Summary

Well, Rookery is defeated, the clan has a new home, Tony a new friend... everything seems just jolly! However, it's too late to change summer plans now, and Tony has to leave for the summer - but he leaves with the promise that he'll come back two years later.

Tony isn't one to go back on his promises, and he DOES come back - but now they're both older, and they have seven weeks at hand. Shit.

(read it bitch it's worth it)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
“What!?” Tony cried in outrage. “We’re leaving already?”

Dad let out a soft puff of breath and bent down to pat his head. “Well, yeah,” he said, “we’ve got more things to see. Places to go, food to eat. People to meet.”

“But –” Tony tried desperately, looking from dad to mom with wide eyes. “– but we just met!”

“I’m sorry, sweetie,” mom said, offering him an apologetic expression. “But you can come back later, can’t you?”

“Excuse me,” Rudolph spoke up from behind Tony’s shoulder, “but when is later?”

“Oh,” mom said, sharing a surprised look with dad, “well, we have plans for next summer, but – but the summer after that you can probably come back.”

“But – but that’s two years!” Tony exclaimed. “That’s so long!”

Rudolph put a hand on his shoulder and hovered closer. “It’s okay,” he said quietly. “I’ll wait.”

Tony bit his lip and looked away, clutching his arm to his chest. “…fine,” he muttered. “Fine. I’ll… I’ll see you in two years, Rudolph.” He turned around to face Rudolph and gave him a smile – and it was the sort of smile you give when you reassure your friends that you’re still their friend.

Rudolph smiled back, the same smile that Tony had given, but then his gaze fell on Tony’s hand, limp by his side, and the smile slipped. “…I…” he began, but he trailed off. Exhaling heavily, the sound bearing more sorrow than frustration, he landed on the ground. “Be careful,” he asked softly, gently taking Tony’s hand in his. “Mortals are dangerous.”

“Says the blood-sucking vampire,” Tony grinned. “But I will. Promise.”

Rudolph seemed to hesitate, eyes downcast and unsure before he shyly pulled Tony in for a hug.

The last time Rudolph had hugged him, Tony had been too surprised to act – but this time he’d been expecting it, and he hugged him back with the fierceness of someone whose life had just been saved.

“Two years,” he whispered. “I’ll see you in two years.”

“Already looking forward to it,” Rudolph replied. “Farewell.”
“Bye, mom!” a now-15-year-old Tony called as he slammed the door to the car shut. “Bye, dad! Have a nice summer!” As the car began to drive away, Tony waved enthusiastically after it before turning to the great castle of “Bed and Bratwurst”.

It looked magnificent, there on the edge of the hill, illuminated by the pale moon shining brightly above. The lights were on in the majority of the windows, and it gave the castle a warm, homey vibe to it, despite the creatures living within.

“Now, where is that vampire?” Tony wondered to himself as he began to drag his suitcase across the bridge leading to the castle.

As it turned out, he didn’t have to wonder for long. When he was half-way across the bridge, a loud whoop cut through the air and a dark blur shot towards him. Moments later he was engulfed in an enthusiastic embrace that lasted only a few seconds, and then he was spun in a dizzying circle.

“Welcome back, mortal!” the blur, now identified as Rudolph, said, laughing a happy laughter that seemed to light up the night as he came to a stop in front of Tony.

“Rudolph!” Tony exclaimed in shock and joy, a wide and happy smile spreading across his face.

“The one and only,” Rudolph replied smugly, puffing out his chest and thumping it with his fist.

“No,” Tony rushed, shaking his head eagerly, “you look older! I thought vampires didn’t age?”

“Oh,” Rudolph said, the air rushing out of his lungs. “Oh, well, I’m fourteen now, so of course I would look older.”

“Fourteen?” Tony repeated. “I sort of thought you’d stay thirteen forever, with how much you complained when I first met you.”

Rudolph laughed. “Don’t be silly,” he said, waving his hand dismissively. “Of course not!”

Tony, still confused but willing to accept that answer for now, grinned and shook his head in fond exasperation. “Of course not,” he repeated affectionately. “How are the others?”

“Come!” Rudolph said, eagerly gesturing for Tony to follow after him as he floated towards the castle. “Why not ask them yourselves?”

Tony’s gaze lingered on his form for a moment, lithe and graceful and pale against the darkness of the night behind him, free to go wherever he wished. God, how he’d missed the sensation of wind against his cheeks and nothing but Rudolph holding him in the air. *Flying.* He’d finally be able to fly again.
Before he could succumb to the memories of that summer, another pale shape came stumbling through the air. It mooed loudly when it saw Tony, and soon a vampire cow was headbutting him and wagging her tail excitedly.

Tony giggled, glad at seeing that the animal was still kicking, and scratched behind her ear. “Hey,” he greeted. “Yeah, I’m glad to see you, too.”

“Tilda!” Rudolph scolded. “Be nice to the guests!”

Tony looked up at him with laughter in his eyes. “Tilda?” he repeated. He giggled again. “You named her Tilda?”

Rudolph froze for a moment, gaze flickering before he caught himself and looked away. “Well, uh,” he said. He cleared his throat. “You obviously weren’t going to, so. Someone had – someone had to do it.”

“Excuses!” Tony cried, bouncing at the balls of his feet as Rudolph pushed open the doors to the castle.

He sniffed. “Perhaps,” he admitted. Then he cast a glance towards Tony’s luggage. “Oh, I can take that.” Without waiting for Tony’s reply, he grabbed his suitcase and pulled it into the air.

Tony crossed his arms and pouted playfully. “But I wanted to go flying,” he complained, making his voice as light as possible to make sure that Rudolph understood it was a joke.

“You mortals!” Rudolph exclaimed, turning upside down in the air to give Tony a mocking scowl. “Always so impatient.”

“Well, that’s because we have such a short lifespan!” Tony defended, hurrying up the stairs after his friend. “What else do you expect us to do, be born and then die?”

“Yes, that sounds good,” Rudolph mused. “Very good, actually. Excellent plan, Tony.”

Tony snorted. He was still the same, even after the two painfully long years. It was nice to see that he hadn’t changed in anything but appearance. “You’ve gotten good at this,” he said. “I like it.”

“Mortal jokes amuse me,” Rudolph replied, turning his nose into the air and sniffing. “Mortals don’t.” Tony grinned. “You are to sleep in my room,” Rudolph supplied, the mockingly-serious tone gone from his voice. “Don’t worry, we haven’t thrown out the beds.”


“How long are you staying, again?” Rudolph asked over his shoulder as he pushed open yet another door, this one leading to the same room Tony had two years ago.

“Seven weeks,” Tony said. “Then school starts, and I have to go.”

Rudolph came to an abrupt stop, spinning around and giving Tony a shocked look. “Seven weeks?” he squeaked. “Just seven?”

Tony shrugged helplessly. “Shorter lifespans,” he reminded him. “Sorry. I can’t do much about it.”

Rudolph huffed. “Alright then,” he muttered. “I’ll just have to make sure that the next seven weeks will be the greatest seven weeks you’ve ever experienced.”

“Excellent plan,” Tony said with a firm nod.
Then they said, in perfect unison – “but now, let’s go flying!” – and then they burst out laughing.

Yes; it was indeed great to see that some things never change.

Then, when Rudolph held out his hand for Tony to take, he latched onto it and leapt from the window sill without a second thought. “Woah!” Rudolph exclaimed, hurrying to grab Tony’s elbow to steady them. “Someone’s eager!”

Tony, airborne for the first time in two years, couldn’t give him an immediate reply. He felt as if his heart had just grown wings and was trying to fly straight through his mouth, and an intense happiness was boiling through him at the sight of his feet dangling in empty air.

“I don’t think you understand,” he breathed, turning his awed eyes to Rudolph, “just how cool this is!”

Rudolph shrugged. “It isn’t that special,” he said.

“Are you kidding me?” Tony asked, frowning and widening his eyes at the same time to give a disbelieving expression. “You only think that because you fly every day!”

Rudolph raised his eyebrows, smirked smugly, and dropped him.

For one sliver of a moment Tony feared for his life, and he let out a surprised cry – but he remembered falling like this before, he remembered and knew, and mere moments later Rudolph caught him in his arms.

“You shouldn’t insult a vampire, mortal,” he said, hushed and dark in the night, only partially-joking. “It might lead to your death.”

Tony looked up at him, at the way his dark eyes gleamed in the starlight, and scoffed. “I wasn’t scared,” he said, not joking at all. “I trust you not to let me fall.”


“Come on,” Tony said, pulling him in the direction of the tallest spire. “Let’s fly!”

And they did.

By the time the sun decided to peek up through the clouds on the horizon, Tony was utterly exhausted. Rudolph, apparently noticing this, shot him a fond glance and flew them back to their now-shared bedroom.

After Tony’d crawled into the bed Rudolph flew around the room and blew out all the candles. At the last one, he hesitated and looked over at Tony, half his face plunged in shadow and the other in gorgeous light. “Good day, Tony,” he said, and it was said in the softest voice Tony had ever heard him use.

“Good night – er. Day, Rudolph,” Tony replied, the words thick with sleep.

Rudolph blew out the light.
The next morning – or maybe he should say night? – Tony woke up to a face hovering right in front of his. He yelped and shuffled backward, successfully falling out of the bed and into a heap of sheets. First then did he realize that the face had belonged to Anna – Rudolph’s sister.

“Anna!” he cried, popping his head over the edge of the bed to glare at the floating vampire. “Not cool!”

She giggled. “Good night, handsome,” she purred, floating closer to the edge of the bed. Tony pulled away from her and winced. How old was she again? Eleven? Ten? Younger? “Good night,” he replied cautiously.

The lid of Rudolph’s coffin slid open, and he poked a scowling head up from it. “Anna!” he cried. “Get out of here!”

“But I want to stay here with Tony!” she complained.

“I, ah,” Tony said, “I’d rather you didn’t, actually.”

The two siblings, who’d been entering a glaring contest, now turned their eyes on him, instead. The both of them looked shocked, Anna more so than Rudolph. She squinted suspiciously and floated closer. “Why isn’t my spell working on you anymore?” she asked.

“Maybe because I’m not interested in you?” Tony asked, shrugging helplessly. How was he supposed to know?

“No,” she said, frowning and floating even nearer. “That’s not enough.”

“Well, maybe because I’m gay?” he said.

Anna froze inches away from his face. “ – you’re gay?” she repeated. When Tony confirmed this, she huffed and pulled back with an uninterested expression. “You can have him, Rudolph,” she said to her brother.

Tony spluttered.

“Why, thank you, sister dear,” Rudolph said exasperatedly, getting up from his coffin to glare down at Anna. “The door is over there. Now, if you don’t mind, we’d like some privacy.”

“Fine, whatever,” Anna said, rolling her eyes and disappearing out the door.

“Sorry about that,” Rudolph offered apologetically as he closed the door after her. “She’ll be laying
off you after that, though, so don’t worry.” With a somewhat frustrated and probably-unconscious head-shake, Rudolph then proceeded to re-light the candles of the room.

Tony placed his folded arms on the edge of the bed and rested his chin on them. Following Rudolph’s moves with his gaze, he had to suppress a fond smile. Such a great friend, after such a short time. What did they even know about each other? Not much – and still they’d managed to trust each other within a few hours.

What could they become, and what could they do, he wondered, if they were given enough time?

