheol says, “oh, again.”

“You like that huh? Like my dick spearing you?” Jihoon says, voice sounding raw. “I like it too Cheollie. Love watching my dick push inside you.”

Seungcheol rides it out quietly for a few more thrusts, grunting low in his throat. Then Jihoon’s cock brushes against a tender spot inside him that has him throwing his head back and howling,
“Oh fuck, oh fuck—yes, just like that. Fuck me,” Seungcheol says, knees sliding that much further apart. His voice is jolted by every thrust. “So full, fuck.”

“Better than your toy?” Jihoon asks with all his typical smugness.

“So much better,” Seungcheol rasps out, licking his lips.

Jihoon laughs, breathless—then treats Seungcheol to another slow pull out and a sharp thrust in. “Has anyone else ever fucked you, Puppy? Hmm?”

Seungcheol shakes his head and shudders, his neglected cock twitching underneath him. He grunts in surprise when Jihoon’s teeth close on a patch of skin low on his nape, whining when Jihoon sucks ownership into the spot.

“Good. Cause you’re mine.” Jihoon grits out, dark and possessive, before his he starts fucking him in earnest.

Seungcheol groans his approval and lets himself go slack, body a receptor for Jihoon’s thrusts and nothing more. Dazed, he just lets himself feel.

Jihoon fucks him faster now, harder. He’s starting to lose control, Seungcheol can tell, starting to get frantic. The head of his cock is nudging against Seungcheol’s prostate on every thrust now, driving Seungcheol crazy.


Seungcheol tries to protest this, muzzily, but that’s derailed by his orgasm, which takes him by surprise. When he comes, it feels like falling, long and far.

“Fuck—Cheol. So good. ’ve wanted this since—” Jihoon grits out, and then his hips snap frantic and fast. He tugs on Seungcheol’s collar, pulls Seungcheol tight against him as he presses deep one last time, coming inside him as no one else ever has.

When Seungcheol turns them over, Jihoon plants his head on Seungcheol's shoulder and presses tightly to his side, making his colonial intentions perfectly clear.

Seungcheol has no intention of moving any time soon either, and reaches out, gropes for the Kleenex box on the bedside table, cleans them up the best he can, and tosses the used tissues onto the floor.

When he raises his eyes, he finds Jihoon watching him. There's a warm expression on his face—heat and affection—and a quiet, disbelieving awe that he hides quickly but still manages to leave Seungcheol feeling flushed and self-conscious.

His first instinct under the intensity of that look is to put his best poker face on and turn aside—to brush it off before the moment can make him give away just how damn vulnerable he feels right now.

But this is Jihoon. And Seungcheol forces himself to meet his eyes without flinching.

He smiles, spine tingling pleasantly at the way Jihoon smiles back, and then his eyes drift closed as he leans in for a kiss.
Jihoon's mouth is warm and obliging, and when Seungcheol presses his tongue shamelessly past Jihoon's lips, he's rewarded with the feeling of fingers threading through his hair, of Jihoon's other hand warm at his neck, a soft but insistent pressure guiding him closer.

Seungcheol lets his knees fall apart, feels Jihoon settle between his legs, but this isn't about kicking off round two. This is about getting as close as physically possible and holding on.

Seungcheol's not letting go any time soon.

Eventually Jihoon props himself on his elbows and pulls back. He doesn't go far. Just puts enough distance between them to look Seungcheol in the eye—gaze dipping briefly, distractedly to Seungcheol's frilly pink collar before rising again.

"Was that okay? Did—did I hurt you?" He asks, leaning into Seungcheol's space and tracing familiar fingers along his jaw.

Seungcheol snorts, but he’s smiling as he nuzzles into the touch.

"Jihoon I’ve been shot, stabbed,mauled, poked with pitchforks, doused in petrol and set on fire and even crucified at one point, but yes—our consensual love making was the final straw.”

Jihoon smiles, that easy, loose, silly smile that Seungcheol hardly sees, but dutifully adores. “It was your first time bottoming—I wanted to be careful,” He says, fingers playing idly across Seungcheol's collarbone. “And crucified? Really?”

Seungcheol manages a casual shrug, “Well—they tried their best. But they didn’t use enough nails. Amateurs.”

“Poor puppy.” says Jihoon, taking Seungcheol's hand in his and raising it to his face so he can press a nuzzling kiss to his palm. "Tell me where they hurt you and I’ll kiss it better.”

Seungcheol affects the appropriate pout. “Well just about everywhere really. My whole body was one big bruise.”

Jihoon's mouth curves up with a hint of a smirk. “That’s a lot of kisses.”

Seungcheol's eyes drift shut and he leans his head back against the pillows, smiling, “Then you better get started then.”

Jihoon laughs softly, kissing the very centre of Seungcheol's ribcage, nuzzling gently before peppering a dozen or more kisses all the way up to the curve of his neck. The kiss he lays there quickly turns into hot, wet suction over his pulse point, and before Seungcheol realises it—they’re careening into round 2.

Afterwards, they lay spooned together, legs entangled under the comforter.

"How long?" Seungcheol wonders out loud, because Jihoon never finished that sentence.

Jihoon's answer comes muffled against Seungcheol's shoulder, "Always."

Seungcheol frowns up at the ceiling, "Why didn't you say something? Or, I don't know, do something? You're not exactly shy when you want—"

Jihoon shakes his head. "It wasn’t the right time. And you don’t exactly come across very—subby."
Seungcheol blinks up at the ceiling for a moment, then dons a considering expression and says, "Well—you know you can just ask me. There’s hardly anything I wouldn’t do for you. No more secrets okay, tell me next time what’s on your mind."

Jihoon leans back to look at him shrewdly.

“What?” Seungcheol prompts.

“Bit hypocritical, don’t you think? You’re not exactly jumping to tell me what’s on your mind.” Jihoon says, poking a finger into his chest. “What about all your secrets that you never share? Hmm? You never really talk about your past.”

Seungcheol sighs and pulls Jihoon closer, lays his cheek against the top of his head. “That’s different.”

Jihoon snorts petulantly, “Pot. Kettle.”

