Involuntary Blood Donation

by **pikkulintu**

**Summary**

Takumi is living his life like any other day, until something disturbs his peaceful drive down mount Akina. The fateful meeting will lead him into a side of world he never dreamt was true, and to the feelings he never experienced before.

**Notes**

This is the first fic I've ever written, and I kinda feel the writing gets a bit better over the chapters. I got this idea out of nowhere one night and couldn't help but to write it down. There are quite many chapters but they are not that long, so don't be imitated by that lol :D
Fateful Tofu Delivery

Air was chilly and the wind was getting stronger. It was still early in the spring and the temperatures were near freezing at the night time. Takumi curled into his jacket as he waved to the hotel employee that had received the daily tofu delivery. He was glad to get back in the 86 and dreamed of a good sleep he would have when he would get back home. Bunta had gone for a fishing trip with the owner of the gas station, and it was Sunday so there wasn’t need to wake up early for school, nor anyone to wake him up. A small smile rose into Takumi’s lips as he sped away from the hotel and down the mountain.

The road down was as dark as ever, with the sunrise still just a thought under the horizon. A small crescent and some stars gave an eerie light to the heads of trees bordering the serpentine road. The 86’s headlights swept the road and the only noise besides the engine was the small beeping of the speed limitation warning. Takumi kept his eyes in the road and tapped the gear switch gently with his left hand. Everything seemed to be just as any other day.

Until it wasn’t.

Suddenly a figure in yellow staggered from the bushes straight into Takumi’s line. Only the experience he had with driving allowed him to avoid the crash. He turned the wheel sharply right and straight away back to left, braking at the same time and letting the 86 make a turn so that the head now faced the way he had come from. The headlight showered light into the figure that caused the situation. It was a human who weakly shadowed his eyes in the bright light, crouching in the road. Takumi sat in the car with his heart pumping in the sudden adrenaline rush. His hands held the wheel and just when he started to grasp the situation, he saw the figure collapse into the road, seemingly losing his consciousness. There was no time to think any longer. Takumi rushed out of his car and towards the figure. There was no way he could have just left him lay there.

“Are you okay” Takumi asked in a loud voice as he hurried towards the figure. The mystery man gave no answer. Takumi leaned over to shake him gently. “Oi, are you awake” he asked again. The man felt very cold to his touch. His hair was blond, probably dyed as it seemed to have a yellowish tone. It was shaped to stand up in the top. He was wearing a bright yellow hoodie, black leather pants and some kind of brown leather loafers, quite a strange combo as Takumi momentarily thought, and also hardly the right attire for a stroll in the mountains at a spring night. He was starting to get seriously worried for the man, noticing that he had some bruises in his face and didn’t seem to be breathing. Takumi stretched his hand to feel if there was a pulse in the man’s neck as the man suddenly took a deep breath and half-opened his dark eyes. Takumi froze in his place, glad that the man seemed to be alive but also starting to think that he should probably be taken into a hospital as soon as possible. “How do you feel? Can you tell me your name?” Takumi asked to get the man’s attention. The man slowly raised his head a bit, shifted his glance into Takumi’s eyes and opened them fully, at the same time muttering “So sweet…”. Takumi’s eyes widened with surprise. The man’s eyes weren’t dark brown as he had thought. They were red. On the dark side but still undeniably red.

There was no time for Takumi to process this, as the man suddenly gripped the hand Takumi had stretched out. In a moment that seemed incomprehensibly short the man yanked the wrist near his face, opened his mouth and bit the wrist. “Wait what” went on Takumi’s head as he desperately tried to understand what the hell had just happened. He was undoubtedly somewhat sleep deprived, but this still seemed too weird to be a dream. The sharp pain that followed the bite, and the unpleasant feeling of bleeding shook him back to the earth. He looked at the man, who looked like he had starved for days, drink the blood. The man started to suck the blood with even more force,
and Takumi felt a strong blush rising in his neck and face. “Stop” he said, and as it didn’t seem to have any impact, he gathered all of his force and kicked the man straight into the stomach while yelling “STOP!”. The force of the kick made the man release his grip and growl back. The man put his hand on his face, feeling the fresh blood near his mouth, standing still for a moment while his eyes widened. He seemed to finally reach full consciousness. Takumi sat on the ground, holding his bloody wrist with the other hand, staring at the man.

The silence and staring seemed to go on for a small eternity. The moment was broken as the man moved his hands to his hair, holding them frantically, now staring the ground and whispering “No, no, no… I didn’t mean to, what have I done.” Freed from the trance, as it has felt, Takumi started to feel pain in his bruised hand and inched in pain. The man’s eyes moved back to Takumi and to the mess he had caused. “The bleeding, it must be stopped” he muttered and raised the helm of his hoodie to reveal a basic white t-shirt. He tore a long strip from it and stand up. Takumi could do anything but stare the man. He had never seen anyone do that in real life, only in movies. “He must be strong” Takumi thought. He also now observed that the man was taller than him and in good shape. He moved somehow gracefully as he took the few steps towards Takumi, before grouching and giving out his hand, saying “please let me stop the bleeding, I won’t hurt you anymore”. In his mind Takumi thought that he really shouldn’t trust someone who had just caused the injuries, and still had blood, his blood, all over his hands, face and hair. But still, Takumi felt like wasn’t in condition to move or run away so he held his hand for the man to bind it. The man spoke again “I’m so sorry I did this, I never meant to hurt you” he was clearly in agony over what he had just did. Takumi was silent for a moment before he gathered his courage and asked: “who or what on earth are you?”
The man kept binding Takumi’s hand, eyes averting his gaze. After he fastened the binding into place, he gently took Takumi’s left hand and placed it into the bind. “You should apply pressure here, it’ll help stop the bleeding.” Then he sighed heavily and rose his eyes to meet Takumi’s. They were blue. Takumi said his thought out loud “wait I could have sworn that your eyes were red just a moment ago”. The man gave a small smile before answering. “They probably were” he rubbed the temple of his head and continued “I am a vampire. When I’m really hungry or agitated my eyes turn to red from their original colour.” Takumi blinked slowly, not wanting to believe the man, but having no options considering the change in his eyes and the fact that he just had his blood for a midnight snack. Takumi stayed silent as the man continued. “My name is Keisuke. I have been wandering in the forests for some days after storming out from home. I have no idea where I am, and I was so tired and starved I didn’t even hear the noise from your car and ended up scaring you. I am glad you averted me, though I resent that you still got hurt because of me.”

Takumi still had the blush on his face as he kept staring the man… Keisuke… straight into his eyes. He was somehow captivating and seemed genuinely sorry for what had happened. “It’s fine” said Takumi, a bit surprised at his own words. “At least you don’t seem to be on death’s door anymore and I am sure my wrist will heal just all right.” As the tension from the situation began to lose its grip Takumi started to feel a bit dizzy. He closed his eyes, muttering “wow I really could use some sleep right now”. Then he carefully stood up and began to walk towards the 86. “There is no way I could let you drive like that” said Keisuke from behind. Takumi tilted his head back saying “well I could hardly sleep here either, I have to go home, I need my blankets”. Keisuke smiled at that “I’ll drive you home, just tell me where”. A part of Takumi’s mind told him that it was an incredibly stupid idea to let this random man, who he had just met and fed in the middle of mount Akina, to drive him anywhere but the current state of his also didn’t leave too many options. “Fine. It is just down the road, and the first intersection to the left. A tofu shop in the local shopping district.” He said and gestured to the side of the 86. Then he opened the passenger’s door, sat down and put on his seat belt. He fell asleep almost immediately, still holding his left hand in the binding.

Keisuke stood outside the car watching the younger man get in, realizing he hadn’t told his name. “What an unusual guy, he doesn’t seem to be swayed at all that there suddenly is a mythical creature in his life.” He shook his head and moved towards the car, reading the text on the side that the man had waved at. “Fujiwara tofu shop. Hmm… I guess he is Fujiwara then, if he lives at the shop too.” Keisuke then sat down behind the wheel. The car was a bit older than what he was used to but seemed to be well taken care of. Keisuke recognized the model to be 86 and remembered that these had been very popular with racers some 10 years ago, though he had never happened to drive one before. He adjusted the driver’s seat slightly as he was a bit taller than Fujiwara. Then he turned the car around to go downhill, ending up spilling water from the cup from the cup holder. “What the hell” he mumbled “why is there such a full cup of water here”. He glimpsed on Fujiwara, but he was deep asleep and didn’t react at all. Keisuke found a napkin in the car and dried the spilled water the best he could. He then started the way down, listening to the steady breathing next to him.

Luckily for Keisuke he was able to find the tofu shop quite easily and parked the car in the lot next to the main door. He gently shook Fujiwara from his shoulder, saying “we are here, you need to get up”. That seemed to only have the opposite effect as Fujiwara murmured a bit and curled to himself. Keisuke waited for a moment to see what would happen, but Fujiwara seemed to be in deep sleep, and waking him up forcibly didn’t seem like a good idea. But nor did waiting in the car for the morning either. No doubt the people passing by wouldn’t be very understanding on of a
bloody stranger and unconscious boy from the tofu shop. Keisuke frowned as there wasn’t a house key with the car key. He looked around and didn’t see one anywhere. It had to be somewhere here. Keisuke turned his glance to Fujiwara once again and noted that he was wearing a jacket with pockets. Maybe there. Keisuke felt like he was doing something wrong as he moved Fujiwara’s hand to feel the pocket. It indeed felt like there was a bundle of keys there. He softly slid his hand into the pocket, feeling the body warmth even better now. It made Keisuke want to have a second course on him, but he bit his lower lip and focused on the more pressing matter of getting Fujiwara inside.

Keisuke got out of the car and walked to the door of the shop. The door opened with the key to Keisuke’s delight. He opened the door and winced at the voice of a bell. “Damn stores and their main doors” he muttered as he looked inside. Behind the counter seemed to be a door to the back. Keisuke walked fast to see what was there and found a kitchen. In the back was a staircase to upper floor. The bedroom had to be there. After deciding this Keisuke got back outside and to the car. “I guess I have to carry you” he said in a low voice to Fujiwara. Keisuke lowered himself, placing one hand under the knees and another behind the back of Fujiwara. He didn’t seem to wake but wiggled a bit in his sleep. Keisuke couldn’t help but to smile to how serene and gentle Fujiwara looked in his sleep. He gently raised him from the car, trying to avoid bumping his head on the frame, and carried him inside.

There were three doors in the upper floor, but only one was open. Keisuke walked to the door and saw a very basic bedroom. A low table and a bed that hadn’t been made. The whole room had the same sweet and appetizing smell that had made him bite Fujiwara in the first place. This had to be his room. Keisuke softly placed Fujiwara into the bed, slipping him out of the jacket and tucked him in. He then went back out to lock the car and the front door. Going back up he noticed an ashtray in the kitchen table. Keisuke frowned, and as he hadn’t noticed the smell of cigarettes on Fujiwara it had to mean that he probably didn’t live alone. Keisuke went back up and opened the two other doors upstairs. The first was another bedroom, in which the smell of cigarettes was even more prominent. Keisuke frowned to the unpleasant smell. The second door was to a bathroom. Keisuke went in and eyed himself from the mirror above the sink. He looked like he had gone through a lot. There was blood and bruises all over his face. “Yare, yare” he sighed and washed his face the best he could. His clothes were also a mess, but he didn’t have anything else, so he just dried his face in the yellow hoodie and left the bathroom. He then entered Fujiwara’s room again, closing the door behind him, and sat beside the table in Fujiwara’s room, watching him sleep peacefully. One part of him wanted to flee, but a stronger feeling was to stay and watch over him. He couldn’t deny that this man had peaked an interest in him. Keeping his senses sharp in case someone would come to the house, Keisuke sat there and calmly observed the sleeping Fujiwara.
Takumi felt the sunshine in his face, still keeping his eyes closed. He hadn’t felt this well rested in ages. The memories from last night slowly started to flow back into his mind. He had met a… vampire it seemed. If he remembered correctly, he had said his name was Keisuke. The tickling pain in his left hand made the crazy memory feel real. Frowning his brows and raising a hand to ruffle his hair Takumi slowly opened his eyes. The noises of the shopping district faintly flowed into his room, and everything seemed like any other day. Except Keisuke sitting beside the table on the floor, leaning his head to his hand, eyes closed. There was no way Takumi could deny that something had happened last night, even tough he had no idea how he ended up in his own bed. Takumi rose to sat and saw Keisuke’s eyes open to look at him. He squinted and a thought rose to Takumi’s mind. He really wasn’t one to watch horror movies, so he didn’t have a strong idea of what vampires should be like, but he recalled some details from the few movies Itsuki had made him watch during middle school. “Doesn’t sunlight hurt you?” Takumi asked.

Keisuke snorted. “Is that really your first question?” Takumi raised his brow. “Well yeah?”

Keisuke closed his eyes again. “I don’t burst into flames or burn in sunlight like the vampires in movies. Though sunlight irritates my eyes and it gets annoyingly hot quite fast, even if it would be chilly otherwise. I like cloudy and rainy days, but I am a creature of night. I’d rather sleep the days.” “I’m sorry I don’t have any darkening curtains” Takumi said. Keisuke chuckled. “You are too worried for me.” That brought the question to Keisuke’s mind “oh yeah, would you mind telling your name to me? I guess Fujiwara is your family name?” “Ah, I forgot to tell. My first name is Takumi. You are Keisuke, right?” “Yeah.” “So… Do you have a family name? Or family at all? I have no idea what to expect from a vampire.” Keisuke snorted. “Yeah, I have. And it’s not like we live in caves outside the society or anything. We live just like humans, that’s why no one believes that we are real. We have blended in and learned how to act like human, avoiding any doubts.” He hesitated for a moment. “My family name is Takahashi, but I’m not in very good terms with my family at the moment so I’d prefer you call me Keisuke.”

They sat there in silence for a moment. Takumi wanted to ask more about what had led Keisuke into the current situation but didn’t feel he could as they had just met. He thought that Keisuke would tell later if he felt comfortable to do so. A loud growl from Takumi’s stomach gave an easy change of topic for them. “I want some breakfast” he said out loud and stood up. “You want some too?” he asked before realizing he didn’t know if Keisuke could even eat anything other than blood. He continued straight away “I mean, do you eat normal food at all?” Keisuke smirked and answered “nah, I only need blood to live. Solid foods make me sick, but I can drink liquids just fine. They don’t do anything for me, in good or bad.” Takumi grinned “well I guess you’ll be getting just green tea for breakfast.”

Keisuke sat besides the kitchen table, watching Takumi’s back as he made breakfast for himself. He had made the tea first and set cups for both of them. Keisuke enjoyed the calm moment and the smell of the tea. He could get used to this, he thought to himself, realizing he hadn’t really had this kind of moment in his life in a long, long time. Takumi sat opposite to him, and laid down a bowl of rice, some fried tofu with scallion and a piece of mackerel. Keisuke looked as he started to eat. “You know you should probably start to eat some iron supplements; the levels drop after losing blood. I took a bit more than they would in a blood donation.” Takumi chewed on a piece of the mackerel and swallowed before saying “I have never donated my blood, but I feel just fine”.

Keisuke leaned his head to his hand. “Well now you have donated it, in a way. Even though it wasn’t voluntary, and you slept around the clock after it.” “I feel like I hadn’t slept well in ages, so it isn’t that surprising I slept for that long. And I feel good now that I get some food, don’t worry about it.” Keisuke frowned. “You can’t always feel anemia, so please take the iron before getting
it. I could taste that you could have had more iron in your blood even before I took some away.”

Takumi stopped chewing his food as the realization struck him. He was really sitting opposite to a someone, who had eaten from him, and was now commenting on the taste. Several questions started to flow around in his head, and a tiny bit of panic rose its head. Takumi slowly set his chopstick on the table. Looking Keisuke straight into the eyes he asked “could I have been hurt worse last night?” Keisuke pressed his long fingers around the tea cup. “Yes, you could have.” He looked extremely serious. “I was so hungry, and you smelled better than anyone I’ve ever met. I let go of my personality to become only a starving beast that just had its prey. If you hadn’t kicked me and brought me back to my senses, I could have taken it all before realizing it was too late.” The seriousness of the situation hit Takumi, and he sat still, mouth suddenly dry. “But you didn’t” he said in a low voice. Keisuke had a pained expression in his eyes. “Thank god I didn’t.”

There was a silence, until Keisuke broke it “I will leave right now if you wish so”. For a second Takumi thought that it would be the easiest solution, just forget all of this and return to the safe routines of his life. But no. Nothing much usually happened in his life, it was just school, preparing for exams, working at the gas station and delivering the tofu. This was something too interesting to let by. Keisuke was too interesting. “Do you even have anywhere to go?” Takumi asked. “Well not really, I guess I’ll just find somewhere I can lay low.” A small voice in Takumi’s head still doubted the decision he had made, but he left that without any attention. He had made his choice and was going to see where it would lead him. “Then stay here. I don’t want you to end up as you were last night again.”

Keisuke was truly in awe. He had just been accepted like that. Usually humans would have screamed or ran away after being told they could have been killed by him. Not that it had happened too often. Takumi truly was something else it seemed. He spoke his mind “how can you trust me so easily after what I did to you?” Takumi picked his chopstick back in his hand before answering “You didn’t hurt me too bad, and after you got back to your senses you have done nothing than apologize for that and cared for me. I don’t remember all than happened last night, but I guessed you tended my wounds, drove me here and carried me to bed. You could just have left me there, and probably never have been caught. I feel like at this point you hurting me would be a waste.” Takumi looked Keisuke into the eyes with a determined look “I feel like I can trust you.”

“Thank you. I promise I’ll never hurt you again.” Keisuke said softly, impressed at the determination Takumi seemed to have. “Good” Takumi said and smiled. A smile that warmed Keisuke from the inside. A smile he truly wanted to see more of and protect. He watched Takumi finish his meal, and before he had the time to stand up Keisuke said “please show me your hand, a vampire’s bite shouldn’t become inflated, but we should still bind it better than with a piece of shirt.” Takumi straightened his hand to Keisuke, who started to take the bind of. Takumi hadn’t really thought about the wound before, but now he got kind of curious about seeing it. He watched as Keisuke rolled the bind of, revealing the skin with two red dots, and scraps in the side of his palm connecting to them. Keisuke didn’t look too happy about that. “You had to kick me to let go of you so I caused a bit more damage than I would otherwise have. Do you have any bindings here?” Takumi nodded. “In the bathroom cabin upstairs.” Keisuke stood up “I’ll go get it.”

Keisuke moved fast and softly. To Takumi it almost seemed like he ran upstairs, though he was walking. A moment later he was already back and started to dig through the first aid kit for some bandage and disinfectant wipes. He found them and bind the wrist again, swiping it with disinfectant first. “There.” He said “It should take some days but still heal quite fast.” Keisuke organized the other things in the kit to their places and Takumi stood up to take the plates to the sink. He washed them straight away. Now that he had eaten, he realised he was still in the same clothes he had left home last night. A bath was just what he needed right now.
They were back at Takumi’s room. “I’m going to take a bath; you would probably also want to take one?” Takumi asked, going to his closet to get clean clothes for himself. “Yeah it would be nice.” Keisuke answered. “I guess you also need some new clothes” Takumi said and nodded at the clothes Keisuke was wearing. Keisuke snorted “Yeah, I guess people would think I’m someone suspicious if I went out with blood on my clothes. “I see what I have” Takumi said and turned to raid his closet. He found some black gym shorts and a dark red t-shirt that was a bit too loose for him, so he didn’t usually wear it. From the corner of his eye he saw Keisuke take off his tattered hoodie and the t-shirt under it. Takumi turned his head slightly to get a better look. The bruises he had noted on his face also covered his hands and chest. There were some bloody scraps too.