He went down to eat breakfast in the dining hall without many hopes. The last time he’d been here, all he’d gotten was a big platter of bratwursts, and this time the place was inhabited by vampires, so… he wasn’t expecting much.

Which was good, because he didn’t get much, either.

“Well,” he muttered as he turned on the stove, “it’s a good thing I like eggs.”

Rudolph, who was hanging upside down over the stove, shot him a confused look. “Why, isn’t eggs good enough?” He turned around in the air and floated away from the warm surface in favor of giving Tony a genuinely concerned look. “We can find something else if you want?”

“Yeah,” Tony said, cracking the first egg open on the edge of the frying pan, “I’d like that.” Rudolph nodded and made for the door. “Cereal!” Tony called after him. “And – and bread! Thank you!”

When Rudolph came back, Tony had finished preparing an omelet, eaten it, cleaned up after himself and then cleaned the whole room, and also spoken with six different vampires who’d floated in and out of the kitchen.

“ Took you long enough,” he grumbled.

“Mortal food is hard to find!” Rudolph defended as he landed on the ground and stepped up to the countertop, where he placed down two big plastic bags. “I have no idea what I’ve brought, I just took things that looked edible.”

“Isn’t that hard,” Tony muttered. He walked over to the counter and looked inside of the bags. “Hey, you got cereal! Thanks.” After a quick look-through, he found that most of the stuff Rudolph had brought was food. He’d also brought a bottle of shampoo and a box of tissues. “Don’t you guys use shampoo?” he asked, holding up the offending bottle and raising an unimpressed eyebrow.

“We use soap,” Rudolph said, crossing his arms stubbornly. “Not this liquid madness.”

Tony giggled. “Oh, it doesn’t matter,” he said, waving one hand dismissively and turning back to the food. “You brought mostly food anyway. Thanks.”

Rudolph bowed. “It was my pleasure,” he said, again in that mockingly-serious tone. When he resurfaced from the bow his eyes twinkled in mirth. “Are you done eating?”

“Hm? Oh, yeah, why?”

“Come along.” Rudolph said. “My clan can take care of that.” He jabbed his head towards the food still on the counter. “There’s something I want to show you.”
Rudolph led him along the river, the water beneath them dark and the forest on their sides thick and impenetrable. Tony glanced down more than once, the reflected stars just inches away from his face, and if he reached down his fingers would breach the surface.

“Where are we going?” he asked, for the umpteenth time.

Rudolph looked over at him, and it created a weird effect, the stars first reflected in the water and the water reflected in Rudolph’s eyes – but it was pretty, Tony had to admit. “You’ll see,” Rudolph replied, smirking teasingly and speeding up.

Whatever it was Tony had been expecting, it certainly wasn’t this. Below them was one of the most beautiful sceneries he’d ever seen. There were mountains in the distance, glancing out over the landscape like gigantic guardians frozen in time. The stars, seeds of light speckled across the dark blue night sky, cast shining reflections in the water, along with the crescent moon bobbing among them. On the edges of the body of water – a lake, Tony was pretty sure – was the thick forest, still, the trees darker than even the night thanks to their numbers. This all had a reflection in the water, even the mountains – and the place seemed to glow in its glory.

The air was thin, but warm – and besides, Rudolph was an endless source of comforting warmth beside him, so had the air been cold, Tony had a suspicion that he would’ve been fine.

Rudolph hovered in the air next to him, his expression somehow softer in the douse of moonlight. “I found it when I went flying some months ago,” he said, and even his voice was somehow softer in the gentle summer night. “What do you think?”

“I – ” Tony said. “I don’t – I don’t have words.”

“Is that… good?” Rudolph asked, raising one eyebrow and lowering the other in an odd but worried expression.

“Well, yeah! Duh,” Tony said, rolling his eyes playfully. Rudolph loosened up, then, and shook his head before flying them down to a round stone right at the edge of the water. He sat them down gently.

Tony didn’t let go of his hand.

“So,” he said, conversationally, “how old are you? Like, actual age, not – not 14.”

Rudolph cocked his head. “I have lived for four thousand, three hundred and… six years, I think,” he said. “What about it?”

Tony blinked. “Four thousand?” he breathed. “But that means – that means you were born – ”

“Two thousand two hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ, yes,” Rudolph nodded.

“But that’s – do you remember that far back?” Tony asked curiously, shuffling closer and turning to face him.

“Oh, no. My first memory is from when I was… oh, six, I think? I was learning to fly around that age, and I crashed into the roof and fell to the floor.” He chuckled fondly and shook his head, glancing wistfully into the distance. “Ah, memories.”

“But – wait, how far back is that?” Tony asked.
Rudolph frowned and put one black-painted nail to his chin. “Hm,” he muttered. “That would be… one thousand eight hundred years ago, I think.”

Tony shook his head in disbelief. He didn’t believe it – he couldn’t believe it! That was crazy! “Two thousand years of memory,” he whispered. “I don’t believe it.”

“It’s true!” Rudolph exclaimed. “What makes you think I’m lying?”

“Uh – no, no, it’s. It’s just an expression,” Tony stuttered. “I believe you. Promise.”

“Oh.”

They lapsed into silence, Tony tilting his head back to stare at the stars twinkling above. Rudolph shuffled closer, still holding his hand, and leaned against his shoulder. The warmth was a welcome one, and Tony leaned back.

“Say,” Rudolph said, his voice gentler than it had any right to be, “when was the first time you remember experiencing wonder?”

Tony blinked. “Wonder?” he repeated. “I… I’m not sure,” he admitted. “Let me think.” He frowned, delving into his own memories in the search for the earliest time he felt pure, genuine wonder. “I – the earliest I can remember,” he began cautiously, “is two years ago. When you flew with me for the first time.”

Rudolph pulled back to give him a surprised look. “Truly?” he said, and over his lips brushed the ghost of a joyous smile. Tony nodded, didn’t want to break the silence, and when Rudolph turned to stare out over the lake the moonlight caught in his eyes.

Tony’s breath hitched.

Beautiful, he thought, truly beautiful –

“The first time I experienced wonder,” Rudolph said, “was the first and only time I saw the sun.”

“You’ve seen the sun?” Tony asked in surprise. “But I thought vampires burned in sunlight?”

“Oh, we do,” Rudolph assured him. “I was ten at the time, though. I wanted to see the sunrise, wanted to see if it was as beautiful as people said. So I snuck out and hid in the shadows.”

When he didn’t say anything more, a flash of desperation surged through Tony. “And…?” he said, trying to pry more out of him so he wouldn’t stop talking.

“And what?” Rudolph said, turning towards him in surprise.

“Was it as beautiful as you thought?” he nagged.

Rudolph hesitated for a moment, gaze going to their hands, still joined between them, and then back to Tony, where he met his gaze calmly. “No,” he said, “I found that it was a thousand times more beautiful than I’d imagined.”

Tony hesitated, unsure if he was hearing what he thought he was hearing. He couldn’t possibly – he shook his head and decided to ignore it. “Well, have you seen the sunset?” he asked, instead of commenting. Rudolph hesitantly shook his head no. “What, not over a phone, either?”

“…phone?” Rudolph repeated. “Vampires can’t be bothered by electricity.”
“That’s a no, then,” Tony muttered. “Well, I know for a fact that there’s electricity in the castle, which means that I’ll be able to charge my phone…” He trailed off and tapped his lower lip before lighting up. “Hey – what do you say about an all-nighter? I can film the sunrise and sunset for you, so that you can see it almost in person!”

Rudolph’s eyes widened. “You – would you do that?” he asked softly.

“Yeah, of course,” Tony nodded, glad to be of help. “That’s what friends are for, after all.”

They passed the rest of the night off by flittering in and out between the trees in the forest, laughing and sharing jokes and Tony teaching Rudolph how to climb trees without using vampiric powers.

It was okay.

(More than okay, when Tony thought back to Rudolph’s face bathed in moonlight as he called him beautiful)

But during summer nights are the shortest, and so their time outside of the castle was far too short. Rudolph flew them back to the bedroom and sat them gently down on the floor before hurrying to walk away from the window.

“You just sit down over there or something,” Tony said, gleefully bouncing over to his backpack to retrieve his phone. He hurried back to the window, where he slipped past the curtains and unlocked his phone.

“What are you doing, exactly?” Rudolph asked, voice slightly muffled by the thick curtains.

“Filming the sunrise,” Tony replied, tapping the big red button at the bottom of his screen just as the first flickers of sunlight peeked over the horizon. “You’ll be able to see it later.”

“Oh,” said Rudolph. “Oh – okay.”

Some ten minutes later Tony slipped back into the room and handed Rudolph his phone, knowing full well that there was a bright smile plastered across his face. “Watch it,” he said. “It’s pretty neat.”

Rudolph squinted. “Is that another expression?” he asked.

Tony rolled his eyes. “Yeah. Duh.”

Rudolph watched the video, and when it got to the part where the actual sun began to show its face, he had to sit down on Tony’s bed.

When Tony was given back his phone, Rudolph was staring emptily at the air in front of him. “I…,” he said. “I don’t – I don’t know what to say.”

“Maybe thank you?” Tony supplied with a grin.

“That doesn’t even begin to cover it,” Rudolph breathed, turning wide and awed eyes in Tony’s direction.

- oh.

“So,” Tony said, clearing his throat and rubbing his nose to hide the fact that he’d blushed, “you
wanna stay awake until sunset?"

“Yes,” Rudolph said. “Absolutely.”
In the beginning, they just messed around in the room – upon Tony’s begging, Rudolph spent most of that time hanging upside down from the ceiling – and talked. They had a singing contest at one point – or maybe it was an attempt at karaoke? – and Tony was absolutely shocked at discovering that Rudolph was a big fan of classical music. But as the day progressed, the two of them grew too tired to do much. Tony actually crawled into his bed at one point and refused to get out.

“I refuse to believe that it's that comfortable,” Rudolph scoffed from his position on the ceiling.

“Have you ever **tried** one?” Tony asked, raising one eyebrow as he burrowed deeper into his pillow.

“You’re going to fall asleep if you do that,” Rudolph said, instead of answering the question.

Tony shuffled around until he was laying on top of the covers instead of underneath them. “Happy now?” he asked mockingly before grabbing his pillow and propping his chin up on it. “And come on down and join me! It’s comfy, I promise.”

Rudolph scoffed, obviously not trusting Tony one bit but still hesitantly floating down from the ceiling. He came to a stop right by the edge of the bed, where he hovered uncertainly.

Tony rolled his eyes and sat up, using his elbow to brace himself as he reached for him. “C’mon,” he said gently, offering his hand with a gentle, reassuring smile. “It’s not hard.”

After another moment of hesitation, Rudolph’s expression turned determined and he took the offered hand. Tony pulled him over into the bed with ease, and Rudolph slowly lowered himself into it.

His expression morphed from hesitancy to one of wonder. “Hey,” he said, shifting his weight and looking around himself, “this isn’t that bad.”


“What?” Rudolph said. “No!”

“Well, not forever,” Tony said, “but for tonight. Today? You’re sleeping here, is what I’m saying.”

“I thought we weren’t supposed to sleep,” Rudolph muttered.

“Just for 24 hours. I don’t have the willpower to say awake any longer than that, not without coffee!”

"Lemme see your teeth,” an absolutely sleep-deprived Tony said. He leaned towards Rudolph, lost
his balance, and toppled over.

