Sic Transit Gloria

by DaggerStar

Summary

Gabriel Reyes has been a vampire since 1997 and has made some mistakes. Ana Amari has been a vampire for far longer and is Gabriel's best friend. Jack Morrison is the newest of the three and has a few things to say.

Notes

I think this will only be a four-parter to start with, though I may add more to the story eventually. I'll be posting a chapter every week.
Being dead sucks. No family, no friends that aren't also dead. No Sunday morning pan dulce from the neighbourhood vendor. One would think that, after about seventy years of being dead, it would get easier to deal with, but it never does. The days spent shut inside a dark apartment, with only nightfall bringing solace. All the goddamn blood. Gabriel stared at the mirror in his bathroom and sighed. Dark bags hung under his eyes and his pupils were their typical over-dilated selves. Gabriel's irises usually held a deep brown, but he hadn't eaten in at least a month, so the colour was a burning crimson he'd gotten quite used to. And to think that, at some point, he was actually worried about not being able to see his reflection.

The Latino man stepped out of the bathroom and into his living room.

“What's the time?” he asked the room.

“It is twelve twenty-nine a.m.,” spoke a digitized female voice.

Gabe grabbed one of his jackets, a grey bomber, and headed out the door and into the night. The muggy summer air of Los Angeles hit his skin and he groaned. Gross California summer weather. Gabriel had moved back to LA about a decade ago, knowing that he could find a good life at dusk in the bustling city once more. He thought he had remembered just how hot Southern California could get. I'd dealt with it years ago, so now I'm used to it, Gabe would tell himself before moving. Gabe was wrong. He suddenly regretted his choice of outerwear, but kept the bomber on anyway as a precaution. His skin was a deathly shade of grey, barely holding onto any of the golden colour it did a few weeks ago. That's just what happens when one doesn't eat for so long.

Gabriel kept his collar up and his head bowed, walking swiftly down the sidewalk. A nearby bar is where he was headed. Tom’s Saloon, a real hole in the wall place that serves foamy beer and greasy buffalo wings. The typical clientele are drunkards with no connections. Perfect snack. Tainted blood isn't the tastiest, but it's easy to get from the victim and not hard to come by in a big city. The neon light of the bar shone bright ahead of Gabe, like a beacon leading to his satisfaction.

Gabriel didn't even have to enter the bar to see his target. A young ginger man, staggering while trying to argue with a much larger man. It'll take some diffusing, but it's still an easy kill. Gabe picked up his pace, making a beeline towards the two men.

“I jus’ want 'nother drink!” the ginger slurred.
“You've had enough. You need to leave.”

Gabriel slid his arm around the ginger man’s waist.

“There you are! Sorry for my friend here, he's not supposed to be drinking like this. Right, buddy?”

The stranger squinted at Gabe and was about to say something in protest before slumping over in the vampire’s arms.

“You better take him out of here, sir,” the other said with a stern tone.

“I will! Gotta take him home to his wife. Again, sorry for the trouble.”

The large man nodded his head, then looked closer at Gabriel. Gabriel tilted his head down and swiftly turned around, making his way to the alley behind the bar. The stranger in his arms would surely be heavy to a normal human, but to him, the man was no heavier than a few bricks. When the darkness of the alley finally enveloped them both, Gabriel propped the unconscious man against the cement wall. With how many days he had gone without a bite to eat, Gabe could see the stranger's jugular pulsing, hear his heart beating slowly. Feel the unbridled life emanating from him. It was electrifying.