Takumi couldn’t keep his mouth shut. “So, umm… How did you get so beaten up?” Keisuke seemed a bit surprised and looked at his own chest. “Oh these. When I left my brother tried to follow me”. Takumi noted the mention of a brother and kept that in his mind. Keisuke’s story still continued. “I ran to the forest at full speed to lose him. I’m just a bit faster than him so didn’t have time to be careful.” Keisuke felt an especially large bruise in his left bicep. “I fell down a cliff or two in the process too…” “Wait you what? How can you be so calm about something like that.” Takumi looked concerned. “Don’t you think you should go to see a doctor or something?” Keisuke smiled “Nah, I’m pretty sturdy. More so than humans. I’ll heal just fine in a couple of days.” Still not very convinced Takumi asked “We have some ointment for bruises and scrapes, you should at least apply that.” “If it’ll make you feel better then ok.” Keisuke said. “I’ll go get it” Takumi said and went out of the door. He soon came back with a tube of ointment. Keisuke took it and started to apply it to his hands, face and chest. He tried to reach his back, but a sharp pain hit his shoulder and he winced. Takumi saw this and without thinking too much he asked “Do you want me to help with your back?” “Yeah sure” Keisuke said and held out the tube.

Takumi took it and sat behind Keisuke. His back was broad and lean. Takumi took some ointment to his hand and carefully placed his fingers on a large bruise. Keisuke winched a bit at the touch at first, but when Takumi started to gently rub the ointment into his skin, he gradually relaxed. Takumi felt the skin in his fingers. It was smooth and extraordinarily cool. The tone was pale, and the bruises and scrapes were very clear. The moment was calming to both of them. Takumi realized he hadn’t really been this close to someone before. Never had touched someone else so straightforwardly. A small blush rose to Takumi’s cheeks. He lifted his hands from Keisuke’s back and put the cap back on the tube. “I’ll go to the bath first. You wait here so the ointment has time to dry.”

Takumi sat in the tub, washing his face with the warm water, trying to keep the bind out of water. He stared the wall blankly, allowing himself to relax and think everything in peace. So… Keisuke had a brother. Takumi couldn’t help but to think what kind of person he was, taking into consideration the fact that Keisuke had fled from him in such a hurry. Would he have the same look as Keisuke? Somehow that didn’t seem possible, as Takumi imagined him as a dark, tall and menacing. Keisuke’s hair was obviously dyed, but had it been black or dark brown? Somehow the blond look fit Keisuke, and the idea of him with dark hair made Takumi chuckle. He let himself flow deeper into the water and blew some bubbles from his mouth. He closed his eyes. He recalled the moment he had touched Keisuke’s back and blushed again. There never had been that many people in his life, Itsuki was the only long time friend he had. Working at the gas station he had met Iketani and Kenji, but they weren’t that close to him. All they seemed to be interested in were cars and racing, and Takumi didn’t really have passion for that. There really hadn’t been any physical closeness in his childhood either, as he had never known his mother and while his dad did look after him properly when he was a child, he really wasn’t one for casual hugs or pats on the
head. A sudden thought came to Takumi’s mind and he quickly opened his eyes and sat straight on the tub. “Dammit how did I forget” he said out loud. His dad was coming home from the fishing trip next evening.

Takumi got dressed and walked to his room, still drying his wet hair to a towel. The thought of what they would do bug him. He stopped at the door to look at Keisuke, who was sitting on the floor, eyes closed, legs crossed and hands leaning to them casually. He didn’t seem to move at all. Takumi was surprised. “Are you asleep?” Takumi asked. Keisuke blinked slowly. “No, I was just thinking.” Takumi furrowed his brow. “Do you sleep at all? I mean, can you sleep?” he asked. Keisuke smiled. “Yeah, I can. But only when I am totally relaxed and comfortable with my surroundings. For me sleeping usually means staying calm and drifting into my thoughts, but still being aware of my surroundings.” “Good to know” Takumi said and smirked. Remembering the thought from before he got serious again. “We have a bit of a problem.” Keisuke looked and Takumi and got serious too. “What is it?” Takumi ruffled his hair with the towel. “I live with my dad, he’s on a trip now but will come back tomorrow.” Keisuke remembered the other room and smell of cigarettes. It made sense, and Takumi was also too young to run a tofu shop all by himself. “Okay. What will we do?” Keisuke asked. “I don’t know yet. You go get that bath and we’ll think about this then” Takumi said.

Keisuke folded his pants on the bathroom counter. They were still in somewhat good condition unlike his hoodie and t-shirt. He looked at the clothes Takumi had given him. It would be nice to get the gym shorts instead of the leather pants after bath. He eyed the shirt with some doubt, hoping it would fit. He started to wash himself, thinking about what would happen tomorrow. It would have been ideal to just be together with Takumi in the quiet house, but he seriously doubted that his father would tolerate some random stranger in his house. If it came to that there was still the last solution… returning to Akagi, but just the thought made Keisuke squeeze his hand into a fist so hard it hurt. He absolutely did not want to give his family the satisfaction of lurking back to home after leaving in such a fashion. Not again. Getting out of the bath Keisuke tried to calm himself. It would be all right this time. Now he was older and more determined to keep his head than ever.

The shorts fit fine as they were loose to begin with. The shirt in the other hand was a bit too much. The fabric was nice and soft, but the size was at least one too small, so it ended up licking his muscles. Keisuke frowned at his image in the mirror. He felt a bit ridiculous as he often went for clothes that were a bit of a loose fit or at least in his own size. Letting out a small breath he opened the bathroom door and walked to Takumi’s room.

Takumi sat besides the table, leaning his head into his hand and a serious impression in his face. He saw movement and lifted his eyes to Keisuke. A small “oh…” left his mouth. Keisuke looked like a professional athlete with the tight shirt. Takumi stared for a moment, admiring his build. Then the embarrassment hit. “Sorry for the shirt, I don’t really have anything in your size.” Takumi said. Keisuke left the other side of his lips into a small smile. “It’s all right, not what I would usually go for but at least it doesn’t strain too much. I’m thankful to get clean clothes at all.” Takumi waved his hand. “Of course. I put your hoodie in the washing machine by the way. But now… I don’t have any good ideas for the situation. I don’t think introducing you to my dad and asking for you to stay would be a good idea. He is way too sharp for his own good sometimes, even though he doesn’t really look like that.” Keisuke sat down opposite to Takumi. “Yeah I thought that it would be impossible too.” Takumi continued “I don’t have any other places either nor the money to pay for a hotel room.” Keisuke rubbed his damp hair and sighed. “I would have money to pay for a room for some time, but there is just one problem. The money is in my room back at home.”
“Tell me more.” Takumi asked. “I… worked… in Tokyo until about a year ago, before my brother came to find me and dragged me back to home. Anyways, I have savings from my time in Tokyo. And my car is in there too. I really would prefer not going and risking seeing anyone, but it seems there aren’t any other possibilities. My parents should be out for the whole day in the end of the next week for some business they can’t miss.” “So… How far away it is? How are you going to get there?” “In Akagi. Not that long of a journey by car.” Takumi raised a brow. “And how are you going to get a ride to there?” Keisuke grinned. “I kind of played on you wanting to help me with that.”

“Well, I’m not saying I won’t, but the car isn’t mine. I just do the tofu deliveries every night.” “Then maybe we could do this after the delivery?” Takumi rubbed his chin. “Perhaps… I would have to some kind of reason for that though. My dad knows how long the delivery takes and he’ll ask if it takes longer than normal.” He sighed. “But I’m sure I can come up with some excuse. So, how did you think we will go through with this?” A bright and exited look flashed in the other man’s eyes. “We’ll go there when it is still dark. I’ll sneak in and you can drive away. I’ll drive back here with my own car.” “I’m not just going to leave you there” Small irritation rose its head in his mind. When he decided something, he always saw it through. “I’ll go with you to the end.” Keisuke shook his head. “I can’t let you do that. Even though they should be away there is still a possibility of them changing their plans, and a human burglar in a vampire house won’t meet a nice end.” “I’ll at least wait for you in the car then. If something goes wrong, we can both get away. I won’t leave you behind to the place you decided to leave.”

Keisuke was troubled, but the persistent look in the younger man’s eyes didn’t leave him many options. “Fine. I’ll let you do that, but only if you promise to leave right away if you see anyone even close to the car.” “I’ll do that.” He said, even though he doubted that in his mind. “How are you going to get into the house?” “I’ll climb to the balcony. Nobody ever remembers to lock that door.” That sounded a bit of a gamble, but Takumi decided to let that slide. Seemed like the vampire could do anything he wanted. Climbing to a balcony hardly seemed more extreme than falling of cliffs in the mountains. He glanced at the clock in the wall. “I’m going to sleep now. I have to make the delivery in the night and get to school in the morning.” “Can I come with you to the delivery? I’d like to see you drive. Avoiding me in that mountain road was pretty challenging but you did it and kept the control of your car well.” Someone being interested in his driving was something he couldn’t really understand, but it didn’t bother him either. “Sure, if you want to.”

Takumi closed the door of the 86. It felt weird having to fix the driver’s seat to fit him after someone had altered it for himself. That almost never had to be done as he and his dad were about the same height. He took the cup from the holder and filled it from a bottle. Keisuke seemed interested. “Why do you do that? I wondered that when I drove us here too.” “My dad says I must drive without spilling any to keep the tofu in perfect condition. You saw them while carrying the baskets into the car, right? They could be smashed quite easily.” Keisuke had insisted to carry the heavy basket because Takumi had the wound in his hand. “I kind of wonder if that is the whole reason though, or if he just wants me to be careful on the road.” Keisuke looked surprised. “Can you really drive in the mountains without spilling it?” “Yeah, it was a bit tricky first, but I got the hang of it and now I don’t even have to think about it that much.”

Keisuke looked at the water mesmerized. Every time it seemed it would spill Takumi changed his steering just a bit and got it to stay in the cup. Such precise control seemed almost unreal, as he didn’t believe he could have done that himself. “How long have you been driving to get used to this?” Takumi changed the gear into a smaller one while coming into a tight corned. “Around 5
years.” Keisuke frowned his brows. “Really? I would have thought you were under 20 but with that long experience it doesn’t seem like that.” A small chuckle came from the right. “I’m 18.” “Really? So you started driving at… around 13? Why’s that?” “Dad wanted some help with the deliveries, and there is rarely any other traffic at this time, so he just started to teach me. I got the hang of it quite fast and started to go by myself then.” Keisuke shook his head. “Your father doesn’t seem to care that much about the laws.” “He was a street racer in his youth, so I guess he never has been one to go by the book.” That peaked Keisuke’s interest. “Really? Have you ever raced?” “Nah, I don’t see the point. Driving is just a task to me, though I know some racers. And I don’t get why they have to have such flashy cars and large spoilers.” Keisuke smiled as the thought about his own car. It was a prime example of a flashy street racing machine.

“How did you end up meeting them if you’re not into the scene?” “I have a part time job in a local gas station. I work with one racer and others often drop by.” Silence fell in the car and Keisuke inspected the road they were driving at with more interest than before. There was a nice balance with different types of curves and straights. “Do the racers here have a team?” “Yeah. If I remember correctly, they call themselves the Akina Speed Stars.” “They have a nice home ground, I kind of want to drive here myself too.” Takumi glanced to his left. There was still so many things he didn’t know about him. “Do you race?” “Yup. It was actually my brother that made me start it, but I gradually started to enjoy the speed and adrenaline. Now I do it because I want to. I like having a moment of freedom and seeing my own skills carry me to the finishing line.” He smiled widely. “And I like winning.”

The tofu had been delivered and they started the way back to the city. Keisuke noticed the change in pace almost immediately. It almost seemed like the drive up had been an afternoon walk to Takumi. Now he sped through the corners with a nonchalant look. Changing of gears and braking were done in the optimal moments. And the water still didn’t spill. They were in a straightway before a slow right curve followed by sharp left. There was no sign of slowing down, not even at the point where he would have done so himself. “Oi, oi Takumi what are you doing, aren’t you going too fast?” The look on the driver’s face didn’t even flinch. He finally braked and steered into the first corner. Keisuke supported himself by grappling the handle on the roof. It seemed like they were going way too fast and would crash into the fence at any moment. A sudden movement of the wheel made them go in a perfect inertia drift, and they sped through the corner. Keisuke was wide-eyed. “What the hell, you say you don’t race but your technique would make any racer jealous.” For a fleeting moment they looked into each other’s eyes. Then the eyes were back at the road. “I don’t know about any special techniques. Driving back is boring, so I just try to get home as soon as possible to get some sleep before school.” He was amazed. It seemed he had found someone who could really make him test his skills. He turned his stare back at the driver. “I want to race you.”
Chapter Notes

After being down with the flu for a couple of weeks I’m back with a new chapter! Yay! Writing this is still so much fun for me, so I'm definitely not dropping this. Hope you are also enjoying this and stay tuned for future chapters ;D

Takumi had gone to school, and Keisuke stayed behind at the shop. He sat in the kitchen and skimmed through the newspaper looking for the rental apartment notices. There were a few interesting ones, and he had already made some calls and agreed on a showing. Drifting to his thoughts he pondered about how the plan of fetching his belongings from home would play out. He was pretty sure that anyone wasn’t at home that night, but still it was a risk. The sound of the bell from the front door snapped him out of his thoughts. There shouldn’t have been anyone coming in, the door had a clear notice on the store being closed for the day. Furthermore, it was locked. Keisuke glanced at a clock on the wall. It was still about an hour to the time Takumi had said he would be back from school. He heard the door close. Could it be that his brother or some of his lackeys had hunted him down? In an instance he was up from the floor, ready to run away at any moment. He stared the doorway and kept as quiet as possible, listening to any clues from the other room. There was a small thump, followed by a snap and a deep breath. Suddenly the smell of cigarettes started to flow into Keisuke’s nose. He didn’t know any vampires that smoked because the smell was too much, so that option was probably out.

The person started to move towards the kitchen and Keisuke knew he had to move somewhere. A place where he could see the person, but not be seen himself. He needed to know who had came into the house. The steps came closer and closer. There weren’t many options. He sprinted towards the staircase and jumped on the step to get a hold on the beam on the ceiling. Thankfully vampires knew how to move without making too much noise. He pulled his feet up and ended up in a starfish-like position, horizontal to the ceiling and supporting himself with mostly pure muscular strength. He fixed his position to a bit more comfortable while hoping he could transform into a bat like the vampires in some movies. He had gotten out of sight just in time. Just as he glanced back to the kitchen door an older man came in. He walked straight to the cupboard and poured a class of water for himself. Considering the situation it had to be Takumi’s father. There was some resemblance between them, and a random burglar wouldn’t have been that relaxed in someone else house. According to Takumi he should have been back late in the evening, but it seemed there had been some changes in the plans. The man sat beside the table, eyeing the newspaper and pulling the ashtray closer to him. He flipped the paper to the frontpage and started to read. There was no way Keisuke could move anywhere from his position without being noticed.

Takumi payed even less attention than usually to the constant babbling Itsuki let out of his mouth. The classes had just ended and they were walking out, and his mind was on situation back at home. His dad would come back in the evening and as Keisuke still didn’t have any other place to go to, they would have to be extra careful to keep him unknown of the situation. Suddenly something Itsuki said managed to catch his attention. “I really want to get to Akagi this Saturday, there is a race between the Red Suns and Night Kids. I wonder if Iketani-senpai or the others are going to watch it and would let me tag along.” Usually this type of thing wouldn’t have interested Takumi at all, as he saw it only as a waste of his precious free time. But knowing that Keisuke was a street racer from Akagi he wondered if there was something he could learn. “Huh, they are so amazing
you’d go all that way just to watch them drive?” The sudden interest from Takumi made Itsuki even more excited and he kept on with the blabbering. “Of course! The rotary brothers will be there with their FC and FD and the team leader of Night Kids is rumoured to have a new R32 so it is a must see race! The cars are all top-notch!” “The rotary brothers? Who are they?” “Only the most talked pair of the street racing world, Ryosuke and Keisuke Takahashi. They both drive a rotary engine, so someone named them that. Especially the elder brother Ryosuke is exceptional, he was known as the White Comet of Akagi before assembling the Red Suns. They say he has even received professional offers and is also studying to be a doctor. I want to know where he gets the energy to do that all.” Takumi kept silent but in his mind lots of things went on. There was no doubt, it all matched perfectly. Ryosuke was the brother Keisuke had mentioned before, and so a vampire too. No wonder he had the time to do all that. But a vampire as a doctor? That was a bit surprising.

Takumi waved at Itsuki as they parted ways. He hurried his steps to get home a bit faster. He was deep in his thoughts as he opened the lock on the front door and walked towards the kitchen. If he had paid a bit more attention, he would have noted the luggage set in the entryway, and the noise of boiling water from the kitchen. He went through the door but froze in his steps as he noticed something that shouldn’t have been there. His dad. His eyes widened a bit and he quickly looked around the room. There was no sign of Keisuke, and his dad didn’t seem to think there was anything wrong either. He must have hidden somewhere in time. “Oi, Takumi, good timing. The food is ready in a few minutes” Everything had to seem as normal as possible to avoid any questions, so Takumi tried to relax his shoulders and have his normal expression. “Nice. But how are you here now? I thought you would come back late in the evening.” “That was the plan, but the weather was lousy so there was no change to fish this morning and we headed back.” “I see. I go change before eating.” Bunta nodded and turned back to the stove.

Meanwhile Keisuke still hang to the ceiling. Bunta hadn’t left the kitchen at all in the time he had been home. After reading the paper he had started to cook straight away. There was no way Keisuke could have gotten down from where he was without making too much noise. So even while his muscles winced from the strain, he didn’t want to get found out. Heck, it would be even harder to explain the situation now than it had been if he was found immediately. No human could have done what he just had. The sound of the bell from the front door sounded like the rescue he needed. He listened the talk from the kitchen and made his move when he saw Takumi get into the stairs. Flexing his muscles to the extreme he managed to change his position so that he could swing himself to the stairs in front of Takumi.

Takumi was now paying close attention to the situation, wondering where Keisuke might be. Suddenly a fast movement from above caught his attention. It was Keisuke, who almost seemed to fly through the air and land before him. Sadly the landing was far from graceful. He ended up losing his balance and falling towards Takumi. As a reflex Takumi dropped his bag from his hand and caught the falling man in his arms. He just barely managed not to fall back to the stairs, but the noise they made was still quite loud. “You all right there?” Bunta called from the kitchen. To avoid him getting there to look at the inexplicable situation a fast answer was needed. “Yeah, I just stumbled to my own feet. No need to worry.” “Fine then.” Both of the men in the staircase took a deep breath. “I’m sorry” Keisuke whispered straight into Takumi’s ear, and he could feel the air tickling him. Somehow the closeness of his soothing voice made him feel butterflies in his stomach. The feeling of his body pushed close to his didn’t help at all. He found himself hoping that the closeness could continue for longer. However the weight he supported made the small wounds in his wrist ache, and they had to get out of the staircase. “Good thing we didn’t fall all the way down that would have been a sight. Let’s get up now.”

All the exhaustion from hanging in the ceiling took its toll as Keisuke slumped next to Takumi’s table. “How the hell you ended up there?” “I wanted to see who came in, but I didn’t anticipate
he’d stay in the kitchen and I couldn’t leave. Half an hour more and I would have just dropped from there… good thing you came back in time.” Takumi shook his head in disbelief but there were more pressing matters. “You need to hide for now. So, do you prefer the wardrobe or under the bed?” The question was answered with a risen eyebrow. “Are there any monsters in either to keep me company?” The irrationality of the situation made Takumi laugh out loud. “Not that I know of. You get to be the only one.” Keisuke joined the laugher. “Fine, I’ll go to the closet.” Takumi opened the door. Luckily there was room in the closet as he didn’t have that many clothes to hang. That also meant that anyone opening the door would see the vampire lurking in there, but Bunta always left his clothes for him to fold away. “Get in then.” Takumi grinned. “And try to get some rest, you look exhausted. I’ll go down to eat now.”

“Are you going to move?” The question took Takumi by surprise and he stared at his dad who had just asked that. He furrowed his brows. “No, why?” “When I got back the paper was open at the apartments-page.” His dad was scarily observant, once again. “I just skimmed through it this morning half asleep until I had to leave for school, I didn’t pay that much attention to it.” “Mmm. Okay. And what happened to your wrist?” he pointed at the binding still wrapped over Takumi’s hand. He had explained it earlier at school, so he had the made-up reason ready. “I scraped it to a tofu box while loading them to the car. It bled a little, so I disinfected and wrapped it just in case.” “Try to be more careful in the future.” The discussion ended there, at least Bunta wasn’t one to dig deeper when he was given a logical explanation.