“My teeth?” Rudolph repeated, blinking sluggishlly as Tony resurfaced from the bed.

“Just do it,” Tony mumbled, waving his hand somewhere around his ear.

Rudolph opened his mouth wide, displaying his fangs.

“Ooooh,” Tony said. When he leaned forward this time he remembered to brace himself. He reached out and poked one of Rudolph’s teeth curiously and leaned even closer. “Shiny.”

The pad of his index finger lingered at the sharp fang, and he was hesitant to pull away. It was so fascinating, everything that had to do with Rudolph being a vampire. Tony thought to the summer two years ago when Rudolph had almost bitten him, when he, in an anger-induced madness, had crawled all over the roof and the walls while hissing, eyes shining brightly and blood-red – and Tony did pull back, then, because he was far too tired to deal with being horny.

“Now let me see yours,” Rudolph said, bringing Tony’s mind back to the present by prodding his cheek. “I’ve never seen a mortal’s teeth before.”

Tony opened his mouth.

A few hours later the both of them were laying face first down on the bed and groaning. “Is it sunset soon?” Rudolph moaned.

“I don’t fucking know,” Tony replied groggily, “I don’t want to get up and check.”

Rudolph groaned loudly. “I’m tired!” he complained. “I want to sleep!”

“You caaaaan’t,” Tony muttered, turning from laying on his stomach to laying on his back. “If you sleep I sleep and then the sunset will go without me there.”

“What sort of logic is that?” Rudolph wailed, sitting up to give him a scrutinizing look. There were bags under his eyes, his hair even more ruffled than it usually was. “Ugh.” Rudolph fell back into the bed. “At least the bed’s comfortable,” he muttered.

“Told you,” Tony said. After another pause, he groaned and sat up. “Fine, I’ll go check what the time is!”

A few stumbled steps later and he was slipping past the curtains and squinting at the sun. “You know what,” he called through the thick cloth, “I’ll just. Put my phone here and it can record I don’t even care anymore.”

There was a noncommittting grunt from the bed, and Tony took that as a sign that he was allowed to go on, so he placed his phone so it’d be able to keep filming and scooted back into the room. He passed three different lights on his way and extinguished them as he went.

When he came back to the bed he fell into it and wrapped the covers around himself. Rudolph began to rise, but Tony grabbed hold of his foot and tugged him back down. “Nope,” he said, the word muffled by his pillow. “You’re sleeping here, I toldchu.”

“But – ”

“NO buts,” Tony replied, scooting over to one side of the bed to make space for Rudolph.
“C’mon.”

Rudolph didn’t complain anymore, was probably too tired for that, and crawled underneath the covers to join Tony. “You’re sleeping in my coffin tomorrow,” he muttered as he made himself comfortable.

“Mm. Sure,” said Tony. “G’night, Rudd.”

He didn’t notice Rudolph glancing fondly at him before falling asleep.

Tony was the first to wake.

From behind the curtains covering the windows came only darkness, the only sources of light within the room being the lit candles, so they couldn’t have been sleeping for long. And apropos sleeping – sometime during the time they’d been asleep, Rudolph had managed to latch onto Tony’s arm, while Tony himself had slung his other arm across his torso. They were pressed closer together than he’d like – if Tony shuffled closer he’d be able to feel Rudolph’s breath on his cheek.

A sick feeling curled up inside of him. It felt like he was betraying him by doing this – he knew Rudolph wasn’t too fond of touching, and now he was snuggling up to him while he slept? It felt horrifyingly wrong to be aware of what was happening here while Rudolph himself wasn’t, and he hurried to tug back his arm.

Rudolph muttered something in his sleep and scooted closer.

- great, just perfect, exactly what Tony wanted –

Tendrils of panic were starting to suffocate him, but they shied away from him when –

“Go back to sleep.”

Rudolph’s voice was muffled by Tony’s arm, but it was clear of sleep.

Oh – er – uhm – so, he was okay with that? With Tony having his arm around him? Well, if he was awake he would be able to complain, so… with a mental shrug, Tony carefully wrapped his arm around Rudolph and put his head back down on his pillow. He should at least try to get rest, and Rudolph was warm beside him –

he cast the vampire a look from behind his bright bangs. His eyes were closed and his expression calm – had he fallen asleep again? That soon? God, that must be a superpower on its own.

There was something odd about seeing him like this, so calm and vulnerable, face squished against Tony’s arm and completely at his mercy. And something twitched within Tony at that thought – Rudolph had instinctively trusted him enough to fall asleep with him nearby. Yeah, he’d heard him say that he trusted him before, but it was… nice, to experience that trust himself.

Tony smiled and closed his eyes.
Chapter 5

Tony gaped at Rudolph over his half-eaten cheese-and-ham sandwich. “What do you mean you don’t know how to bike!?”

“It was never useful for me to know!” Rudolph defended himself. “It’s just a bike, it’s not that big of a deal.”

“Just a – ” Tony spluttered. “Just a bike!? Rudd! It’s not just a bike!” He put down his sandwich and scowled. “You or someone in your family will find two bikes and two helmets that we can use. I’m not leaving this place before you have learned how to bike.”

Rudolph gaped and spluttered for a moment, but evidently crossed his arms and looked away. “Fine,” he muttered, “I’ll find you a bike.”

“Great!” Tony beamed. Without another word he picked up his sandwich and continued eating.

It was weird, biking during night. The moon shone brightly through the dark ribbons flitting across the sky, and it was more often than not reflected in the pedals of their bikes, though it didn’t blind them nearly as much as he thought it should. Rudolph was faring excellently – Tony mused quietly to himself that it must be because of his being a vampire that he had better balance, but some small part of him also whispered that it was because Rudolph was genuinely good at learning.

They, in their stupidity, decided that it would be a great idea to have a race when Rudolph figured out the basics of biking. A race where, you ask? Not important. They were young – it was all about speed, all about action, all about competition.

It was just Tony’s luck, of course, that he’d manage to crash his bike into a tree.

“Tony!” Rudolph exclaimed, more in surprise than fear, ditching his own bike in favor of flying over to his fallen friend and crouching beside him on the ground. “Are you alright?”

He didn’t sound nearly as afraid as he should be, in Tony’s opinion, but he let it slide. He groaned. “Think I bruised my knee,” he muttered. He planted his palms against the ground, and when he pushed himself up into sitting the undergrowth of the forest dug into his flesh. “…and scraped my knuckles,” he added sourly once he realized there was blood trickling down the back of his hand.

Wait.

Blood.

He turned his head to look at Rudolph so fast that his neck cracked.

Rudolph didn’t seem to notice. His gaze was locked intently on Tony’s hand.

Suddenly everything surrounding them was wiped away. Nothing mattered – he felt uncomfortably light, so light, his feet tingled in a way he recognized as not getting enough blood there –

“Uhm,” he said, and his voice was faint to his own ears. “R – Rudd? Rudolph?”

Rudolph didn’t seem to notice that, either. He moved, slowly, the slowest Tony had ever seen him move – but it wasn’t sluggish, it was graceful – and grabbed hold of Tony’s hand. He held it in a
gentle grasp, far gentler than Tony had expected, and, gaze still transfixed and focused, brought it to his lips.

Tony knew exactly what was going on, what Rudolph was about to do, but he didn’t – he didn’t actually care – he wasn’t sure if he could care, he only watched in a detached sort of interest as his breath grew shallower and his eyes wide.

*That’s surprisingly hot,* he thought, and his thoughts were detached, as well.

Rudolph’s breath fanned hot over the bruised skin on Tony’s knuckles, and that was all the warning he had before soft lips pressed against his flesh and a warm, wet tongue licked at the cuts and with them, the blood.

The moonlight slid across Rudolph’s expression as it morphed from intense focus to horror. He dropped Tony’s hand as if burned and jumped away, taking flight half-way through the jump and landing with grace on a low hanging branch in a nearby tree.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered, eyes wide as he lowered himself into a terrified crouch and attempted to back further away than he already was. “I’m so sorry – I didn’t mean to – ”

Tony, breath still shallow and an odd sense of need throbbing through him, looked from his hand and up to Rudolph. “Come down,” he asked quietly. “I’m not mad.”

Rudolph was shaking when he hesitantly flew back down. He landed a good five feet away from him. “I didn’t mean to hurt you,” he said. “I’m sorry.”

Tony held out his hand. It was shaking. “Take it, take whatever you need,” he said. His voice was not. “I don’t mind.”

Rudolph’s eyes widened. “You – I don’t – I’m not even – ”

Fuck but he was so warm, so warm, he felt like he might be suffocated if nothing happened between them, if Rudolph didn’t – still that strange throbbing need bothered him, as well, he had to –

“Well, if you don’t want it,” Tony shrugged, feigned indifference bitter on his tongue as he pulled his hand back into his lap, “I guess I’ll just – ”

He was incapable of finishing that sentence as Rudolph lunged forward. The process that mere moments ago had taken almost a full minute now only took a second and Tony’s hand was pressed flush against Rudolph’s lips between one heartbeat and the next, his teeth scraping against his skin but never puncturing it.

Tony noticed, absentmindedly, that his head thudded into the tree behind him as his eyes fluttered closed. It was – nothing like he expected, really – and he wondered, briefly and as arousal surged in him, if vampire spit was somehow like a drug or something similar, or maybe it was just him being stupidly attracted to his friend –

but just as the thought hit him, Rudolph pulled back. His eyes shone, somehow redder than they’d been before, and his expression was still apologetic. “S – sorry,” he whispered. His fangs were slightly longer.

There was also blood smeared on his lower lip.

“You’ve got some, uh…” Tony muttered, gesturing for his own mouth.
Rudolph quickly wiped it away. He turned his face and glanced at the ground, his fingers tightening around some grass. In the nimble light of the moon, he looked terrified. Then again, maybe he was.

“I’m not mad,” Tony repeated. “I’m fine. I’m feeling no negative emotions at all, actually!” When Rudolph still didn’t look at him he rolled his eyes. “Oh, come on, Rudd. Don’t feel bad.”

“But – ”

“Nope,” Tony interrupted him. He tried to stand up, but his legs were shaking so bad that he lost his balance and nearly fell again. “Could you take us back to the castle?” he asked sheepishly.

Rudolph stood up, the move smooth and graceful – if Tony were to describe it, he’d say Rudd looked like a shadow rising from the forest floor, but Tony was preoccupied with taking Rudolph’s offered hand, and so he didn’t describe anything at all.

The flight back was spent in silence.

Rudolph sat cross-legged on top of his closed coffin. Tony was laying in his bed, his head dangling upside-down over the edge. None of them had spoken since they arrived – but now Rudolph finally gathered his wits.

“Are you sure it’s okay?” he asked, his voice fragile and terrified.

If he was going to continue refusing to listen to what Tony was saying, this whole summer would eventually turn sour, Tony realized. But what could he do to reassure him that he’d. Uh. Not minded it?

Maybe he should just tell the truth.

_Welp, here goes nothing_, Tony thought, gritting his teeth as he steeled itself.

“Yep,” he chirped, straining his eyes to be able to see his response. “Pretty dang sure, as it turned me on to the extreme.”

Rudolph’s head snapped up, his eyes, still fiercely red, wide in surprise. “Turned – oh.” He cleared his throat and looked away, color rising to his cheeks. “Alright.”