Seungcheol can’t really blame him though; he’s not blind to the double-standard he’s setting with his own secrets. The truth about his past lurks within him, crowded up against some unnamable blockade, and he doesn’t know how to get past it.

He has tried. He truly has—but not talking about, or admitting to, all the shit they don't talk about is the only reason they have the stable relationship they do right now.

They’re in the coffee shop right till closing time, just talking, relaxed and carefree.

But when they finally make their way outside into the cool night air, an awkward silence settles between them—the kind which neither of them knows how to break smoothly.

Soonyoung doesn’t want to even try, because saying anything right now will just bring them closer to the fact that their date is over and they’re probably never going to see one another again.

Which is a shame, because Lee Seokmin was really starting to grow on him. He might not be the conventional Lycan Soonyoung was hoping to find for himself one day, but he’s smart and witty and super sweet. Plus, he’s not too hard on the eyes.

Maybe in another life they could have had something special—but Soonyoung can’t imagine the guy wanting to meet up again after his run-in with Seungcheol. Letting your date get manhandled and threatened by the Alpha of your pack is probably not the best way to secure a second date.

In all honestly, he’s amazed Seokmin even hung around to finish their date after all the threats of disembowelment Seungcheol made. Not that Soonyoung’s ever going to actually complain to Seungcheol about that—because angry overprotective Seungcheol is even hotter than regular grumpy Seungcheol, and discovering a new level to Seungcheol’s hotness is like…woah.

“I really enjoyed this.” Seokmin says suddenly.

“Really?” Soonyoung stares at him, slack jawed. “Even after Seungcheol threatened you and dragged you outside the coffee shop, and into another coffee shop and threatened you there too?”

“Maybe not that part.” Seokmin adds quickly, looking sheepish. “But I enjoyed the you part.”

Soonyoung blushes, “I enjoyed the you part too.”

The moment threatens to turn awkward again as they stand their quietly. And just when it’s about
“So—” He says, stuffing his hands in his pockets, “Does this mean I can I see you again?”

Seokmin chuckles, and nudges him with an elbow, donning a wry smile. “Dinner sounds great.”

“Awesome. And maybe you’ll get to meet the rest of my pack.” Soonyoung offers.

“Yeah,” Seokmin drawls, though he looks more anxious than happy by the suggestion.

For the first time all night he doesn't look carefully polite. He looks both amused and slightly unnerved instead. He gives Soonyoung an intense look of concern, a line forming between his brows before clearing his throat and saying, “Soonyoung, I—I gotta ask…. your friend Seungcheol—he’s not the Choi Seungcheol by any chance?”

Soonyoung blinks as he parses Seokmin's statement, and the implications beneath the words. “I honestly don’t know what you mean by that dude. Seungcheol doesn’t have a rep. He’s not violent, he’s just….protective. Threatening to kill you aside, he’s actually a pretty tame guy.”

Strangely, Seokmin’s bemused expression sharpens into something like scorn. He shoves his hands in his pockets and rocks back on his heels. “Yeah—right. Tell that to his last pack.”

Feeling shell-shocked, Soonyoung scrubs a hand over the back of his neck. “Okay—I’ll admit to being a little lost here. What happened to his last pack exactly?”

Seokmin’s face darkens into a sceptical expression, and he cocks his head to one side. “You really don’t know?”

“No, he never really mentions them.” Soonyoung offers, shaking his head. “Why though? What happened to them?” He asks, trying to work out the source of Seokmin's confusion.

Seokmin stares at him for a moment, watching Soonyoung with probing eyes.

Then, finally, he admits, “He slaughtered them.”

Seungcheol rolls out of bed at the first scent of something amiss in the air, not that he senses any danger—just one of his baby vampires loitering nearby. Jihoon murmurs softly in his sleep when the bed shifts, so Seungcheol dresses quietly, shuts the bedroom door carefully behind him before padding down the corridor.

He finds Soonyoung’s sitting awkwardly on the couch, with his elbows on his knees and his back
hunched tiredly forward. He’s clearly deep in thought, and startles when Seungcheol steps close and bumps his knee.

“Hey.”

Soonyoung doesn’t answer him immediately, just stares at him like he’s an apparition or something. After a drawn-out moment of awkward staring, Seungcheol deigns to break the silence.

“So—” He drawls, raising his brows in expectation. “How’d it go with Seokmin after we left? Did you guys hit it off despite my interruption?”

A heartbeat more, and then Soonyoung visibly shakes himself. The quirk of smile on his face looks unnatural—forced—and he drops it quickly. Drops his eyes to the side, though he doesn’t turn away as he says, “Uh, yeah. It was ….good. Great. He’s a really nice guy.”

The couch creaks quietly beneath him when Seungcheol drops beside Soonyoung—mirrors his posture—“Yeah? Then why do you look so conflicted?”

Soonyoung’s mouth presses into a thin line, tense and considering, and then he turns away. “Seokmin told me something, and—I guess I don’t know what to do with that information.”

Seungcheol flashes him a half smile, “Did he tell you he was into some really weird kinky shit. Because if you’re the one having reservations about weird kinky—that’s not a good sign. You’re the weirdest, kinkiest person I know.” He laughs, pushing on Soonyoung’s shoulder playfully.

He’s attempting, in his own socially stilted way, to lighten the mood—but Soonyoung’s not going along with it for once. If anything, Seungcheol’s attempt at levity only seems to irritate him further, and he makes an exasperated sound.

“No, no—it wasn’t about me.” He huffs. Then his expression darkens into something shadowed and intense, “It was about you actually.”

The coldness that crawls down the back of Seungcheol's neck takes a long time to slide away. But eventually he manages to pull enough courage together to ask, “What did he tell you?”

Soonyoung worries his lower lip between his teeth for a moment before he manages to speak. “Did you really kill your last pack off?”

Seungcheol’s stomach twists, and he presses his mouth into a thin line.

It’s been almost twenty years, but the question still hits him hard enough to make his breath catch sharply in his chest.

“That’s—” He tries to start. Fails, pauses to breathe, “Yes—I did.”

He’s pretty sure he’s supposed to be hedging and evading right now. Not confessing. But the voice of reason is silent in his head, giving ground to the quiet frustration that’s had years too long to build beneath his skin.