They both focused on their food, until an idea rose to Takumi’s mind. A possible reason for leaning the car to go to Akagi. “Hey dad.” “Mm?” “Can I borrow the car after the delivery next Saturday?” It was impossible to read anything from his face. “What for?” He gulped and hoped this would go well. “Itsuki mentioned that there will be a road race in Akagi, and the course is interesting, so I kind of want to see it. I still have no idea why he is so into the whole racing thing, but maybe driving the course myself will tell me something, so I could maybe share some of his interest. It’s kind of boring just to listen about his babbling without knowing anything myself.” It was rare to hear that long of an explanation from Takumi. Bunta put down his chopsticks and light a cigarette instead. He though about it for a while. “Fine, it’s not like I need the car then. But you’ll have to pay for the gas yourself.” A smile light Takumi’s face. “I will.” He rose and said thanks for the food. Bunta looked at his back as he went upstairs. Maybe the boy would finally start to show some interest on racing, as he had planned from the start.

“It’s me” Takumi said to let Keisuke know he didn’t need to worry. He walked to the closet, opened the door a bit and sat down on the floor. “We can go on with the plan, I got the car.” The closet’s monster glanced him from the opening. “Great. Now I just need to not get noticed by your father for the rest of the week. It’s probably easier if I spend the days out.” “I think so too. Unlucky for you though that the forecast seems to be really sunny and warm for the week.” A sigh came from the closet. “Just my luck, but what can you do. Do you happen to have sunglasses? Those would help a bit.” Takumi rose and went to look into his drawers. He soon came back and handed a pair of very basic shades in, along with some cash. “You have to get some new clothes too, pay back when you can.” Keisuke hated being in dept to anyone, but the other man was right, and he didn’t really have any options, so he just took the things and nodded gratefully.

That night Keisuke stayed at the closet while Takumi made the delivery. When the morning came, they managed to get him out unnoticed, and as they had planned, they went their separate ways. Takumi into school and Keisuke to the shopping district. He noticed he got some looks, which really wasn’t that surprising considering his looks. He had his own black leather pants, the dark red shirt and shades. With his hair he totally looked like a troublemaker, which wasn’t too convenient. He really needed to go buy something a bit more normal. At least the bruises had already faded from his face, so he avoided a full on gangster look.
It was the night of the plan. Everything was set. Keisuke had rented an apartment earlier in the week and was going to fetch the keys first thing in the morning. Wearing a black hoodie he had bought to blend into the night and hide his blonde hair he stood on the window in Takumi’s room. He observed Takumi and his father load up the tofu into the 86. When Bunta went back in, he silently slid the window open and moved to the roof, closing the window behind him. He then carefully took a few steps and dropped down to the ground. Sneaking into the passenger’s seat he kept his senses as sharp as possible to avoid getting noticed. In the car he tried to lay as low as possible, while whispering “let’s go”. He nodded as an answer and they started their way to the dark roads of mount Akina. The night was like any other, and the skilful driving made Keisuke feel at ease.

There was something that bothered Takumi, and what he needed to discuss with Keisuke. Something he had unconsciously avoided until now. “Aren’t you hungry?” While letting the question into the air he briefly looked at the vampire to see how he reacted. He saw a clenching jaw and hands squeezing into fists, before he looked back to the road. A silence between them, and it felt like an eternity went by before it was broken. “A bit. But it doesn’t affect me yet.” Takumi looked at the passenger again. “Your eyes have a slight violet tone. Shouldn’t you eat before you spiral into the red again?” The vampire sighed and buried his face into his hands again. The time he had had to spent outside at sunshine during the last week had taken a surprisingly big toll on his strength. The limited time he had spend resting had also been bothered by the constant fear of being found out, which didn’t help at all. All that showed as hunger. “Yeah.” A moment went by as Takumi chewed on his lip, wondering if he should say what he was about to. But it needed to be done. “I’ll give you some.” The hands flew away from the vampire’s face and revealed a shocked expression. “No!” “And why is that?” “Don’t you remember what happened last time? You had to forcibly stop me and slept around the clock afterwards.” “You were starving, and I had sleep deprivation. That isn’t the case now. After we make the delivery you’ll eat. You can drive to Akagi and I’ll rest for that time.” Keisuke still seemed unwilling to go through with the plan he had just heard, so Takumi continued with his reasoning. “You should avoid getting too hungry, it will just lead into trouble.” There wasn’t any good arguments for that. And the reasoning still continued. “And besides, shouldn’t you be in full power for this? You said it yourself that anything could happen. I don’t want to lose you.” Keisuke was taken aback by the sudden affection. It felt surprisingly good having someone to worry about his wellbeing. “Fine. I’ll take it.” The driver smiled. “Good.”

The discussion didn’t end with that. “I know this is a bit touchy subject, but I must ask. How do you usually get your food? I don’t see how you would go running around randomly assaulting people for blood.” Keisuke snorted. “Good to know you don’t take me for a savage. There are some vampires that still do that, but they attract a lot of attention to us, so other vampires in the area don’t usually tolerate that.” He hesitated for a moment. “Our food gathering concerns many vampires and people as well. You can’t talk about this to anyone, or someone will come to silence you. Do you still want to know?” Takumi had a very serious expression. “Yes.” He felt like knowing this was essential to get to know Keisuke better, and he surely wanted that. There was a moment of silence. “Most vampires live off donated blood. I mean blood that was donated to healthcare. Around a half of that goes for vampires and the rest for actual human patients. So did I.”

Takumi had never thought about the blood donating business, but he was still surprised. Half of the whole amount was considerably much. The story seemed to continue so he kept on listening.
“In official records they mark it as used in operations and so on. They are marked under human patients or false names to avoid having attention to the fact on how often they get blood transfusions.” Suddenly it made sense to have a vampire doctor, and Takumi couldn’t help but to express his thought out loud. “Is that why your brother is studying to be a doctor?” Keisuke seemed even more shocked than after getting the offer for blood moment before. “How did you know that?”. “…I have a friend who is really into the racing scene and he happened to be blabbering about the rotary brothers the other day…” Keisuke seemed to want to sink into the ground. “Oh yeah…. I really shouldn’t be that surprised… We have attracted a lot of attention during the last year.” He seemed to be collecting himself for a moment. “Many vampires are on the health care field because the system has a possibility for smooth food collection. My family actually runs a hospital and is on top of the hierarchy because of that.” Suddenly his expression changed into a disgusted one. “My parents wanted me to be part of that too, just like my brother.”

He was silent for a long time again, and Takumi almost asked something, but he continued on his own. “I ran away to Tokyo from their expectations once before, but they dragged me in again, promising I could just help with keeping the vampires in the area in our control with Ryosuke.” His expression turned bitter. “Of course I shouldn’t have believed them. Slowly but surely, they started to reel me into the blood business. First me rebelling against them was just out of my need to find my own way in the world. After coming back I started to feel disgusted about the system. It feels deceiving to let the people believe they donate to other people. Treating them like livestock, and after making human friends in Tokyo that felt unbearable. And they take abundantly, just because they can. About a quarter of the amount could be plenty to feed everyone, but some have even become picky about the freshness and taste. And most also indulge in eating straight from humans from time to time too. Out of rebellion I refused to eat, thinking I could just wither away. That didn’t work out as you know…”There was nothing Takumi could say to that. It wasn’t like he had ever had to think about anything like that himself. The only thing he could do at that moment was to reach his left hand to grab his. He gently squeezed it. “I am here for you now.”

They had delivered the tofu and driven into a bit more secluded area. Takumi parked the car and turned to Keisuke. “Let’s do this. I am willing to give my blood to you, so you shouldn’t have any bad feelings about taking it.” “I couldn’t be more grateful, you know that.”. They changed places so that Takumi was sitting in the passenger’s seat sideways, feet on the ground. Keisuke squatted in front of him, still looking very concerned. “Please place your foot on my chest to you can kick me away whenever you feel so. And hold your arm to me.” Takumi did what he was asked to, but still couldn’t help but to think about the movie vampires. “Don’t vampires usually feed from the neck?” A small laugh escaped from Keisuke’s lips. “That’s the stereotype. I’ve only ever done that while…” “While?” “While I was intimate with the person.” “Oh.” Takumi blushed, and hold his hand up. “Arm it is then.” “I’ll bit from the elbow crook, so it’s easier to hide than wrist.” “Fine.” Keisuke moved his face towards the elbow, and his breath felt warm on the skin. Chills went down Takumi’s back. Gently the lips touched his skin and in a second he felt a sharp pain piercing through. This time he was very aware of what was happening unlike before. The feeling of warm blood flowing out, and the sucking of it felt weird, but somehow satisfying at the same time. It made him feel warm and the blush deepened in his face. Somehow, he found himself wishing that the vampire would have been at his neck so that he could have closed him in his arms.

Keisuke tried his best to be calm about the situation, even though it was not easy by any means. He could hear the pulse and see the small movements on the vein tempting him. The warmth of the arm felt comforting and the smell was delicious. More delicious than anything else had ever been. That was baffling as he had smelled and tasted many different bloods in his time. How it could be that the best was the one he had stumbled across so unexpectedly? And for the person to be such an open-minded and accepting as Takumi was, it felt really good. Keisuke enjoyed the fragrance a bit more before deciding on the optimal place to bite. The taste filled his mouth and it felt like he
had never eaten before. But it couldn’t continue for too long. It took a lot of willpower to stop, but the thought of hurting Takumi was far too horrifying to ignore. He licked over the small holes to help them close faster and pulled back. Looking at Takumi’s blushing face made him want to kiss him. Keisuke shook his head, surprised at his own thoughts. He hadn’t wanted to kiss a man before. Overlooking the feeling as a side effect of eating just now he rose up. It was a pleasure to notice that this time there weren’t any blood stains anywhere, and the bleeding had almost stopped. Takumi took a binding from the first aid kit he had ready and handed it to Keisuke. “Could you? It's a bit hard by myself.”

Chapter End Notes

This has nothing to do with the story per se, but the most part I've been listening to bands Battle Beast and Beast in Black while writing. Especially the song Touch In The Night. I like the mood of their music and because I've listened to them so much while writing hearing them now makes me automatically think about the story xD lol I just wanted to mention this for some reason.
Takumi was nodding off. Despite his best efforts it was still a bit hard to stay awake. It was dark outside, and the constant noise of the car’s engine made him feel relaxed. His drowsiness didn’t go unnoticed. Keisuke briefly looked at him before turning his eyes back to the road. “Take a nap, I’ll wake you up before we get there.” There was no answer, but it only took a few seconds for him to drift into sleep. The vampire noticed that from the change in his breathing. He felt kind of bad, as he was brimming with energy after eating. Energy that he had taken from the other man. Instead of moping over that he decided to focus on going over his plans once more. They would go to the house. He would get into to fetch the money and then his car. They would drive away in different cars, and part ways in Akina. He didn’t want to get attention to his car near the tofu shop, so he’d just spend the rest of the small hours in a parking lot somewhere and meet Takumi the next day, after his job at the gas station. Everything would go fine. It had to.

A gentle shake woke Takumi up. He slowly opened his eyes and saw Keisuke looking at him. Still a bit dizzy from sleep he stretched his hand to touch his cheek and looked straight into his eyes. “They are bright blue again. Like a surface of a lake in the sun.” The vampire looked surprised, but his expression soon turned into a smile, and he placed his hand on top of the other. “Thanks to you. I feel great.” A moment went by as they just kept staring into each other’s eyes. Even without any words they both felt their nerves calming. It was a serene moment, which felt like eternity to them.

A car driving by made them realize they still had something to do. Takumi felt a bit embarrassed now that his mind was clear from sleep again. The hands dropped and Keisuke cleared his throat. “We are just a few minutes away. Let’s change places so you’ll drive there.”

"It is this one." Takumi looked at the mentioned house. There weren’t any lights on the house, only the streetlight made it visible. It was large and new-looking two-story building with a stone fence going around it. On the side there was a garage that had enough room for two or three cars. The streetlight had burned near it so there was a darker place. “I’ll get out now. This road is a dead end, so turn your car around and park. Keep your engine going but close your lights. If you see anyone turning into the street, then call me and drive away yourself. All right?” “Yeah.” Keisuke nodded. “Good. Let’s roll. I’ll see you tomorrow.” He hopped out of the car and ran to the house. Takumi looked at him go. He climbed over the fence like it was nothing. For a moment Takumi admired how effortless his moving looked. He hadn’t seen anyone move like that before, but on the other hand he hadn’t observed vampires moves before, as far as he knew. He shook his head in disbelief of the situation but proceeded to do as he was told. He parked into the dark spot between the streetlights. Feeling the nervous energy going through him he closed the lights and focused his eyes on the beginning on the road. He had his phone at his hand, ready to call Keisuke at any moment.

Keisuke looked at the wall in front of him. It was made from tiles so there were some places he could hang onto. The balcony was on the second floor, so not too high. He stretched his back and hands. The bruises had completely healed over the week, and with just having eaten he felt better than in ages. It was a play in the park for him to climb up. In a moment he was up, hand on the handle of the door. He took a deep breath, hoping no one would have closed the door. No one usually did as it led straight into his room, and he didn’t allow anyone in there. The handle moved, and the door opened smoothly. “Yess” he whispered under his breath. He stepped into the room. It was exactly how he had left it. Messy. He almost tripped over a box near the door and cursed. Maybe he really should try to live a bit tidier. Focusing to his mission again, he went to the bed, kicking some used clothes and car magazines to the side. Under the bed there was a sports bag with some clothes, money and other valuables. He had kept it there in case he needed to get away fast, but it hadn’t happened as he was elsewhere when he decided to run. At least it was useful now. He
threw the bag into his back and looked around for the car keys. There was a spare in the bag, but he preferred to have both to himself. The other key was on the table besides the bed, so he grabbed it into his hand. He looked around at the room. Despite of the mess he felt a bit sad he couldn’t stay there. This room had been about the only place he could relax and do whatever he wanted while at home. But he had made his mind. It was time to go.

Meanwhile outside the situation started to move on. Someone turned into the street and started to drive towards the house. Takumi immediately called Keisuke and listened to the dialling noise. Then he grouched down at his seat. He wanted to see if the driver would go all the way to the house. Even if Keisuke had wanted him to drive away straight away, he felt that he needed to see Keisuke following him before he could go.

Moving through the house nothing seemed out of the ordinary, it was clean and tidy as ever, unlike his room. It was like him leaving so suddenly hadn’t moved anyone. He tried to keep those thoughts out of his mind and focused on getting into his car. He was just about to open the door from the house to the garage when he felt the phone in his pocket vibrating. Something was going on outside. Immediately all of his senses were at the edge. He moved as fast as he could and stormed to his car. It was just where he had left it. The FC that was normally next to it was out. Just as he had sat down to the FD the rolling door started to go up. “Oh shit.” He hadn’t yet opened the door, so some from the outside must have done it. The familiar noise of rotary engine confirmed his fear. It was Ryosuke out there, coming in. It felt like the door moved up slower than ever. Sitting in his car he first saw the headlights and then the white paint of the car. He was waiting for the optimal moment to go. It came as the door rolled up, and the FC started to move in. Keisuke started his own engine and opened his headlight, pressing the gas and moving out of the garage at a high speed. He could see the surprised look on Ryosuke’s face and knew he would see him as well. But there was no time to think about him too much, he had to get away, so he focused on the tight corner he needed to clear to get out of the yard. Ryosuke couldn’t move his car fast enough to follow him, it is ok he kept telling himself. Turning around the corner he caught a glimpse on the 86. Keisuke cursed. In a way he was not surprised the younger man hadn’t listened to him, and it was nice to see he was fine. Hopefully Ryosuke hadn’t paid attention to the car and wouldn’t come find him.

The moment Takumi saw the car turn into the yard of the house he got increasingly worried on whether Keisuke would get out or not. A few seconds after he saw the backlights of the white car go behind the wall the headlights of another car came into sight. He sighed from relief. It had to be Keisuke. He turned on his lights and hit the floor with the gas. They needed to get away as soon as possible. There was a possibility of the white car following them after all. He saw the headlights of the other car following him but didn’t get a look on how it looked as the brightness of the lights in the dark overpowered everything else. He focused solely on the driving, almost enjoying the excitement of the situation. The car behind him followed constantly, they didn’t seem to be left behind even after strict corners. In the odd times he passed someone on his deliveries they always were left behind so fast. It was a new experience to have someone follow him so intensely. Surprisingly he found it quite exiting. The trip back to Akina was over in a flash. As they were at the first intersection of the city, he saw Keisuke flash his lights, and turn to the other way, as they had planned. When Takumi pulled into their parking space, he felt happy. They had achieved their goal and he had actually enjoyed the race back. Maybe the street racers actually were doing something interesting.
Takumi looked at the clock. It was almost the time for him to go change out of his working clothes. After that he could contact Keisuke and go to see his new hideout. The day had been a slow one as there weren’t that many customers. It had led Itsuki, who also had a shift, into talking constantly about how he was exited to see the race at Akina in the evening. Iketani and Kenji had agreed to go see the race and let Itsuki tag along. Takumi was arranging the washing gear when he heard an especially exited squeal from him. He turned to look at what could be the reason of it and saw a bright yellow sports car with a spoiler large enough to fly with turn into the yard. Takumi couldn’t get his head around on why someone would want to drive a car that showy. Once again Itsuki’s babbling snapped him back from his thought. “Isn’t that the younger Takahashi?? It has to be!! Oh my god!!” Takumi was surprised for a moment. It was true he hadn’t seen the car Keisuke drove last night, as it was dark the headlights were the only thing really seen from the back mirror, but he still hadn’t expected… this.

His confusion just grew as Itsuki proceeded on pulling a magazine from his pocket, opening it excitedly. “Look! These are the Takahashi brothers. They even had an interview with a racing magazine! Isn’t that clearly the same car?” Takumi took a look on the page Itsuki was showing and indeed, there he was. Wearing the same yellow hoodie he had on the first time they met. His expression was somewhat embarrassed and annoyed, as he didn’t really want to be photographed. He had to acknowledge that the car really fit the style he had going on. But enough of the magazine, the real deal needed attention, as he had driven to the gas pump. Itsuki was still waving the magazine around excitedly so Takumi left him to do that and walked to the driver’s side of the car. The window was rolled down and he saw a cheeky smile, he seemed like a different person comparing to the picture. “What could I get to you?” “Tank full on high octane and you.” He rolled his eyes to the latter. “No way I’m going with you in this car, Itsuki will never stop bothering me if I do.” “Itsuki?” “The friend who is into street racing, he’s also working here” He gestured to the other boy who stuck his magazine back into his pocket and ran towards the car. Takumi turned back to Keisuke. “Text me your address and I’ll come there after work.” Without listening to any arguments he went to start fill in the gas. In the corner of his eye he saw Itsuki clean the windscreen of the car more excitedly than ever before.

Takumi went into a small corner store on his way. He didn’t exactly expect Keisuke to have anything to eat at his place. He picked a ready meal of chicken karaage and a melon soda to go with it. Giving a 1000 yen bill to the cashier he though about what would happen with Keisuke from now on. It seemed like they had known for a long time already as they were in total ease with each other. Somehow his mind wondered into last night, and to the time he had offered his blood to the vampire. The memory caused a happy and warm feeling in his body, even though he didn’t really understand why. That had not happened with anyone else before. And the feeling of his lips in his skin… It made him blush a bit. The cashier girl seemed a bit surprise of the sudden change in his face, but still handed him his change smiling brightly and wishing him a good day. He muttered something similar as an answer and picked his goods from the counter, leaving the shop maybe a bit faster than what was normal.