Tony looked up at the ceiling again and pressed his bruised hand to his chest. “You okay with that?” he asked softly.

A barked laugh came from Rudolph’s direction. “I can’t believe it,” he muttered. There was a shadow of amusement to his voice. “I just turned monster on you, and you’re worried that I’m mad it turned you on?”

“Pretty much, yeah,” Tony said.

“Well,” Rudolph said, “I’m not. So don’t worry.”

There was a pause. “So… we’re even?”

“We’re even.”
Praise the heavens.

Tony poked his index fingers together. “Uh, there was something I wanted to talk to you about, actually,” he said.

“I’m listening.”

Drawing a deep breath, Tony hauled himself up into a sitting position before turning around to face Rudolph. “I, er… I wanted to say thank you. For when you chose me over your family. Two years ago.”

Rudolph blinked. “Really?” he said.

“Yes,” Tony said, growing more confident when Rudolph didn’t evade the subject. “Uhm, it…it meant a lot to me. Still does. So thank you.”

“Yes, well,” Rudolph said, looking away and scratching the back of his neck. His cheeks reddened. “I couldn’t just let them bully me like that.” He said me, but Tony heard you.

“I know,” he said, a small, grateful smile spilling over his lips. “But still. Thanks.” And just as he said that, his stomach let out a growl. “Oh – heh, I’ll need to eat soon, I guess. You coming with me?”

Rudolph’s eyes widened. “Are you mad?” he breathed. “I’m not going anywhere right now!”

Tony blinked. “Why not?”

“My eyes,” Rudolph hissed. “Everyone down there will know what I’ve done if they see my eyes!”

Oh. Tony had thought that was his mind playing tricks on him, but now that Rudolph mentioned it he supposed it would make sense. “How do you know?” he asked curiously. “You can’t see them.”

“I can feel it,” Rudolph hissed, twisting from just sitting to bracing himself on his hands and leaning forward. “You have no idea what you do to me – what your blood does to me, I can feel it, telling me to run and hunt and chase!” At the last word he flung himself from his coffin and onto the wall, where he began to pace, on all four, angrily and back and forth.

“That’s the thing with us vampires, you see,” he snarled, not looking at Tony as he spoke, “we’re always hungry, always thirsting for more, always needing to hurt and hunt, we’re creatures of the night!”

He scuttered down the wall, onto the floor, and over to the bed where Tony still sat. As he continued to speak he braced himself on the mattress, leaning closer to Tony with each word he said. “You have no idea what you have done,” he breathed, his eyes shining brightly in the fiery light of the candles as he looked up at Tony, “making friends with vampires.”

And oh fucking Christ, seeing him like this, nestled between Tony’s legs after that, fangs displayed and graceful and –

“Nh – Rudd,” Tony said, fighting very hard to not let it show how flustered he was, “remember what I said about being turned on?”

Rudolph had been hovering mere inches away from him when he said that, teeth bared, but now he pulled back so fast that he stumbled and nearly fell. “Sorry,” he gasped from the floor, eyes wide and terrified, “I wasn’t thinking – ”
Tony let himself fall back on the bed, pressing one hand to his flushed cheek. His heart was beating far too fast for his liking, threatening to spill out of his chest with each pulsating thump.

“S’okay,” he whispered. “It’s okay.”

“Am I seriously going to be sleeping in your coffin?” Tony asked, for the umpteenth time.

“We vampires don’t go back on our promises,” Rudolph sniffed. “But if mortals do…”

“Ugh, fine,” Tony said, crossing his arms. “Will there even be enough air for the two of us?”

Rudolph seemed to hesitate. “Uh… we can open the lid.”

“How about space?” Tony asked, raising his eyebrows.

“Doesn’t matter,” Rudolph said, waving his hand dismissively. “It’ll be fine.”

“My back is going to kill me,” Tony grumbled.

He crawled into Rudolph’s coffin with only a mumbled complain.

As it turned out, his back didn’t kill him. It was surprisingly comfortable, actually, to sleep in a box of wood – but then again, that might as well have come from the fact that he’d spent the night pressed up against Rudolph, their hands held and legs tangled in the dark.
“Hey,” Tony said after another cheese-and-ham sandwiched breakfast, “can we go flying today?”

“How not?” Rudolph shrugged. “Where do you want to go?”

Tony cast a look out the window, a short glance at the speckled shimmers of gold spread across the sky – to the moon and beyond, he wanted to say, to go laugh among the stars.

“I dunno – d’you know about any other cool places around here?” he said.

“I’m sure I can come up with something,” Rudolph said with a smug grin.

Of course he could.

* 

This place must be doing things to me, Tony thought when Rudolph brought them to a seemingly random clearing. I’ve never gotten choked up about nature before. But the moonlight bled from the sky like rays of hope, flitting in and out between branches and leaves and sleeping birds, painting the landscape a luminescent silver – and Tony couldn’t not.

“Have you got any philosophical questions for me this time?” he asked, raising an eyebrow and throwing a smirk in Rudolph’s direction. It was a silent challenge – one he hoped Rudolph would rise to.

Rudolph didn’t disappoint. “Well, let’s see…” he muttered, in the mockingly-serious voice from five or so days ago. “What’s… your greatest fear?” When he turned to Tony his expression was only semi-serious, eyebrows raised slightly and head tilted forward, a joking spark in his eyes. The moonlight shimmered on one of his fangs.

Tony swallowed. Certainly not that, he thought before he could stop himself. “Oof, tough one,” he said aloud. One he’d thought a lot about the last year. He leaned forward and rested his elbows on his knees, tapping his thigh with his fingertips as he thought about how to formulate his next response.

“Growing up,” he finally admitted. “I don’t know if I’m ready for that. I’m afraid I’ll fuck it up really badly – and I just have one life, y’know?”

He felt Rudolph’s gaze boring into the side of his face. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“Not really,” Tony said with a shrug, before turning to offer him a gentle thank-you smile. “Thanks, though.”

The gaze that previously had been slightly worried now lingered on him with a sort of faded
warmth before Rudolph looked away. “My worst fear,” he said, after a beat of heavy silence, “would be the people I care about dying.”

Tony, remembering how desperate he’d been when scurrying across the roof two years ago, winced. “I’m sorry,” he said softly. “There really is too much pain in this world.”

There was a tense silence for a moment. “You have changed quite a lot, Tony,” Rudolph said. His voice was quiet, but otherwise, it didn’t give away anything – unwavering and emotionless, yet not cold –

“So have you,” Tony offered. “Change happens, Rudd. A change within a person is not something you can go back on.”

“I know,” said Rudolph. When Tony looked at him he was smiling a gentle smile, hidden in the dull shadows cast by his cheekbones. “I didn’t say I didn’t like it.”

Tony was compelled to take his hand – so he did. Rudolph responded by intertwining their fingers.

Hmm… he wondered…

In a moment of curiosity, Tony twisted his hand slightly, pressing his thumb against Rudolph’s wrist, into the soft skin just underneath his thumb.

Rudolph snorted. “You can just ask, you know,” he said, amusement dribbling into his voice.

Tony flushed, embarrassed at getting caught. “Uh – s – sorry – ”

Rudolph untangled their fingers, but before Tony could let his hopes sink, his hand was pressed flat against Rudolph’s chest. Warmth seeped out through the layers of cloth, but that wasn’t what was important here –

a heart beat against his palm. It was dull, and sort of sluggish, and muffled by Rudolph’s clothes, but it was there.

When Tony shifted his focus from their joined hands, pale gray and pale cream in the starlight on Rudolph’s chest to Rudolph’s face, he found that the vampire was staring intently at him, something about his eyes impossibly soft. Tony wondered briefly why he always looked so damn soft in moonlight, so damn pretty, but that train of thought was cut off when Rudolph removed his hand from his chest –

and pressed a gentle kiss to his palm before intertwining their fingers once more. “I might be dead,” he said tenderly, “but my heart is still beating.”

Tony shook his head. “I don’t get it,” he whispered.

“You don’t have to,” Rudolph said.

And Tony accepted that answer.

* 

Tony and Rudolph were playing chess, Rudolph hanging upside down in the air and Tony sitting cross-legged on the floor, when Rudolph’s mother came into the room.

“Rudolph,” she said, voice gentle as ever, “Tony.”
“Hello, mother,” Rudolph replied, looking up from the chessboard with a surprised expression.

“Mrs. Sackville-Bag,” Tony greeted politely.

“Aunt and uncle will be coming to visit tomorrow,” Mrs. Sackville-Bag said, offering Tony a smile before turning back to Rudolph.


“Indeed,” Mrs. Sackville-Bag said. “Father and I expect you to greet them and spend some time with them.”

“But – ” Rudolph said, “but mother, I have a guest!”

“Oh, don’t worry about it!” Tony said. If Rudolph was 14 but also 4 306, imagine how many years his great-aunt and uncle would be! And when Mrs. Sackville-Bag exited the room, he decided to ask about that.

Upon receiving the question, Rudolph shrugged. “Oh, some twenty thousand years, I imagine,” he said.

Tony’s eyes boggled. “Twenty thousand years?” he repeated. “How old do vampires get?”

“Well, it’s generally believed that we don’t get older than forty thousand,” said Rudolph, in the voice one might use when discussing one’s breakfast.

“Forty thousand,” Tony breathed. “God.”

“I assure you, he has nothing to do with it,” Rudolph said. Then he blinked. “Is that another mortal expression?”

“You know what, let’s just continue playing,” Tony sighed, bending back over the game. He moved a piece. “Checkmate.”

Rudolph cursed. Loudly.

* 

Much to Tony’s surprise, Rudolph had suggested that they slept in Tony’s bed and Rudolph’s coffin on intervals. He’d agreed, mostly because it was a joy to talk to Rudolph in the dark of his bed, but also because he’d never be able to sleep in a coffin again if he said no.

This day they’d been sleeping in Tony’s bed, and he woke the next night to Rudolph looking at him through dark lashes. “Night,” he said. Tony blinked, mind muddled with sleep, still, before realizing that it was the equivalent of ‘good morning’.

“Night,” he replied groggily, attempting to rub at his eyes – but he found that his hand was linked with Rudolph’s, mashed somewhere between them, and so he stopped. “Slept well?”

Rudolph’s lips split into a small smile, a sort of relieved-because-you’re-here smile Tony had seen his parents give both each other and him on several occasions. “I have,” Rudolph said. They were so close now, Tony could trace the faint veins on his face if he raised his hand. He wanted to. Very, very badly.

Tony smiled the same smile back. “Same,” he said, feeling a bit stupid for using almost-slang in this situation. He blinked hard to rid himself of the prickly sensation of sleep. “Weren’t your aunt
and uncle coming today?” he asked.

A light hum from Rudolph assured him that it was indeed today. Tonight? “Not for long yet, though,” Rudolph said.

“Mm,” Tony said. A sudden chill went through him, and in the soft, unreal air of the bedroom in the early hours of night, all boundaries were gone. He shifted closer to Rudolph, pulling their hands aside in favor of tugging him to his chest and burying his nose in the crook of his neck.

Rudolph tensed for only a short moment, but then he curled up against him like a cat basking in sunlight, their legs tangling together almost on their own accord.

Tony felt almost like crying, it was such a tender moment, but instead he only inhaled shuddery and tightened his hold on Rudolph, who hummed softly and nuzzled Tony’s ear.

