### Weakness

**by** [Kandakicksass](mailto:kandakicksass@archiveofourown.org)

**Summary**

Kiryuu Zero is finally done. He's done fighting, especially what he is... and maybe he's done fighting Kaname, too. Then again, with a blood contract, there's not really a choice in that department...

***Repost from FFnet for archiving purposes.*

**Notes**

This is an old unedited fic I'm reposting here because I've deleted my FFnet fics and for some reason people seem to like this one.
Chapter 1

Kiryu Zero was getting tired of being locked up.

Well, that was an understatement and it gave that damn headmaster too much credit. As if he'd ever manage to overcome Zero's raw strength. The idea was comical, to say the least. He could imagine it in his head vividly, that blonde-haired idiot jumping around, trying to capture him.

It wasn't like he was literally caged up—he was merely on a probation of sorts. He was restricted to Cross Academy, yes, his only non-debatable activities being his classes and if he so desired, his duties as prefect. He could wander the campus, visit the moon dorm, eat meals with this classmates. He could still see Yuuki.

But he didn't. He rarely ventured out of his room other than classes and prefect duties, and rarely even those. He couldn't see Yuuki; not when he was so dangerous the way he was. Last time he'd gotten within ten feet of her—his best friend!—he'd lost control and practically pounced on her. He'd so very nearly drained her dry and he'd been nearly killed by Kaname, who was righteously pissed. Rightly pissed, too. Kaname had warned him that if he hurt Yuuki again, he would be punished. And boy, was he punished.

When Kaname had left Zero's room later that night, Zero had been unable to walk. His right leg was fractured, the other broken. There was a pattern of bruises splaying across his upper body like ink stains, a nauseating mixture of blue, black, and green that made him look like he'd just come out of a filthy pond. Zero had been in bed for two months and Headmaster Cross had been worried he had internal bleeding.

But his legs had healed within the month and any internal damage he may have suffered at the pureblood's hands had healed as well. The extra month was insisted upon by Cross, just to make sure he was well.

He knew he couldn't blame Kaname. It had been his own fault. He had known he was close to the edge, but he had wanted to see her and so he did. He was selfish. So very selfish.

And Zero was starving. Quite literally.

Since that incident, Kaname had not come to sustain him with his pure vampire blood and that was possibly the worst punishment Kaname could give him. Zero was doing all he could to refrain from going level E. Because that would be worse. He didn't want to go level E—and he didn't want Kaname to have to kill him.

Zero had seen Kaname kill before. He'd seen Kaname kill her, he'd seen the pureblood's eyes turn a dark crimson, promising violence. He'd felt the shiver go down his spine as that blood-soaked hand had punctured that bitch's chest. If Kaname was anything, he was fucking scary when pissed.

Zero had calmed down since being "locked up". He used to have a temper of fire; now he barely got angry about anything. When he'd hurt Yuuki, and Kaname and beaten him, Zero hadn't even resisted him. That was probably why the damage had been so extensive; he didn't fight. He simply let Kaname throw him around. Yuuki liked saying he'd become an empty shell, but he was pretty sure that was an exaggeration—he was simply exhausted. Very, very exhausted.

"Zero!"

The hunter—or rather, ex-hunter; he was under the opinion that he didn't count if he happened to
be one of the monsters he was supposed to hunt—groaned, leaning back against the bed sheets.

"Yuuki."

She sighed, her happy energy dimming as she caught wind of his bad mood—as if he spent his time being anything but angsty or crabby these days.

"Can't you seem happy to see me, at least once?" she griped. "I come to visit you and you never let me in. We see each other, what, once a month now? You don't even come to class much anymore, and—" Zero wondered absently why she was complaining about him not letting her in when she was in the habit of just barging in anyway.

"For the love of God, Yuuki, would you please just let it go?" he requested quietly, peering up at her with his unusual violet eyes. "And go in general."

"Why?" she demanded, hands on her frail little hips. "You're always telling me to leave. I'm sick of leaving you all alone."

"I'm hungry, Yuuki!" he snapped at her. "Do you remember what happened the last time I was hungry around you?" The brunette paled, but her fists didn't unclench. He felt bad for speaking to her so rudely, and even worse for reminding her of all the times he'd fed on her, but he could feel his fangs throbbing at the very promise of the blood moving through the girl's veins. He didn't appreciate being teased with it and even though he knew it wasn't what she was doing purposely, it still felt that way to him.

"Kaname came after you," she replied quietly. "I told him not to, you know. That I was fine."

"But you weren't," Zero said bitterly, his nails digging into his palms through the bed sheets he was fisting. "Even a fool could see that. I hurt you." Then, quieter… "Like a monster. I hurt you."

Yuuki glared at him.

"Don't call yourself that, stupid. You're not a monster. You're a vampire. There's a difference!"

"Oh, yeah," he snorted, ignoring her look of indignation. "A real distinct difference." She rolled her vermillion eyes, a movement he only caught in passing. He disliked making direct eye contact with Yuuki just for the color of her eyes—a deep shade of red, so similar to his. "Yuuki, you really should go. I'm tired of damaging you."

"Damage me?" she repeated, incredulous. "Damage me? What's got you talking like you've just walked out of a sixth century horror novel?" She put her hands on her hips again. "What's next? Uncouth?" Zero laughed, despite himself and his predicament.

"Yuuki," he said in a gruff, teasing voice. "You're being so uncouth, it's a wonder that Kuran is even still interested in you! No, wait, that's not right. That's why he's—"

"Zero, you big meanie!" she giggled. He promised himself not to make fun of her for her elementary school name-calling, but when he spoke again he was thinking he maybe should have, because he killed the mood instead.

"Please, Yuuki, just…" he sighed, settling down again. Yuuki sighed as well, leaning over to kiss his forehead.

"All right, I'll go," she complied, smiling softly. "But, Zero?"

"Yeah?"
"You know you're my best friend, right?" she asked. "In the whole world, you know me better than anyone else. Like, ever. Even better than Kaname-sama."