The place was just a few blocks away from the store. The building seemed quite old and a bit shabby. No wonder it had been available right away. Takumi walked to the stairs and into the second floor. It was the third door to the right as per his instructions. The door didn’t have a name of anything in it, but it seemed fitting. He didn’t want to be found after all. Takumi knocked on the door and stepped a bit back. He didn’t hear anything from indoors but suddenly the lock snapped and the door opened a bit. He heard a voice. “Come inside.” Recognizing it was indeed Keisuke inside there he opened the door and stepped inside. In the doorway there was just one pair of shoes,
and Takumi took his off and placed next to the other ones. The room consisted of one room with a small stove on one side, and a door that probably led into toilet and washing room on the other side. The flooring was traditional tatami. The only furniture was a low table and a folded futon at the corner of the room. There were curtains at the windows, and it was quite dark. Keisuke was sitting at the floor besides the table.

“Seems like the place has everything you need.” Keisuke smirked. “Yeah, definitely an upgrade from the closet.” Takumi laughed a bit. “Good for you. But where is that fancy car of yours? I didn’t see it outside.” “I managed to get a garage spot for it. It attains quite a bit of attention, so I didn’t exactly want to leave it to an outside space. Someone might recognize it.” “Makes sense. You are such a big name in the racing world it seems, and I have never seen a flashier car anyways.” he said jokingly. The smirk on Keisuke’s face widened. “Are you complimenting my tastes? I have personally decided every detail of the looks.” Takumi shook his head amused. “If you want to take it as a compliment then do so. At least it fits you well.” The vampire seemed delighted with that.

He sat down opposite of the vampire. “How did you end up as a street racer? Was there someone who introduced you to it?” “Well I have enjoyed driving for a long time, but I only took on racing last year when Ryosuke dragged me into it.” “Why would he do that?” “It is actually part keeping the vampires in my family’s control. The hospital business gives us an upper hand, but some still want to challenge that to get a better standing themselves.” Takumi shook his head. “But how on earth you ended up in the decision that street racing was the way to keep others in check?” “The vampire history dates back into the start of humanity. Originally the strongest clans were decided by brute force, but it gradually changed. In the Middle Ages the tournaments of knights were started by vampires. Over the decades the sports have changes and nowadays it somehow ended up in motor sports. Maybe because it’s usually done in the night so it’s more comfortable without the sun.” “That kind of makes sense. Winning the glory and popularity amongst the crowds by fighting in the streets.” “You make it sound so grand. But basically like that. There are human teams also but many of the more successful ones are vampires. They have had more time to learn so they often triumph over humans.”

The end mention made Takumi a bit anxious over something he had thought before too. “You say they have had more time, so… how long do vampires live?” It wasn’t like Keisuke hadn’t expected this topic to come up eventually. “Longer than humans. Many hundreds of years even…” So some of the movie clichés actually held up. “And… How old are you?” That was the obvious continuation to the topic, and just what he had seen coming. “I was born in the beginning of the century. Takumi furrowed his brows. “You are almost 100 years old? You look like you would be at your 20s.” Keisuke had a sad feeling showing in his face. “Around that. Vampires age really slowly; with good food it almost stops completely. We are in a way like living statues. Things around us change and we don’t.” There wasn’t anything he could say to that. Living for a century was such an absurd idea, and he didn’t even want to think about what the future held for the two of them. He was just a normal human after all. A human whose stomach suddenly made a growling sound. It gave him a good reason to change the subject.

He pulled his food out of the bag he had carried it in. “Do you mind if I eat?” “Not at all. Actually I have something for you.” The vampire stood up and walked into the cabinets over the stove. He pulled out a small round package and walked back to the table, setting the object in the middle of it. Takumi looked at the packaging. It had a round red mascot with a smiling face. The text said “Iron supplements.” He raised his brow and looked at Keisuke. “I thought you had forgot my advice. These are to be taken with meals, so now’s a good time to start.” He looked back at the package and took it into his hand. “Fine, I guess I don’t have any reason not to take them.” For a brief moment the thought that he could voluntarily lose more blood in the near future crossed his mind. Why not to take the supplements just in case. He opened the package and took a pill into his
mouth, opening the soda and washing the pill down with that. It didn’t feel like anything. He popped the lid out from the meal and separated the wooden one use chopsticks from each other.

Keisuke looked at Takumi eating, happy that he had taken the supplement. Keeping him safe and in good health seemed to the most important thing for him these days. There weren’t any words being exchanged between them at the moment but still he felt happy to have him there. He had no idea what the future held now that they succeeded in their big plan of getting his belongings, but he hoped they could be together for now. He almost wished he could have him all for himself. The thought surprised him. It had been ages since he had last been this interested in anyone. Actually, he kind of doubted if he had ever been. There was no doubt he had had some more or less serious relationships in his past, but they had always started on the other party on having an interest in him and he had just flowed with that. This was different. It was him who had sparked an interest to Takumi. Deep in his thought he kept on looking the eating boy, who didn’t seem to mind the silence or the stare. Looking at the smooth movements of his hands when he picked the pieces of chicken with his chopsticks and lifted them into his mouth made him want to feel the lips himself. To kiss them. This was the second time he thought that and this time he couldn’t hide behind the excuse of excitement of eating to be reason for that. It was something else. It was love. The realisation didn’t sway him that much. Deep in his mind he had known that since the last time but couldn’t admit it straight away even to himself. It was not like he anticipated to get any response to his feeling, but that was fine too. The important thing was to have his company. He closed his eyes and drifted deeper into his thoughts, feeling oddly happy and bubbly inside.
Takumi fished the last piece of chicken to his chopsticks and ate it. He put the sticks down and looked at Keisuke. It seemed like he had fell asleep. It had been fun to watch him getting more and more sleepy by the moment, finally seeing him close his eyes. He was sitting cross-legged and kept his hand tightly folded at the chest. His head was tilted to his chest. He seemed too peaceful to disturb, so Takumi rested his head to his hand and closed his eyes too. It wasn’t that bad of an idea to take a moment to calm down properly. He hadn’t slept at all between coming home last night and getting into school in the morning, and to work after that. All that started to take its toll as he drifted to deep sleep faster than he had anticipated.

The constant ringing from his phone shook him awake. It felt like only a brief moment had went by after eating but a look at the clock proved that to be false. It was the time for delivering the tofu. The noise from the phone was his ringtone. A call from his dad. He answered it. “Hi.” “Where are you boy? I thought you would be home by now, even when you weren’t home when I went to sleep.” “I’m sorry, I fell at sleep at a friend’s place. I will get there in a moment.” “Fine, see you.” And the call ended. Opposite him Keisuke had also woken to the noise and was stretching his hands. Takumi shot up from his place, almost tripping to his foot that were a bit numb for sleeping on top of them. “I should have been home ages ago. I need to do the delivery now.” He seemed more flustered than usually and rushed to the door to get his shoes. “I can give you a lift to your place, it will take just a few minutes.” That seemed to calm him down a bit. “A lift would really help.” “Let’s get moving then.”

They practically ran out of the building and towards the garage. Keisuke slipped into the driver’s seat and Takumi to the other side. The interior of the car was clearly more modern than in his dad’s old Trueno. Even the seats were the type you would see in a professional racing car. It was clear that money had been spent to the car. But even more interesting was to look at Keisuke’s driving. He was totally focused on what he was doing, but all the movements seemed effortless. There wasn’t any traffic in the city at that time of the night as they sped through the streets. It wasn’t something Takumi usually did. He was mostly used in driving fast at the mountains. It was a whole different environment there. “Have you ever raced on other places than in the mountains?” “A few times at the circuit. And I have hunted down some punks in the streets of Tokyo but that wasn’t a race per se…” “Why on earth were you hunting them down?” “There was some money involved… The 80s were a bit wild anyways, but that’s a story for another time. We are at your home street.” It had taken less than 10 minutes for them to get there. “Please leave me here, I will walk to the shop, I don’t really want to explain you to my dad right now.” Keisuke smiled. “Understandable. I’ll follow you to Akina, so we will meet at the top.” “Okay.” Takumi got out of the car and rushed towards the end of the street. Keisuke watched him go. He decided to wait at where he was until he saw the 86’s light go away and follow then, there wasn’t enough space for him to turn his car around and take another route.

“You got here fast.” Bunta noted as he saw his son rush to the car. He took a long breath before answering. “My friend doesn’t live that far away.” “Is this a friend I know?” “I don’t think so, we met at the gas station.” That wasn’t a full lie per se as they had seen each other at the station that day, but he knew that his dad would take it as if the friend also worked there. “I see. Well, get into the car boy, the tofu won’t deliver itself.” He sighed. “Yeah, yeah I will go now.” He hopped into the car and started the engine. His dad handed the water cup from the window he opened. Takumi took it and nodded. He rolled the window back up and steered to the road. His dad stood outside, watching the car go. The boy clearly had something going on, He had been behaving differently for some time now. The reason for that was still somewhat unclear to him, but he had his suspicions. He lit a cigarette and smiled to himself. Maybe the boy had found someone special.
Blowing the smoke into a small cloud he moved back into the store but looked back to the street when he heard a loud voice of an engine nearing. A yellow sportscar, a street racer most likely. Not something that was often seen at these parts of the city. Maybe it could have something to do with Takumi, after all he had gotten back so fast, maybe someone had dropped him off.

Despite the delay Takumi had managed to get the delivery done just in time. Getting back to the car he saw Keisuke wave to him from the other side of the parking lot. He drove next to him and got out of the car. The vampire seemed to be excited and was all smiles. “Now is the perfect time. Race me.” To his own surprise Takumi found the suggestion somewhat interesting. The first time he had heard it from the vampire it had felt like a nuisance. But the enjoyable experience of driving together from last night still made him feel happy. Still he couldn’t just agree like it was nothing. “What is in it for me? You clearly enjoy the racing itself, but for me it’s just like a drive home that I would do anyways. “If you win, I do whatever you want. One thing.” Having a vampire be in your dept did seem like something that could be useful. A cheeky smile rose to the vampire’s face. “Of course, if I win the same will apply to you.” That sounded a bit more dangerous. Though thinking back what could he ask that he wasn’t ready to give? He had already fed him voluntarily. A smile rose to Takumi’s face. “Fine. I agree to your terms. What are the rules?” The vampire’s face now had a victorious smile. “You go first, and I’ll follow you. Whoever crosses the finishing line first will win. Let’s say that is after the last corner of the road?” “Fine.” They shook hands to confirm the terms. “Let’s get racing then. Go ahead.”

Takumi had to admit that the situation was a bit exciting. He drove to the exit that lead into the road. After stopping to look at that there weren’t any obstacles on the road, he floored the gas, moving from the first gear to the third one in a fast pace. The headlight behind him weren’t left back at all. The race started with a longer straightway, but even so Keisuke kept his place behind. He didn’t want to win just because of his better car. The corners were where this fight would be won or lost. They cleared the two first ones in a fast pace, and in almost perfect synch. Keisuke fell into his racing mood, focusing all his thoughts into the tasks that was passing the car ahead of him.

They were almost halfway to the race, and Keisuke had managed to keep up perfectly. At some points it almost felt like the FD could hit the back of the 86, but it never did. Takumi could feel the pressure from the other racer. This was a whole different experience than the enjoyable ride from last night. It was almost like the vampire was staring at him intensively from behind, as if he was preyed on. He didn’t like that. Despite knowing that the vampire was a well-respected racer in the area he still somehow couldn’t have thought about losing to him. There had to be a way to lose him. The new feelings made him flustered and lose focus. Getting into a particularly tight corner he suddenly saw the headlights get left behind. He had messed up the timing of the braking. Taking a deep breath he floored the brake and steered away from the railing that was getting way too close way too fast. The side of the car stayed untouched by the slightest margin. While all of his energy was used on keeping himself at the road the FD slowly but surely took the line inside the corned and moved ahead.

The look of disbelief on Takumi’s face would certainly have made Keisuke laugh and tell him “I told you I was good”. When he thought of that it was almost like all of his negative thoughts were lifted away from his mind. It brought a smile to his face, and he shook his head to collect his thoughts. The race still wasn’t over. Despite getting passed it didn’t seem he was left that much back. He could still win. Determination took over his mind. He had to win; he couldn’t settle for less. The competitive side of Takumi wasn’t seen that often but when it surfaced there was nothing to stop him. And there still was one trick up to his sleeve.

Keisuke glanced at his rear mirror. The 86 still followed. That was good, he wouldn’t had expected any less from the other driver. He would believe he had won only after passing the finishing line. Before that anything could happen. Though a small part in his mind kept telling him that if he just
kept on driving as well as before there was no way he could be overtaken by a ten year old Toyota. Next up there were two consecutive corners. It was here where he had first seen Takumi do the inertia drift. He took a breath and waited the right moment. Now. He pressed his brake at the exact same moment when Takumi had. His speed was transferred into a flawless drift, and it felt like the time was moving in slow-motion. A sharp turn of the wheel made him effortlessly switch into the direction of the second corner. In the corner of his eye he saw him. The cars were moving in perfect alignment, and the eyes of the drivers met. They smiled like madmen to each other, and the feelings in Keisuke’s heart grew even stronger. The moment was a perfect mix of adrenaline and having fun together. But the moment had to end, and they were back on their positions once again.

The race was nearing the end, only a handful of corners ahead of them. But that didn’t matter. The next one was where the winner would be determined. It was time for Takumi to play his cards. The trick was straightforward, but not used that often because it was somewhat reckless and hard to the wheels. But it was what the situation asked for, so he was going to do it. The straightway was ending, and he steered into the inner side of the corner. Instead of braking and drifting he dropped the wheels on the left side to the shallow ditch besides the road. It felt like he was flying thorough the corner. The yellow car couldn’t compete even with its clear drift. He looked at the driver, who had an astonished look on his face, as he watched the other car took the leading position and bounce fully back to the road from the ditch.

Takumi pulled the car to the side of the road as they finished. Keisuke came behind him. He practically flew out of the car and came straight to Takumi to hug him and lifting him up a bit and spinning around excitedly. “I have never been this excited about losing a race! Your technique is amazing, I can’t help but to admire it! This is the most fun I’ve ever had!” Takumi could help but to laugh heartily to the excitement of the other person. It felt good to get compliments from such an amazing person. But the closeness of the hug felt even better. The moment almost made him feel drunk. As Keisuke stopped spinning them and Takumi stared into his eyes, he felt all the unfamiliar feelings he had had since Keisuke had walked into his life crystallized into one solid feeling. Not thinking his actions thorough he lifted his hands to both sides of the vampire’s face, pulling him closer to his own face. For a fleeting moment he just stared the bright blue eyes before kissing him straight to his lips.
The Hunt Begins

A gust of wind moved the branches, making a soft rustling sound. The moon shed its pale light to the top of the mountain. The serenity of the night was broken by noises of revving engines and talking people. The parking lot was almost full, as quite many people had found their way into the mountain despite the late time. The excitement could almost be felt on the air. It was time for the race between the Red Suns and Night Kids.

One of the main players of the night looked grim as he leaned to his white car. He looked well-dressed compared to the other people around. Long black trousers with a suit jacket and a dark grey button-up shirt. The formality of the outfit was broken by the rolled up sleeves and the few unbuttoned buttons in his collar. His black hair moved gently in the wind. In his dark blue eyes and furrowed brows a clear annoyance towards the situation could be read. No one had yet dared to approach him. Even his own teammates kept a respectful distance. The man didn’t mind that as it helped him listen to the mumble from spectators. He had known there would be talk when they would show up without Keisuke. Even so, they couldn’t afford to cancel the event, or even more questions would have been asked. Afterall the Takahashi family had to maintain their image and power over the other vampires. And there had been some trouble especially with some members of the Night Kids.

Speaking of the devil, a shorter man with dark brown hair parted down the middle and going almost to his jawline dared to approach him with an arrogant smile. “Oi Ryosuke, where is your loser of a brother, I thought I’d get to challenge him on my terms tonight.” It was always as annoying to interact with this one. “There has been some changes in the plans, Shingo.” The man smiled in a way that resembled a hungry beast. The grin showed his sharp canines, and there was a red glimmer in his brown eyes. He was no doubt a vampire. A weaker person could have been intimidated by his acts, but it didn’t sway Ryosuke at all. He made it a point to keep his calm in every situation, and reason with his mind rather than fists. The other man spoke, but it sounded more like angry hissing. “You think you can just say so and we will be over with it?” Another man showed up from behind Shingo. He put his hand on his shoulder and pulled him back a bit. “Calm down, there are humans watching.” The angry stare switched from Ryosuke to the man. “Keep your hands off me, Nakazato you bastard.” The hand lifted from his shoulder and instead swiped back the strands that didn’t keep back on his back-swept black hair, but there was still a condemning look in his black eyes. “Let him explain the situation before jumping into conclusions.”

There was no way Ryosuke could tell them that his brother had run off. Twice actually if you counted last night. He hadn’t even tried to follow him as he had gotten a head start so long there was no way he could have been caught, especially as he didn’t know where he was going. Keisuke was one of the only racers that could really challenge him anyways. They couldn’t let the others think that they weren’t powerful enough to even keep their own in line, never mind all of the vampires in the area. “Keisuke has been sent on a mission by our father. I can’t tell you the details.” The reasoning didn’t really convince him. “Yeah right, are you sure he didn’t just get scared and run away?” Ryosuke almost sneered at the thought of his brother being too scared to race someone. That could never happen, he wasn’t someone who would back away from a challenge in normal circumstances. His voice got ice cold as he answered. “I am quite sure. He surely would have raced you if the situation wasn’t what it is now.” For a moment the two vampires stared at each other viciously, and the moment could have escalated into more if the third man hadn’t stepped between them.

“Shingo that is enough, he gave us a valid reason and we will have to respect that.” A moment
went by before the situation loosened. The shorter man was still pissed as he hissed. “Fine. Who is going to race me now?” “I will. Go tell your terms to my team.” Ryosuke gestured at his team that was following the situation keenly. “And of course we team leaders also race each other, as per our original plan” he said while turning to look at Nakazato, who nodded approvingly.

He would face Shingo first on the downhill, and after that Nakazato on the uphill. It seemed that the first match would be some ridiculous “gum tape death match” as Shingo had phrased it. He had accepted that without any complaints, though in his mind he felt that only uncapable drivers would have to turn for gimmicks like this. The expectations for the race to become interesting to him weren’t high. So instead of worrying about the race he focused on listening to the crowd while Matsumoto, his mechanic, taped his right hand to the wheel. He heard all sorts of things from people comparing his FC to Night Kids’ Civic and R32 to useless gossiping about someone hating their job at a convenience store. Most of it he didn’t bother to listen for long. Until someone managed to catch his attention with a piece of info he had been looking for.

“I’m so disappointed that the younger Takahashi didn’t race today. I even saw him today! I wonder what happened…” said a clear voice from a younger boy. Ryosuke turned his glance slightly and saw a short black-haired boy standing near the starting line. A taller man with a stubble spoke to him. “Really, where?” “At work, he came in for a gas fill.” The man looked doubtful. “Are you sure? Why on earth he would have been in Akina?” “I am sure! And Takumi saw him as well so you can ask him too! I don’t know why but he was undoubtedly there. I even got to clean the front glass of the FD! That car is amazing!” The other man smiled. “I don’t think Takumi would recognize any racers, but fine I’ll believe you.” The discussion drifted into other topics and Ryosuke stopped listening. He had already gotten what he needed. A direction to aim his search. It was possible that Keisuke had only stopped at Akina on his way to somewhere, but it was still more than he had known before. The night was successful for him, and the races were just an afterthought. In the first race the other vampire showed his true colours as he tried to win by knocking Ryosuke from the road but ended up damaging his own car instead as the FC slipped away from his line effortlessly. The taped hand didn’t seem to affect him at all. The second match was a bit more interesting as Nakazato actually paid attention to his strategy. Nevertheless his drifting skills just weren’t as honed so in the steepest corners the FC gained lead. The Red Suns left as clear winner of the night, and Ryosuke already had his plans for hunting down his brother ready.

Takumi was watering the yard at work to keep the dust down, but he was even more absentminded than usually. The flashback from last night haunted him. He had… kissed him. He really had. He raised his fingers to his lips to remember the soft touch, his first one. The look in Keisuke’s face had been that of a total surprise. There hadn’t been any anger or disgust seen, but still as Takumi realised what he had done he stepped away. They stared each other for a moment that felt like an eternity. In the end Takumi couldn’t deal with the situation right away. He blushed furiously and ran to his car, mumbling “see you later” at his way. Keisuke hadn’t moved at all; he had just let him go.