If his aunt and uncle were there already, they’d just have to wait, blast it all.

* 

When they finally got out of bed and into clothes, some two hours later, it was just in time for them to rush out to meet the two elderly vampires.

“Auntie!” Anna, who was hovering by her father’s side, exclaimed, before shooting off to meet them halfway.

The two elders embraced Anna first, and then they came for Rudolph. In all the fuss that happened thanks to the uncle, Rudolph managed to let go of Tony’s hand – which, of course, caused the ground to rapidly close in on him.

Rudolph was fond of dropping him while flying, so Tony’d gotten far too used to this over the last week. Instead of reacting with a scream, like he might’ve done before, he only sighed and waited for someone to realize what had happened – and not three seconds later he was in a sheepish Rudolph’s arms. “Sorry about that,” he coughed.

“Be more careful in the future, hm?” Tony asked, crossing his arms.

“Of course.”

Rudolph floated them back up to the others. Tony let his arms stay curled up loosely around Rudolph’s shoulders when he let go of him, and Rudolph, taking this as an invite, snuck his arm around Tony’s torso.

They didn’t think too much of it – they had become more or less accustomed to this after the first few days. It was brought on by the amount of hand-holding they did when flying, along with the fact that they literally cuddled in the same bed – and, frankly, they didn’t see anything wrong with being comfortable around the other.

“Ah, and this must be Tony, yes?” the uncle asked, the words spoken in a genuinely sweet voice.

Tony nodded enthusiastically and held out his hand. “Tony Thompson, pleasure to meet you,” he offered, voice trembling with his eagerness. When the uncle let go of his hand, Tony turned to the aunt, and, instead of shaking her hand, brushed his lips across her knuckles. “And what a wonderful lady,” he added. “Clearly beauty runs in the family.”

“Must you flirt with my entire family?” Rudolph sighed exasperatedly. “It is rather gross to watch.”
“Ah, of course,” Tony said, using the same mockingly-serious tone Rudolph was so fond of as he turned raised eyebrows on him. “You’d rather have me flirting with only you, I suppose? Selfish, Rudd. Truly shameful.”

Rudolph actually blushed, which caused Tony to muffle his snorts in his shoulder.

He noticed, of course, the surprised glances the adults cast each other. He just didn’t care.

* 

During the next week, Tony noticed an… interesting change to Rudolph. His teeth were elongated far more often than they’d been previously. Often, when he spoke, there was a slight hissing overlapping some of his words. He tended to rake his fingers lightly over Tony’s arm whenever he walked past him. In addition to that, he also tended to move more smoothly – more gracefully, with more dramatics – and it seemed – to Tony, at least – that he was letting more of his instincts control him.

He was a bit confused as to why – and while he didn’t dare comment it, he sort of wished he wouldn’t do that. Tony was walking around in a semi-aroused state almost constantly, and he’d had to sneak off to the bathroom twice to – shall we say, blow off some steam.

One night Rudolph was supposed to feed off one of the cows. This time around Tony didn’t look away – he wasn’t sure if he could even if he wanted to – and when Rudolph pulled back from the cow he shot Tony a small smirk, blood smeared on his lip and glistening on his fangs.

And fuck it all but Tony wanted him.

It wasn’t before Rudolph combined all of those above with a meaningful, lingering glance, that Tony realized he was low-key flirting with him.

Well, two could play that game.

He brushed his knee up against Rudolph’s groin when they cuddled, pleased to note that his breath hitched whenever he did so. His touch lingered on his cheeks, neck, arms – wherever he could reach. One time he even ‘stumbled’ into his lap. “Oops,” he’d said, smirking slightly and deliberately putting his hands on Rudolph’s hips to steady himself. He took longer than necessary to get up again. Whenever Rudolph took them flying somewhere, Tony casually placed his hand on his knee, and somehow always managed to remind him that they were alone there.

Once Rudolph realized that Tony was playing his game right back at him, it led to more obvious advances. Suggestive eyebrows, hands trailing to places hands shouldn’t be before pulling back, small grins and lingering touches… the sexual tension was thick.

They didn’t break through it before half-way through the third week of Tony’s stay.
Chapter 7

Rudolph had taken them flying again – back to the lake, this time – and he was in the middle of telling Tony about how long a vampire pregnancy lasts when Tony went to scratch his ear. When he dropped his hand again, however, he let it drop onto Rudolph’s knee.

This wasn’t unusual, and Rudolph only stuttered for a moment before continuing, voice slightly warmer now.

What he didn’t know was that Tony had decided to up the game – and every time Rudolph completed a sentence, he let his hand inch up his thigh. Soon Rudolph was speaking faster, then even faster, then too fast for Tony to follow -

“Rudd,” he said sweetly, interrupting Rudolph when his hand was two mere inches away from Rudolph’s groin. Rudolph’s head swiveled to stare at him, red eyes wide and shining. “I don’t follow. Can you take that last part again?”

While Rudolph nodded shakily and began to repeat the last part, Tony slowly put pressure on each of his fingers in turn – and when he began to trace small circles on the inside of Rudolph’s thigh, his breath hitched and he trailed off.

“What?” Tony asked, leaning so close that he knew his words would be hot on his cheek. “What’s wr –”

He didn’t come any further, as Rudolph lunged forward and kissed him with the gracefulness of a newborn baby. The rough, clumsy kiss didn’t even last two seconds before Rudolph pulled back with a gasp – but Tony followed him and tugged him back in, desperate to quench the bottomless well of need that had manifested at the beginning of summer.

It wasn’t his first kiss – he recalled sloppy experiments behind the school and the boy he’d dated eight months ago who’d come with him home –

but by God, if it wasn’t the best thing he’d ever experienced he didn’t know what was, Rudolph was warm and perfect and everything he’d never thought he needed –

He was pushed off the stone, landed softly in the grass, and moments later Rudolph was over him, lips closed over his and hands seemingly everywhere all at once, soft and kneading and caressing – Tony arched into the kiss, giving as good as he got, and there was friction, hip against groin and swollen dicks, but most importantly it was Rudolph –

at one point Rudolph abandoned Tony’s lips in favor of trailing hot kisses down his neck – and Tony, who hadn’t forgotten one damned moment what Rudolph was, turned his head in the biggest invite there ever was.

And fuck, he trembled in apprehension, Rudolph’s fangs were scraping over his skin, he could feel them digging into his flesh, but not puncturing it, and fuck shit fuck he needed –

Rudolph pulled back. “I can’t,” he whispered, the moment shattered like glass.

“Wh – wha -” Tony spluttered, hurrying to sit up and stare incredulously at Rudolph. “What do you mean you can’t? I want you to –”

Rudolph shook his head slightly. He didn’t look at him. “Not before you understand what you’re
getting yourself into.”

What he was—? Alright. Alright. Fine. He could do talking.

Tony sighed and shifted into a more comfortable position. “What am I getting myself into, then?”

“The transformation works differently on humans,” Rudolph began to explain, voice gentle and low in the night. “It needs several bites for the venom that is vampire spit to work itself into your bloodstream. If you’re only bitten once, or not all the times that’s needed for a full transformation, you will only be partially turned. When the venom fades it will hurt tremendously.”

Tony sat still and mused this over. “But it won’t hurt now, will it?” he asked. “I mean, besides the bite.”

“The bite won’t even hurt that much,” Rudolph said, shaking his head. “It causes a hormonal reaction in the – victim.”

Then what was the damned problem?

Tony lunged forward and pinned Rudolph to the ground, causing him to yelp in surprise and scramble for something to hold on to – which ended up being Tony’s shoulders. “Well then,” Tony mumbled, pressing his lips briefly to the hollow of Rudolph’s throat, “what the fuck are you waiting for?”

Rudolph gave a strangled gasp. “I – it’ll – it’ll hurt – ”

“Life hurts,” Tony breathed, moving to now press his lips to the sensitive skin underneath Rudolph’s ear. “What else is new?”

When he now moved to kiss Rudolph’s collarbone, Rudolph startled him by grabbing his shoulders and twisting them around with a low growl – and then sinking his fangs into Tony’s neck.

* 

Afterward, after release, after Rudolph with glowing eyes had gently kissed Tony’s bruised skin and promised to clean it when they got back home, when they were just lying still in the grass and staring up at the sky, Tony listened to Rudolph’s heart beat against his ear.

I just shagged a vampire, he thought. Well, to some degree. The thought didn’t stir as much emotion as he thought it would. Hesitantly, Tony let another thought surface. I just shagged Rudolph.

Ah, there it was. An odd sense of pride, overshadowed by intense warmth and happiness.

He didn’t mind half as much as he should.

“Tell me,” he said, lifting his head from Rudolph’s chest, “what sort of changes can I expect?”

“Not much,” Rudolph replied. Earlier his eyes had glimmered in the moonlight, but now they outright glowed on their own, beaming from the inside out. He tightened his fingers in Tony’s hair. “It’s only been one bite, after all.”

“Yeah, but which changes?” Tony nagged.
Rudolph rolled his eyes. “Depends,” he said. Tony’s hand, resting on his shoulder, was jostled off when he shrugged. “Hovering abilities. Slightly sharper teeth. A slight hunger.”

Tony wriggled closer and lifted his head, nuzzling Rudolph’s neck slightly. “Mm,” he muttered, letting the sound vibrate in his throat. Beneath him, Rudolph shuddered. “I can live with that.”

The grip Rudolph had on Tony’s hair tightened further, the arm around his shoulder tugging him closer. “I don’t think you have any choice,” he growled darkly, possessively, and Tony grinned against his skin.

“Great,” he whispered.

* *

If they had expected Rudolph’s parents not to notice, they’d been horribly wrong.

“Rudolph,” Mr. Sackville-Bag hissed, looming over his son with a threatening expression, “I cannot believe you have done this!”

“Now,” Mrs. Sackville-Bag muttered softly, placing a hand on his elbow, “our son is – ”

“Does Tony even know what this means!?” Mr. Sackville-Bag continued angrily. “Does he understand what you’ve done!? Do you understand what you’ve done!? The heartbreak this will bring?”

Tony, who was cringing in one corner, sank into himself upon hearing this. He hadn’t thought about – hadn’t thought, in that moment, that Rudolph already had lived more than 200 times as long as him and would live at least 20 000 years more, hadn’t thought what that meant –

“Frederick – ” Mrs. Sackville-Bag tried, “ – sweetheart, he’s old enough to – ”

“He doesn’t understand,” Mr. Sackville-Bag cried, “what he’s done!”

“I know, father,” Rudolph said quietly. The room silenced. Tony turned wide eyes to him. “I know I don’t understand. But I never will if I’m not allowed to try, will I?”

The silence lasted for a few moments more, and then Mr. Sackville-Bag pulled himself up to his full height. “I am very disappointed in you,” he said, and while he spoke it just as quietly as Rudolph his voice was low and dangerous, opposed to Rudolph’s meek and small. “But I shall let it pass, if it ends when Tony returns home, or if he is turned.”

“I won’t turn him,” Rudolph said, and suddenly his voice had grown firm and fierce. “I’d never do that to him.”

Mr. Sackville-Bag nodded once. “Very well,” he said. “It’s accepted. For now.” A pause. “You have the summer.”

Rudolph left the room in a flurry of cape-whipping, and Tony hurried after him so fast that he nearly stumbled. Rudolph grabbed his hand without looking at him, and before Tony had the time to gather his wits they were airborne.