Soonyoung looks uncomfortable now. Thrown off by Seungcheol's candour. Maybe he was expecting Seungcheol to come up with some bullshit story that would let them pretend this away after all. But it’s too late for that.

Soonyoung shifts, folds one knee up on the couch so he can face Seungcheol directly, and
whispers, “Why?”

Seungcheol isn't entirely sure how to answer; explaining his history seems far too complicated. He thinks it through slowly, knowing Soonyoung won't rush him.

He doesn't think he has to tell the whole story in order to make Soonyoung understand. He doesn't have to dredge up the painful, implausible details—doesn't have to relive them himself, moment by moment, all too vivid in his memory. But he already knows this conversation is going nowhere good. There are, inevitably, awkward stumbling blocks everyone comes to when they try and fit the pieces of their life around another person's—Seungcheol just happens to have more corners than most.

“They were going to hurt someone that I loved—and I had to stop them.” He finally replies, completely truthful.

Soonyoung stares at him, like he can’t decide what to comment on first.

Finally, he says, “Killing them was the only way?”

Seungcheol takes a deep breath and nods, an unwelcome rerun of things he hasn't thought about for years playing in his head.

“Yes, it was. I tried to reason with them, to offer an alternative—but they wouldn’t listen. I realised at that moment, I’d lost control of them. They saw me as weak, compromised, and killing them was a desperate last resort to make them stop.” He pauses when his voice lodges in his throat—takes a moment to swallow and cough. “As much as it pained me to do what I did, to them—I don’t regret it. I had to protect him at all costs.”

Soonyoung draws in a long breath that whistles a little between his teeth, and Seungcheol can't tell if the sound signals judgment or sympathy.

When he turns his head, he finds Soonyoung still looking more anxious than he would like. Seungcheol feels something like a stab of grief in the pit of his stomach, but he doesn't think he has it in him to sound apologetic, though. Not mournful and really mean it.

He can't bring himself to regret the course of events that pulled him out of that life and brought him here.

“Did that someone you were protecting make it out okay in the end?” Soonyoung asks after a heavy silence.

Seungcheol can see so much curiosity shining in his eyes. Soonyoung wants to know who that person was, how he fitted into Seungcheol's life. But he doesn't think he has it in him to sound apologetic, though. Not mournful and really mean it.

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Of course he'd spent years wondering what happened to him. Maybe he even hoped to see him again, living safe and content somewhere. But it's a far different thing actually knowing. He’s out there somewhere, or maybe he isn’t.

Seungcheol can feel dark corners of his brain lighting up again, the machinery of obsession whirring to life.

“I think so.” He mumbles, feeling his vision go damp and blurry. Frustration simmers and bubbles at the edges of his voice when he adds, “I couldn’t really hang around long enough to find out. But I—I tried my best to make sure he was safe.”
Soonyoung looks at him with a sombre expression that Seungcheol can’t help but look away from. Instead he rises from the couch, rubbing at the back of his neck with one hand. “Look—I know what you must think of me now. And I know you’ll probably—”

“Soungcheol,” Soonyoung interrupts sharply, standing up too. When Seungcheol looks back at him, he finds him smiling, all hints of his previous apprehension gone. Then, moving slowly enough for Seungcheol to deflect him if he wanted to, Soonyoung steps in and hugs him.

“It’s okay Hyung. This changes nothing.” He murmurs into Seungcheol’s shoulder, squeezing him tight. Relief makes Seungcheol sag forward into the embrace, and he holds Soonyoung tightly, wondering what he’s done to deserve such conviction. Soonyoung still trusts him, and he wants to cling to that faith—needs it all to be true. Because if Soonyoung can stare head-on at everything he is without flinching, then maybe—hopefully—Jihoon will too one day.

Soonyoung’s eyes are warm when he steps out of his arms. Then in the next instant, it’s as if a switch is flipped. That painful honesty is gone, and the mischief is back.

“Told ya I’d get a hug out of you one day.” He waggles his eyebrows, “Next step—petting.”

Seungcheol strongly resists the urge to roll his eyes. “Goodnight Soonie.”

He watches Soonyoung go, and wonders how hard he'll find himself freaking out about this come morning.

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Turns out, Seungcheol doesn’t even have time to freak out about his own problems the next day. Not when his phone rings half-way through making breakfast, and he answers it to the sound of Junhui’s quiet sobbing.

Seungcheol had thought Junhui was just being dramatic when he’d said his place had been trashed to hell and back—but he really needs to stop underestimating Junhui’s accuracy of description because when he abandons his breakfast to trudge half-way across town—Junhui’s apartment really has been trashed to hell and back.

There are scorch marks everywhere. Like it wasn’t enough to break all the furniture, smash the windows and shred the upholstery—they had to set fire to the place too. Or at least—they tried to. There seems to have been some attempt to douse any fire with….oh god.

Is that urine?

Oh fuck. Gross—it is.

The place reeks of piss, and there are suspicious brown stains smeared down the wall that look like old vomit but could be anything really. Either way it is completely revolting, and it takes everything in Seungcheol not to gag and walk right out.

What asshole trashes an innocent baby vampire’s home, sets fire to it, then urinates to put it out? That’s just—that’s just poor form.

And Junhui doesn’t look that great either.
In fact, he looks about as troubled as Seungcheol’s ever seen him. His eyes are bloodshot, and his cheeks are abnormally flushed in comparison to the pallor of the rest of his face, and…are those tears tracks?

He’s crying. Fantastic.

Seungcheol drags him in by the sleeve of his jacket, more to have a look at him and see whether he’s broken or not than to hug him. Although there’s a fair amount of hugging going on. Panicked hugging. And face framing and hysterical—“Holy shit. Are you okay?”

“No.” Junhui sobs into his shoulder.

Junhui may be the oldest vampire in his pack, but he’s still a baby and must be protected. Cemented by the fact that he’s currently rubbing his cheek on Seungcheol’s jacket like it’s his safety blanket. Seungcheol would normally be angry about that—but right now he can’t bring himself to do anything than rub Junhui’s back soothingly and whisper reassurances in his ear.