“Takumi, close the tab for heaven’s sake!” Iketani’s voice pierced though his racing thoughts, and he looked to the ground. He was standing in an ever expanding pond of his own creation. Quickly he closed the valve. Iketani stood watching and shook his head. “You always have your head in clouds. This is enough for today; your shift is ending anyways, go home.” He nodded as an answer and collected the waterpipe into a roll for storing it and headed in to change out of the uniform. Leaving the building he absentmindedly greeted Itsuki who was coming in for his shift. The route back to home was the same he always took, so he just let his legs carry him through the familiar streets while still thinking about how he would face Keisuke again.

The day was warm and sunny. The outdoor tables of cafés in the centre were full of people
enjoying their drinks. A bright babble filled the air. Most were there with their families or lovers, but there was one person who stood out. He sat alone in the table nearest the road and was wearing all black and long sleeves despite the weather. He just kept spinning his cup of coffee with his spoon without drinking it, seemingly reading the small book he held in his hand too keenly. Of course nothing was what it seemed. Ryosuke wasn’t enjoying his day at all. The sun was irritating his skin and the shades only helped that much. He despised summer days, but it was important to follow the trace as fresh as he could.

There was no change Keisuke would just walk to him. Instead of his eyes he searched with his nose. All of the vampires had senses way more precise than humans, but Ryosuke’s sense of smell was exceptionally good even by their standards. It wasn’t some inherited super sense or anything like that. During his long years he had started to observe the different details in people’s scents to find the best food. In the same way some humans honed their skills to find the subtle undertones in wines he had done with blood. In many ways blood was like wine for vampires, all had types they preferred and even found irresistible, and others that they really didn’t care for. The source made all the difference. Some had stained their scent by smokes, strong alcohol, drugs or potent perfumes while other were pure as spring water.

Identifying a vampire for a human by scent was easy for him, as humans were generally more refreshing. When a vampire fed from a human their scents tended to mix for some time. Ryosuke had some theories about it having something to do with marking the target belonging to certain vampire but he hadn’t still thought about it too much. But that unusual combination was what he was looking for now. He hadn’t found any signs of vampires in the city so far, and to his knowledge no one had a permanents residence here. He had sat on the café for a few hours now without noticing anything and anxiety was slowly starting to grow. He was just about starting to think about changing places to somewhere in the shadows when it hit him. The fragrance of a vampire mixed with a human. And not just any vampire, it was Keisuke. He would have recognized it anywhere. It was like burning wood with a bit of tar, untamed like the person himself. It was mixed into an earthy scent of a forest just after rain. The balance was perfect. Ryosuke blinked his eyes a bit surprised. It was rare that two people would complement each other this well.

Ryosuke identified the source of the scent easily as there weren’t that many passing people at the moment. He seemed quite young and quiet, there was no way he would have paid any attention to him if it wasn’t for the scent. He closed the book he was holding with a small thud, and swiftly rose from the bench, leaving the coffee untouched. As smoothly as a shadow he started to follow the boy, who seemed peacefully unknown of that. He walked through the streets with a fairly slow pace and stopped to buy a drink from a vending machine once. After walking for some more he stepped into a small tofu shop. Ryosuke stayed outside, waiting for him to come out and continue his shopping trip. He studied his surroundings while leaning into a wall in the shadow. The car near the shop caught his attention. A panda Trueno. It would have been a good racing car some ten years ago. He could have sworn it looked somewhat familiar, but on the other hand the faint memory could have been from ages ago. While thinking that his eyes wandered on the top of the shop. It seemed that the building also was the home for the shop owners. Maybe the boy was son of the owners or something. He breathed out heavily. It seemed it was time to buy some tofu.
A Model Version of A Vampire

It was just Takumi’s luck to end up with another job just after returning from the first one. As he had walked into the house his dad had told him to watch the store for a while as he went to buy some smokes and slipped out of the door. As he knew he didn’t have any say in that anyways he just sighed and slumped onto the stool behind the counter. To pass the time he started flipping through the newspaper that had been left on the counter. After some time the sharp voice of a bell from the door told him that someone had entered. He lifted his eyes from the magazine to see a tall man come in, lifting his shades onto the top of his head. It was a bit surprising to see such a stylish person in the store as they mostly served the housewives of the neighbourhood. Despite the mild surprise the person was a customer and needed to be greeted. “Welcome, what can I get to you?”

Walking into the store Ryosuke immediately noted the boy he had followed behind the counter. How convenient. For a moment he stayed still, eyeing the selection of different types of tofu available. He had never understood the eating habits of humans, and the pale, slightly moist looking, blocks certainly didn’t change his views. There were some light brown pieces that looked a bit less unappetizing, so he chose those. Not that he was going to touch them at all though. “A serving of fried tofu, please.” “Coming.” He followed the movements of the boy who rose from his stool and placed the asked tofu into container, put a lid on top and slipped the whole thing into a plastic bag. It didn’t seem that he had recognized him as one of the top racers around. Furthermore he didn’t seem to have anything extraordinary to him. Nothing that would tell why his brother would have had contact with him. Maybe he hadn’t been anything else than a dinner to him, but that kind of behaviour didn’t really fit his style. “Anything else?” “This will do.” “That’ll be 320 yen.” He picked his wallet from the inner pocket of his jacket and handed a 500 yen bill to the boy and watched him dig up coins from the register. “And that’ll be 180 yen back.” “Thank you.” From a closer distance he caught a faint smell of gasoline on him that he hadn’t noticed before. Maybe the kid had something to do with racing after all? That would explain why he had caught the interest of the second best Red Suns member.

While Ryosuke dropped the coins into his wallet he also moved on with his hunt. Raising his gaze to the boy’s eyes he asked his question. “Say, I couldn’t help but to notice the 86 parked outside. It is a good racing car… and well I have been interested in street racing lately, so I thought if you happened to know if there are any racers around here?” The boy seemed a bit surprised by the sudden inquiry as he furrowed his brows slightly. “There is a team called the Akina SpeedStars, but I don’t know much about their races. You should go to the gas station near the road to the mountain to find the right people.” “I see. So you don’t drive the 86 then?” “I only do deliveries, it’s my dad’s car anyways so I don’t know much about it.” “Does your father race?” “He did when he was young, he claims to have been really good at it too, but I have never seen him take driving too seriously.” A faint memory wavered on his mind. “What was your name again?” He asked the boy suddenly. The question surprised him, and he answered with a doubtful look. “Takumi Fujiwara.” Ah. That was it, a few decades back there had indeed been an incredibly talented human racer in the area with the same surname. He had suddenly ended racing and Ryosuke hadn’t heard about him since, but could it be that he had suddenly crossed paths with a son of his? If that was the case maybe the boy would have inherited some of his skills, despite not showing an interest on racing. The silence clearly made the boy even more suspicious as his furrow deepened by the moment. “Thank you for the info. I think I’ll try to find the SpeedStars to get some more info on the racing.” he said while slipping his shades back to his eyes. The boy nodded. “Yeah. Thank you for the purchase.”

Takumi watched the man leave the store. Something about him had disturbed him straight from the start. He hadn’t pinpointed exactly what is was before seeing the long jacket sway as he walked
away. It was a really hot and sunny day, and despite that the man had been wearing all black clothes that covered most of his skin. It was more of an autumn look. Besides that he moved like all of his gestures were planned to waste as little energy as possible. It didn’t remind him of any humans he had seen, but something entirely different. Adding to that the colour of his eyes was a bit different but the shape of them and the eyebrows was awfully familiar. It was almost like looking at a darker version of Keisuke. And he had asked about racing… Takumi slumped back to his stool. Most likely he had just met the older Takahashi. Unlike Keisuke he had seemed exactly like what a vampire should be. Dark and a bit menacing, despite his elegant and polite demeanour. Throwing his embarrassment to the side Takumi decided he had to see Keisuke as soon as possible.

Ryosuke walked down the street seemingly aimlessly. It seemed that following the boy would be his best shot at gathering more information about the situation. He wondered if he should go see the racing team he had mentioned, but quickly abandoned the idea. He would most likely get recognized by them and too many questions would follow. Thinking about the team brought another memory to his mind. The boy who had led him to Akina by mentioning Keisuke’s name at the race at Akagi had also said something about the gas station and Takumi. Takumi wasn’t that rare of a name but piecing it together with the fact that he had smelled like Keisuke and gas didn’t leave much room for doubt. It had to be the same person. Keisuke visiting a gas station wasn’t anything surprising, but had he chosen the one out of many in the city because of the boy working there? Was he that important to him? Or had they met just then?

Ryosuke was deep in his thoughts and had unconsciously stopped walking and was standing on the side of the road. From the corner of his eye he saw someone approaching him. It was a young woman, probably in her 20s. She didn’t hesitate to address him. “Hi honey, you want to take me to a date tonight?” Ryosuke looked at the woman more closely. She was quite the beauty and by her movements it could be seen that she knew that herself too. But he wasn’t interested. There had been someone he cared about once, but that hadn’t ended beautifully. After that he had decided that there was no need to get close to anyone again. Not even for casual fun every now and then. “I am afraid I already have plans for the night.” He showed his best polite yet apologetic smile. “But you can have this, it is untouched.” He said while placing the bag that contained the tofu into one of her hands. The look on the woman’s face was baffled but he didn’t care to stay in the situation for any longer, so he just waved his hand a bit and continued his walk.

It had been a long few hours, but the darkness was finally falling to the city. Ryosuke flexed his hands and enjoyed the chilly wind. The damned sunshine finally ended and the slight burning sensation on his skin was eased a bit. He had spent the time circling around the city, checking the tofu shop from time to time. The boy had still sat on the counter last time he went by. As the darkness prevailed, he could now hide near the shop without being seen and observe if the boy would go somewhere. During his long years he had noted that people didn’t tend to look up when they were observing their surroundings. With that in mind he swiftly climbed his way up to a roof opposite the shop and chose a corner where the streetlight’s effect didn’t reach. He sat there without moving at all, like a good-looking gargoyle.

Some people went by and the voices from nearby bars were echoing down the street. For an hour there was no movement whatsoever in the shop. Then suddenly the door on the side, near the car, opened and a square of light glowed out, revealing a dark figure, who turned back inside to shout something. With his precise senses Ryosuke could hear the words as if he was standing next to the boy. “I’ll be out for a moment, but I’ll get back before the delivery time.” A muffled “Okay” came from the inside. The boy closed the door, and walked to the street, watching into both directions before heading left. Ryosuke let him walk for about hundred meters before he got up and started following him, grousing in the roofs. Luckily for him the city was quite densely built, and he could follow him without much trouble. Occasionally he had to jump a bit from roof to roof, and a few times balance himself on the cables going over the streets. His long coat swayed behind him as
he moved, and if anyone had seen him, they would certainly just have thought that their eyes were betraying them, and before they could watch again he would already be gone.

The tailing was over in a moment as the boy had stopped in front of a door in a run-down apartment building. Ryosuke followed the situation from a nearby roof. He was close enough to see the boy hesitate, closing his hand into a fist for a few times before raising it to knock on the door. It took a bit of time before the door opened slightly and he could see a familiar face peak outside. He saw a gentle smile. It had been ages since he had last seen that on his brothers face. The door opened a bit more and the boy slipped in. The small thud from the closing door left Ryosuke alone outside. “Found you” he whispered into the wind.
Invitation

Takumi was standing in front of the door that was the only thing between him and the person he so desperately wanted to see, and at the same time avoid. The wind was chilly after the sun had taken its warmth away with the last rays of the day. He sighed and pressed his hand against his head as he started to feel an ache coming. Nevertheless, he was ready to take on anything Keisuke had to say. After all keeping him safe was more important than anything. He raised his hand to the door and knocked gently, taking a step back to leave room for the door to be opened. It took a moment, and in his head, he already started to doubt whether he was going to open the door at all. All of the anxiety he had felt recently made him restless. Then, suddenly, the handle moved slightly, and the familiar blue eyes looked straight at him from inside. The vampire smiled a bit, almost like he didn’t even realize the face he was making. He opened the door more. “Come in.”

While Takumi was taking his shoes off Keisuke had already sat down besides the table. He sat opposite to him, wondering where to start. For a moment they sat in silence, before the other person broke it. “I don’t hate you by any means if you are afraid of that.” Takumi lifted his gaze to meet the eyes of the vampire. It was as if he had read his thoughts. “I… I am sorry, it was in the heat of the moment and I didn’t think it through. Please don’t think about it too much.” In the depths of his mind he wanted to tell that even though it had been in a heat of the moment he still would have wanted more, but he didn’t dare to say so. “It was hardly the first time I’ve been kissed, don’t worry” the vampire answered, showing a smile, which didn’t quite reach his eyes. Instead, was that a glimpse of sadness he saw on those blue depths? He had a desperate need to reach over the table and grab him by the collar for another kiss to confirm his feelings, but that wasn’t something he had the courage to do. Even if he had been forgiven once, there was too much to lose. He could feel the heat rising to his cheeks, and the headache growing stronger, and just nodded as an answer to the man he loved.

Keisuke was having a hard time. On the other hand he only wanted to stay with him for ever and never let go, but on the other hand he somehow didn’t feel like he had the right to do so. To reel the pure person into his dark and messed up realm. Not more than he already had. In his mind he thanked the gods for him not showing up with a confession or something, as he didn’t know if he could have resisted that. The current situation let him take advantage of the acting skills he had honed in his long years. The part he chose to play was that of a forgiving friend, but nothing more. He eyed the man opposite to him, whose thoughts still seemed to be all over the place, allowing him a moment before asking his question. “Was there something else on your mind?” The man almost looked guilty, as he started to explain the situation. “I… Today I was watching the store when this one particular customer came in. He was in all black and most of his skin was covered, despite the weather. I’d say he was a bit taller and maybe older than you, with black hair and dark blue eyes.” Keisuke could almost feel his face getting paler, as he still listened. “Somehow his movements were too smooth. It reminded me of you.” The description left a little room for error. “…That sounds exactly like my brother.”

The feeling that was most prominent in Keisuke’s mind was fear. He knew his brother could be merciless if he wanted. To have him that close to someone dear to him, who was quite defenceless against a vampire, sent chills down to his spine. Under the table he clenched his hands into fists so harshly that his fingernails pierced the skin, and a few small pearls of blood formed on top of the skin. “Did he say anything?” “He just asked if there were any racing teams around here.” His brows were furrowed deeply, and he stared the table furiously. How his brother had ended up questioning him about it? Then it hit him. The mix of their scents was already so familiar to him that he didn’t pay much attention to it, but for another vampire it would be a clear sign. Especially one so keen on the scents as Ryosuke was. How he could have not realized this sooner? “This is all
my fault. I should have never pulled you along to this.” “No it is not. I chose to stay with you, even when you volunteered to leave. I carry the weight of my own choices.” Keisuke lifted his eyes to meet the determined gaze on the other man’s face. “I… thank you.” Those were the only words he could utter to even remotely describe his feelings.

It seemed that after Takumi had gone through the things bothering him the most his mood changed. That didn’t go unnoticed, as the vampire observed him rubbing his temples, also noticing that the pink tint hadn’t moved from his face this whole time. “Are you all right?” “I’m feeling a bit under the weather, but it’s probably just because I haven’t slept too well.” “Can I help you in some way?” “Some cold water would be nice.” Keisuke nodded and went to the sink to let the water flow for a moment for it to turn cold. “I’m kind of surprised you even have any cups in here, your diet hardly requires them.” He turned to glimpse at Takumi, noticing that he was now leaning his face to his hand, seeming a bit sleepy. “I like to enjoy a cup of tea every now and then.” “Mmm.” He filled the cup with water, and just as he turned back to the table, he saw his face slip from the hand he had leaned it to.

Without a moment of hesitation he dropped the water and rushed to the table, getting his hand between the table and his face just in time. For a feeling moment relief filled him, until he realized that the face to his hand was extraordinarily hot, and the man was completely silent despite the situation. Gently he moved his hand from under his head, letting it lay on the table. “Takumi, you hear me?” Only silence answered. Struggling to keep his nerves in check he tried to think logically. He moved his other hand to feel the vein in his neck. Much to his relief a steady pulse still moved drummed against his fingers. It seemed that he had passed out. Very gently he shook his shoulder, speaking to him in a voice bit louder. “Takumi, wake up please.” A moment went by as he just stared the face of the unconscious man. Just as he was about to call his name again his eyes suddenly opened up. He blinked a few times before focusing his eyes on his face. “Keisuke… what happened?” “You fainted. I got you just before you hit your head. It seems you have kind of a high fever.” He closed his eyes, mumbling an answer. “I didn’t think I’d be this ill. It’ll be fine, I just sleep it off.” As he finished his sentence he was already drifting to sleep. The vampire watched at the human who was suddenly sleeping by his table. He was lost as he thought about what he should do in this situation. He had said that sleeping would be enough, but was it really? Vampires didn’t get sick, so the situation wasn’t something he was familiar with. All of his knowledge of the human health was related to their blood and what they needed to keep that healthy. For a moment he just stared at the serenity of the sleeping face, thinking about his next move.

In the end he thought that the best solution was to take Takumi to his own home to rest. He knew that Ryosuke knew where he lived, but having an another human, his father, at the house also probably would stop him from doing anything too extreme. After all his brother didn’t want to give humans any excuses to suspect that vampires were ruling from the shadows. And also, another human would know how to take care of him. It was also important to distance himself from him as much as possible, so that his brother wouldn’t get any ideas.

Keisuke slipped his loafers to his feet, and placed Takumi’s shoes into a small bag. He didn’t want to draw any attention by using his car, so instead he carefully lifted the sleeping man and moved him into a piggyback ride. He didn’t weight too much. There were only few people crossing their way, and no one cared enough to do more than just glimpse them. Maybe they thought he was just getting his drunk friend back home. The heat against his back felt good as the chilly night wind hit his face. Soon they were at the shop. All the lights were off. His father had probably gone to sleep already. As quietly as possible Keisuke opened the door with Takumi’s keys and moved through the silent house to his bedroom. He slipped the boy into bed and tucked him in. He seemed to awaken a bit and groaned “water”. Quickly the vampire moved into the corridor and fetched a glass of water from the kitchen. As he got back the other man was half-awake. “Here, drink this.” He rose into a more of a sitting position and took the glass, taking a sip. “How did I end up back
here?” Keisuke smiled a bit. “I carried you. I don’t know how to take care of sick humans need so I thought this was the best solution. Get well soon, and we talk more after that.” “Okay” he said, laying back down. Before he completely fell into his dreamworlds he looked at the vampire into eyes. “Thank you. I’ll call you in the morning.”

Keisuke’s thoughts were all over the place as he walked through the dark streets to his house. The feelings of love and fear of losing it were battling in his heart. Suddenly something caught his attention. It seemed like the shadows were solidifying into a figure, who stepped right in front of Keisuke. “Hello little brother.” The two pairs of blue eyes stared each other in silence. “Ryosuke” he greeted with tight lips. “Your run didn’t take you too far away I see. Is that the doing of that human boy?” Keisuke tried to play it off, as if it was nothing. “As if, he was a good meal, nothing more. I needed to heal fast.” Ryosuke eyed him from head to toe. “Well I see you are in top condition so there is nothing to stop you from coming back home.” Keisuke grinned, showing his sharp canines and growling in a low voice. Between his teeth he hissed “I won’t.” “Are you sure, even if that would mean certain someone hurting?” Keisuke did his best to seem uncaring. “I’ll find someone else to give me blood.” But the change in his eyes didn’t know unnoticed as they darkened in a matter of seconds. Ryosuke smiled dryly. “Tomorrow, mount Akina at midnight.” Glimpsing him for the last time he turned back to the night, leaving his brother alone on the dark street.
Challenges

Keisuke was nervously walking in circles around his room, the words of his brother echoing in his mind. He wouldn’t harm a human, right? He glimpsed at the clock on the wall. Half past two in the night. Still almost a full day to the time his brother had given. Staying inside was getting unbearable. He needed to relax his racing thoughts, and the best way he knew how to do that was physical exercise. Picking a black hoodie from the floor he stormed out while pulling it on. His feet almost automatically started to take him into the direction of the tofu shop, but he stopped at his tracks. “Act like you don’t care.” he murmured to himself quietly, while taking the opposite direction towards the mountains. The streets were empty and only the dark clouds in the sky moved as he started to jog, the movement soon changing into running. He tried to keep his pace in humanly limits in case of some night owl crossing his way.