"I know, Yuuki-chan." She smiled again, feeling accomplished.

"I'm not gonna stay away, Zero," she promised. "I will be back. If you weren't so adamant about me leaving I'd be staying a hell of a lot longer than I am now."

"I know you will, you stubborn girl," Zero chuckled. "Why I love you, after all."

"Love you, too," she called from the door, waving. "Sexist bastard!" He waved back, laughing at her last minute insult, keeping the hand up until the door slammed shut.

He did. He loved Yuuki. He wasn't in love with Yuuki, and she knew that, but he loved her all the same. She was his companion, his best friend. The only one who'd always accepted him, who'd made sure that he was if not happy, then not suicidal.

She'd caught him at that point, once. Just after he'd bitten her the first time. She had walked in just as Zero was about to pull the trigger of his Bloody Rose when she'd pounced him unexpectedly. Her shriek of 'no' still stung his ears. He winced at the very thought. If he wasn't causing her physical pain, he was hurting her emotionally. He sighed.

"Well, she's still alive. Kudos to you, Kiryu."

Zero's eyes snapped open, focusing on the door with undisguised loathing.

He didn't know why he looked at the vampire like that. He didn't hate him, most certainly not, but sometimes he just made him feel so inferior, and Zero hated that. He was just as important as Kuran! He may not be the last pureblood (because he certainly wasn't a pureblood at all), or the most handsome boy at school, or the most charming, but he was… what was he? He was strong, but Kuran was stronger, and was most definitely smarter.

Then he reminded himself. He was Yuuki's best friend, the foster child of the headmaster, and a damn good hunter, even if he couldn't call himself that officially any longer.

"Shut up, Kaname," Zero grumbled, forcing himself into a straighter sitting position instead of the lazy slouch he'd had before. "I can control myself for five minutes."

"Oh, yes, I forget," he said smoothly, the sarcasm and underlayer instead of the forefront tone. "It's anything over that where you become a crazy, blood-crazed beast intent on sucking my dear girl dry." Zero glared at him.

"You take being an asshole to new levels," he told him bluntly. "It's people like you that remind me not to be a fucking hypocrite." He shot Kaname a dirty look. The brunette shrugged gracefully, the white material of his uniform lifting and falling on his muscular shoulders.

"Your rude comments fail to faze me anymore, Kiryu," he said nonchalantly. "However, they will not go unpunished. You have resisted devouring Yuuki, and for that I applaud you. Why, I was ready to allow you my blood." His eyes were sharp as daggers, cold steel. "But then I come and you sass me like you think you are better than me? Tsk, tsk, Zero. Very inconsiderate. I think the blood I was going to offer you will come at a price now."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean, Kaname!" he snapped, struggling not to yell at him. He had to admit; it was a hard task. He knew Kaname wasn't all bad—the man (vampire, whatever) worked for peace between the two main races, cared so deeply for Yuuki… but sometimes, he
could be such an asshole! A horrible, sadistic asshole.

"Did you not hear me, Kiryu?" he mocked, coming ever closer to the bed which in turn inspired Zero to scoot further away, toward the wall. "I said, there is now a price to the salvation I can offer you."

"A price? Are you fucking me?" He was starting to get uncomfortable and on top of that, he was quickly becoming outraged. Would Kaname honestly be so cruel?

"Not yet!"

This voice was entirely new—higher pitched and almost melodious. Zero knew that voice, knew it quite well, and with a start his eyes jumped from the irritated vampire to the girl standing in the doorway behind him.

She had green eyes framed by long brown lashes and a pleased smile that made those orbs glitter like she knew something he didn't. She was short for her age, but what she lacked in height, she made up in mounds of unruly chocolate brown curls that framed her face and bounced on her back as she tumbled into the room, the bangs straightened and threaded with neon orange that matched the loose off-the-shoulder shirt she wore. With it, she wore a pair of Converse (only god knew how long it had been since he'd seen a pair of those).

Zero was shocked speechless. Kaname, on the other hand, was simply confused.

"Hello?" she asked, drawing the word out teasingly, her hand on the strap of her messenger bag as she walked into the room. "Did you fall on your head or something, Z? I'm not willing to play babysitter to you if you've got head damage, you know…"

Zero was dumbstruck, barely able to make his mouth form the word he desired. "Miyu…?"

She nodded happily, leering at him, before…

"Oh, Zero! You've no clue how much I've missed you!" Officially named "Miyu", she literally jumped on him, wrapping him in a choke hold that cut off his air supply. Unlike with most, Zero had no unbearable desire to bite down. Instead, he could focus solely on unangling her from him.

"Miyu-chan! Miyu-chan, let me—go, hey, Miyu, you're hurting me—ah!" Zero cried out as she accidentally squeezed a bit too hard, making Kaname glower at her like she was something disgusting and potentially dangerous.

"Ack!" she squeaked, terrified, as she pulled away. "Oh, I'm so sorry, Z, I just got a little carried away! Oh… oh, dear…"

"Would you like to explain all of this, Kiryu?" Kaname asked dryly through clenched teeth, gesturing to the small girl still clinging to the half-vampire in a less life-threatening embrace. "Just to clear up all this confusion." The words were malice coated, though why Kaname would have such an aversion to his tiny friend, Zero couldn't imagine. Either way, Kaname's current expression was the tiniest bit frightening.

"Kuran," he sighed, giving up on ungluing Miyu from his side. "This is my friend, Miyu. We knew each other before I came to Cross Academy. End of explanation."

Miyu rolled her eyes. "I'm a vampire," she added. "Almost pureblood."

Kaname's eyes widened.
"A pureblood?" he repeated. Zero could almost see the questions scrolling through Kaname's brain—*if she's pureblood, why don't I know her? Is she illegitimate? Where has she been all these years?*

"Almost," she corrected. "Well, anyway, that's how Zero-kun and I met; his master was hunting me because he thought I killed some girl in a town nearby where they were staying. Terrible incident."