“Shh it’s okay. Do you know who would have done something like this?”

“No.” Junhui’s breath hitches. “I’ve lived here for two years and never had any trouble. Everything was fine when I left—I was hanging out with Mingyu last night—then I came back and found everything like this.” Another tragic sniffle. “I know it was a dump. But it was my dump.”

Seungcheol eases him off his shoulder and tries to make a sympathetic face, but it’s probably more of a grimace because Junhui’s face is a mess of snot and tears.

“I know, I know—but let’s stay positive yeah? Look on the bright side.” Seungcheol says, realising belatedly that there may not be a bright side left to look at.

He walks around to survey the extent of the damage, mindful to keep a safe distance from any surfaces, and finds the chaos extends into the kitchen and the bedroom.

Whoever the culprit was, really doesn’t like Junhui. Or perhaps just vampires in general.

Is this their way of sending a message?

Jesus.

“You know, I don’t think this is the safest neighbourhood for Vampires Jun.” Seungcheol points out, rather sensibly he feels. “You ever think of finding a place closer to where I live? Somewhere closer to work? I could help you find a place.”

Junhui smiles at him hopefully, “Are you suggesting we move in together?”

“No. There was nowhere in that sentence that suggested that.” Seungcheol says frostily.

Junhui deflates, hope falling into an expression of quiet misery. He rubs a hand over his face. “I can’t afford another place though. Not by myself anyway.”

Seungcheol’s brow scrunches as he thinks it over.

“Why don’t you, Soonie and Chan get a place together? You’re all baby vampires, you’re all single and you’re all earning just above minimum wage. You could get a half-way decent apartment if you lived together.”

That point, at least, seems to stop Junhui short. He gets a considering look in his eyes, weighing
and calculating as he thinks it over.

“That’s not a bad idea actually. I’ve always wanted to have a housemate, and we all get along like a house on fire.”

Seungcheol nods sagely, “Quite possibly literally if you leave Chan in charge of the cooking.”

Junhui’s mouth twists in a smile, “Alright. Thanks Cheol—I’ll talk to them.”

“No problem,” Seungcheol smiles. He’s reaching over to ruffle Junhui’s hair—when he hears footsteps approaching, and they both turn to see a stocky looking man with a moustache standing in the doorway, a ring of keys in his hand.

Landlord—Seungcheol guesses, and that turns out to be true after the guy stares wide eyed at the state of the apartment and promptly loses his shit.

“What the hell! What the fucking hell! Is that shit? Is that shit on my walls?”

Several moments of swearing and flailing later, the Landlord turns and takes several steps forward, invading Junhui’s space.

“What the fuck did you do Wen!” He snaps, poking a finger into Junhui’s chest.

Seungcheol’s jaw tightens, face flushing red with anger. “Hey—it’s not his fault someone broke into his apartment and trashed the place.”

“Sure it is.” The man snarls and spits, stabbing his finger in Junhui’s chest again, “You vamps are always bringing trouble to your doorstep. I don’t even know why I tolerate your lot as tenants.” He says, voice positively dripping in self-righteousness.

Bristling, Seungcheol turns to glare at him, his arms crossing over his chest into what Jihoon had coined his ‘dad mode’. “Because it’s the law. Because it’s discrimination if you don’t.”

“Fuck the law.” The Landlord snorts. He’s over by the window now, fiddling with the latch, trying to get it open and completely oblivious to Seungcheol’s irritation. Then he turns to Junhui and says, “I’m doubling your rent to pay for the damage. Three months should cover it.”

Junhui’s face falls, “What? No, please Mr Hwang—I can’t afford that. I can hardly afford this place as it is.”

The Landlord holds his hands up in a ‘not my problem kid’ kind of way.

Seungcheol looks around the place and feels a cold rage wash over him.

He’s seen it plenty of times before, a landlord taking advantage of their upper hand when a tenant is down on their luck.

But not today.

Not with one of his baby vampires.

After taking a discreet breath, Seungcheol excuses himself and waves the Landlord over with a finger, indicating the front door. He doesn’t stop until they are outside on the corridor, right in front of the stairs which lead to the fire exit, before grabbing the guy by the collar and slamming him against the wall.
“You’re right—fuck the law.” Seungcheol bites out, flashing his rapidly lengthening incisors. “The same law that says I shouldn’t crush your windpipe and chew on your insides for being a worthless piece of shit.”

The Landlord’s eyes saucer with terrifying realisation, and his voice cracks with a scream, hoarse enough to make Seungcheol worry about tracheal damage.

He’s recognised so rarely—Lycans are so few and far between, the legends about them so varied and often preposterous that Seungcheol is almost never recognized for what he is—but when it happens, the results are always...satisfying.

“Please—oh, god, please don’t hurt me. I have a family!” The man croaks. He certainly isn’t smirking behind that salt and pepper moustache anymore.

“Oh—what’s this? A piece of shit with something to live for?” Seungcheol growls dangerously.

The Landlord nods urgently. Even with the edges of his vision turning red, Seungcheol can see the man’s lips trembling under that ridiculous moustache.

He smiles widely, baring his fangs as the other man swallows hard.

“Alright then—here’s what you’re going to do.” Seungcheol grunts, leaning in close enough that the man’s eyes cross, “You’re gonna go to the nearest ATM—you’re going to give my friend his deposit back—in full, then you’re gonna pay for your shit show of an apartment to be repaired on your dime. Then you’re gonna forget about me, or I will find you and do terrible, terrible things to you and your family. Don’t think I won’t. I know what you smell like now—so trust me when I say there is nowhere you can hide from me. Do you understand?”

The man’s head bobs once in silent agreement.

Seungcheol snarls then releases him. He turns back towards the apartment, tossing, “Run along now,” over his shoulder before stepping back inside Junhui’s apartment.

He finds Junhui in the bathroom, picking through what’s left of his stuff with a pair of tweezers. He glances up when he hears Seungcheol enter.

“Everything okay?”

Seungcheol smiles innocently, “Peachy. You’re not paying for the damage and you’re getting your deposit back in full.”

Junhui’s face shoots up, his brows crawling into his hairline. “Christ, Cheol. What did you do? Blow the guy?”