Reaching the outline of the forest he let go of any restrictions. He sprinted into the woods at full speed, not giving his eyes the time to adjust to the darkness and hitting himself into some branches on the way. The painful stings from new scratches made him feel more alive. Enjoying the movement he let his thought race free and focused on getting up the mountain as fast as possible. His eyes were now adjusted to the darkness and he could see some wild animals getting scared of him and running away in terror. They were right to do so. He was part of the most lethal creatures on earth, even if that wasn’t what he had decided to be. But he couldn’t run away from his blood that gave him everything a predator would need to hunt down his prey. A predator designed to hunt humans, not befriend them.

A vaguely familiar scent hit his nose, taking him away from his depressing thoughts. He couldn’t pinpoint to whom it belonged, but it was obvious that the person, or actually two separate persons, were vampires. He was approaching from below the wind so most likely they hadn’t yet spotted him. Quickly thinking the situation through he decided there was no need to completely avoid them. It wasn’t as if they possessed a great threat to him, as vampires didn’t usually hunt each other or get involved in hunts of others. And they would probably assume that it was what he was doing. Changing his route a bit he headed to the road around hundred meters below where the other vampires stood. He had his black clothes and the hood covering him, making him less identifiable. Seeing the opening of the road piercing the woods he headed for it. As his feet hit the asphalt of the road he glanced to then left and saw the vampires in front of a black car. Two males, one with short black hair and one with longer brown one. They had been in a middle of argument when suddenly hearing his steps and turning their heads to see him. Keisuke’s glance hit the stare of the brown haired one for a second, before he was back in the darkness of the woods.

His mad dash to the top reached its end as he came to the shore of the lake on top of the mountain. Pausing for a moment he tore his clothes off himself, jumping to the cold water. The touch of the water felt blessed, and he let himself float away for a time that felt like eternity. Finally he started to gather his thoughts. Even if he had let his vampiric side take the lead for a moment it wasn’t who he was going to be. He wouldn’t let his blood decide his actions, if the one person who could make him feel comfortable in this world was a human then so be it. And there was no way he would let others take him away. In order to achieve that he needed to detach himself from his family in a more official way. Running away wouldn’t work now that he wasn’t alone anymore.

As he had finally made up his mind he slowly swam to the shore. Getting up from the water the last moments of moonlight glimmered in the droplets at his skin. The night was serene and so was his mind. He now had a plan of action. Or at least some sort of draft of a plan. He put on his clothes that had dampened in the moist grass, and started his journey back to the city, following the road this time.
The sun had already passed the top of the sky when Takumi slowly awaked. The headache of last night was gone, and he felt better rested than in ages. Raising himself up he felt the dryness of his mouth and reached for the half of glass of water he had noted on the night table, downing it in one gulp. Now looking at the glass he wondered how it had ended up there. It was his fathers’ favourite glass, not one he would have usually taken. His memories of the last night were hazy. He had indeed visited Keisuke and they had talked, but… How had he ended up back home? Feeling a light breeze in his hair he turned to look at the window that was slightly opened. No idea when that had happened either. He sat there for a time, before finally getting up from the bed to go wash his face.

The cold water woke him up better, as he now recalled some parts of last night. His father coming to see why he hadn’t gotten up and noticing his fever. He had given him some medicine before leaving him to rest and going to the delivery himself. But before that… A soft feeling of Keisuke’s hair in his face as he had carried him in his back. The faint scent of something he didn’t really know how to describe. But it had made him feel comfortable, like he was near a warm fireplace in a winter’s day. After that him getting the water as he had asked, before falling asleep.

Takumi changed his clothes before heading down to find something to eat. He found his dad sitting besides the dining table, reading the newspaper and smoking a cigarette. Flipping the page he raised his stare to Takumi. “Good morning” he said in a tone that indicated that the time was way past morning already. Indeed as Takumi glared at the clock on the wall it showed the time to be almost two. “Morning” he answered, walking to the counter to make himself a toast. His dad waited silent until he had gathered all he needed and sat opposite him, taking a bite of his bread. “I woke up at night, hearing you talk to someone. I thought perhaps you had gotten drunk and someone had to drag you to home but it seemed like you got sick instead.” Takumi blushed a bit at the assumption. “Yeah. It seems I got a bit over exhausted and it broke down as a fever. A friend dropped me home from his place.” “Mmm. Was this the racer friend with the yellow sports car?” Takumi couldn’t help but to stare at his dad with wide eyes. “When I have ever mentioned him to you.” “I was right then.” Annoyed that he had fallen into his trap Takumi sighed. “Yeah. He was the one. But how did you know?” His dad flipped the page of the paper, raising a brow as if the answer was clear as a day. “A father’s instinct.” Realising he wouldn’t get a straightforward answer out of him Takumi sighed a bit frustrated and focused on destroying the rest of his breakfast.

Getting back to his room after eating Takumi remembered he had promised to contact Keisuke in the morning. He picked up his phone and dialled his number. The phone rang and rang without anyone picking up. For a moment longer he waited, before ending the call, instead sending a short text. “Sorry for last night. I feel much better now. See you soon?” Throwing the phone back to his bed he eyed the mess around the room. He hadn’t paid much thought for cleaning for some time and it showed. Sighing he started to pick used clothes from the floor. Better clean before it got totally out of control after all.

Keisuke was nodding off at his apartment when the ringing of his phone shook him up. Tangling to his blanket he scrambled to get to the phone that he had left in the pocket of his hoodie. The phone kept ringing as he stared the name of the caller on the screen, his thumb hovering over the green answer button. The thoughts raced in his mind. He so wanted to hear his voice tell everything was all right, but keeping a distance was important until he would have made the situation with his family clear. Hearing his voice would too likely make him want to see in person too. The call ended as abruptly as it had started. He just kept staring at the screen as it finally closed, just to light up a moment after to indicate a new received message. In a flash he opened and read it. He sighed, relieved to hear he felt better already. But for the question he couldn’t answer as he didn’t want to straightforwardly decline him. Better to leave him in the dark for now. To avoid any temptations he closed the phone and left it at the table, before returning to his futon, waiting for the midnight.
Keisuke could see the white FC before he noticed the black silhouette of his brothers next to it. He turned his car in a sharp angle to park it head facing the road, so he could leave as fast as possible. His brother stayed still, hands in the pockets of his coat, watching as he got up from the car. For a moment they looked at each other. Wind rustling the leaves of nearby bushes in the silence, before Ryosuke broke the it. “You did wrong when you fled. It’s my duty to get you back in line. We’ll look weak if I don’t.” “I don’t care about that. I can’t stand in the side of our fathers’ business.” “You should tell that to him, not just run away.” “As if he would have let me take a step away from his office if I did that. He values looking powerful to anything else.” A moment of silence fell between them. “That is true. That is also why you are important to him. The second best champion in his kingdom, so to say.” “So me leaving is a blow to him and freedom for me. Both things I want.” “Yes. But what is the price you are ready to pay for that?” Keisuke frowned. Ryosuke took one of his hands from his pocket, throwing something to his brother. A basic white t-shirt. But the scent was tell-tale. It was Takumi’s. The frown deepened as Keisuke growled. “Where did you get this.” “Oh I just went in from the window as he slept, humans are so careless you know” said Ryosuke with a crooked smile.

Keisuke’s thoughts were in a mess. His brother had indeed dared to threaten Takumi. With this straightforward of a threat he could not lay low anymore. Not that he had intended to do so after last night. This mess had to be dealt with through vampire rules. Clutching the shirt in his hand he stared at his brother, saying the words that he had decided would be the best approach despite the possibility of everything going bad for him. “I’ll challenge our father to a dual. If I win, I get my freedom and you won’t affect my life or anyone in it in any way. If I lose, I’ll get back home and be a model son he always wanted me to be. As we both know you are his representative in all races so this is between us. You can inform him of my decision, as it is my right to challenge anyone I want. Bring whoever you want to act as a referee. We end this tomorrow at our home ground in Akagi.” Not waiting for his brother to answer he turned to his car and rev up his engine before speeding down the hill.
Takumi hadn’t heard anything back from Keisuke which made him more anxious than he dared to admit. They hadn’t even known for that long, but he still had already taken it as granted that he would be close anytime. It was confusing to care about someone so much and realising that only made his irritation grow. He would have liked nothing more than to run out to Keisuke’s apartment to see if he was there, or if something was wrong. But no, there he was, sitting at school. Listening to Itsuki’s babble for all the spare time between classes didn’t help the restlessness at all either. To top it all he had to go to work straight from school so finding out more about the situation had to wait until the evening. Sighing deeply he gripped his pen harder and tried to focus all of his energy into learning about the generals of the sengoku era.

Luckily for Takumi the day at work had been busier than usual, not letting him get swallowed in his thoughts too much. He was just finishing changing back to his own clothes after the shift when Iketani walked into the room. He seemed more excited than usually and talked to the smaller boy next to Takumi as soon as he saw him. “Oi, Itsuki, did you hear the big news already?” He seemed a bit confused. “No, what is it?” “The Rotary brothers are having a race between themselves today night at eleven at Akagi! They say it is some kind of showdown because Keisuke wasn’t around for the latest race. I would have loved to see that, but I happen to have the late shift…” Takumi froze in place, thoughts racing in his mind. What the hell was going on? He hadn’t heard from Keisuke and now he was suddenly about to race his brother? The same one he had wanted to avoid before? Takumi shoot up from the bench, slamming the door of his locker close. Iketani and Itsuki turned to look at him in awe as he stormed out of the room. They looked at the door for a solid moment after he had gone. Iketani broke the silence. “What was that? I’ve never seen him like that before.” “I have. It’s rare but sometimes he gets like that when something rubs him the wrong way. Though I have no idea what prompted it now.”

Takumi was basically running as he made his way to Keisuke’s apartment. Reaching his door he only stopped for a brief moment to catch his breath before knocking. Only silence answered. He waited for a moment before knocking again, raising his voice to speak at the same time “Keisuke if you are there you better come out right now.” There was still no signs of movement from inside. Only from the next door neighbour as a man he didn’t know angrily opened the door to tell him to be quiet. Takumi quickly apologized before leaving the hallway. There was another thing he needed to check before he would believe if Keisuke was actually away or just pretending. His car.

It took just a minute for him to get to the garage building. There was a small window in the door from where he could try to take a peek. The window was a bit too high for him, but luckily there were some wooden boxes lying around the back entrance of a restaurant nearby so he could get the leverage he needed. The window was a bit dusty and dirty, but he could still see the big picture. The stall was empty except for the cover that had been on top of the car. Getting down from the box Takumi was getting increasingly worried and angry at the same time. What was happening? He took his phone from his pocket and dialled Keisuke’s number once again. This time the automatic voice told him that the number couldn’t be reached at all. So the phone had been turned off. He looked at the time, and to the sky. The darkness had fallen in a moment as the day was cloudy. There was only one option in his mind. He needed to see the vampire face to face. And he knew where he supposedly was this night.

His dad was watching television when Takumi got home. He threw his bag into a corner over some older shoes. “I’ll borrow the car.” His dad raised an eyebrow and shake some ash from his cigarette into the ashtray. “Why?” “I’ll need to get to Akagi. I’ll be back before the delivery.” Bunta evaluated his son’s expression for a moment. The relentless look in his eyes was familiar yet not
too common to see. Instead of telling him to stop and get his rest, as he probably should have as they boy had clearly been running around despite the fact that he had been sick not long ago, he just said “Fine. Do what you need.” Takumi nodded as he was grabbing the keys. “Yeah. I’ll fill in the tank later.”

Takumi was speeding through the streets, heading to the highway to Akagi. It would take him around an hour to drive there. He would be there roughly an hour before the race was supposedly starting. As he kept driving the clouds in the sky started to seem heavier by minute. He had almost reached his destination as the first droplets hit the front window. Driving in the rain wasn’t anything new, but as he took the turn to the mountain road, he paid more attention than normal to the road itself. He had been there a time or two in the past but not in a while. As he kept getting closer to the peak, he started to notice people standing in the sides of the road, despite the weather and time. Some exited spectators ready to see the race.

Takumi drove to the top and looked at the parking lot. No sign of obnoxious yellow sports car anywhere. Instead there was a white one, next to some vans. A tall figure in black, Ryosuke, was discussing something with another man who Takumi didn’t recognize. Did he imagine or did the figure seem to look at his direction? Taking his eyes back to the road he kept on driving. The parking lot wasn’t at the end of the road even though the race seemed to be started there. There was still a smaller one a bit higher behind an old, narrow and bumpy road. An optimal place for someone involved in the race but not keen on being seen before it.

His hunch was right. Flashing between the trees as he drove to the old lot he saw something yellow. The familiar figure next to the car didn’t seem to notice him right away as he was checking his tires. The man glanced over his shoulder, freezing in place as he recognized the 86. Takumi parked the car on the opposite side of the lot and stepped out. His gaze was at the vampire’s face, trying to read his emotions as he walked to him. He watched as he straightened back up and turned to face him. Everything was quiet as they kept on looking each other, just an arm’s length away from each other. A part of Takumi felt calmer now that he could see him, but another part would have wanted to grab him by the collar to shake out some answers. If he hadn’t had the time to calm down a bit during the drive there that would most likely have happened.

Takumi noted some new scratches on the vampire’s hands. “Have you been running around mountains again?” The question seemed to baffle Keisuke for a moment before he realized and looked at his hands. “These are nothing.” Takumi shook his head a bit. “And what is the race everyone seems to be so excited about?” “I don’t know how it ended up being such a show. I intended to keep it small.” “Because you wanted to keep me peacefully unknown of all this?” Keisuke looked a bit ashamed. “That too. But mainly because this is a family matter between me and my father.” “Not with your brother?” “He is representing our father in the race. Like knights in tournaments for their king, if you remember the comparison I used before.” “So, what is at play here?” Keisuke was silent for a moment before answering. “My freedom, I’ll get that if I win.” “And if you lose?” “I’ll become the son he always wanted me to be.” “How come you haven’t tried this before? You said you hadn’t been in good terms with him for a long time.” “It is a big gamble, and there hasn’t been anything worth taking it until now. Avoiding him most of the time has done the trick just fine.” “And now? What is now worth it?” Keisuke raised his eyes straight to Takumi’s. “You.”

That took Takumi by a surprise. In the back of his mind he knew Keisuke did indeed care about him, but so much that he was willingly risking so much? A part of him just wanted to forget the whole thing and return everything to how it had been. But there was still the aspect of the situation that had sparked his whole journey there. “Given that you say that it is odd how you still seem to think the best approach to the situation is to leave me totally outside of it. You could have told me. You should have.” The vampire’s eyes seemed to darken as he averted his gaze to the ground. “It
was all to keep you safe. He is too dangerous.” “I never asked you to decide that for me. I thought we would be in this together after the whole sneaking to your home thing.” Keisuke spoke in a low voice full of emotion as he answered. “I was too afraid of him realizing how much you meant to me and taking advance of that.”

Takumi was surprised again. Did vampires usually take friends so close to their hearts, or was there something else there? His thoughts were interrupted by Keisuke who continued his thoughts out loud. “Thinking back I was stupid to even think he wouldn’t find out...” “What do you mean?” Keisuke sighed and ruffled his hair. “I don’t like telling you this, but I see keeping you in the dark isn’t a good decision either.” He turned to the FD and reached inside to grab something. Something white. He handed it over and watched as Takumi folded out the bundle. A shirt. With a familiar stain from miso soup a few days back. He lifted his eyes back to the vampire. “Wha... Is this mine?” “Yeah. Ryosuke used it to provoke me to challenge him, I guess. I have no idea when he got that from you.”

Thoughts started to run in Takumi’s head. The window that was open after he woke up from his feverish dreams. “How dare he” he muttered. Keisuke raised an eyebrow. “You have an idea?” “He must have gotten in while I was sleeping, that night you took me home.” The vampire’s eyes reddened in a flash and he clenched his hands into fists, fighting the urge to punch something. “That bastard, what is he even thinking. He’s going to pay for this.” Takumi looked back and forth from his shirt to the flustered angry expression of the vampire. He clearly wasn’t at the best state of mind for a race. The anger that burned in his red eyes had cooled down into cold determination in Takumi’s mind. He spoke his mind in that moment. “You said your brother represents your dad right? Then is there anything stopping me from racing in your place?”
Ready, set...

Keisuke couldn’t believe his ears. “What? No! That’s not happening.” “Why not? I won our match, if you happen to remember. Taking that and your current mood into account I think I have the upper hand.” “I… Well you do have some good arguments, but you are not familiar with this course nor the style of my brothers driving.” “I just drove up here a moment ago.” “It’s hardly the same as racing down in full speed.” “Not that much. I have the route pretty much memorized in my head. That’s enough. And besides not knowing him goes both ways. He probably knows your style in and out. Not mine. He’s never seen me race.” Keisuke stood still, trying to grasp the meaning behind his words. “…Are you actually confident you can win?” “The only person I’ve ever lost to is my dad, and he taught me to drive.”

The vampire still seemed doubtful about the whole deal, so Takumi proceeded with his convincing. “You haven’t been confident about winning this race before, that’s a part of why you haven’t tried it, right?” He saw some reluctant agreement in his red eyes. Acting without thinking he stepped closer and raised his hands on both sides of his face, looking up to his eyes. “Why not change the game when you have the opportunity? As you said I am the thing that is different at this time. If I lose I still walk away unharmed, even if we have to part ways.” Keisuke closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. He enjoyed the now so familiar and calming scent of Takumi, who almost seemed to know his fears better than he himself. His proposal was indeed an unpredictable one, and that might give him the advance for the race. And besides his racing skills were top notch, even when he didn’t really use them that often. Leaving his fate into the hands of others wasn’t something he was used to, but on the other hand he hadn’t really cared about anyone before as he did for Takumi. He opened his eyes again to look at the man staring at him. “Fine. I’ll let you do it.” Takumi’s lips curled into a bright smile. He wasn’t one to show his emotions on his face too often and the sudden expression made Keisuke’s heart skip a beat. “Thank you for trusting me.”

Ryosuke listened to the wind whistling in the trees as he looked to the sky. The rain had ceased for a minute but could start again any minute. He looked to the direction the 86 had driven. Still no sign of his brother or the boy. The starting time of the race was steadily getting closer, and some of the other vampires started to seem anxious about the other participant not showing up. Especially the annoying brown-haired Night Kids member who had been pestering him for a moment now. Still after some redemption from the match he should have had with Keisuke it seemed. Speaking of the devil there he was again. “What is this Ryosuke? Did your brother run away again?” “He will be here on time, trust me.” The man spat to the ground. “As if.” Ryosuke ignored his attempts at provoking him as the familiar sound of a rotary engine caught his attention. The flashy yellow car he was so used to seeing was now coming down to the lot. Followed by the old panda Trueno. They parked side to side opposite from where he was standing, both drivers getting up and walking to him. It was somewhat surprising to see the boy with his brother, taking that he had straightforwardly threatened him. He had thought that he would send him home straight away. Maybe their relationship was deeper than he had anticipated? At least the boy seemed to have the mental strength to walk into a bunch of vampires without flinching.