"So why aren't you dead?" Kaname asked pointedly, getting over his shock quickly enough. The girl, obviously not completely Japanese, rolled her eyes, but Zero beat her to the punch.

"Kuran!" Zero snapped, not liking Kaname's tone. His voice could be sweeter than honey and softer than velvet (it disturbed Zero that he could make those comparisons), but right now it was hard and cold, threatening harm—threatening **Miyu** harm. He couldn't let anything happen to her.

"What?" he snapped back, turning his eyes on Zero. It seemed to the silver-haired vampire that he looked sort of betrayed. Zero just couldn't understand it—but when did he ever understand the vampire's emotions?

"You're acting like she's some big threat!" Zero growled, his grip on the brunette becoming protective. "You look like you're gonna kill her. Back down." Miyu, observing all of this, rolled her eyes, shaking Zero's arm off of her and sliding to the edge of the bed, standing and putting a hand on her hips.

"Z, you know as well as I do that I can take care of myself," she snorted. "Quit acting like an overprotective mother hen."

"Oh, yeah? He's a pureblood, Miyu!" Zero argued. She gave him a mocking gasp.

"Oh, god! A pureblood!" she screeched in ersatz fear. She dropped the act. "Zero, I'm armed. You know that."

"So? A gun isn't gonna do much against that bastard!" He heard an indignant huff, though it was ignored by both parties

"Did I ever say a gun is all I have on me?" she demanded, putting her hand on her hourglass hips, much like Yuuki had not an hour before.

"What else do you have then, Miyu?" Zero asked, his eyes hard. She rolled hers.

"I have two guns, a taser, and mace—which you know as well as I do works on *any* species. Anything else you think I need before I'm allowed to talk with the big, bad Kuran Kaname-san?" she asked with raised eyebrows that made a small eyebrow piercing glint in the light from the lamp.

Zero backed down, but not without a weird look and a curious, "Why do you have a taser on you?" Miyu laughed but they were interrupted by the very annoyed pureblood.

"Why aren't you dead?" Kaname repeated, not caring what Zero's answer was.

"Because Zero found me first," she said simply, easily finding her way back to the topic at hand. "Zero and I talked for a while and figured out pretty fast that I was innocent. He convinced his master and I was released."

Kaname looked disgruntled that she had a reasonable explanation and quickly fired another question at her. "Why are you armed, anyway?" Kaname asked.
"Why do you keep asking me questions?"

"Why do you have more than one gun?"

Zero was the one who broke the string of inquiries. "She's been living on the street, you dolt," he answered, eager to get the battle over and done with. Miyu could be a right headache if she was trying to be and Zero really couldn't deal with one of those at the moment. "And on top of that, she's part of the secret police force or whatever for your kind—"

"Our kind—" Kaname interjected with a sour look, but was railroaded by Zero as he continued with what he was saying.

"—so she's always armed in hopes she gets to shoot someone like you," he finished snidely. Kaname's mouth shut with a snap, his eyes like daggers, his jaw clenched.

The minute Zero got the words out, however, Miyu smacked him on the back of the head. He flinched away from her and rubbed the sore spot, making a face.

"It's impolite to brag, Z," she told him shrewdly, ignoring the look he was giving her.

"It's not bragging if the one involved isn't saying it," he argued, trying to massage away the pain.

"Enough!" Kaname hollered and they both turned to look at him, Miyu with bored curiosity and Zero with surprise and more than a little dread. He'd been avoiding Kaname getting that pissed off by getting in the middle of their spat, but it looked like he'd just been getting more angry instead of calmer. "You! Girl, get out!"

"No!" she snapped.

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

Kaname growled wordlessly at her unwavering form. "Fine," he snapped. "Let Zero die; it's not like I give a damn." With that he stalked out, his shoes clacking on the wood floors. The two watched him leave, one with a distinctly miserable expression. Miyu groaned, sitting down on the edge of Zero's bed.

"I'm sorry, Z," she said miserably. "I just got carried away. I'm sure he's a nice guy, but he was acting so pompous I had to fight with him. You know me."

"It's okay, Miyu-chan," Zero mumbled, distracted. Since when did Kaname call him Zero? He shook his head to clear the thought. He had to stop thinking about the pureblood. Nothing good ever came of it, after all.

Miyu had gone by dinner time, leaving Zero to his complicated thoughts. Turns out she'd been invited by Cross; unsurprising, and yet her arrival completely astounded Zero. He hadn't seen her since he was... what? Twelve? They'd been kids back then, just on the cusp of being teenagers. So happy, so adventurous. After that encounter on that hunting trip, they'd done everything together.
They were best friends, for nearly three years.

"Is it okay for me to come in, Kiryu-san?" came a dark, angry voice from the hall.

"You never listen to what I say, anyway, you damn vampire, so I don't know why you're asking. You might as well come in; you know you're going to anyway." He fiddled with the book he'd been attempting to read to distract himself from his own musings before setting it aside.

Kaname stepped through the door, carrying two plates. One of considerably less full than the other, presumably for Kaname. It was common knowledge that vampires didn't need much "mortal" food as humans did, and Zero was considerably more human than the other was. He slammed the fuller tray down in front of the emotionally worn Zero, who pulled it in front of him, picking at it's contents half-heartedly.

"She really didn't like me," Kaname noted quietly as he pulled a chair to Zero's side and sat down, popping a strawberry into his mouth.

"You were acting like a stuck-up prat," Zero said, trying halfheartedly to be insulting. "Not much different than usual, but she thought you were acting like an ass—not too different than my observation—so she decided to even the score. As it was, you were being quite the bastard."

"Me?" Kaname snapped in return, though his voice wasn't half as angry as it was earlier. "I was the one acting like a bastard? You're the one who completely disregarded the fact that we were having an important conversation so you could get glomped on by some four-foot-tall pixie with attitude!" This was the rudest thing Zero had ever heard Kaname say. It was, surprisingly, much more like a regular teenager and barely sounded like the normal, refined Kuran.