“Please, if I’d have blown him, he’d be paying you to live here,” Seungcheol deadpans.

Junhui all but croaks. “So….you did blow him?”

Seungcheol shoves at him, feeling all his previous anger melt away as he laughs. “C’mon, grab your stuff. Or—what’s left of it. You’re not staying here anymore. You’re moving in with me and Hoonie till you sort out some place new.”

Junhui’s jaw drops comically. “S-seriously?”

“Well it’s not like you can stay here. You don’t even have a front door.” Seungcheol huffs,
gesturing at the missing door. Actually, the door is there, but off its hinges and resting inside the closet for some reason.

Junhui’s face shifts from slightly stunned to stupidly happy, then he’s scrambling around and grabbing his things, yapping on about how Soonyoung’s going to be ‘soooo jealous’.

The salvageable remnants of Junhui’s apartment fit exactly into two cardboard boxes. Both of which Seungcheol ends up carrying home because Junhui’s still eating his damn ice cream.

Honestly, Seungcheol has got to be the biggest doormat in all of Seoul, if not the whole damned country. Hell, the world.

He should never have agreed to stop for ice-cream to cheer Junhui up.

By the time they walk through the front door of Seungcheol apartment, the smell of pancakes has unfolded all through the house. Seungcheol breathes it in, and his stomach growls.

“Hey Hoonie—” He calls out, dumping Junhui’s boxes by the front door, “Bad news—Jun’s moving in with us until he finds a new place to live. Someone trashed his place.”

“Hey—no fair!” Comes a voice, which is decidedly not Jihoon’s.

Seungcheol steps into the living room and is immediately greeted to the sight of Soonyoung’s sulky face.

“If I knew that’s all it would take to move in with you guys, I would have trashed my own place ages ago.” Soonyoung huffs.

Seungcheol pinches the bridge of his nose and prays for patience. He prays that Junhui hurries up and finishes his ice-cream before Soonyoung yaps about that too.

“Cheol says he’s gonna make me my own special den—just like the one he made for Jihoon.”

Junhui counters, in his laziest, smuggest drawl.

Which is a big fat fucking lie as far as Seungcheol is concerned—because he agreed to no such thing. He opens his mouth to say as much, but Junhui’s taunt clearly has its desired effect and Soonyoung’s already throwing a hissy fit.

“What! This is so unfair!” He whines, eyes widening in juvenile frustration. “I want a special den too. Why can’t I get a special den? I’ve known you longer than Jun. Jun wouldn’t even be here had I not introduced him. Where’s my special den? Cheol I want a special den!”

Seungcheol is seriously entertaining the possibility that he might be going crazy.

“He is not getting a special den Soonyoung, he’s just teasing you. He’s sleeping on the couch.” Seungcheol says firmly.

It seems very important to make this point very clear before things snowball out of control. But as usual, nobody seems to be listening to him.

“I’m gonna go check out the attic,” Junhui announces, already heading down the corridor with his boxes of crap and Soonyoung on his heels, “Seems like a good location for my special den.”

“This is not a permanent arrangement!” Seungcheol yells after them as he rounds the corner into the kitchen, where a baby vampire is seated at the breakfast bar, shovelling pancakes into his
And okay, Seungcheol’s no stranger to coming home and finding baby vampires eating his food and drinking all his orange juice, but last he checked he had five baby vampires, and this guy is definitely not one of his.

He looks pale and hollow-eyed, except for the line of black bruises trailing down the left side of his face and the line of his jaw. He doesn’t look like he could stand straight in a stiff wind, but his hand doesn’t shake as he mechanically moves his fork from plate to mouth.

Seungcheol takes one look at the guy and snaps, “Who the hell are you?”

A fork clatters on the table as the kid jumps up, startled by his outburst. Seungcheol catches a whiff of anxiety coming from him, which quickly transforms into fear as he takes another curious step closer.

“Hey—I asked you a question. What the fuck are you doing in my house eating my pancakes?”

The kid doesn’t answer, he just backs up instinctively, around the corner of the table and away from Seungcheol, his eyes wide with surprise. He looks ready to bolt, until Jihoon appears out of nowhere and steps between them smoothly.

“Relax Cheollie,” He coos, resting a placating hand on Seungcheol’s chest. “This is Vernon. He’s a baby vampire.”

For once, Seungcheol wishes he can summon something other than forced laughter as he scrubs a disbelieving hand over his face.

“No way, really? A baby vampire, in my home? Oh my god, what a rare and interesting sight. I did not see this coming. Who’d a thought it.” He says, his voice a perfect balance between sincerity and sarcasm.

Jihoon doesn’t seem to appreciate his incredulity, and fixes him with a look that could freeze water on an August day.

“Don’t worry Vernon. Seungcheol can be a smart ass sometimes, but he’s going to help you. Won’t you Cheollie?” says Jihoon, mouth set serious while his eyes sparkle with a smile.

Seungcheol sighs tiredly and turns on his heels because Jihoon’s already made the guy pancakes and there’s the damming scent of hot chocolate in the air, so clearly there is no winning this one.

Where Jihoon’s concerned, Seungcheol tends to let a lot of things slide – partly out of defence, and partly out of an understanding. He rocks the boat as little as he can because it’s his only reliable survival mechanism, but honestly, it’s beginning to feel like his home has become a half-way house for baby-vampires and he’s lost all say in the matter.

He heads down the corridor and shoves his way into the bathroom, the only room he’ll be guaranteed some privacy. Ironically, he’s not in there for more than a few seconds before Jihoon’s slipping in behind him and shutting the door.

“Cheol, what’s wrong?” He asks, sounding tentative and very, very far away.

“Nothing.” Seungcheol lets out his breath in exasperation and starts rummaging through the cupboards in search of Aspirin.
He can feel a headache brewing—a baby vampire shaped headache.

In the mirror, he can see Jihoon’s jaw tick, and for a moment he looks like he intends to play it cool. Then the façade crumbles, leaving his concern painted like an unhappy shadow across his face.

“Don’t be like that Cheollie—I know you’re angry.”