“Rudd,” Tony tried softly, “I’m sorry you got into a fight because of me.”

Rudolph turned those glowing, fierce eyes to Tony and smiled a small smile at him – a smile that yelled I-know-something-you-don’t-and-I’m-about-to-tell-you – but it was overshadowed by the
lines of sorrow carved in around his eyes.

When they got back to their bedroom Rudolph landed them on the bed, but before Tony had the time to do anything, Rudolph wrapped his arms around his torso and snuggled up to his chest in a slow, dark-tinged move. Tears prickled in Tony’s eyes, even though it was Rudolph who should cry, not him.

It was weird. He wasn’t used to be the one to give comfort – but Rudolph needed this of him, it was very obvious he did – and God, if he needed something that Tony could give, he’d give him all. He didn’t say anything, but he pulled Rudolph closer and rested his cheek on top of his head.

So they had out the summer? Fine.
Fine.
(it wasn’t.)

* 

Anna showed up some ten minutes later. She didn’t look surprised to find them cuddling in bed and only leaned against the wall with the shadow of a smile ghosting over her lips. “I’m happy for you,” she offered. “Don’t listen to father. He can be rather insensitive.”

“You don’t say,” Rudolph said. It was muffled by Tony’s shirt.

Anna shrugged one shoulder. “It’s not as bad as he says it is,” she said. “If you just keep the venom flowing, instead of letting it fade in between bites, it’ll be one painful re-turn instead of several.”

“Thanks, Anna,” Tony said. “Uh… how long does the… venom keep flowing?” he asked, brushing two fingers up against the bite mark on his neck. It was already healing.

“Five days, give or take,” said Rudolph. He lifted his head slightly to give Tony a roguish look.

“Though we won’t wait that long.”

Anna grimaced. “Gross,” she said. “I’ll excuse myself.”

She did.

“Will my appearance change?” Tony asked, once the door shut behind her.

“No,” Rudolph said. “Only your eyes, and, depending on who turns you, your skin tone. But that’s only if you turn fully.”

“But all that other stuff,” Tony said, “the… the flying, and the hunger, and the sharp teeth, and the grace… that will come now?”

“Yes.”

“That’s so cool!” Tony exclaimed. “I’ll be like a vampire but not really!”

“…yes, that’s… that’s exactly what it is,” Rudolph muttered. “You mortals. Always so daft.”

Tony chuckled. “Got that right,” he said, threading his fingers through Rudolph’s hair. “So we got the rest of the summer?”

“Three weeks,” Rudolph agreed. The amusement drained from his voice.
Tony didn’t reply. He felt like all amusement had drained from him, and not only Rudolph’s voice. By God, he’d make those three weeks feel like an eternity – he had to.

*

Three days later, and Tony acquired the skill of flight.

*

“Aren’t you getting tired of going here?” Rudolph asked. He ought to have sounded bored, or tired, or exasperated, but there was only a shadow of amusement to his voice.

“Nah,” said Tony, as he and Rudolph descended from the sky to land in a clearing filled with dark blue flowers. “I’m with you. Of course not.”

Rudolph snorted. “Sap,” he said, jabbing his elbow into Tony’s ribs.

Tony flashed him a grin. “You love it,” he replied, bending down to pick up one of the flowers before sliding it in behind Rudolph’s ear.

“I – ” Rudolph said, and in the dark of night the blush on his cheeks matched the blue of the flower, “ – I suppose I do.”

One beat of silence, two beats of silence – “I’m curious,” Tony began conversationally, dropping to the ground to lean back against the flowers. “You vampires have very long lives – what are you planning to do with all those years?”

Rudolph dropped to the ground beside him, giving a half-shrug that cast shadows across the grass. “Just live, I suppose.” He sighed wistfully, tilting his head back to take in the stars. Tony didn’t care for the stars. He could see them in his eyes. “I’ve always wanted to start a family, but that’s not for thousands of years to come.”

The words shot like a poisoned arrow through Tony. Again, this painful truth he hadn’t thought too much about – the fact that Rudolph would live to see more than thirty thousand years, while Tony had a measly hundred. And oh, how it hurt, to think that he wasn’t more than an unimportant mortal Rudolph could waste some time with, while Rudolph, to Tony, was the whole fucking world and then a little bit more.

And to think, they didn’t have more than sixteen days left.

Damn it all. Damn it all.
Chapter 8

Tony stood by the window, hands clasped behind his back, staring solemnly up at the inky sky speckled with glowing spots of gold.

“I would give you anything,” Rudolph whispered, from right behind his left shoulder, voice a deep hush in the warm summer night. He leaned over, warm lips underneath Tony’s ear, comforting and gentle without a single hint of teeth –

Tony’s breath shuddered, he tilted his head to the right, giving him access if he wanted –

“I know,” he breathed. “I know.”

* 

“I’m going to miss you so much,” Tony said.

Rudolph, whose head was resting on Tony’s chest, nodded, and the move was sluggish and uncontrolled. “I will miss you, as well,” he sighed. Then he went quiet for some time. “Will I really never see you again?”

Tony wanted to cry.

“Well, you know what your father said,” he said softly. “It’s done after summer.”

Rudolph twisted and sat up, leaning over Tony, his cape hanging over his shoulder and brushing against Tony’s stomach. “It’s my stupid fucking family’s fault,” he whispered. “Fucking – controlling bastards – ” He cut himself off and let his weight drop, hiding his face in the crook of Tony’s neck. “I fucking love you, don’t they see?”

Tony’s eyes went wide.

A warmth, dull and warmer than glowing ambers, welled within his chest, rising in his throat and threatening to devour him whole, and he smiled, and swallowed, and smiled even more, a helpless and relieved smile –

He placed a gentle hand at the nape of Rudolph’s neck. “I love you, too,” he whispered, the words thickening in his throat and nearly choking him. When Rudolph exhaled, a shuddery breath that brought forth memories of last night and teeth against his skin, Tony got an idea. Why, oh why, hadn’t he thought of it before? “Listen. When I turn eighteen, I’m my own person – my parents can’t control me anymore – I can come back, you can turn me – ”

But Rudolph shook his head and sat up. “And what if you don’t want me then?” he whispered, eyes misty. “With the age difference – and – and all that – ”

“Oh, Rudd,” Tony said, sitting up and shifting his weight. “Do you really worry about that?”
Rudolph looked away and rubbed harshly at his eyes. “Yes,” he bit out, “of course I worry about that – humans age differently from vampires, in four years you’ll be eighteen and I’ll still be a kid in your eyes, what if you’d rather want my brother?”

Tony reached after him, hands gentle against his neck as he pulled him into a slow kiss. “Hush, you goof,” he whispered, “of course I won’t want your brother.”

Rudolph’s breath hitched again, his shoulders trembling. “You’re fine with the age difference now because it’s only one year – ”

“Let me at least finish tenth grade,” Tony whispered. “That’s one year. I’ll be sixteen. Can you do that?”

Rudolph sniffed. “Are you really okay with that?” he asked. “Me, turning you?”

“Rudd,” Tony said, “it’s one of my greatest wishes.”

A tear slid down Rudolph’s cheek, and he wiped it away with a sharp motion. Then he nodded. “One year? I can work with that.” There was a brief pause. “Thank you,” he whispered. His voice shook.

Tony kissed him.

One year was far too long.

* 

“A year,” Rudolph reminded him in a voice that was probably supposed to sound stern, but really only managed to be begging.

“A year,” Tony agreed in the same voice, pressing his lips to Rudolph’s in a weak kiss. “You’ll wait for me?”

There were tears in Rudolph’s eyes. “Of course,” he said. “And you the same for me.”


Rudolph grabbed his hand and held it briefly to his chest before kissing his fingers softly. “Don’t forget me,” he whispered.

Tony cracked a weak grin. “Impossible,” he said.

He flew down to the ground and ran for his parents’ car before he would burst into tears. When he entered the car he was met with two pairs of wide eyes. “Hey, Tony,” his mother said warmly.

“Hi, mom,” he replied, hoisting his luggage into the backseat.

“Uh,” his father spoke up, “what’s with the flying?”

Oops. “Prolonged exposure to vampires,” he said, thinking fast. He flashed them a nervous I-know-what-I’m-talking-about smile. “The effect will wear off in some weeks.”

“Oh. Well, alright.”

He shut the door and ran around the car to enter his side. After shutting the door behind him and fastening his seatbelt, his father began to drive. “Back to reality, eh?” he said, throwing Tony a
glance in the rear-view mirror.

“Heh,” Tony said. “Yeah.”

Resting his forehead on the cool window he let out a heavy sigh. What he wouldn’t give to be part of Rudolph’s reality…
Chapter 9

The first night back in San Diego Tony lay awake in his bed, twisting and turning, covers pooled around his hips. The bed was too small, but at the same time it was far too big, and the emptiness in his arms was an echo of the emptiness within his heart.

*I’m too fucking young for this,* he thought, turning his head to hide his face in his pillow, imagining it to be Rudolph’s chest and failing miserably. *Aren’t people supposed to fall deeply in love when they’re older?*

His breath shuddered. He wanted to fucking scream – sitting up in his bed Tony rubbed at his eyes, and when he dropped his hands his fingers lingered at the healing wound at his neck, his touch far too hot and yet, not hot enough.

He needed air. He needed *air.*

He snapped his window open and hopped onto the windowsill, gathering in a crouch before pushing off and shooting into the sky. The difference from the German woods was *immediately* noticeable – there were noises everywhere, light pouring *up into the sky* rather than *down from it,* and the air was thick, thick and horrible, but it was still air, and Tony rose high, high into the sky. His nightclothes weren’t good enough, though, he suddenly understood Rudolph’s love for capes, his love for the dramatic. He tilted his head back to stare at the stars, scattered wildly across the sky and blinking tiredly through a layer of fog, and tears prickled in his eyes.

“Rudolph,” he whispered, feeling miserable and stupid at caring at such a young age and also missing Rudolph so much that it felt like he might explode, and there was fear at the pain when the venom would fade out, and fear at what might happen if Rudolph decided *he* wasn’t worth it before next summer, and anger at Rudolph’s stupid dad, and longing, and love, and longing, and sorrow, and fear, and the tears spilled over.

“Oh, Rudd…”

*

Going back to school was an absolute fucking nightmare. Then again, it had always been – but now it was *ten times worse.* First of all, it took extreme restraint to not fly everywhere. Second, after spending seven weeks among creatures who’d lived in *thousands of years,* being at school with people his age was… excruciatingly painful. They were just *so* immature!

The irony of saying this about people his own age was not lost on him.

The time he’d spent around vampires bled into his behavior – he kept crashing into people because they weren’t careful, kept catching himself staring at their necks and wondering how they’d taste, kept tapping his somehow-long teeth in boredom only to receive scared looks from his classmates and *gloating at them.*

“Tony,” a girl Tony was vaguely friendly with said, “what happened to you over summer? You’ve changed.”

Tony wasn’t sure what to say. “Changed?” he repeated, as if he didn’t know that himself, thank you very much. “Eh, I… uh… spent the whole summer with just one person, maybe he affected me.”
Not a lie, his mind supplied.

The girl raised her eyebrow. “He?” she said. “Got yourself a boyfriend, have you?”

Tony blushed. “You could say so, yeah.”