"Why are we arguing about this?" Zero demanded. "It's in the past. What are your terms?"

"For what?"

"Your fucking price!" Zero clarified with a bit more hostility than he'd meant to. "For your blood." He squirmed despite the anger at the mere thought of Kaname's stipulation simply for the fact that he had said what he just had. Zero had degraded himself so badly he was referring to his need for Kaname's precious blood casually, as if it didn't ruin his self-esteem every step of the way.

"I want you," Kaname said quietly, his finger lightly tracing the rim of his glass—blood tablet water, Zero assumed.

Zero froze.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" he demanded, scooting as far away from the close-to-pissed-off vampire as he possibly could while in bed. His face was a deep shade of scarlet.

Kaname sighed. "Zero, my obtuse little vampire, why is it so hard to believe that I do not dislike you?"

"Because you spend half your time cursing my very existence," he said bluntly, fighting the urge to bite his lip. He didn't want Kaname to know the extent of his request's affect on him.

"A cover up," Kaname admitted smoothly, though his leg was twitching, telling Zero how truly unnerved he was by the entire situation. "For how I really feel. So you have your options. Go level E or submit to me."
Zero stared at the pureblood in unhidden shock, his eyes wide, betraying his terror. He pressed himself against the headboard, his entire body trembling from simply from the vampire's words. Kuran looked regretful, to an extent, but mostly he just looked annoyed.

"That is your only reaction to my preposition?" he said bitterly.

Zero found he was unable to speak and opened his mouth only to shut it again, utterly mute. The lack of speech may have added something to do with the fact that he couldn't think of a single thing to say.

The vampire rose from the seat he was in, swiftly picking up his tray. Zero's own lay forgotten on the bed table. "I'll leave you alone then, for the day. I'll have Yuuki bring you breakfast tomorrow." He wanted to oppose the notion, to say anything, but he was capable of only reaching out to the vampire who had already left, moving as quickly as he could without completely ditching his model-like walk. Zero had to admit, he had seen nothing more graceful than Kuran Kaname.

But Zero had seen him kill in cold blood. He didn't dislike Kuran anymore, not as much as he had before he had descended into what he was, but he couldn't let himself be distracted by pretty (or in this case frighteningly blunt) words or by that damn-pretty face of his. Kuran was dangerous.

He was a threat, more than Miyu could ever be. Kuran could kill him at any time and he repeated to himself multiple times that he must never, ever forget that.

"Zero, just how badly did you piss off Mr. I'm-such-an-awesome-pureblood-vamp-that-I-can-walk-all-over-that-'five-foot-tall-pixie-with-attitude'?"

Zero was suddenly too tired to look at his friend. Instead Miyu sat on the edge of his bed, her sad eyes boring into his. Zero didn't like that expression on her elfish face, but he was too exhausted to say anything. Honestly, he barely even noticed she'd been eavesdropping, which happened to be one of his biggest pet peeves.

"Your hair is neon orange," he commented dryly by way of distraction and it worked, drawing her attention from his unholy predicament and to her own bright hair color.

She brightened immediately, fingering the colored locks.

"I know!" she said smugly. "It's the shit, isn't it?" Zero raised an eyebrow, glad she wasn't upset anymore. Her moods were like the rainbow—vivid and ever changing, which was normally a pain in the ass but had a tendency to be pleasant when it was least expected.

"Hey, Miyu-chan?" he asked. She looked at him expectantly.

"Yeah?"

"Your mood swings are confusing." She laughed loudly.

"Thank you!" she chuckled, standing again to stretch and attempt to pull him up, but one look at Zero's resigned expression made her sigh and sit down again. Zero wondered if his moods were catching. "I'm serious, Z, you look like shit. Headmaster Cross told me what happened a couple months back. I know about the thing with Yuuki—I know fucking everything, Zero, and I'm worried about you."
"Frowning doesn't suit you," Zero mumbled, trying to change the subject. She glared at him predictably for his efforts, undetered.

"Yeah, well, bedridden doesn't suit you, either," she retorted. "I love you, Z. You're my best friend and you're so fucked up it isn't funny." Her expression was earnest and made him feel awful for being so horrible to her. Honestly, he already knew everything she was telling him, but he was too stubborn to listen.

"I'm not fucked up, Miyu," Zero snorted, but she just snorted right back. He felt another pang of guilt for being the one to put the worry in her eyes.

"If you're not fucked up, then why is Kuran stationed outside your door like a fucking guard, huh? Bet you didn't think about that, eh?"

Zero blinked.

"I didn't know he was there," he mumbled. Which happened to be true—he was floored by the very notion that Kuran Kaname was playing guard outside. His surprise made his friend laugh loudly enough to bring the brunette into the room.

"Well, duh," she chuckled, rolling her eyes, earning a dirty look from the ex-hunter. "Dumbass. And—"

"I told her not to tell you, but of course she had to," Kuran's sour voice interrupted from the doorway. "I didn't want to upset you since you so obviously want me gone." He sounded positively bitter about the whole situation and Zero felt bad for being an ass to him, too, which may have been the first time that had ever happened.

Zero couldn't help but stare at him. It was an off day for the night class so Kaname was dressed very simply in black slacks and a deep red shirt that made his eyes glow their unnatural shade of burgundy. There wasn't much he didn't look good in, but red certainly was a striking color on him. His strong arms were crossed, the hard angle of one hip jutting out as he leaned against the door frame.

"I'm sorry about what happened after dinner," Kaname continued while Zero stared (and wondered why he had so many visitors when it was nearing ten). "Your silence took me off guard. I didn't mean to get… snappish."

Miyu snorted again, this time at Kaname. "Yeah, cause you asked for a quick shag in exchange for blood. Dumbass," she repeated. "Anyone would be surprised at that. Or rather, shocked speechless, anyway." Kaname rolled his eyes and Zero was a little taken aback by the fact that he no longer seemed hostile toward the brunette girl still sitting on the edge of Zero's bed.