Seungcheol's posture falls then as he sighs. “Do you ever stop to think how dangerous it is for so many baby vampires to be one place at once time? What kind of attention that draws?” he asks, letting his weariness show.

He looks in the mirror again, then swivels so they can look each other in the face. “I’m trying to lay low here Jihoon—for both our sakes, and you’ve just gone out and dragged a stray off the streets, expecting me to fix his life like I’m some kind of Genie. I’m not a genie—I can’t grant magical wishes. I can’t adopt all the baby vampire strays in the city.”

“I know that, but Vernon—”

“Is a complete stranger.” Seungcheol interjects, careful to keep his voice down. “And you’ve taken a huge risk by inviting him in here. You don’t know who’s following him.”

Jihoon looks at him sharply, almost angrily, but quickly deflates into a tired slouch. “It wasn’t me who brought him here, it was Soonyoung. He found him rummaging through the bins at the back of his shop, and he just looked so hungry and injured, I just thought we could, you know—”

He shrugs sheepishly, “Help him get back on his feet.”

Snorting now, Seungcheol can’t quite keep his tone from going tart. “So we’re a charity now, are we? Who’s funding this shit?”

Jihoon flinches, like he’s been slapped.

Seungcheol can smell the hurt coming off him in waves, as sharp as torn orange peel, and immediately regret swamps him.

“I’m sorry, you’re right.” Jihoon murmurs as he takes a step back, reaching for the door, “I’ll get Soonyoung to take him over to his place instead.”

He pulls the door open, only for it to be pushed shut again as Seungcheol quickly moves to crowd him against it, the need for caution transmuting into the desire to soothe.

Pressing his face against Jihoon’s shoulder, Seungcheol breathes in his scent: fabric softener and flannel and boy, deeply familiar.

“I’m sorry—I shouldn’t have said it like that,” He murmurs, voice cracking, “It’s sweet that you have so much faith in me to fix things, but I’m not a good person Jihoon. There’s a reason I kept to myself before I met you. I keep telling you this, and it’s really not an exaggeration.”

Jihoon stares up in confusion, his eyes wide and blinking, his lips bitten pink. “Why do you keep saying shit like that? It’s not true. You’re such a good person—you’ve done so much for me.” He whispers. Still so innocent—so trusting, despite everything he knows Seungcheol is capable of.

Seungcheol's breath shudders out of him. “It’s different with you. And—don’t ask me why, I don’t know—you were just different. I had to protect you.”
Jihoon's face shifts, just a little, into something that looks like frustration.

And yeah, Seungcheol gets it. He understands that look. But he doesn’t know how to explain that dark something that tightens in his gut whenever he looks at Jihoon—the protectiveness so fierce it leaves him weak.

When he’d first arrived at his doorstep, Jihoon had been on his last legs—so thin, so impossibly small and imminently breakable under Seungcheol's fingers. But now when Seungcheol slides his hands over his back, he feels solid. Strong. A curious mixture of softness and invulnerability.

He’s more than capable of looking after himself now, of caring for the pack in Seungcheol’s absence—but none of that changes the fact that he is Seungcheol’s to protect. Even to his dying breath.

“I’m not saying Vernon needs to leave,” Seungcheol murmurs, brushing his fingers carefully on the tiny bite marks on Jihoon's throat. “I just want you to be more careful with who you invite. Just because he’s a baby vampire too, doesn’t mean you should immediately trust him. Remember what happened the last time you trusted a stranger.”

Jihoon holds his gaze for a moment, looking conflicted, then his eyes slide guiltily away. “There’s something I think you should know about Vernon.” He says quietly. His voice is low and serious but there's something else underneath, something that sounds scared.

Seungcheol pulls back, studying his face intently. “What is it?”

Jihoon’s expression twists awkwardly, like he can’t believe what he’s about to say. Then he takes a deep breath and it shakes right through him before he says, “I—I sort of have a connection with him.”

Seungcheol feels his jaw fall open in shock.

He tries to reel it in, but none of his muscles seem to be particularly responding.

“Wha-whaddya mean a connection? Like a sexual thing?” He says when he finally gets it together enough to respond.

Jihoon actually laughs—a warm puff of air that teases Seungcheol’s lips, “No—Not like that!” He gasps, frantically shaking his head. He makes a gesture which means nothing but there's a vague desperation to it and adds, “I don’t know how to explain it, but when Soonyoung first brought him here—I immediately felt this pull towards him, a need to help him. And when he told me about his conversion—I realised it was the same way mine had happened. That’s why I wanted you to hear what he had to say. I thought maybe he and I—”

He trails off then, shaking his head, as if he can’t find the words, or doesn’t think they are important.

A thought occurs to Seungcheol, then. One that makes his stomach stop twisting into such tight knots.

“You think you guys had the same progenitor?”

Jihoon’s eyes, for a moment, are sharp and uncertain, a frown tugging between them. Then his expression twists into something more surprised. He looks a bit like someone in shock. Like someone who’s been confronted with an unexpected truth. “Maybe? I—I wouldn’t know how to tell. That’s why I wanted you to hear what he had to say. Maybe you could make some sense of it
Seungcheol shifts his weight uneasily. “Alright—” He says with an air of strained, deliberate calm “Just give me a minute, yeah? I need to clean up a bit, then I’ll listen to him.”

He doesn’t actually want or need a shower—but it's good to have an excuse, some space to get his equilibrium.

Jihoon nods, face shining with relief. But instead of leaving immediately, he lays a hand on Seungcheol’s cheek and says in an earnest whisper, “You are a good person Seungcheol, please stop saying that you’re not.”

The words, however softly they are delivered, yank at the knot of shame that still sits inside Seungcheol’s gut.

On instinct, he tries to pull back, eyes falling away. But Jihoon doesn’t allow it. He brings both hands up to frame Seungcheol’s face and won’t let him look away from the daunting weight of acceptance in his gaze.

“Whatever you’ve done in the past—it doesn’t matter anymore. None of it. And when you’re ready to tell me, I’ll listen, and it won’t change a thing between us.”

Seungcheol cradles his face in his hands and kisses him, “I hope you’re right.”