Without further adieu, Gabriel took off his jacket and let his fangs slide over his natural canines. He covered the man's mouth and bit down. Hard. The sweet taste of blood covered his tastebuds and he moaned in pleasure. In that moment, Gabriel Reyes was but a starving man taking his first bite of food in a month. As soon as the vampire’s fangs penetrated the skin, his victim's eyes shot open. Arms flailed about, trying desperately to fight the attacker, but failing for many reasons. Gabe simply chuckled at the man's pathetic excuse for self defense and continued drinking. Draining said man dry. Mouthful after mouthful of blood left the human paler and Gabriel, healthier than ever. He could feel the warmth returning to his body. His eyes faded to their usual deep brown and colour livened his flesh. Once the body was completely exsanguinated, Gabriel reluctantly let go. The frenzy of a fresh meal was still buzzing in his head like a bitter high. Breath in, breath out. With some practiced calming down, the frenzy ebbed and Gabe stood up straight. He stretched, looking to make sure no one was around as he did so. Then he looked down at the body. Vampire venom does a lot of magical things that many don't know about. He watch as the corpse, starting where the bite mark was, began to decompose. The skin became hard and black, like it had been burnt, while the innards bubbled into a liquid. Similar to a spider's kill. Soon enough, the corpse that once layed before him was nothing but a puddle of steaming viscera soup the colour of tar. Gabriel wiped his mouth on his sleeve.
Time to head back home. Gabe brushed some dirt off his sweatpants and pulled his grey bomber back over his muscular figure. Back he went, into the humid night. The darkness seemed brighter now that Gabriel had healed up. The busy sounds of Los Angeles were somehow even busier, conversations from blocks away about work and love, honking horns and engines revving. Gabe smiled and put his hands in his pockets. When he finally made it back to his apartment, there was a pep in his step and an itch to do something. Today's my day off, but there's always something to do in LA after midnight. He unlocked his door and walked through. His punching bag was as inviting as ever until he found something else to entertain himself with. Maybe I'll give Ana a call. Gabriel threw his jacket onto the couch and kicked off his shoes.

“Call Ana Amari.”

“Calling Ana Amari,” replied the room's voice.

Gabe began punching and kicking his punching bag as the call dialled. A few beats passed when a woman's voice finally spoke.

“Gabriel! How are you?”

“Doing well, how 'bout you?”

“Good, good. I'm actually on my break at the office right now.”

“Oh, that's a shame.”

“Why?”

“I was just wondering if we could go somewhere today. I'm bored and it's a day off.”

“Well, I get off work in,” a pause, Ana likely checking her watch, “About an hour if you can wait?”

“Yea, that's fine. Finally got down to having a decent meal,” Gabe elaborated with a chuckle.
“You really should eat more, friend. You don't have to wait until you are at death's door to have a bite to eat.”

Gabriel steadied his punching bag and wiped his brow, then sighed.

“I know, Ana. I'll try.”

“That's all I could ask. I gotta go, Gabriel, but I'll come over after work, okay?”

“Okay, see you then.”

The call ended and Gabe started punching once more. He'd be riding the high of his feed for at least the rest of the night, feeling invigorated and healthy. He grinned, fangs barred with excitement.
Chapter Summary

A surprise run-in with a handsome someone.

Chapter Notes

I know it's late, but it's still Tuesday for me, just as promised. I had to take my cat to the vet, so it's been a busy day. Hope you enjoy nonetheless.

There was a knock at the door when Ana finally arrived. Gabriel got up from his couch and strutted over to open the door and greet his friend.

“How was work?” Gabe asked as he let her in.

“As good as being a secretary can be,” Ana replied with humour in her voice. “What did you want to do today then, Gabriel?”

“I'm not sure. Maybe go dancing?”

“We always have fun at the clubs. It's like ordering off a menu.”

“I just ate, Ana, I'm not hungry.”

“Relax, I'm joking.”

A smile spread across the Egyptian woman's face and her amber eyes glowed with warmth. She took off her blue wool coat, setting it on the couch, and undid her braid. Gabe shook his head and took off his sweat and blood stained tank top. He walked into his bedroom, looking for a presentable outfit for the club. A dark red, long sleeved button-up and some black jeans should suffice.
Gabriel walked out of his room with said outfit on and spun around for Ana to see.