Zero stared at the two again from his seat before taking a deep breath, his cheeks tinting pink.

"Miyu, stop talking about it. It's rather… erm, private, and if you hadn't noticed, it made your inner British come out—really, shag? Kuran, I will consider taking you up on your offer. Now, both of you, please leave. It's late, and I'm tired." More like dead on his feet—or ass, as it were. The exhaustion wasn't exactly a physical thing, though—he was emotionally worn, and needed badly to recuperate.

Miyu and Kaname stared at Zero, one pair of green eyes and one pair of crimson eyes boring into him in shock.

"Zero," Miyu murmured, backing up. Kaname just stared at him mutely, not saying a word. He, by
contrast, took a step forward. "I'll come by later. Kuran… make sure he's okay." Miyu flitted out of the room, leaving the silver-haired vampire alone with the pureblood.

"Zero, what's wrong?" Kaname sighed after a lengthy silence in which Zero entirely expected him to follow Zero's wishes and leave, coming forward and sitting on the edge of Zero's bed. "I'm worried about you. Yuuki's worried about you. That pixie girl is worried about you. Please… what's wrong?" It was the most repetitive he'd ever heard Kaname. Obviously, he was trying to enforce the message and, judging by the guilt bubbling once again in the pit of his stomach, he was successful.

Zero frowned, biting his lip. He didn't want to talk about his issues with Kaname—god only knows if he'd give a damn or not—but he wasn't sure if he had a choice or not.

As if he'd heard Zero's thought, his eyes narrowed. "Zero, I'm being serious. It's been two months. Talk to me. You're not yourself." He had almost forgotten how long it had been since he'd let himself recede into the depths of his rooms.

He didn't want to, but his eyes met Kaname's of their own accord and the brunette looked almost shocked by the look in them. He contemplated one last time whether he should tell him or not… and in the end decided that he was sick of the tight feeling in his chest from having everything to say and no one to listen that he felt could understand it. "I don't know what to do," Zero whispered, his voice cracking.

Kaname froze.

"I… Kuran—Kaname! I don't know what to do anymore!" Zero blinked, trying to focus on not crying. He'd been so shut up for so long… he didn't know how to share what he felt without breaking down. He wasn't the strong, bad ass prefect he had been anymore. He was weak. He was fragile. The weakness killed him… but here was Kuran Kaname, and he was offering to let him let it out.

"What don't you know?" he asked softly, sliding closer to Zero. "It seems you've made your choice, locking yourself up like this."

"What else should I do?" he asked, locking eyes with Kuran pleadingly. His body was trembling again, his lower lip more than anything else. Kaname watched as his jaw twitched with the effort to keep the tears in. "It's either I stay locked up or… I could hurt someone. I can't hurt anyone… I have to make it so I can't kill anyone…" Tears welled further against his will, making his vision swim, and he broke their staring contest, hanging his head in shame. "I'm such a damned idiot."

Kaname, however, got the gist of what Zero was suggesting, and his eyes widened in shock, his heart thundering at the very idea of Zero doing what he was implying. "Zero," he said hoarsely, then cleared his throat and repeated in the most controlled voice possible, "Zero, don't you fucking think about it." Zero looked up at him timidly, miserably.

"What other choice do I have?" he whispered and Kaname growled, moving from his side too fast for Zero to see. His head whipped back and forth, trying to spot the pureblood in the room…

"There are so many more options than suicide!" Kaname roared, nose to nose with the silver-haired teenager, reappearing, straddling the ex-hunter. "Don't be a fool, Zero!"

"Then tell me what I can do!" he screamed back, literally in Kuran's face. His eyes widened, glistening with tears, and he crumpled in on himself, sobbing. He felt so pathetic for breaking down but he couldn't stop the flow of his tears. It felt like he was crying out the pressing darkness
inside of him, soothing it for the time being. Kaname's expression softened and he leaned down, brushing the hair out of Zero's face, moving to the side of him.

"Hey," he murmured. "Zero, hey. Calm down. Shh, it's okay." Zero didn't fight the hand that brushed away his tears, the tears he was so angry at himself for shedding, and nor did he fight the arms that he was pulled into. He rested his head against Kaname's chest, letting the vampire rock him slowly, back and forth. He felt safe in Kaname's arms. Not happy, but he wasn't exactly upset there either an that he would take over letting the pain wash over him again.

"Zero, there is a salvation I can offer you," he whispered. "I will tell you it exists only so you have all the options. I highly doubt you will accept it… nor do I blame you if you do not, mind you—but you should know it exists." His voice was almost reluctant.

"What is it?" Zero asked, looking up at Kaname in confusion, tears glittering on his eyelashes despite his attempts to wipe them away. He looked hesitant, embarrassed… even sad.

"The only other possible way… other than drinking your sire's blood, which is now impossible…" Kaname winced, slowly getting what he wanted to say out. "Is to make a blood pact with me."

Zero's eyes widened and his body stiffened in the vampire's warm arms. "Whatever that is, it doesn't sound good."

Kaname winced again. "A blood pact is a… it's when two vampires pledge themselves to each other. They share blood… mate… and—"

"If you're just going to try and get me into bed, Kuran, then get the hell out of my room!" Zero snapped angrily, pushing Kuran away. He opened his arms and let him go willingly, allowing Zero to scramble away like he'd been burned. "I'm not some whore!"

"I realize that, Zero!" he responded quickly. "I'm not making it up to, as you so crudely put it, 'get you into bed'! I swear to whatever god there is out there that the only way for you to be stable permanently is to swear into a blood contract with a pureblood! It's the only way!"

"With you," Zero seethed, his anger nearly palpable. Kaname nodded, mute again. Slowly, understanding set into his lilac eyes and he closed them, feeling another wave of tears building up. He slumped, clenching his teeth. Kaname wasn't lying. He could tell that.

It wasn't as if Zero would hate it, after all, that wasn't the problem… but what if Kaname got bored of him? One look at the two of them and anyone would be able to tell they didn't exactly look like an ideal couple.