Half an hour and a hot shower later, Seungcheol is cleaner and steadier—and manfully suppressing the urge to murder Soonyoung when he tries to re-open the topic of the special den Seungcheol’s not building for Junhui’s in the attic.

He joins the others in the living room, taking a seat in the armchair and accepting the cup of coffee Jihoon pushes into his hand.

“Vernon’s a stray too, but unlike me, he remembers how he was converted.” Jihoon begins, taking a seat next to Vernon and resting a gentle hand on his shoulder. “Go on, tell him Vernon.”

Vernon’s sipping on a hot chocolate, and he sets his mug down to run a hand through his hair.

“It all started when I went to this nightclub with a group of my friends. And I’ll be honest, we knew from the get-go that it had predominantly Vampire clientele, but the bar crawl rep assured us non-consensual feeding was against the law, so none of us were that worried. The night was mostly fine—I hung with one of my closest friends until we left for the next club with the rest of the group. But then my friend started feeling weird soon after, complaining of dizziness and stomach pains. I stayed with him outside when everyone went into the next club, and after a while I started feeling sick as well. I thought it was because I was watching him be sick, but then I felt dizzy and I must have passed out, because when I woke up, I was in this really weird place. My friend was lying next to me, and another girl from the group I didn’t know. They were passed out, blue in the face. I tried to wake my friend up—but he wouldn’t move, and that’s when I saw the bite marks on his neck. I freaked out and ran. I found a door and I saw sunlight and I ran for it. The minute I got outside, I could feel myself burning. I was in so much pain and I had to hide in this alleyway. That’s when I realised I’d been….”

He trails off, gesturing at the bite marks on his neck. They’re still raw, fresh.

Seungcheol sits back in his chair and levels a no-bullshit look his way. “So what happened to your friend? You just, what? Left him?”
Vernon blinks and turns to look at him. The expression on his face flickers briefly from neutral blank to something sick and sharp and shattered. Then the empty expression is back, Vernon's features twitching but clinging to the illusion like a protective shield.

“I didn’t have much of a choice. I was too scared to go back.” He says softly, sounding hurt.

Jihoon shoots Seungcheol a disapproving look, before offering a softer one to their guest. “It’s okay Vernon. Just tell him the rest.” He says, refusing to be diverted.

Vernon sighs, already cutting his eyes away, focusing at nothing in the space between them.

“After the sun set, and I could finally leave the alley—I went back to campus. When I got there though, I realised my wallet was missing and I didn’t have my key-card on me. Someone had emptied my pockets. Thankfully, one of the girls from my class let me into the building, but when I got to my room—all my stuff was gone. My side of the room had been totally cleared out. My roommate told me two guys showed up that morning and packed all my stuff, told him I had been arrested. He said they weren’t vampires—they just flashed a badge at him and started packing my things. I don’t know who they were, but a few days later I found out they’d even filed paperwork with the college saying I’d dropped out of my course.” He makes a thin noise, shakes his head. “It was as if on paper, I suddenly didn’t exist anymore.”

Seungcheol’s eyebrows pull together in confusion; everything has suddenly taken on a cold sinister edge.

“When did all this happen?”

“A month ago—I don’t know.” Vernon shifts uncomfortably, hands twisting in his lap, “I’ve kind of lost track of time.”

Jihoon slides over beside Vernon and takes his hand, trying to offer comfort. “Where have you been staying? How have you been surviving?”

“On the streets mostly.” Vernon says, picking up his mug again, “My roommate Seungkwan is pretty sweet, we kind of had a thing going on before this happened, and he’s been letting me stay with him. But since I ‘dropped out’—he’s been assigned another roommate, so I can’t always be there.”

The building intensity of the conversation is briefly dispelled, and Seungcheol rubs a hand over his face, playing the whole story over again in his head.

It’s certainly a good sob story, Seungcheol will admit. But despite his lingering reservations, he somehow doesn’t think it’s rehearsed; Vernon looks like shit for one thing, and his voice has been tight throughout, veering far too close to the edge of panic to be anything but genuine.

And if what he’s saying is true—then they’re wading through way deeper shit than Seungcheol anticipated. Because this whole operation sounds planned—like a carefully constructed feeding trap designed to lure unsuspecting victims. Which is bad—shit tons of bad.

There’s only a handful of people who can do something like this and get away with it.

“I know it sounds surreal, but non-consensual conversions still happen.” Soonyoung puts in, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. “Vernon’s not the only stray I’ve caught rifling through the store trash out the back. With all these new laws controlling feeding and the cost of a conversion certificate getting higher every year, strays are going to become more common.”
“Right.” Seungcheol nods, mirroring his pose. Taking a deep breath, he turns to Vernon again, “Have you come into contact with any hunters yet?”

Vernon gives one slow headshake. “No—not directly. But the others tell me about them—tell me where they patrol and what places to avoid. We have lookouts.”


“Uh, yeah,” Vernon flounders for a moment. “Other *strays*.”

For a moment, Seungcheol's brain slips down a gear and he can't manage to say anything back. Thankfully Jihoon still has the wherewithal to ask smart questions. “So you have a bunch of strays you hang out with? That must be nice.”

Vernon emits a low snort of sound, something like laughter but brief and bitter. “Not so much. They’re a paranoid bunch and it took me a while to earn their trust. But it’s better that we stick together you know—safety in numbers.”

Seungcheol blinks, processing that. “What *kind* of numbers are we talking about here?”

“It’s hard to say,” Vernon hedges without meeting Seungcheol's eyes.

“Ballpark it.” Seungcheol presses.

Vernon delays in answering, but from the way his eyes go momentarily distant Seungcheol can tell evasiveness isn't what's causing the delay. Vernon is trying to calculate as accurate a tally as he can manage. Seungcheol doesn't interrupt.

Finally Vernon meets his eyes and says, "A hundred. Maybe more."

Seungcheol's eyes close at the number, and his chest tightens uncomfortably. “Oh, shit.”

Under the cover of night, Vernon leads them half-way across the city to where he’s been living amongst the other vampire strays.

It turns out to be an abandoned subway station in the grimmest corner of Seoul.