“Would you look at that! You don't look like you've done three rounds against The Undertaker for once.”

“Please, you know how I clean up. Remember New Year's 2025?”

“How could I forget? We were both quite wealthy during that decade. Armani looks good on you.”

“And Valentino on you,” Gabe said with a smirk.

Being a vampire since 1997 means having many lives under one's belt. From then on, Gabriel Reyes has had decades of names, jobs, apartments. Fake deaths. Someday, he and Ana would forget their real names and opt for yet another title. They might even get married to present completely different people to the public. Who knows.

Ana unbuttoned her blouse ever so slightly, and untucked it out of her slacks. After a beat, the duo headed out towards the garage attached to the apartment complex. Gabriel’s black ‘38 Charger shone in the dim light. The model has changed very little over the years. Still the same old muscle car. He and his friend opened the doors and got inside, and the car whirred gently to life. Huntington Park flew by outside as Gabe drove the two of them onto the 101 towards a nice club in Hollywood. The lights of the freeway shined outside and set a calm mood, accented by other hovering cars zooming down the road. Unlike the Dodge Charger, Los Angeles had definitely changed over the decades. The old smog was replaced by environment-friendly power options. Solar panels covered the skyscrapers in order to power the city. Where there would have been the homeless, their tents set up by walls of tacky graffiti, there were now large buildings meant to house those who couldn't afford places of their own. Much better than the old shelters from before he turned. His favourite parts of LA, however, were definitely all the murals. Eventually, in order to prevent graffiti artists from tagging things they weren't supposed to, sizable brick walls were erected throughout the city. They were specifically made for artists to tag and paint. It makes everything pleasantly colourful. Beautiful, even.

“Can you pop open the glove compartment?”

“Course.”

Ana opened the glove compartment, and Gabriel reached over to grab a packet of cigarettes. He
shook one out and tapped the tip lightly on the car dashboard out of habit. The metal of the cigarette caused a thick stomping noise and Ana chuckled. Gabe shot her a glare, but his smirk betrayed him. He pressed a small button on the cigarette and pressed his lips on the thin tube. The warmth was comforting and the burn in the back of his throat was familiar. A different type of burn than alcohol.

“Those things will kill you, you know,” Ana chuckled.

Gabe grinned and let out a breathy laugh. He smacked the power button of his car radio light-heartedly and turned on some vintage tunes. *Funny what's vintage nowadays. I had an *NSYNC poster in my room back in the day, and now Amoeba sells their CDs like they used to sell Led Zeppelin vinyls*. Gabe took the exit into Hollywood and slowed down to an even 60 miles per hour, scanning Melrose for his favourite nightclub. There it was. A bright holoscreen of a winking, scantily clad woman shone above the club, its LED name blinking a bright pink and turquoise. The Dancing Rose. Reyes turned into the spacious parking lot and parked his car. He and Ana swiftly stepped out, making their way to the front of the (considerably) long line.

“Raphael! Sarah! Head right in.”

The bouncer pulled back the rope and let the two of them inside. They were well-paying regulars, after all. Music pounded in their ears, the boosted bass pumping through the club, making the walls vibrate. Thank goodness Gabe had eaten before they arrived. Being surrounded by humans while hungry is never good. One can hear the blood pumping through their veins. Such a hazard.

The DJ had on a golden frog head and played a thundering beat. Ana ordered the two of them some Long Island Iced Teas and pulled Gabriel onto the dance floor. She swayed her hips from side to side, dark hair dancing with her. After a beat, Gabe began tapping his feet and moving his shoulders along with the beat. The music eventually hypnotized the two of them. They danced for hours, letting time pass them by. Time becomes so meaningless when you're immortal. The mix of blue and pink lights fired them up. Lightning shocking them in the best way possible. Ana began eyeing a man at the bar. He had broad shoulders and slightly greying blonde hair that fell just below his ears. Ana smirked at Gabe. Gabe rolled his eyes. She stopped dancing and strutted over to the bar, tucking her hair behind her ears. Gabriel continued dancing to the rhythm, letting people grind on him. Suddenly, his hair stood up on the back of his neck and goosebumps on his arms. He darted his head around the club, but didn't see anyone suspicious. Then his eyes landed on a man who was staring at him.