But the pros out numbered the cons.

Kaname was beautiful, and smart, and kind. He was righteous and when he was angry, he was enchanting at the same time he was frightening. He didn't want this, didn't want anything but his own freedom—but the choice was slavery or death. There was no way he would get out of the situation he was in on his own.

Zero took a deep breath.

"Okay."
Miyu listened closely through the door, her eyes narrowed, before she turned and stormed down the hallway with as much dignity as she could muster. She stood straight, walking in a perfect line, keeping a hand on the bulk of her gun the entire time. When she arrived at her destination, she raised her hand and knocked sharply on the mahogany wood.

"Come in."

She did so, the door knob feeling cold in her grasp. "Kuran has offered Zero the blood pact." The words tasted sour in her mouth and she practically spat them out. The brunette stood in front of the desk and brushed a strand of green out of her eyes, a scowl etched permanently on her features. "Bleh. I feel sick just saying it."

Cross raised his eyebrows, standing at her entrance to reach across the desk and shake her hand. It was the first time he was meeting her in person, but he looked a little shocked at how young she seemed, and how daintily pretty. "Really, Miyu-san? Strange. I thought he'd wait a little longer before taking that step." Miyu shrugged, her stiff posture released, and took a seat in front of the desk with a sigh. "And Zero's reaction?"

Miyu chose her words carefully, picking at a scar in the leather of the chair she was sitting in. "He was shocked, at first. Not surprising in the least, considering. After a mild explanation from Kaname, he accepted." She said this in an unhappy tone of voice, sounding frustrated by the news. Her foot tapped against the side of Cross's desk iratably.

Cross laughed, looking relieved. "Thank god!" he cheered softly. "Don't look so angry, Miyu! Think about it—Zero-kun will be fine!"

"Zero-kun will be chained to a man he does not know if he loves," she retorted, then sighed again, dropping the defensive. "I'm not against it, Headmaster. I'm just worried about him. I don't know if Zero's ready for this quite yet. As a matter of fact, I'm pretty sure he's not. Kuran cares about him, obviously, and I'm not worried about that. It's the fact that Zero's so breakable."

Cross just smiled at her sympathetically, sitting down again. He ran his fingers through his hair, his eyes searching her expression. "You really care about him, don't you, Miyu?"

"He's my best friend, Headmaster. I love him more than the world itself. I just don't know if Kuran will be... good for him."

Cross sat back down, sighing. "How do you know if anyone will be good for him?"

Miyu shrugged, stretching her long legs (for such a short body) out. "I just know. I can feel people like that... it's part of what I am. In my profession, we have to be good at reading people."

Cross raised an eyebrow. "And you can't read Kaname and Zero-kun?" She shrugged, but this time her eyes betrayed her frustration.

"Not really," she answered. "And I feel like a shit friend because I can't help him. I seriously can't do anything for him... it kills me." She grimaced. "Seeing him there... it took everything I had to stay smiling. He's ruining himself, no help needed. On one hand I want to thank Kuran for being there for him, for trying to help him. On the other hand I want to rip the two apart and bury my fangs in his neck for even attempting to touch Zero." The mere thought made her fangs pulse uncomfortably.

"You're looking at this all wrong, you know," he told her gently. "Just be glad you're here now, and that Zero is going to be helped. The methods... they don't matter. It's Zero's decision. What you
need to do is think of the good coming from this. He has you by his side now as comfort, to help him understand and deal with everything, and Kaname, to... okay, I'll admit, I'm not sure what Kaname's doing for him besides playing bond buddy, but I'm sure it's important. Either way... the good, not the bad, Miyu-san."

She sighed, her eyes closing while she forced herself to take several deep breaths. "You're right," she said after a long while. "Thank you, Headmaster. I'm going to bed."

"Any time, Miyu," he called after she left.

She trudged back down the hallway, her eyebrows furrowed in frustration. She knew what the headmaster said was true, but she was still having a hard time accepting it. She wasn't sure what to do. Did she let things play out, or interfere? But if she interfered, and Kuran was the right one for Zero...  

She stopped dead in her tracks and forced herself to take a very deep breath. She was overthinking it. Obviously, it was Zero's decision. If she interfered, she could cause great damage. Her instincts may have been good, but they weren't infallible. She was just an old, worried friend. She couldn't meddle in their affairs—because if she did, and Kuran was right for him, she would feel horrible.

She ran a hand across her forehead, brushing her hair back. She frowned. All the constant worrying wasn't going to help any one, least of all Zero. She was doubtful Kaname would attempt to make the blood pact tonight, anyway. It would make it incredibly spontaneous and kind of out of nowhere, even if Kaname had been planning it for months.

"Ah-h!"

Her eyes widened, making her way slowly to her friend's door, her heart thudding in something close to fear.

"K-Kaname, not so hard!" she heard, the soft moan freezing her from the inside out. So it was too late, she thought, feeling sick again. It was already too late. What was done was done.
"Zero, are you sure you want to do this?"

The honest answer was no, he did not want to do this, but what choice did he have? He could be bound to Kaname for life—very much alive, and able to torture Kaname by stopping him from being with Yuuki (though according to the vampire's confession, that wasn't exactly an issue). He could ruin Kaname's life, ruin the lives of those around him. He could ruin his own life, he could continue to hate himself and he could learn to despise Kaname like he'd wanted to the entire time… but he couldn't.

"I'm going to," he answered softly, burying his face in Kaname's shoulder. The brunette had hugged him when he'd answered and Zero was sure he'd felt him shake just the slightest bit, his entire body relaxing in what he assumed was relief. "What I want… what I really want doesn't matter anymore. You… are my best option." He felt the hand stroking his arm pause before continuing and he felt a shred of guilt return. "I'm sorry," he added softly. "That my reasons aren't what you'd… like them to be."

Kaname just shook his head. "In time, Zero. Nothing is impossible unless you make it."