Shingo was the first one to speak. “I see Keisuke, you brought your snacks with you.” Keisuke’s eyes flashed a bit as he glanced the shorter vampire. “I see you are still as unpleasant as ever.” Ignoring the ramble that his comment caused he turned to face his brother. “I didn’t know you would like to make this such a big show.” “I didn’t.” Excited to get some words in Shingo spoke over. “It was me who told everyone. You deserve your loss to be seen by as many as possible.” Keisuke glanced at him again, wondering how he had even found out in the first place. Brushing his words off he continued. “Not that it matters now. This is the case and we will deal with it.” You could almost hear Shingo boiling in anger as his words didn’t have the outcome he had
Keisuke spoke to his brother again. “There is something that has changed since our last talk.” If the older vampire was surprised he didn’t show it. All he did was raise one of his brows in a questioning manner. “And that is?” “I wish to use my right and appoint a representative for myself.” Shingo let out a surprised and angry growl but Ryosuke still seemed calm. He glanced at the boy next to his brother. “I assume that your representative is young Takumi here.” Takumi felt some chills in his spine, being addressed so casually by someone who had threatened him. Still he spoke up, looking to his eyes. “Yes.” Thoughts were moving fast in Ryosuke’s mind. He had never seen the boy race but had seen him drive enough to know he wasn’t completely hopeless. Not to mention the possibility of him being the son of the Fujiwara who had been well respected among the racers some decades ago. He turned his stare back to his brother. “You believe his skills to be better than your own?” Without even flinching Keisuke answered. “Yes I do.”

Ryosuke was truly surprised now, even when he didn’t show it to others. To think that his brother who took pride in his skills could say that so nonchalantly. He had really changed after storming out from home. “Fine then. It is your right to do as you see best. Even though it is not common at all for a human to represent a vampire it is not forbidden.” Shingo wasn’t really swallowing the sudden change in drivers. “Who the hell he even is? Some brat with wet ears? How in the world is it even a race if he faces a vampire who has driven since cars were invented?” He moved fast in the direction of Takumi, trying to grab his collar. Instead his wrist was grabbed by Keisuke’s hand. He looked him straight into eyes, the colour shifting into a dark red. “Don’t touch him” he growled. Shingo yelped, backing away. He collided into someone behind him and turned to look. It was Nakazato, who clearly wasn’t happy about the situation. “I let you out of my sight for a moment and this is what happens. You can’t threaten another vampire’s partner and you know that.”

Takumi’s mind didn’t seem to realize the words at first. A partner? That could mean many things. Even ones involving romantic feelings… His glance flashed from the two vampires he didn’t know into Keisuke whose face suddenly had a red tint. He didn’t seem to have his usual collected attitude as he mumbled. “I… he…” He shook his head and faced his brother again, trying to get the conversation back into safer waters. “He will race with his own car, all right?”

It was a bit of a disappointing for Takumi not to hear a clear answer from Keisuke. But… Given his reaction, the blush and all, could it be he had similar feelings to his own? Did he even dare to think so? Thinking back he hadn’t gotten that mad over the kiss, as you could have expected a man to get if another man suddenly kissed him. He could feel his own cheeks warming at the thought. No. This wasn’t the time for this. He brushed the thoughts away for now. After the race was the time to resolve them. Or bury them if he lost. But that wasn’t really an option. He would win, no matter what.

Trying to focus on the present again Takumi noticed Ryosuke eyeing his car with a tiny bit of disbelief in his eyes. He looked so much like Keisuke at times. They had the same eye shape; the colour was just darker in his eyes. It also reminded him of the fact that they indeed shared the same blood. It was hard to believe how different the two brothers were. Was he truly so dedicated on getting Keisuke back to home that he ended up threatening someone who couldn’t possibly harm him? And after that even going so far that to sneak into his room, only to steal a shirt. He could have done much worse if he wanted. It was odd.

Ryosuke suddenly turned his gaze to look directly at Takumi. “The rules are simple. The one that crosses the finishing line first is the winner. The race starts from here and ends about a hundred meters from the last curve. There is staff standing there so you shouldn’t be able to miss them. We start side by side and someone will do a countdown to us. Is everything clear?” “Yeah.” “Then it seems we are good to go.” Keisuke spoke up. “I’ll drive down before you start. I want to see the
results as soon as you cross the finishing line.” His brother nodded. “Understandable.”

Raindrops were starting to fall again as Keisuke and Takumi walked towards their cars. The vampire glanced to the clouds as he spoke. “Does the rain bother you?” “Not really. The tofu needs to be delivered despite the weather after all.” He smirked to that. “Of course.” They stopped to face each other in front of the cars. Keisuke patted Takumi’s shoulder and let his hand rest there. “I wish to see you first at the line but know that whatever the results are I won’t blame you.” “I intend to live up to my words. Thank you though.” Takumi almost wanted to ask for a hug for good luck, but no. He had decided all that stuff with feelings would be sorted after this. So instead he gently moved his hand from his shoulder and got into his car. Keisuke stood still for a moment longer before he waved to him and went to his own car, starting the engine straight away. He watched him drive away. The surprise and confusion in the spectators could almost be touched as they saw Keisuke pass the starting line, heading down alone.

Takumi started his own engine and followed the white car to the starting line, stopping next to it. He looked over to Ryosuke and nodded. The vampire leaned out of his window to talk to the older man standing next to his car. “Matsumoto, the road is clear, right? You can give us the countdown now.” The man nodded and walked to the centre line of the road in front of them. This is really happening Takumi thought to himself, his heart beating faster by the moment. He could feel the same thrill he had while racing Keisuke. Despite the situation he was in, it actually felt kind of satisfying to get to blow out some steam in a race.

Matsumoto held his arm up, shouting “Ready… GO!” as he moved it down. Two engines roared as they speeded down the road. The race had started.
The rain poured down as the cars moved in unison. For the straightaway, before the battle really started, they drove next to each other. In the first corner Takumi took the lead, Ryosuke following him into the drift with only the slightest margin. The crowd gathered alongside the road was in awe. They knew nothing about the opponent, yet his technique was at the same level as Ryosuke’s. Maybe the race could be interesting after all.

Takumi wasn’t particularly fond of his position. He would have much more liked to be the one following. He trusted his skills but looking at how the vampire behind him didn’t fall back at all, even in the tightest corners, was a bit nerve wrecking. Focusing on the constant noise of the engine and the rain hitting his window he managed to calm his mind. This is what he had done for the past five years. Trained for, actually, as he realised suddenly. His dad had kept on correcting his technique with vague comments, letting him figure it out himself. Not to mention driving with the water cup, namely to protect the tofu from getting damaged, but was that really all? He had said to do it even in the downhill, despite there being none in the trunk at that time. It was so in style for him to act like that, hoping he would start to gain interest in racing, but never stating it out loud.

Ryosuke was impressed. He knew the boy had to be good as he had ended up in this position, but the technique he showed… Extraordinary for someone his age. It would have been an interesting story to hear how he had acquired that. No wonder Keisuke was so smitten. Once again he drove to the corner. A perfect four wheel drift. But not enough to grow the distance between them. It wasn’t Ryosuke’s normal style to rely so heavily on drifting, but that didn’t mean he didn’t know how to. It was just a small advance for the boy, for now at least. In his years in racing the most important thing Ryosuke had learned was that even the smallest things could change every race. Nothing was truly over until they would cross the finishing line. And there was no way he would hold back. A race was truly a race only if both opponents gave their all.

The rain eased a bit as they neared the midway of the race, instead turning into a slight cover of mist that hung low, lowering the visibility. They were in the middle of a corner when something caught Takumi’s attention in front of them. Something moving on the side of the road. As an instinct Takumi hit the brake. He had seen too many animals hopping into the road on the mountains to not be vary of them. Not to mention a certain vampire that now waited on the finishing line. But it was not a wild animal this time. It was a small group of spectators who had for some reason preferred to see a glimpse of the race in the middle of it. Not something Takumi was used to. A curse escaped his mouth as he realised the car behind him wasn’t there anymore. For a second he couldn’t see it anywhere. Not until it was on his left side. He had taken the inside line for the next corner. Takumi didn’t have the room to drift properly. There was nothing he could do but to look as he took the lead.

Takumi took a deep breath as he watched the lights now in front of him. It had happened so easily. Only a slight mistake on his part and the other driver had taken an advance of that instantly. He had to admire his reflexes. He had driven so close to him that only managing to brake in time would have been challenging, not to mention deciding the best line and taking that in the moment. But there was no time to mope on what had happened. The race still wasn’t over. His race with Keisuke had fortunately taught him not to be too scared of being passed. There was still a change of winning that he needed to take. For Keisuke’s sake. And much to his own surprise, also for his own sake. He didn’t want to be second. He wanted to win and show everyone what he was capable of. To prove his worth in front of the vampires.

In that moment there was nothing else on Takumi’s mind than the race. With cool determination he
focused on inspecting Ryosuke’s driving, waiting for a moment to strike. The technique he had used to pass Keisuke in their race was out of the question for this time. He didn’t know how deep the rain ditches were here, and besides they were full of water rushing down after the rain. There had to be another way. And soon. The race was reaching its end, only few corners left. For a moment he focused on Ryosuke’s drifting. While it was undoubtedly good there was something slightly out of the ordinary. A tiny bit of oversteering. If he wasn’t such a skilled driver he could have thought that the wet road affected him. But no. That made the effect clearer but the source of that were his tires. They were starting to show marks of wearing. It had gotten worse over time. An idea formed in Takumi’s mind. A way to take advantage of the conditions to surprise his opponent.

Nervousness was tearing Keisuke apart as he waited for the race to finish. For a moment now he had been hearing the sound of the cars closing. The mist had been too dense to see the last corner clearly from the finishing line, so he had moved closer. He had no idea what had happened in the race so far and could only hope for the best. The sounds of tires screeching were so close now. A second went by. A ghostly gleam in the mist. The headlights of whoever was leading. Keisuke could feel his heart racing, sending all his hope and cheering to Takumi. The first car drifted into sight. His heart sank. It was the FC. But it wasn’t the end yet. Where was the 86? The noise was from two cars, but he only saw one. Before he had time to think about it something happened. Two things happened. He saw Ryosuke going too far with his drift, forcing him to slow down for a moment, and at the road that was now open new set of headlights shone as if they had manifested from thin air. But no, he had been there the whole time. Headlights closed, lurking in the shadows of the mist. What an absolute mad tactic. Keisuke grinned like a crazy as he shout out “GO FOR IT TAKUMI!”

As an answer to him the driver floored the gas. He steadily gained the lead, but only by the slightest of margins. FC’s headlights were at the side of the 86’s backlights. But there was only so much straightway left. Keisuke started to sprint to the finishing line alongside the road. The cars passed him. FC’s headlights were almost at the 86’s front doors. A heartbeat later they were at the goal. Keisuke’s feelings were in a mess. He wasn’t sure of the results. He reached the people at the finishing line. “Well? Which one was it?!” They looked at him with astonished expressions. The taller man answered him. “The 86. With half a meter maybe, but still. And nevertheless he made a new course record.” Keisuke blinked, his mind not fully realising the words he had just heard. He looked at the stopwatch the man was showing him. 5 seconds better than the last record. That was unreal.

Keisuke slowly turned to look at the direction the cars had stopped to. It felt like time had slowed down. His brother getting up from his car, shaking his head like he couldn’t believe what had happened either. But he wasn’t important in that moment. Only the other driver was. And there he was, a bit further than Ryosuke. Looking around, searching for something. No. Someone. For me, Keisuke realised and finally managed to move. Takumi’s eyes found his and he saw a wide grin for on his face. As if all the worries had fell from his shoulders. Once again Keisuke was running. Now straight to Takumi. He reached him in a flash, and the familiar scent and the feel of joy hit him. Pulling him into a hug, burying his head to his shoulder, voice shaking as he whispered “thank you”.

Takumi reached his own hands to Keisuke’s back, enjoying the touch and the warmth of his body in the chilly night. For a moment they just stood there. Long enough for Takumi to start feeling like there was something damp on his shoulder. It surprised him. “Are you crying?” And indeed, as the vampire lifted his head he saw the glimmering in his bright blue eyes. His eyes were always mesmerizing, but the tears made them even brighter. And there was hope in his eyes, something that had been missing for a long time. Takumi moved his hand to wipe them away from his cheeks. As he did so Keisuke uttered. “I am never going to leave you.” Hearing that made his heart jump to his throat. He tried to clear that. “I…” His words were cut short as Keisuke moved his hand under
his jaw, lifting it slightly as he lowered his face. Their lips met. Takumi didn’t resist, couldn’t resist. The kiss was gentle and soft, filled with unspoken feelings. It was nothing like the fast smooch after their race. After a long moment they parted, looking at each other, almost short of breath. Takumi managed to speak first. “I have craved that since the first time.” The vampire grinned. “So have I.”

Ryosuke called them from the finishing line where he had been talking with the staff until now. “If you two lovebirds could stop for a moment there are some things we have to discuss.” Upon hearing his words they both blushed, but still kept on looking at each other’s eyes for an instant longer before unwillingly moving. They had indeed totally forgot the situation around them.

Ryosuke had sent the staff away so they could have more privacy to talk. He eyed his brother and his human as they stood in front of him, before he started talking. “I must admit I never thought your relationship would take this kind of a turn.” He noted as they both blushed, but didn’t answer anything, so he continued. “That was the best race I’ve had or seen in quite some time. You truly have skills for this, Takumi. I have nothing to complain, you beat me fair and square.” He muttered his thanks and let him continue. “I also must apologize for the threats I made before. They were only to motivate my brother here to finally challenge me.” Keisuke looked dumbfounded hearing that. “What the hell you mean?” “Since I had to drag you back after the first time you ran away I have thought that this life really doesn’t seem to suit you. But there was nothing I could do to help you leave it officially. You had to do that yourself. I know you have been contemplating this race for a long time. Finally you found something to drive you to the edge, but still needed a push. You have the skills to beat me if you really want. I had no idea you would end up making Takumi your representative though. It’s hard to surprise me but that’s exactly what you managed to do.”

Keisuke couldn’t quite believe his ears. “So wait… You have been on my side all this time?” His brother smiled carefully. “Yes.” “And you just expect me to believe you like that?” “Believe what you wish but know that I didn’t hurt him even if I could so easily have.” Takumi felt the chills down his spine as he heard that and thought about the shirt that he had stolen. But what he said made sense. “So what will you do from now on?” Both of the brothers seemed a bit surprised to hear him talk. “I have nothing against either of you. You can be together freely. I have no objections and I will not bother you in any way from now on.” Keisuke still seemed doubtful, but Takumi answered. “I believe you.”

Even though he should have been used to it by now Keisuke was still blown away by Takumi’s open-mindedness. He himself wouldn’t have been so fast to forgive his brother’s actions. Though thinking back it was the same mindset that had even led to them getting to know each other better. He didn’t shove people away from him without a solid reason.

The spectators were starting to go down the mountain, some of them stopping near them, excited to hear more about the situation and especially about the mysterious boy who had beat the reigning champion of the area. Takumi didn’t feel comfortable staying to hear all the talk, so instead he waved his hand to Keisuke only saying “see you tomorrow” before leaving. Keisuke watched as he got to his car and drove away. The following moments were a smash of old and new faces talking and asking questions. Keisuke left Ryosuke to do most of the answering, and just followed the situation. After a long time they were finally able to leave to their family home, where they still had some formalities to go through with their father. The sun was rising when Keisuke finally started his journey back to Akina. Back to his new home as he realised. Back to Takumi. He could still feel his lips when he thought about the kiss. A smile rose to his lips. The future now seemed bright after such a long time of darkness.
Keisuke was standing outside the tofu shop, looking at the dark windows. Takumi had indeed said that they would meet today, but without specifying the time or place. After nervously pacing around his apartment for the whole day he had finally decided to come down to the shop to meet him. He could have sent a text but couldn’t come up with anything. He didn’t exactly know why. Maybe because Takumi hadn’t tried to contact him either. But it was not like he had rejected him or anything. Last night had gone well, in all senses. He looked at his wristwatch. Takumi should have left school several hours ago, so he was probably home. Taking a deep breath he walked to the side door that lead to the apartment part of the building. This is it, he thought to himself as he rang the doorbell and took a step back, waiting for the response.

It took a moment before the door opened, and it was not Takumi but his father who opened it. It took Keisuke by surprise. He had been so deep in his thoughts the whole day he somehow hadn’t thought about this possibility. There was a moment of silence before the man, Bunta as Keisuke suddenly remembered, spoke. “You have some business with me?” “I was looking for Takumi.” “He should be coming home from work in just a moment.” Ah, yes. He indeed had some shifts after school days too. “Oh, okay then.” Bunta eyed Keisuke for a moment before asking “you want to come inside to wait for him?”

The offer surprised Keisuke. He had tried to stay hidden from this man for some time, so it felt quite strange to speak to him face to face. But he wasn’t lurking around his house anymore. And if he intended to stay close to Takumi it would be good to at least introduce himself to his family. Maybe. Not all families would probably be very positive about their son being in a relationship with another man. That was if Takumi even wanted that in the first place. His thoughts were dragging on and Bunta was seemingly starting to wonder if he would get an answer at all, so Keisuke decided to just go for it. “If it’s not too bothersome.” Bunta just opened the door more, walking back inside himself.

Keisuke left his shoes next to the door and walked to the kitchen. Nothing had changed after the last time he had been there. Bunta glimpsed at him from where he stood next to the counter. “I was just about to make some tea. You want a cup?” “Yes that would be nice.” “Just sit to the table then.” Only the noise of bubbling water and clanks from measuring the tea leaves broke the silence as Keisuke sat down. He was a bit nervous and didn’t figure anything intelligent to say so he just waited.

In a moment Bunta carried a teapot and two cups to the table and sat down opposite to Keisuke. He finally broke the silence as he handed a cup over the table. “So you are the one that finally managed to drag that son of mine to race.” It was not a question, he just stated it as a fact. Keisuke didn’t know how the man had gotten that information but there wasn’t really any way to deny it. “All he needed was just persuasion for the first time. He had the skills of a racer all along though. I take that is your doing?”

Bunta almost took out a cigarette but decided to leave it for later and instead poured the tea. “I just taught him to drive so he could do the deliveries.” Keisuke didn’t really believe that to be the whole truth. “But you are happy he got into racing?” “I am happy he finally has something to be passionate about. He has spent the most of his life not being too keen on anything. Or anyone.” The last word made Keisuke’s cheeks heat a bit. Just how much did this man know?

Takumi was walking home through the sleepy city. Everything was the same as before, but still so much had changed in his life. For the whole day he had listened to Itsuki, and at work also Iketani,
freaking out about the mysterious 86 driver who had beaten Ryosuke Takahashi himself and then just vanished from the site. He didn’t dare to think about what they would say if they found out it was indeed him who had done that. Or that he knew his younger brother and was… whatever he was to him they would have to clarify soon. He would have sent a message to tell him he would come to his apartment in the evening if his phone hadn’t run out of battery while he was at school. Rubbing the back of his head, deep in his thoughts, he hurried his steps to get back at home sooner.

Takumi opened the door, yelling “I’m home” to his dad as he took off his shoes. Walking to the kitchen door, he was just about to ask what they had to eat as he saw who was there. His bag slipped from his hand and thumped on the floor. Keisuke. Sitting there casually with his dad. Perhaps one of the biggest surprises he had had lately, and that was saying a lot. His dad noticed his surprise and answered the question before he got to even say it. “He came to see you, so I let him in to wait.”

“Oh, okay then.” Takumi answered, the confusion still showing on his face. “I’ll let you talk in peace then” his dad said as he got up, picking his smokes with him and heading to the living room to watch TV. Before going he quickly said over his shoulder. “Oh and you don’t need to do the delivery today, I’ll go myself since the kitchen staff wants to talk about something.” It had been a while he had gotten a day off from the delivery, if not counting when he was sick, so that was a nice change. “Oh, great” he answered and watched as his dad leave the room.

Takumi turned his attention to the vampire still sitting at the table. “What did you chat about?” “He seemed quite happy about you racing, even though he wouldn’t admit it directly.” Takumi snorted. “That’s just like him.” He went to get something to eat from the fridge as Keisuke spoke his thoughts in a low voice. “He seemed to be quite aware about who I am and didn’t even question anything about me showing up in your doorstep.”

“I have no idea where he gets all that info but yeah, he mentioned before about knowing I have a friend with a yellow sportscar, so maybe he just decided it had to be you when he saw you.” “He just decided I look fitting for the part?” Takumi grinned. “Well you kind of do with your rebellious bleached hair and everything.” Keisuke pouted at that. “I just happen to like this style.” Takumi’s smirk widened. “Well, it is stylish in a way. Like a gangster.” The vampire looked at him. “Well it is better than to have no style at all.” Takumi playfully threatened to throw his cup at him as they both laughed.