A handsome man with sunny blonde hair, smiling at him. The man stood up and walked outside to the yard area, hand lingering on the door before closing it. Gabriel followed this pretty stranger. When he walked into the night, he saw him more clearly. The stranger leaned on the railing, looking at one of the space heaters. He had fair, peachy skin and, when he finally looked over at Gabe, eyes the colour of lapis lazuli.
“Hi, my name is...Raphael,” Gabriel spoke after clearing his throat.

The other man walked slowly over to him until Gabe was nearly pinned against the wall near the door. At this distance, he could see the barely there trace of freckles on the white man’s cheeks. Said man slammed one hand against the wall, next to Gabe’s head, and locked the door with the other. Which would’ve turned Gabe on to no end except for the fact that his goosebumps made an appearance again. He stared at the man’s hands, both now planted on the wall behind him. He had on a sky blue, long-sleeved shirt and navy denim jeans. Blue to match his eyes. However, when Gabriel looked back up at the stranger’s gorgeous gems, their cobalt had been replaced by a burning, icy silver.

Reyes felt his fangs tear through his gums and seat themselves over his normal canines. Although he couldn’t see it himself, he knew his dark brown eyes had begun to glow fiery red.

“Long time no see, sweetheart,” the man snarled.

“Do I know you?” Gabriel asked behind bared teeth.

“Las Vegas, two thousand five. The day you ruined my life.”
After years of living on the west coast, Gabriel Reyes was finally going to Las Vegas. It took some time to get used to his newfound immortality, and even more time to get used to feeding. Not that he would know. After he had not-so-pleasantly realised what he had become, Gabe figured it was time to live a little, consequences be damned. So he grabbed his helmet, hopped onto his Yamaha, and sped off down the 15. Straight to Vegas, baby. Streetlights shone down on him in the late afternoon darkness. Winter was approaching, so the nights became longer. Perfect for a vampire roadtrip. Gabriel rode through the city, passed the mountains, and was finally on open road in the desert. He zoomed down the freeway, swerving through the braids of cars and other bikes. Normally, the road would be much less populated, but he was nearing Primm and it was a Friday night. By the time he had made it to Vegas, it was nearing eleven at night, which means that the strips were bright and bustling. Gabriel had heard of one particularly nice club at the top of the Palm’s Fantasy Tower where you could see the night sky as you danced.

The line was long, but well worth the wait. The moon’s illumination paired kindly with the nightclub’s lights. Gabe strutted briskly over to the bar and ordered a martini from the lovely bartender. She slid the glass over to him and he took more than a sip. A presence was suddenly at his side. When he looked over, he saw sunny blonde hair and eyes like the ocean on postcards.

“Name’s Jack!” Ocean-Eyes yelled over the music.

“Michael!”

“Wanna head out to the balcony?”

“Definitely!”
The two of them made their way outside and the cool air hit their skins. In this air, Jack’s cheeks grew rosy, showing off a myriad of freckles. Gabe smiled and leaned against the railing.

“Aren’t you afraid of falling off?”

“I like to live on the edge.”

Jack laughed at this. Gabriel saw a waiter coming around with glasses full of a bright orange liquor and grabbed two. Jack grabbed another two from behind the waiter, raising his brows and smirking at Gabe. The two of them talked about sports, then about their home cities. When Jack had said Bloomington, Indiana, Gabe had laughed so hard, he cried.

“Got a corn farm there?”

“Yea, how about you? You a failing art student or something, Mr. LA?”