She waggled her eyebrows at him and nudged him a few times in the ribs, but let the matter drop, to Tony’s great relief.

Some shithead put on a love song during lunch, one day, and much to his mortification, Tony burst into tears.

Another day, a dude from the grade under him decided to run over and startle him, which caused him to spin around with the angriest hiss he’d ever uttered. The boy, whose face had turned ashen when Tony turned defensive, turned on his heel and ran. When Tony prodded his teeth with his tongue he knew why and hoped the boy wouldn’t spread rumors.

Three weeks into the schoolyear, the venom faded from Tony’s bloodstream. The process had him writhing and screaming, shredding his pillow in the effort of not waking his parents. He lay sweating in the remains of his bed and felt his teeth shrink, with horror feeling himself sink further into the bed as the ability to fly moved from him.

Still he didn’t feel all too different. The instincts – they were still there. He sat up and swung his feet over the edge of the bed. Pain exploded behind his eyes and he whined before falling back into the bed - but in that tiny moment before the pain erupted, it’d become very clear that he still had the grace of a vampire.

Fuck.

*

Two more weeks were spent where Tony nearly died on five separate occasions – all of whom were caused by him nearly walking off of something tall or trying to unconsciously fly. He missed flying, missed his fangs, missed the now faded wound on his neck, missed who’d put it there, missed the whole fucking world of Rudolph – the sun tore at him, at his walls and resolves, and he got more and more tired for each day that passed, weariness breaking down his bones and barely-concealed anger scattering their ashes – and he couldn’t fucking do it –

he opened his computer one day and skyped the holders of the Bed and Bratwurst. It had taken the couple a few months to get used to the idea of Rudolph’s clan inhabiting the castle with them, but after some time they warmed up to the idea. They’d signed a binding contract that stated the vampires of Rudolph’s clan were to be given roof over their heads and the cows to use whenever they needed to, and in return they would be promised protection and safety.

A small bloom of amusement sparked in him when their faces appeared on the screen, both far too close to the camera and expressions terribly confused. They were both obviously not familiar with how skype worked. “Tony Thompson!” the woman greeted. “Vat can vee do for you?”

“Hey,” Tony said. “Could you get me Rudolph? Please?” They’d agreed that Tony wouldn’t call him unless it was very, very important, as Rudolph didn’t have a computer and didn’t want one, either, and different time-zones and all, but… this was very, very important.

“Rudolf?” the man repeated. “Which iz zat?”
Tony rubbed at his eyes. “The, ah… the clan leaders son,” he said. “If you ask for Rudolph Sackville-Bag you’ll find him.”

“I vill get him,” the man said, standing up and leaving the image.

“You don’t look zo gut, Tony,” the woman said. She sounded worried. “Vat iz vrong?”

Tony gave her a tired, worn smile. “I hope I’ll solve it soon,” he said, knowing full-well it wouldn’t be reassuring at all.

Almost ten minutes passed, and then the screen was stolen by Rudolph. Tony sagged in relief at seeing him, wanted to fucking cry at the joy of it, but only gritted his teeth and fought the tears. “Hey,” he offered softly.

“You look like you’ve been hit by Rookery’s lamp! - are you alright?”

Tony squeezed his eyes shut and shook his head. “I can’t fucking do this,” he whispered, voice high and harsh and desperate. “The venom faded two weeks ago, I miss you, I miss everything, it’s so hard, I can’t, I – ”

“Breathe,” Rudolph breathed, eyebrows knitted together and lip bitten. “Breathe, Tony, love, breathe –”

At the nickname Tony couldn’t hold back the tears anymore, and they spilled over his cheeks with a broken sob. He clapped a hand over his mouth and bit into his skin to keep from disturbing his parents, but through his tears he could see Rudolph’s expression go alarmed. “Oh – oh, Tony – ”

“Sorry,” Tony whispered, “sorry, I’ll – I – ” He inhaled a shuddery breath and fanned his face, wiping his tears with the sleeve of his other hand. “Can I come this – this thanksgiving? I don’t think I’ll be able to wait until next summer, I can’t do that – ”

“Of course,” Rudolph blurted. “Father will just have to fucking accept this, you can’t go around feeling like this – of course you can come, Tony – ”

“Thank you,” Tony whispered, and with that he began to cry anew.


* 

Tony stood before his full body mirror with a shattered expression.

He was going to leave his family – leave his life – leave everything behind – all in favor of one person. One lifestyle. One reality.

He turned his head and caught a glance of his family pictures, an instinctual smile flitting over his lips, gone as soon as it came. He loved his family. He truly did.

It was just that he loved Rudolph’s reality more.

“I know,” he said aloud, turning back to the mirror. “I know what I’m doing is childish. I know that I’m being rash. I know I’m young and extreme. I know I’m being stupid. I know.” He raised his chin, the shattered expression fading into one of determination. “And I don’t care.”


*
“Mom, dad.”

The two of them looked up from their respective phones. “Yes, honey?”

Tony drew a deep breath and straightened his shoulders. “I really, really miss Rudolph. Can I go to Germany this Thanksgiving?”


“Yeah,” Tony said, moving over to sit on the chairs opposite of the couch, “alone. This Thanksgiving. C’mon, mom – I’ll be sixteen – you know, the age when most people move out?” He sighed. “If I’m old enough to move out, I must be old enough to find my way through an airport.”

“I mean,” dad mused, “he isn’t wrong.”


“And we don’t do much about it anyway,” dad reminded her calmly. “Aunt and uncle are in Morocco anyway, they can’t come.”

Mom frowned. Tony’s heart thundered in his chest. Please, he begged, please, please, please – c’mon, let me – please –

“I guess,” she sighed. “But you’ll have to pay for the tickets yourself!”

“Thank you!” Tony cried, jumping up from the chair and throwing himself at them. “Thank you so much!”

They laughed, the bright laugh that came when you’re surprised, but it sounded genuine enough. A flare of pain winked in him at that, but he pushed it away. He couldn’t change his mind now.

* *

“Is it really okay for me to come?” Tony asked nervously.

“Absolutely,” Rudolph said, nodding sharply. “Father actually tells me he’s proud.”

“Really? Wow,” Tony said. “You’ll come pick me up, right? At the airport?”

“Nah, I’d been planning on leaving you there,” Rudolph said. “Of course I’m coming to pick you up, you stupid mortal.”

“Not mortal for long, though,” Tony winked.

Snorting, Rudolph shook his head amusedly. “I’m still surprised you’re letting me turn you,” he said softly. “You never hit me as the type to want that.”


“I know,” Rudolph whispered. “Had it been possible for me to turn mortal, I would. But there is no such way, unfortunately.”

“Vampire it is, then,” Tony joked. “Lighten up, Rudd. One month and I’ll be there, kay?”
“Looking forward to Thanksgiving?” the girl Tony was vaguely familiar with asked, plopping herself down beside him on the bench.

“Yes,” Tony said, not looking away from his food, “going back to Germany.”

“Germany?” she asked, eyebrows shooting into her hairline. “What the fuck are you going to do there?”

“Visiting my… boyfriend,” Tony said. “Why, wanna join?”

She grimaced. “Gross,” she said, “I’m into girls, you twat.” Tony shrugged, not feeling sorry at all for his joke. “But it’s just a weekend,” she said, obviously over the comment already, “that’s not a very long stay?”

“Well…” Tony said, putting down his fork and frowning at his food. “To be honest, I’m… not planning on returning.”

“Oh,” she said. “Oh!” She lit up. “Really? You’re running off to Germany to join the love of your life?”

Tony grimaced. “When you put it like that it sounds sappy,” he complained.

“Sorry, want me to say the love of your heart instead?” she grinned. “But are you?”

Scratching the back of his neck, Tony turned from frowning at his food to looking at her. “I… yeah. Yeah, I am.” The girl let out a muffled squeal, balling her hands into fists and gathering them under her chin. “Zip it!” Tony warned sternly. “Don’t tell a single soul, okay?”

She nodded frantically. “Course not,” she whisper-yelled. “Your secret’s safe with me, Tony!”

“Great. Thanks.”

“No problem, bro,” she said, punching him in the shoulder and grinning madly. “Have fun with your man, yo.” She got up and left, leaving Tony to stare after her.

Yo? Who even said ‘yo’ anymore?

Shaking his head, he returned to his food. She, apparently.

*  

The next three weeks passed by, at times slower than the slowest slug, others as fast as he could fly. Then, finally, the day was upon him – he packed his bag with only his favorite possessions – things he’d need to feel like home (he hoped dearly that Rudolph wouldn’t mock his worn teddy bear and knew that he wouldn’t), and hugged his parents goodbye.

He’d written a note and left it on his desk – they’d read it when he didn’t come back after his given days. It explained most, and apologized, and was speckled with teary spots. I’ll come back and visit you, I promise, stood at the very bottom, followed shortly by, I love you, forever and always.

The flight was uneventful, a time where he just fingered nervously with his pens, unable to draw to save his life. Then finally, finally, the plane touched ground, and he rushed out of it and to the check-out. The sun had already set when he stepped out of the airport, and he didn’t have to wait for long before a dark spot appeared in the sky. The dark spot became a person, and the person
became a boy, and the boy became Rudolph.

Within moments of touching the ground Tony was over him, arms locked around his waist and nose buried in his shoulder. “I’ve missed you,” he whispered hoarsely. “So much.”

Rudolph’s hand wound into Tony’s hair as he hugged him back. “I assure you,” he muttered, “the feeling is mutual.” After a moment that meant everything to Tony but nothing in the big picture, Rudolph pulled back. “Ready to fly?”

Tony couldn’t for it: a small, relieved smile spilled over his lips. “You bet,” he whispered. “Let’s go.”
“Woah!” Tony breathed, following Rudolph’s motions with his eyes as he hopped back and forth between the walls. “Oh, I wish I could do that!”

Rudolph stopped abruptly, hanging from the roof by one foot. “Well, you can,” he said, too far away for Tony to read his expression but never too far away for him to understand. “There’s enough venom in your blood.”

Tony’s eyes widened to the extreme. “Are you kidding me?” he cried. “Show me how!”

Rudolph let himself fall from the roof and landed in a crouch before him. As he stood up, he raised an eyebrow challengingly. “Why does my opinion matter?” he asked.

“Because I want to impress you, duh,” Tony scoffed. “Please?”

Rudolph blinked, taken aback at the honest reply. “Uh – well, uhm, of course. Of course.” He cleared his throat and walked over to the wall. “Alright, it… it goes like this – ”

Tony was an expert before the sun rose.

*  

There was a spot by the river, where, when the timing was right, the moon turned the water into liquid silver and the flowers into glowing faery lights. Rudolph hadn’t know about it, but Tony found it the first time he tried flying alone, and so the two of them went there to spend a few hours.

They sat and talked – talked about hobbies, about dreams, about that one classmate that always managed to step on Tony’s nerves, about Rudolph’s strange aunts, about the galaxy and how small they were.

And when they didn’t talk, they leaned back and let themselves be embraced by the soft grass, one’s head on the other’s chest, and when Tony had both a heartbeat gentle in his ear and the quiet whisper of the river in his other, the world felt right.

*  

But of course, Rudolph’s parents weren’t the only one who noticed what Tony had become.

“Why is he allowed?” a woman shrieked, clawing after either Tony or Rudolph. It was a bit unclear.