Despite Vernon giving a signal that a ‘friendly’ is approaching, the group of baby vampires loitering outside the main entrance scatter immediately, sprinting off in different directions. One of them bolts down the darkened staircase leading into the subway, possibly to warn the others.

Vernon steps aside, turns his head to look across the darkness of the street and sighs. “Sorry man—but I told you this would happen. They’re a cagey bunch, and they probably think I’ve captured and coerced into exposing them.”

Judging by his taut, unhappy expression that’s something that’s happened before.

“That’s to be expected.” Seungcheol nods sombrely. Turning to look at Jihoon and Soonyoung hovering behind him, he says, “You guys stay here while I follow Vernon inside. Keep a look out.”

Soonyoung makes a noise which gives the impression he finds the idea of standing watch on the sidewalk boring or something. Like he’d had better plans for the night. While’s Jihoon's expression takes a mutinous turn, but he doesn't actually argue. He just nods curtly as Vernon leads Seungcheol away.
The path leading down into what used to be the platform is rutted and unpaved, little more than footsteps worn into the ground. The gravel crunches beneath Seungcheol’s feet, and the damp, rotting stink of the place coils all around him.

As they walk further down, gravel turns into large concrete slabs—then into smaller white tiles, dusty and scattered with footprints.

Seungcheol can’t hear a thing, even when he strains his senses, and he’s staring so resolutely ahead he almost trips over the body at the bottom of a broken staircase.

Whoever it was has been dead for some time; they’re gaunt looking, almost skeletal, and their eyes glisten white like they've had all the life leeched out of them. From the neat arrangement of their limbs it’s clear to Seungcheol they’ve been placed their deliberately—laid out like a sacrifice, like protection?

Vernon comes to a dead stop in front of the body and doesn't say a single word, but Seungcheol can see his face tense up, mouth a fine tight line and he knows what that feels like, because he feels exactly the same.

After a quiet moment, Vernon very carefully steps over the dead body and keeps walking. A trail of dark blood leads down a slope, a gentle, almost meandering line on the dirty tiles. Seungcheol follows him carefully, feet quiet on the ground, quieter than he should be for his size; Seungcheol knows how to contain himself when he has to, when he needs to.

There’s a large plastic sheet at the bottom of the slope, covering the entrance, and when Vernon pushes it aside for them to step through, Seungcheol is stunned by the sheer size of the space that greets them.

The room they step into is cavern-like; a huge open space filled with tents and crates and poorly erected wooden shacks. There’s barely a trace of the old subway station left to see—the train tracks have been uprooted, and one side of the tunnel has been sealed off with bricks—but dominating one corner of the tunnel is a heavily graffitied subway cart, its broken windows boarded with planks and dirty blankets. Like a makeshift hub of sorts.

The whole place looks like a refugee camp. Which Seungcheol supposes it kind of is, and as he scans the entire space for a second time, he can see the bright glow of a hundred vampire eyes staring back.

“Fuck.” Seungcheol breathes quietly.

Next to him, Vernon looks serious and watchful. Though he’s relaxed for now. Relaxed enough that Seungcheol thinks maybe they’re not going to be surrounded by the hungry vampire hordes any time soon.

“It’s okay guys, he’s not a hunter.” Vernon calls out, voice echoing in the darkness. “This is Seungcheol, he’s uhm—” he winces, like he still doesn’t quite believe what he's about to say, “—a Lycan. And he’s here to help.”

As friendly first introductions go—it’s not very convincing. If the shoe was on the other foot, Seungcheol sure as hell wouldn’t come out to say hello. But these guys must trust Vernon’s judgement though—or maybe they’re just a curious bunch, because soon enough they begin to emerge, peering over tarps and sleeping bags.

And Vernon was right—there’s easily a hundred of them. There are more than a hundred baby
strays packed inside, with that combination of restlessness and stillness that genuine fear brings to a large group of people.

As Seungcheol makes his way down the centre of the tunnel, some of them scatter quickly, while many more remain rooted in place, staring him down suspiciously. They don’t seem to be preparing any sort of attack though, and as Seungcheol approaches, it becomes apparent why.

They’re all terrified.

Genuinely terrified.

They’re twitchy and starvation thin—too young, too inexperienced and weak to launch any sort of coordinated attack, and when Seungcheol comes to a stop in the centre of the room, he can hear crying from more than one direction.

It’s sad and fucked up. This is all so very fucked up.

What the fuck is he going to—

Seungcheol turns when someone touches his shoulder, and he finds himself face to face with Jihoon—who of course couldn’t follow a simple order and stay put. He just had to venture down here into baby vampire central, and he’s dragged Soonyoung along for the ride too.

Idiot.

There’s a reprimand on the tip of Seungcheol’s tongue, for both of them to go right back where he told them to wait—but before he can get a word in, Jihoon’s turning wide, teary eyes on him and croaking, “Oh my god Seungcheol….what are we going to do?”

Seungcheol frowns, because it’s the same question his brain is currently stuck on.

He’s seen some bad things, some really bad things. Nothing’s ever felt like this. He’s never seen so many strays before—practically a whole damn town of strays, all hungry and scared shitless and lost.

Whatever he decides to do, none of this can end well. None of it.

But he can’t just leave them here. He can’t just pretend them away like everything else in his life.

“I don’t know yet Jihoon—but we’re gonna need a lot of hot chocolate.”

Chapter End Notes

So that was a lengthy hiatus. Not intentional I assure you, but every time I made a poll asking what fic I should update, this fic never won. I guess the suggestion of puppy play and bottom Cheol in the previous chapter wasn't to everyone's tastes or something? So yeah, seven months later, I have finally got around to updating it :) I hope to stick to a more regular updating schedule, because this fic is still a while off from completion and I really want to get it finished this year!
Anyway, hope those who were looking for the update are satisfied and sorry I kept you waiting so long!
Thanks for reading and as always, feedback is very much appreciated!

End Notes

1) Yes, I started a new fic.
2) I will still be updating my other fics but this was a new years resolution and I just had to churn it out before I went mAD!
3) Yes, there will be smut. Ohohohohohoho.
4) I'm kind of already decided on who will also be Vampire/Lycan/Human here, but I'd like to hear your thoughts.
5) Thanks for reading :)