Gabriel lightly tapped Jack’s shoulder.

“Too real,” the Latino man replied with a giggle.

Eventually, the two of them were drunkenly making out in some alley. When they pulled apart, their eyes met. A deep sea greeting a simmering umber.

“I wanna marry you, Jack Morrison.”

“And I you, Michael Diaz.”

Gabriel’s new name rang dull in his ears, but he ignored the feelings, instead giving in to his drunk giddiness.

“Let’s do it.”
“What, get married?”

“Hell yea, Jacky. We can find a little uh...thing, and get a union whatever.”

“Why the fuck not? Let's get married.”

And so they did. A Vegas wedding at three in the morning between two very drunk men. An Elvis impersonator officiated their union. The epitome of romance. When the two of them got to the hotel room Jack was renting, they shut the door as quickly as possible. No doubt that the rooms above and below them could hear the creaking of the bed, and their moans permeating through the air. Jack pinned Gabe’s wrists above his head and bit at his neck. They kissed sloppily. Before Jack could start putting on the condom he had fished out of his wallet, Gabriel took it out of his hands. Gabe slid the condom on for him instead, and Jack let out a moan. Jack slapped lazily at the bedside table until his hand found a bottle of lube. He covered his fingers and wasted no time. Gabriel let out a moan, but then bit down on his fist. Jack quickened his fingers, adding more with each set of thrusts until he couldn't stand the wait. Finally, he replaced his fingers with his cock. Gabe gripped the bedsheets, slightly ripping them. A beat passed.

“M-move,” Gabriel sputtered.

When Jack pulled out, Gabe replaced the sheets with the other man’s back. As the pace quickened, the scratches deepened. The sweet smell of blood radiated through the air and Gabriel opened his eyes. He could see Jack’s jugular pumping, seemingly to the rhythm of his relentless pounding. Jack thrusted faster and faster, scraping his own nails down Gabe’s chest. Said man could feel his fangs ripping their way through his gums to sit on top of his canines. A deep burning began to glow in his throat, and a hunger in his belly. The alcohol didn't help his self control.

Jack called out a string of curses as he came. He braced himself against the bedframe. After a moment, Gabriel sat up, leading Jack to stay on his lap.

“I want to make you mine,” Gabe purred, a darker tone to his voice.

“And I want you to, sweetheart,” Jack whispered into his ear with a smile on his face.

Gabriel growled suddenly, and tore at his new husband’s neck. Blood poured into his mouth, making him moan with satisfaction. Jack yelled at first, then whimpered and choked, not unlike
someone who has had their throat slit. Gabe took his own hard cock in his hand and began jerking himself off while still sucking on Jack’s neck. He groaned into the wound. Just as the spout was running dry, Gabriel came. His breathy moans and gasps filled the air. Jack fell backwards in a slump onto the bed. Gabriel straddled his dying body and bit his own wrist. The haze of booze and blood made him miss Jack’s colourless lips a few times, but he finally met his mark.

“Drink up, babe!” he laughed out loud.

At first, drops simply dripped into the dying man's mouth. But then, a frenzy took Jack over. As if the Grim Reaper had stopped its scythe mid-swing, Jack grabbed Gabriel’s wrist with all his might and drank. Drank like his life depended on it. And oh, it did.

The next evening, Gabriel ran. He sprinted back to the tower’s parking garage from the hotel...the other...had booked. He barely remembered anything after the balcony, but he knew he had done something bad to the man with the gorgeous baby blues. Jack...Morrigan? Mulligan? Morrison! Like it mattered. Whatever Gabe had done to him, it was something he could run from. Gabriel Reyes was dead in the system, so no one would be able to connect him to it. As soon as he was on his motorcycle, he was gone. Back onto the 15 freeway to Los Angeles to pack his bags and leave LA County. Like smoke. Gone by daybreak.

~

Reyes stared at the blonde with sorrow in his soul. Or whatever was in its place. He felt the prickle of tears threatening to spill from his eyes.