Zero gave the vampire a dry smile. "So optimistic… is there any possibility that this won't work?" He had to make sure his survival was a guarantee. He wasn't about to throw his life away for a mere possibility—Kiryu Zero did not deal in chance. He dealt in fact.

Kaname answered, albeit hesitatingly. "There is absolutely no way that this won't save your life," he said, but his stroking fingers paused again. "If you're really considering it, I should warn you, perhaps, about the smaller details. I wasn't going to mention them if you were just going to deny the idea, but…" He trailed off.

Zero paused as well, glaring at Kaname suspiciously. "Details?" he repeated flatly.

The brunette nodded, his face impassive, but there was something burning in his wine-colored eyes Zero didn't find himself fond of. "You won't like it." Zero sighed. He liked very little as of late. What was one more thing to add to the list?

"Hit me," he prompted.

"You're going to want me. Sexually," Kaname told him bluntly, though his eyes still had that little flicker of something he couldn't put a name to. His expression was entirely serious, but Zero snorted, patting Kaname's shoulder awkwardly.

"I know you're self-confident, Kuran, but—" Kaname's look turned pointed (though he managed to smile despite himself at Zero's half-joke) and Zero groaned, making a dramatic face. He was half-tempted to turn away from him, pull away from the brunette's arms, but he steeled himself against the urge. Better to learn now; he had a feeling he'd be fighting the urge to run from Kaname for a long time. "You know what? Don't tell me. I don't even want to know."

Kaname didn't like that, the displeasure clear on his face. "Zero, I think you should be aware of what you're getting into," he began, but Zero clapped a hand over his mouth.
"I don't want to know," he repeated. "If I have to become your sex slave, let me do it unawares." Kaname looked dumbstruck at this idea (he was sure Kaname was thinking it was somewhere along the lines of sheer stupidity, but he didn't care about that vampire's opinion, thank you very much!) but shut his mouth underneath Zero's hand.

"If you so choose..." Kaname said carefully, still unsatisfied but aware of Zero's stubborn personality. "If you so choose I will subside." He finished with a sniff, wrinkling his nose in distaste of the younger's choice. Zero managed another smile and removed his hand from where he'd let it linger on Kaname's chin in fear that Kaname would start informing him once more.

"Thank you," the ex-hunter murmured, putting his hands in his lap, fidgeting. He had no idea how to go about this—and on top of that, he had very little idea what 'this' entailed. "So, um... how is this done?" He winced at the way his voice trembled and cheeks darkened slightly.

Kaname stroked his cheek while he thought about the best way to describe it. "Sex, obviously," he decided at last. "Blood-sharing. A quick spell. It's not the most difficult of rituals, though it should be interesting with you being a force-turned." Zero rolled his eyes at the tweak to his nose Kaname gave him, forcing down the snub of irritation. He couldn't respond to Kaname's affections that way, even if they were a new thing... he lost himself to the thought for a moment. Honestly, all touches were so similar, despite the different emotions behind them. A kind touch and a harsh one were both basically the same thing, fueled by different fires. He was used to responding to one with his anger; it would take time to respond to the other in a different way.

"What do we need for this shindig?" Kaname was the one to roll his eyes this time, his left hand absently tracing circles on a spot on Zero's back, who wouldn't lie and say it didn't feel undeniably good. He'd never had much experience with physical affection and he felt... deprived of it somehow.

"You and I, Zero," he answered patiently. "Just that." Zero peered up at him, obviously debating something to himself that Kaname did not interrupt until Zero spoke once more, his tone quiet and entirely too self-conscious for his tastes.

"So... right now?"

Kaname blinked down at him, cocking his head to the side. "Now? I wouldn't have thought you would be so eager..."

"To get it over and done with, dumbass," Zero corrected, chuckling. Honestly, it was kind of funny, the mere thought that he and Kaname would ever be in this situation. He truly thought it would never happen (he'd never thought about it in the first place, anyway), and now that it was, he was having a difficult time taking it seriously.

Kaname smirked at him, finally regaining a bit of his typical arrogance. Zero wasn't sure if he was relieved or saddened. "I assure you, Zero, by the time we've gotten it over and done with, you're going to be wanting it again."

Zero glared up at him, gritting his teeth to avoid yelling at him. He took a deep breath, and spoke. "Bullshit." Kaname laughed at him, his arms still around him loosely, jostling him and disgruntling him further. "I'm not fucking kidding," he griped.

"I know you aren't," Kaname snickered. "And that's partially why it's so amusing." Zero growled, but the sound was abruptly cut off as Kaname kissed him, effectively startling him enough to stop the threatening noises.
“Did you just kiss me?” Zero asked in disbelief. He may have been close to sitting in the vampire’s lap, but at what point had he said it was okay to be kissed? Kaname wasn’t concerned with his objections, however, and just laughed.

“I did,” he agreed in his deep voice. "And I plan to do it again. You wanted to do it right now, did you not?” Zero pushed him away a bit, still not breaking the circle of his arms. "What? Have you changed your mind?” Kaname peered down into his eyes and Zero looked away, not liking the emotion in those striking red eyes.

"No, it's just… is the foreplay really necessary?” Kaname had to roll his eyes again. "No, don't look at me like that! I just… we're not a couple, Kuran—Kaname," he amended at the brunette's dark look. "I can accept the fact that I have to fuck you—" Kaname snorted. "—but do we really have to do all the lovey dovey stuff? You're saving my life, not pledging to love me forever or some shit like that."

He saw something flash in Kaname's eyes and before he quite knew what was happening, he was stark naked, his clothes in tatters around them, and there was a burning pain searing its way up his spine.

Unsurprisingly, he screeched loudly, the sound quickly muffled by Kaname's hand. When he'd finished yowling like a dying cat the hand was removed and he whipped his head around to glare daggers at the half-concerned, half-amused vampire with a finger up his ass. "You bastard," he hissed and Kaname ceased the almost indiscernible wiggling of the finger he'd quite rudely pressed into Zero's anus.