Takumi ate his dinner while they chitchatted about nothing in particular. They decided to head out to Keisuke’s apartment after he was finished. He didn’t really want to talk about the serious stuff while his dad was in the room next door.

The streetlights showered the area in a soft glow as they walked in silence, enjoying the serenity of the moment. It was a chilly night. So much so that they could see their breath. The results of the race had taken a huge load off Keisuke’s shoulders. In that moment everything seemed possible. No responsibilities in an organisation that didn’t meet his ideals at all. No one to tell him to do certain things to uphold their image. There were still many things he needed to figure out, but those could wait. The most important thing to him now was the man walking next to him. He grabbed his hand to his own, grinning at the surprise on his face.

Takumi didn’t shake Keisuke’s hand off, but still couldn’t help but to ask. “Aren’t you worried someone will see us?” “There are almost no people walking here at this time. It’s fine.” Takumi looked into his eyes, suddenly stopping. There was something different in his stare, something Keisuke didn’t quite know how to pinpoint. His face got serious as he suddenly feared he had stepped over some boundary. “What is it?” Takumi took a moment before he answered. “I love you.”
It was like time stopped for Keisuke at that moment. He looked to the bright eyes staring at him, and said, meaning every word from the bottom of his heart for the first time in his long life. “I love you too.” They were now both grinning as they kept looking at each other. Keisuke reached his hand to Takumi’s cheek, who winced a bit at the touch. “Your hands are freezing, come on, let’s go inside.” The vampire could only follow as his love took his hand and started to lead them into the direction of his apartment.

As soon as they were inside Takumi pulled Keisuke closer to give him a kiss. They lingered in the hallway, Keisuke pinning the other man between himself and the wall. He could feel him whimpering as he finally pulled back. They were both out of breath, finally removing their jackets and shoes and going inside the apartment. Instead of sitting next to the table as they usually did Keisuke pulled Takumi towards his futon. He didn’t have a couch or anything, so it was the most comfortable place to sit. They sat, face to face.

“Since when?” Takumi asked. “What do you mean?” “Since when you have loved me?” Keisuke felt his face heating up. “Probably after we got my stuff back and you came here.” Takumi frowned. “That’s before I kissed you after the race.” “Yeah.” “So why did you try to write it off as nothing?”

Keisuke looked down to his hands. “I decided to be what you wanted me to be, and so after you came to tell me to not think about it that was what I did. And when all the other stuff started to happen I started to feel it was a bad idea for us to even be acquainted. All along I have felt like keeping you safe is my priority.”

Takumi let out a sigh. “I feel so stupid. We have both been circling around each other despite our feeling being mutual.” Keisuke chuckled. “At least we now have it clear. So when it was for you that you realised?” “Just before I kissed you. I just acted because of the adrenaline rush I was on.” The vampire’s expression widened into a smile. “I like that.” He said while pulling Takumi along to an another kiss.

It was like they had all the time in the world. Keisuke ran his tongue along the line of Takumi’s lips, who opened them to let him in. He could now feel his tongue tracing his teeth, stopping at the sharp canines. He pulled back to look at his eyes. “When was the last time you ate?” Keisuke had to pause to think. “I’m not sure, when you last gave me some?”

It took only a moment for Takumi to realize what he wanted. The thing that had stayed in his subconscious ever since the vampire had told him that. He gulped as he thought of what he was about to ask. Still, he held his gaze in Keisuke’s eyes as he started. “So… You remember promising to fulfil one wish of mine if I won our race?” All the stuff that had happened after that had quite efficiently buried that one promise over. “Oh, yeah I do. You have something you want now?” Takumi gulped, not quite believing what he was about to ask. “I… I want to feed you, but not like before. This time… from my neck.”

Keisuke looked at him, sudden hunger crawling in his mind. That was all he could hope for, but the person himself was asking it as if it was some kind of a drag. Takumi took his silent stare as a no, so he started to mumble. “I mean you mentioned only doing it with few people, so I got kind of interested and so I mean with how we now are…” Keisuke let out a low laugh as he answered. “It’s not something you should be using your wish on. I’ll be more than happy to do it if you are willing.” Red now covered Takumi’s face, even spreading to his ears, as he only nodded as an answer.

Takumi laid down in the futon, as Keisuke though it would be the most relaxing position for him. But as he rest there, watching Keisuke position his knees in both side of his waist, he suddenly felt
like this could have been a really wild thing to ask for. Keisuke noticed him starting to tense up, so
he pressed a small kiss to his forehead. “Trust me.” He muttered. Their eyes met. “I do, with my
whole heart.” Takumi answered. Keisuke could feel his heart tightening hearing that. He really is
mine now, he thought to himself. He smiled and threw away his shirt.

Takumi couldn’t help but to stare. He could clearly see his muscles and the smooth skin. His blush
deepened. Keisuke leaned down, slipping a hand to Takumi’s waist, under his shirt. “We better get
rid of this. Blood is such a drag to wash out from clothes.” Takumi didn’t fully register his words as
the only thing he could really think of was the touch on his skin. Keisuke took his time, following
the lines of Takumi’s sides and into his shoulders as he collected the fabric up. Takumi rose his
back a bit to allow him to get the shirt off. It was tossed to the other corner of the room.

Keisuke moved his hands back to his navel, now following the central line of his body with his
hands. Takumi shivered at the sudden contact of cool air on his skin, but more from the hands. This
was the first time he had allowed anyone to touch him like this. It felt good. Keisuke’s hands
moved to trace his collarbones before he moved them to the futon to support himself as he bend
over. He started by pressing a light kiss to where his hand had been, moving up from there. When
he got to his neck his touch changed. It was now his canines scraping his skin ever so slightly
while also feeling his breaths at the same time. Takumi could very well see why he reserved this
kind of feeding to a more intimate relationship. All the sensations were arousing. Waiting for him
to bite was getting unbearable. Just then he halted in one place, and after a second sunk his teeth
into the soft skin.

It was hard to describe the feeling. There was a slight pain from the bite, but it was mostly
overwritten by the feeling of closeness. A thin trail of blood dripped down his neck. Takumi
couldn’t help but to arch his back, trying to increase the area where their skin met. He lifted his
hands around the vampire’s back. A soft moan escaped from his lips, and then another. Usually he
would have been ashamed of how he was acting but in that moment nothing else mattered than
being near him. The one he had chosen, and who had chosen him.
Takumi woke up slowly. For a moment he didn’t have any idea of where he was. That was until he recognised the warmth to his right to be Keisuke and felt a slight sting on his neck. The sun was peeking through the curtains, telling him that he most likely should have been at school ages ago, but he didn’t manage to make himself feel sorry about missing a day. Everything else was way too good for that.

Keisuke seemed to be sleeping. Not like in the other times he had seen him doze off, but deeply. He had once mentioned that vampires didn’t usually sleep, so it had to mean he was really comfortable to be able to do that. His breathing was calm and face relaxed. Smiling, Takumi turned to his stomach to watch the vampire. He could have stayed there for hours, but temptation took over him as he straightened his hand to touch his hair. It was soft despite being bleached. He had to take care of it, and the idea of him fussing over some hair conditioners or something made him chuckle.

Keisuke’s eyes moved under his lids, but they kept close. So Takumi continued and moved his fingers to feel his cheekbone, and from there to his lips. He moved his pointer finger along the line as suddenly Keisuke opened his eyes and snapped the finger gently between his teeth. He let go after a second, now outright laughing at the shocked expression on Takumi’s face.

“How dare you.” Takumi said with over-dramatized voice. The vampire grinned. “It’s hardly the first time I have bitten you.” He was almost smashed with a pillow as an answer to that. Instead he managed to evade down, getting closer to Takumi and giving him a fast kiss on the lips. “Nice to see you are so energetic first thing in the morning” he continued, chuckling.

After Takumi had declared he needed some breakfast they had ended up in a nearby café. Keisuke watched him eat his cheese croissant as he kept on stirring the cup of tea he had taken to seem more normal. He had given him a scarf to hide his neck that still clearly showed his marks. Last night seemed unreal. Too good to be true. However, there was something he needed to discuss with him. “He wants to speak at both of us soon.” “Who?” “My brother.”

Takumi stopped eating for a moment. “Well, then we’ll meet him.” “Are you sure you want to?” He shrugged his shoulders. “Why not? Better get it over with.” Keisuke was still a bit hesitant even after what had happened after the race, but he would do as he wanted. In no circumstances would he let them meet alone. “Fine. I’ll contact him about the time and place.” “Great.”

They spend the rest of their day wandering around the city, visiting bookstores and just talking. Enjoying the time together. It was getting dark as Takumi deemed he should indeed get back home. Keisuke walked him home, even though he insisted he didn’t need to.

As Takumi walked into the kitchen he saw his dad making food. He turned to see him, not saying anything about him being out the whole night and day, instead opting for “You are just in time for dinner.” Takumi nodded. “I’ll just change first.”

Bunta just nodded and turned back to the stove. Takumi walked up to his room and started going through his clothes. He knew he had one turtleneck he usually only used in the dead of winter, but it was less suspicious than outright showing the bitemarks or wearing the scarf inside. Luckily he found what he was looking in no time.
He went to the bathroom to wash his hands and to check nothing showed. Nothing did, but he had to tuck the collar down for a moment to properly look at the marks himself. Looking at them was surreal. He had voluntarily let that happen, and actually enjoyed the act too. His life had indeed changed a lot lately. Remembering the surprise from the first time of being bitten, and his decision to continue doing that, he gently touched the area. It hurt a bit but was already healing. The sign of their commitment to each other.

Takumi got back down and went to the cupboard to take his iron supplement. He had told his dad that the school nurse had ordered him to take those as he had started some time ago. Bunta was already sitting down the table, taking food to his plate from the pot in the middle of the table. Takumi joined him and they ate in silence. It was normal for them to not talk all the time, as neither of them was especially talkative anyways. Bunta had finished his food and was watching his son eat as he finally spoke. “Your boss told me someone with an 86 beat some racer superstar in a downhill battle. Just the same night you suddenly needed the car.”

Takumi was looking at this food, somehow not wanting to see his reaction. He had taken his precious car to such a wild race. But there were no hard feelings from him as his only answer was “Took you long enough to end up in a race.”

Takumi raised his stare to his dad, wanting to confirm his thoughts. “You wanted me to do that?” “It was up to you, I just taught you how to drive fast.” “Most parents wouldn’t be happy about their kid breaking the law by racing you know.” His dad almost smirked at that. “I’m not most parents.” He couldn’t deny that, so he just picked the last bite from his plate.

But that wasn’t all his dad had to say about the situation. “He is a vampire, right?” he said and made Takumi almost choke on his tofu. “What?” he managed to get out. His dad just waved his hand dismissively. “They were already a thing in the racing back when I was young. I know one when I see them. I guess most people didn’t realize what they were, but things happened, and I did. Not to mention those mysterious bandages you had a while back.”

Takumi resisted the urge to feel the fresh marks under the turtleneck hiding his neck. “Is there anything you don’t know about?” He just smiled at that. “I hope you can find something in this life to make you happy. Just don’t risk yourself recklessly doing it.”

Takumi was silent for a moment, thinking about all that he had done lately. Hopefully things would cool down now. He didn’t care to explain all of the situation to him, especially considering how much he already seemed to know. Maybe one day he could officially introduce Keisuke to him as his…. partner, but not yet. The thought was too absurd, since he was still in awe himself about them being in a relationship. Even though he kind of wondered why he was even bothering to hide at all it as his dad seemed to find about everything anyways. He interrupted his thoughts with his next question. “So, how was it?”

Takumi’s thoughts went to last night as he stumbled on his words. “W-What do you mean?” Bunta raised his brow. “The race?” He could feel his cheeks heating as he tried to forget his earlier thoughts. “Oh. It was exciting. The opponent was good.” His dad seemed to smile a bit as he lit a cigarette. “Are you going to go again sometime?” He shook his head as he stood and started to collect the dishes from the table. “I haven’t planned to.” He could have sworn he saw a flash of amused doubt at his dad’s face but didn’t react to the implication.

Few days had gone by, and Keisuke found himself in a situation he hadn’t thought possible in the beginning of the week. He was sitting opposite to his brother, both of them stirring cups of tea without drinking them. Takumi was to his right, actually drinking his. The silent staring competition between the brothers seemed to be about enough for him as he finally broke the
silence. “So, what is it you wanted to talk us about Ryosuke?”

The vampire turned his gaze to meet the human’s eyes. “Your driving skills really left many in awe. For the past days I’ve received multiple challenges from rival teams. They don’t know how to reach you, so I had to work as a courier.” Takumi looked him with a straight face. “I don’t really have any reason to accept those.”

Ryosuke nodded lightly. “I thought you would say so. But you really have skills for racing, and I got the feeling during our race that you actually enjoyed it. If you want, I can organize the races.” Thoughts ran wild in Takumi’s mind. Why was it that everybody seemed so determined to get him racing? Not that he hadn’t played with the idea himself, but it still seemed too surreal to focus all of his spare time on that. For now racing Keisuke for fun every now and then would be all he needed. So he just plainly answered “Good to know.”

Ryosuke took what he got and continued his talk. “That wasn’t the main reason I wanted to see you though.” He looked at his brother. “For the last few years our father has been giving me more and more responsibilities at the hospital. In the meanwhile I have been slowly but steadily lowering the intake of blood in our area. It is still high but maybe one day I will manage to get it down. I too don’t see the reason to collect it for waste.”

Keisuke was dumbfounded. He never had thought his brother would neglect their father’s will this straightforwardly. Even when he had helped him in his own way. “So… you really intend to do things differently.” “Yes. And I decided I would try to change the system from inside, since I already have access to everything.”

Takumi’s phone rang and interrupted their conversation. It was his boss, calling to see if he could take over Iketani’s shift as he had suddenly fell ill. He would even get a bonus for doing it, as it seemed like all other employees were unavailable. He didn’t have anything other than this meeting planned for the day, and he trusted Keisuke to tell him everything he needed to know afterwards, so he bid them farewell and hurried to work.

Both of the brothers looked as he went. After a moment Ryosuke broke the silence. “You know, I once had a human lover too.” Keisuke turned to look at him, truly surprised. “How have I never heard about that?” He could have sworn he saw pain in his brother’s eyes. “It was when you were running away in Tokyo. And, well… She died before you came back.” Keisuke couldn’t get his thoughts together. “I am sorry.”

Ryosuke smiled sadly. “It isn’t your fault. If anyone’s it is mine.” Keisuke stayed silent as his brother stared into the abyss, waiting for him to continue if he wished. “She… Wasn’t very strong-willed. For some time everything was perfect but in the end she couldn’t deal with everything after learning about me. About vampires. She committed suicide. I had no idea she was that desperate before she called me that day, and I got the feeling everything wasn’t right. I got to her place as soon as I could. I tried to safe her, but I couldn’t.

When I got to her she should have been dead already, but for some reason she still lingered on. After that I started to study humans, and their relations to vampires. Started to study blood. I got samples from her, and from other people that had been bitten more regularly. It seems that there is something passed down when a vampire bites a human. Almost like antidote. It makes them stronger, more resilient to diseases. Perhaps even elongates their lives, but there hasn’t been any long lasting couples so I’m still not sure about my theory. There are some old scripts that also suggest that, but the knowledge has been long lost after hiding became essential and the mixed-species couples were no longer a thing.”

Keisuke was silent. Of course the knowledge that Takumi was a human, and as one had a much
shorter lifespan than himself, had troubled him. He didn’t know what to do with that. And now this knowledge, the hope that it might last longer than he had anticipated. Unreal. Ryosuke stood up and his brother looked at him. “It is up to you if you want to share this with him. I’ll leave you to think about everything. It must be much so suddenly.” Keisuke only watched as his brother walked away without looking back.

Takumi was finishing the delivery on that night, just about to drive back down the mountain, as he noticed the familiar yellow car in the parking lot near the lake. He went and parked next to it and walked to the doc where Keisuke was already sitting, staring at the water. As he sat next to him he moved his hand to interlock their fingers. Takumi answered the motion by resting his head to his shoulder. Even without exchanging words they felt the comfort of the other just being there.

The moonlight made a linear reflection in the water and some birds were having a concert in the trees. The night was beautiful and serene. For the longest time they stayed still, enjoying the voices of the night and each other’s company. Keisuke’s voice was barely more than a whisper when he finally talked. “I don’t really want to think about this, but…. Your life as a human is just a blink when comparing to my time here.”

Takumi lifted his head, watching straight to his eyes. “Yeah.” “Well, today, after you left, my brother told me about a theory. About how cohabiting with a vampire might end up elongating a human’s life in turn of the blood given. He wasn’t sure of that, only time will tell. But... Are you really willing to spend your life with me, even if might mean you outliving everyone else in your life?”

Takumi took a moment to think about his words. “There is no knowing what future brings, so best to enjoy everything to its fullest right now. As time goes on we will see what happens.” He squeezed his hand. “But I am certain there is nobody else I would rather take the chance in life than with you. Even if our time will be short, or if it ends up long. I’ll love and feed you for the rest of my life.”

Keisuke’s voice was shaking as he answered. “How did I ever deserve you in my life.” “Fate has it’s way. I am glad you stumbled on my way that night.” Keisuke pulled him into a long, firm hug. As he was pulling back, Takumi pulled him back in to give him a long, sweet kiss under the moonlight.

Keisuke had been unsure of his next idea but felt more confident after their conversation. “I have been thinking…” “Yeah?” He turned to look at his eyes. “You want to move in with me? It doesn’t have to be the crappy place I currently live in. We can find better.”

Takumi was beaming with happiness. “Yes! After I finish school I was just planning on staying here and getting a job anyways. So getting a place to share sounds perfect. Not having to worry about anyone walking in on us.” Keisuke moved closer to whisper “Better soundproofing wouldn’t hurt either, I’d rather keep your cute side all to myself.” Takumi blushed at the implication, remembering how he had acted on their night together. And that was just the start.

There was no one to ask Keisuke where and with who he would be living but Takumi would have to explain the situation to his dad. And to his friends. It would be a wild ride telling Itsuki, no doubt. His thoughts brought the conversation from a few days ago back to his mind. He needed to tell the vampire. “He knows.” Takumi said. Keisuke frowned. “What?” Takumi turned to look at him. “My dad, about vampires. About you.” Keisuke was dumbfounded. “And he still is fine with you being with me? What is wrong with you guys and your lack of self-preservation instincts.” Takumi smirked. “You should be thankful for that or we wouldn’t be here.” “True that.”

Once more they shared a silence, looking at the rippling water. A though came to Keisuke’s mind.
“So if he knows about me being a vampire, does he also know about our relationship?” “He didn’t say so outright, but I wouldn’t be surprised. But I don’t think he would be too much against it.” Keisuke couldn’t help but to compare that to his own father. He was jealous in a way. But at least he would have his own small family with Takumi for now on. And maybe the relationship with his brother could end up as well as it had been. In time.

It was starting to get chilly just sitting there so Takumi moved his left hand to back of Keisuke’s head, pulling him closer and leaning their foreheads together. He grinned as he whispered “First one down the hill gets to decide the apartment we’ll get.” Keisuke answered his grin. “Deal.” They stumbled to their feet, sprinting to their cars. Laughter filled the air as they raced to their future together.

Chapter End Notes

So, after almost 8 months the story is now told. This whole fic ended up being a lot longer than I originally anticipitated, but I'm quite happy about the outcome. At least I feel like my writing skills improved along the way as I also got more into it, and I am now more confident to start new projects in the future! Also lol the title of this work didn't end up being too accurate as Takumi started to give his blood voluntarily so soon ooops xD

A big thank you for anyone who read this! And thank you especially for anyone who has bothered to leave kudos, comment or give writing tips! I truly appreciate that, and any future ones too (´▽`)ﾉ

Edit 24.12.2019 There is now a one shot NakaShingo called "Involuntary Attraction" that tells what they did after chapter 17 (σ ＿σ)

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