“I'm so sorry, Jack.”

“Sorry isn't good enough.”

With that, Jack punched Gabe hard across the face. When he swung again, Gabriel held his arms up to block. And again. Jack stomped on Reyes’ foot, then grabbed his head and brought it down onto his knee.

“You ruined my fucking life that day, you sonuva bitch!”

He grabbed the Latino man by the shoulders and headbutted him, then threw him to the ground.
One punch to the solar plexus knocked the wind out of him. Then a punch to the face. Then another. Tears were forming in Jack’s eyes. With each violent punch, the violent scarlet of his eyes dimmed back into their normal sky blue. Blood streaked down Gabriel’s face, matting his curly, dark brown hair. Suddenly, the door shot open. Ana slammed it shut behind her and yanked Jack off of her friend. Before she could throw a punch, Gabe coughed and spoke.

“Don't.”

“He beat the shit out of you, I'm just returning the fav-”

“Amari, please.”

Ana looked at Gabriel, then back at Jack and let out an angry growl. She threw the blonde against the wall behind him and braced herself against the railing. She counted softly to herself in order to diffuse from the situation. Finally, Ana offered a hand to Gabe, and he took it, pulling himself up. He clutched his head and decided to sit down on one of the benches for a moment instead to regain his composure. Jack stood, hunched over, glaring half-assed at the both of them. The three vampires rested like that for a good minute before Ana looked at Jack.

“Who the hell are you and why did you attack Gabriel?”

“My name is Jack Morrison and your pal is the jackass who turned me.”
4:06am

Chapter Summary

Gabriel and Jack have a talk at Ana's house. (edited ending)

Chapter Notes

The final chapter has come! Happy early Valentine's day everyone. Hope you've enjoyed this small story, and that the ending just makes you excited for more! I plan on writing other stories in this same universe about other Overwatch heroes as vampires. Anyway, read on parders!!

“You idiot!”

Ana stood with her arms crossed, glaring down at Gabriel.

“You cannot just turn someone and not expect consequences!”

Jack waved his arm in the air with an exasperated sigh. Ana pinched the bridge of her nose and walked over to Jack. She laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Let's all talk back at my place.”

As she turned away from the blonde, she shot daggers at her friend. Gabe bowed his head and stood up. He wiped his face on his sleeve. Gabriel could feel the odd tingling that typically accompanies his flesh quickly healing itself. Ana took a pen out of her slacks pocket and made her way over to Jack, scribbling her address on his hand. She tucked the pen back into her pocket and swung the door to the club back open with an aura of annoyance. Gabriel shot Jack a passing glance and followed his friend. The music and lights of the club seemed infinitely more far away.

Ana drove Gabe’s car west down the 2 to Santa Monica, the city she called home. Every so often, she looked in the rear view window and spotted Jack following a bit farther behind on a dark blue motorcycle. About ten minutes passed before Reyes broke the heavy silence.
“I didn't even remember any of it the night after. I just thought I killed him.”

“That's no excuse. You shouldn't have been in the original situation to begin with.” The woman's expression hardened.

“I was impulsive! It was in the heat of things, I—”

“Stop!”

Ana slammed her hand onto the autodrive button and turned to her friend.

“I would have expected you of all vampires to never turn someone like that. That man, Jack, would have wanted death before being like us. You should have just had your meal and let him boil.”

Gabriel looked out the window and sighed. Lights flew by the car like fireflies. He took a thin, metal cigarette out of its case and went to habitually tap the tip before stopping himself. The back of his eyes burned and ached. He breathed in and out, sharply, and put the cigarette to his mouth. Ana went back to manually driving the car. The rest of the short ride felt like a five hour road trip. When the trio finally got to Ana’s beach house, it was nearing daybreak. They all hurried inside. Ana’s house was rustic and eclectic, filled with decor and furniture from generations of style. She had large windows overlooking the beach that she began covering with thick tapestry. Pictures lined every hallway. The staircase was spiral and minimalist, and led to the bedrooms and study. Ana walked over to the fridge and took out a bottle filled with deep crimson blood.