Tony gripped Rudolph’s shoulder tighter and floated closer. The only thing holding the woman back was the other vampires – if they let go, only Anna and Rudolph’s father would be standing between Tony and her.
Tony did not trust Mr. Sackville-Bag to protect him.

“I agree!” a voice cried. Another vampire with graying hair and wrinkles around their eyes separated from the crowd. “This is absurd! Bad enough that a mortal is living with us – we’re not even allowed to snack on him!”

Rudolph bumped into Tony. His nails scraped against the back of his hand, and Tony twisted it to let him hold it. Their fingers intertwined.

Another vampire stepped forward. “A delicious mortal and all – why is it that we, the experienced ones, have to survive on cows, when Rudolph – barely 14 – a wimp of a boy – can have him!?” he shouted, gesturing wildly in Tony’s direction.

“Do not ever call my son a wimp!” Mr. Sackville-Bag hissed, just as Tony cried, “Because I trust him!”

The room went quiet. Rudolph tensed.

Mr. Sackville-Bag turned to Tony with a puzzled expression. “I beg your pardon?”

“I trust him.” Tony repeated firmly. He floated around Rudolph, their shoulders overlapping. “I don’t trust any of you not to hurt me. Rudolph doesn’t even want to drink of me that much – ” – well, not in the beginning, at least – “ – but he does, because I ask him to.”

Mr. Sackville-Bag’s eye twitched. – oops. Better be careful about that subject, then.

“I will be gone when the summer is over,” Tony continued, letting his gaze slide over the gathered vampires. “Gone forever,” he added, being very careful not to let the cold dread bleed into his voice.

“If you want to drink blood from any mortals, find someone yourself,” Rudolph butted in. “Someone who trusts you, and who consents. Otherwise you’re breaking the rules within this clan.” Tony turned his head to cast him a look, and he did a double-take at the anger boiling underneath the surface. Rudolph was managing to hide it fairly well, but Tony knew him, Tony was his, and he could see what he hid. “Now goodbye.”

He turned on the spot, tugging Tony after him. He met his father’s gaze when they flew pass him, and while Tony didn’t know Mr. Sackville-Bag the way he knew Rudolph, he could easily tell that something passed between them.

The door shut softly behind them. “I’m – ” Tony began, but Rudolph shook his head gently and took flight out of the window. Their linked hands were the only reason Tony followed without thinking.

They shot up into the sky, far above the castle, and when Rudolph finally stopped rising he still didn’t look at Tony. “I am very mad,” he said quietly, the starlight dancing in patterns across his face. “And terribly sorry. I had no idea they thought that.”

“Rudd,” Tony said, letting go of his hand to float around him. He reached out and brushed his knuckles over Rudolph’s cheek, pale gray and pale cream against each other. Rudolph’s breath hitched. Tony leaned closer, sliding his hand from Rudolph’s cheek to thread into his hair.

His lips were still warm, still soft, still impossibly right against Tony’s.
It was the first time a kiss between them had not led to something more, and when Tony pulled back, it wasn’t far.

Rudolph’s eyes had closed when Tony kissed him, but now they slipped open. There was a sorrow in them, a tender sadness that seemed to be buried beneath layers upon layers of desperation. The corners of his mouth were tugged down in an unhappy frown, and he rested his forehead against Tony’s with a small, shuddery exhale.

“I just don’t want to see you hurt,” Rudolph whispered, the words spreading light through the night, and Tony –

he fell in love.
They were met in the grand entrance by a small gathering of vampires – among them Anna, Gregory, Mr. and Mrs. Sackville-Bag, and some of their closest relatives.

“I’m hearing you’re joining the family,” Gregory said, tilting his head with a grin. Tony would’ve found it attractive, if his heart hadn’t already been set on the owner of the hand currently holding his.

“Heh,” he said, smiling awkwardly and scratching the back of his neck. “I guess.”

“Welcome, then,” Gregory said, punching his shoulder playfully. “Should probably find myself someone too, eh?” he added, turning to give his parents a jokingly challenging look. The look quickly faded when it was met with two unimpressed expressions. “Or not,” he muttered.

“Good to see you back,” Anna said, floating closer with a small smile grazing her lips. “I’ve missed you.”

“Anna,” Rudolph growled. Tony’s heart skipped a beat. God, how he’d missed him.

“Sorry,” Anna said, holding up her hands and backing off. “Just checking if he’s still gay…”

Scoffing in disgust, Rudolph rose further into the air and tugged at Tony’s hand. “If you’ll excuse us, I’m off to assure Tony that he’s still gay,” he said, mockingly-polite. They flew away with the sound of wolf-whistles (from Gregory) and shocked noises (from the adults).

Tony blushed fiercely, but smiled through the heat. He was back.

*

The door barely had time to close behind them before Rudolph spun and pinned Tony against the wall, latching onto his mouth with a feverish, mindless desire that Tony recognized all too well. Trusting Rudolph to keep him up, Tony hooked a leg behind his knee and tugged him closer, desperate for more, always more, never enough –

and Rudolph wasn’t careful, this time, and managed to nick both of Tony’s lips and his tongue, causing fat drops of blood to spill, and that was apparently too much for Rudolph, for he instantly moved from his mouth to his neck, where he first pressed a gentle kiss and then proceeded to bite down, adding more pressure before finally breaking the skin.

“Good to see you – nh – ” – Rudolph sucked – “ – like me for more than, mph, my, ah, my good looks,” Tony breathlessly said, even as he cupped the back of Rudolph’s head and pulled him closer, closer, warmth not enough –

Rudolph pulled back and up, just enough to stare at Tony, and his blood was on his lips and on his teeth, and fuck, shit – Rudolph leaned over and kissed him once more, his own blood salty on his tongue, and oh God –

Rudolph pulled back again. “I’ve already lost you once,” he whispered, breath fanning hot across Tony’s mouth, “I won’t lose you again.”
“Tony?”

Tony froze. “Uh, two seconds, mom,” he said, voice far too light and already cracking. He pulled the phone away from his ear and poked his head through the window. “Rudd!” he called. “Mom’s on the phone!”

Rudolph, who’d been sitting on the roof and reading a few feet away, dropped the book as if it’d bit him and zipped over. He didn’t say a single word, only taking Tony’s hand in his offer for support.

“Alright, mom, hey,” he said. “What’s up?”

“We’re at the airport, where are you?”

She didn’t sound worried, just confused, and Tony’s throat tightened. “Mom, just… just go home, alright? There’s a note – on, uh, on my desk.”

“Tony?”

Now the worry was there. Rudolph edged closer, wrapping an arm around Tony’s shoulders and pulling him against him.

“Bye, mom. I love you.”

Tony pulled the phone from his ear and ended the call. His breath shuddered. “You did great,” Rudolph assured him. “They won’t hate you that much.”

A tear crept down Tony’s cheek, even as he let out a surprised bark of laughter. “Not that much?” he repeated wobblily. “How reassuring.”

“I do my best,” Rudolph replied, tugging Tony closer and nuzzling his neck. It was nothing sexual about it – just a reassuring offer of comfort, a show of affection – and Tony rested his forehead on Rudolph’s shoulder and let the tears fall.

*

He woke the next night to three lost calls and a message from his mom. Rolling over to his side, Tony unlocked his phone and began to read. Rudolph sat up behind him, warmth radiating from him and spilling over Tony’s shoulders as he leaned closer.

we read your message. we’re hurt you didn’t tell us about your choice, but not mad. a bit disappointed, but not mad. while we don’t understand why, we accept your choice and understand nothing we say will change your mind. we still love you, and we’re looking forward to your visit! call us? with love, mom and dad.

“They did take it well,” Rudolph muttered, hand light and warm on Tony’s back.

Tony sniffed. “Yeah,” he said. It came out watery and unsure, but Rudolph only squeezed his shoulder before laying back down in the bed. Tony put down his phone. “They did.”

*

It was the fifth night after Tony left San Diego, and Rudolph was ready to bite him the final time to complete the transformation.
Except Rudolph was getting cold feet.

“Wait,” he said, pulling back slightly to hover in the air a foot or so away from Tony. “Are you sure this is what you want?”

“Rudolph,” Tony said sternly, “are you really doubting that now? If I hadn’t wanted this I hadn’t let it go this far.”

“I know,” Rudolph said, “I know, I know – but how can you be so sure this is what you want – ? What if you fall out of love?”

Tony shrugged. “Maybe I’ll regret this decision a few centuries down the line,” he said – and then he reached after Rudolph and yanked him closer by his hips. Rudolph squeaked – it was usually he who was the straight-forward one. Without missing a beat, Tony continued by saying: “But I know for damn sure it’s what I want now” before scraping his teeth over Rudolph’s skin.

Perhaps in surprise and perhaps in pleasure Rudolph let out a whine, scrambling to hold onto something and ending up with digging his nails into Tony’s shoulders. Encouraged, Tony increased the strength behind his bite – and broke through Rudolph’s skin, causing a few drops of blood to surface. And had he been fully human he would’ve probably recoiled and apologized, but he wasn’t fully human, and so he growled, the sound primal and rumbling from deep within his chest, before pushing closer and sucking. It wasn’t a deep wound, not at all – which was probably good, considering how inexperienced Tony was – but it was deep enough for it to bear fruits.

When Tony pulled back, Rudolph’s pupils were dilated and his breath came fast. He’d cut his lip on his own fang, it seemed, and Tony leaned over and captured the drop of blood with his tongue.

Rudolph exhaled, a deep rush of air, and then he laughed a breathless, surprised laugh. “Yes, I can – whoo – I can see why you like that – ”

“Yes, well,” Tony said, brushing aside a strand of dark hair that’d fallen into Rudolph’s eyes at some point, “hurry up and do it, then!”

Rudolph grinned, a slow, syrupy grin that made Tony shiver – “As you wish,” he purred, and, moving deliberately slowly, he put his mouth to Tony’s neck.

Tony tugged him forward, and with a muffled, surprised grunt from Rudolph, his fangs sank into his Tony’s flesh. Well, not that he complained.

A little while later, and Tony felt Rudolph move back. A hand covered the sore spot on his neck, and then a voice breathed in his ear, “look at me, please.”

Tony did. Rudolph was hovering before him – not that that was much of a surprise – with a raw expression on his face. “Your eyes,” he whispered breathlessly. “They’re changing color.”

Tony blinked. “They are?” he asked. “That’s so cool!”

Rudolph didn’t seem to share his sentiment, and bit his lip carefully as he reached out and brushed his hand against Tony’s cheek in a gentle caress. “No going back now,” he muttered.

Tony moved his hand from Rudolph’s side to his own face, covering Rudolph’s hand with his. When Rudolph’s gaze snapped from Tony’s lips to his eyes, Tony offered him a gentle smile. “Good,” he whispered softly, before moving in for a hug.

Rudolph hugged him back with a fragile desperation. “You’re not allowed to be mad at me,” he
whispered brokenly, “for changing you. Not now, not ever.”

“I won’t,” Tony replied, and knew that his doubt would one day be faded memories.

Chapter End Notes

you're welcome.

End Notes

Hey! You there! Yes, you! Do you want me to write a fanfic for you? Yes? All you have to do is draw me a piece of fanart! Leave a comment if you're interested, and I'll get in contact with you :D

(you will have to draw fandom-blind, and I'll have to see some of your previous works. length, styles, and other things can be discussed upon further between the two of us.)

(yes this is still active)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!