“Do you have a type preference, Jack?”

“No, any is fine,” the blonde replied quietly.

Amari poured three wine glasses for each of them, gave Gabriel a harsh glare, and headed upstairs. A sudden void flooded the room as Gabe and Jack were left alone with each other. Jack took a sip and set his glass down on the kitchen counter. The other man stared at the blood and circled the rim with his finger nervously.

“Why?” was all Jack asked.
Gabriel Reyes didn't know how to answer. Hell, he didn't even know if an answer is what Morrison wanted. The question lingered in the air for a while.

“I don't know.”

The Latino man looked up at Jack, searching the man's eyes for anything. Any sort of emotion that he desperately needed to see, but there was nothing. Just emptiness behind those gorgeous baby blues. A beat passed before another question was asked.

“Does it hurt, Gabriel?”

“What?”

“Does it hurt you to know you did this to me?”

Although surprised by the question, Reyes answered almost immediately.

“Yes.”

Morrison stared back into Gabe's dark umber eyes.

“Good.”

The white man picked back up his glass of blood and sat down at the kitchen island, sipping quietly alone. Gabriel stood in the same place for a while, simply staring at the other man. The same ache and burn appeared behind his eyes and, this time, he let the tears fall. After all, he deserved the pain. He deserved to be hated by this man he had drunkenly married many years prior. So he stood there, letting his tears drop to the flood, not touching the blood Ana had poured for him.

“Did you actually ever want to be with me, or was I just gonna be a fun meal?” Jack nearly whispered.
“I...” Gabriel stopped to let out a shaky breath. “I actually wanted to be with you. Being drunk didn’t matter.”

“You know, I was starving when I woke up. There was a family a couple rooms over. A mom and her two kids.”

Gabriel’s brows furrowed and he shut his eyes, thinking back on situations similar to Morrison’s. When he opened them back up, Jack was staring at him. He looked exhausted.

“I’m sorry. I wasn’t used to controlling myself yet, but that doesn’t matter. I should’ve known better. I’m sorry.”

“Yea, you should’ve.” Jack’s words held no anger, only an exhausted tone of retrospect.

Gabriel took a drink of the blood and went to sit next to the other vampire, albeit a couple stools apart. The two men sat like that, taking occasional sips from their glasses, for a while. Ana had left the bottle out for them, and they drank until it was empty. It didn’t mean anything to either of them, drinking together like that. Similar to two handsome strangers who happened to meet each other at the same bar.

Humans outside yelled and played in the sand. In the distance, the sounds of the Santa Monica pier rang like laughter. The rushing waves splashed against the coast. Ana was likely sleeping at this point in the morning.

“I miss sunrise over the ranch back in Bloomington,” Jack said suddenly, turning to Gabriel.

“Yea?”

“Yea. I had an old collie, Betty, who used to wake me up every morning at five to feed her. Then I’d head outside, with layers of clothes if it was winter, and over to the barn. Pa would go out on his tractor to see to the crops, ma would check on the hens’ nests, and I would feed the cattle.”

“Sounds peaceful.”
“The first and only time I ever went back to Indiana after...after, our farm was abandoned and Mr. and Mrs. Morrison had angel-shaped headstones at Rose Hill.

Now it was Jack who had tears in his eyes. Gabe was at a loss for words.

“I-”

“Don’t. Please.”

Reyes bowed his head. He then got up and walked to Ana’s spacious living room, laying back on the couch.

“Amari has a guest room upstairs.”

Jack Morrison stepped quietly over to the staircase. He stopped walking halfway up the stairs, peering passively at the couch where Reyes laid, then continued up to the guest bedroom, not saying a word.

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