"You said you wanted it over and done with, and then you went and pissed me off. Consider slight pain your punishment." Still he sounded a bit regretful that he'd hurt the hunter and Zero took a deep breath, patiently waiting for the burning and embarrassment of being bare in front of the vampire to subside to speak again.

"How did I piss you off?” he asked when the pain had faded and left only the strange feeling of Kaname's finger's intrusion. Kaname seemed to understand and moved it slowly, watching Zero's face for every hint of a wince.

"You are rather thoughtless when you speak," he answered and Zero sighed, knowing he wasn't going to get anywhere because the vampire obviously didn't want to answer the question. He didn't like the smirk that curved Kaname's lips upward, however, and had to grit his teeth as the bastard forced in another finger. he leaned down, his lips at Zero's ear. "You hurt my feelings," he whispered and an unwanted shiver went down Zero's spine. It was partially disgust, but he couldn't—and wouldn't—identify the other emotion. He didn't like Kuran—not like that—but his ears were sensitive.

"Kaname," he said sweetly and the Kuran raised an eyebrow at him in suspicion. "It fucking hurts." Kaname laughed again and Zero found himself examining the angles of Kaname's face. It could have been worse, he mused absently. At least Kaname was good looking, at least he was kind. Zero knew how frightening he could be… and yet, he wasn't frightened at the prospect of spending his life at his side. He would never be frightened of Kaname, not ever again. He coughed, his cheeks a light shade of pink as he thought of what he was about to ask. "Kaname… will you… can you make it stop hurting?"

Zero felt those slightly wiggling fingers stop and Kaname blinked down at him, making him force his gaze to the bed sheets underneath him. He expected the pureblood to completely disregard his request, but the next thing he knew there was a hand rubbing soothing circles into his hip and fingers massaging the inside of his passage and he felt the pain subside again.
"Thank you," he murmured and he felt Kaname rest his head between Zero's shoulder blades, felt a small kiss turn into a smile against the skin. He opened his mouth to complain again but he shut it, reminding himself that the vampire did have feelings for him, and that he was the one jumping into a relationship without any romantic attachment at all. On top of doing this to save his life, Kaname was getting to spend the rest of his life with someone he obviously cared about (though a month ago, Zero could have been fooled otherwise) and found reasonably attractive. Zero respected his power and was willing to accept that Kaname was stunning. It could have been worse for both of them.

He didn't want it, would likely never want it, but he could learn to accept it. He may even learn to care for Kaname. He knew himself well enough to know that he'd likely never want him (despite the mixed signals his body was sending out now), but he could learn to accept. Maybe even reciprocate, physically.

He winced as Kaname inserted another finger, scissoring them slightly, but that hand was still rubbing circles into his hip, moving slowly to the inside of his thigh to calm the twitching muscles. After a minute or so of that—and the shameful half-hardening of his own cock—he pushed back against them. He looked back at Kaname with a hard look and the vampire steadied him, reaching out to keep the ex-hunter's face in his direction.

"This will hurt," he said as he positioned himself and Zero steeled himself. "There is nothing to do about that." The teenager nodded.

"I expected that," he said dryly. "I think it's best if you just, er, go for it. If you know what I mean. Doing it slowly would just..." He blushed and growled at the bad timing of his shyness. Kaname nodded against his spine and without any preamble, pushed all however-many-inches (but Zero was willing to bet there were at least seven) of his length into Zero's ass.

Even prepared for it, the pain was horrible, shooting up his spine like lightning and Zero opened his mouth in a silent scream, his eyes squeezed shut tight.

Kaname shushed him, caressing the side of his body sweetly to calm him. He breathed as deeply as could, disgusted that he was still panting. "Distract me," he rasped, begged. "Please." Kaname leaned forward, going for his lips instead of his now barely hard cock. Zero surprised himself by accepting the kiss, relief flooding through him that he hadn't gone for the more intimate touch. He still didn't like the contact, didn't like how sweet it was... but he wouldn't complain. It wasn't as if kissing Kaname was unpleasant, anyway. As a matter of fact, it was... actually... rather...

Zero moaned, the sound breathy and higher than either of them would have expected, but it made Kaname's lips turn up and Zero's own erection stiffen. Kaname took it as a good sign to move and did so, thrusting shallowly. Zero gritted his teeth at the pain, unable to deny that underneath it a small layer of pleasure was building with the friction.

"Zero," he murmured. "You'll need to bite me at some point. But first..." He thrusted again and Zero cried out, shock filtering through him with white-hot lust as Kaname struck his prostate head on. Kaname's face, right next to his own, was warm and when Zero looked back he almost moaned again at the sinful look in the vampire's eyes. He captured those soft lips, of his own accord, and threaded his fingers through Kaname's hair, his arm bent back almost painfully but unable to release the soft locks.

"Ngh," he groaned, trying to force out words and finding them gone from his head. "Kaname, not so... hard..." His name came out as a blissful sigh as the vampire struck his prostate again, any and all further complaints dying on his tongue. He felt Kaname kiss the corner of his mouth one last time before moving to his neck, kissing up and down the pale column, his hips still moving
against Zero's and creating delicious fire between them.

Zero wasn't sure when exactly Kaname pierced him because he lost himself in the sweet ecstasy he was being offered, the pull of his blood toward the puncture being only part of it. Zero couldn't say how long they remained like that, just moving against each other, riding the bliss until finally his own thirst took over him and he pulled away only to push Kaname back into the headboard, his fingers digging into the cotton shirt he wore to push it aside as he straddled the vampire, plunging his own fangs into that tempting neck, retracting them to suck with vigor. He heard a soft moan and moved his body against Kaname's. He heard that bloodstained mouth whisper, "Bibo ergo sum. Repeat that."

"Bibo ergo sum," he whispered against Kaname's skin. The bite marks began to heal as he spoke, his warm breath drying the blood on his shoulder. His voice was hoarse, a strange burning drying him from lips to lungs. He pressed his lips into the blood, hoping for the wetness to help. He touched it, and felt only fire. He wanted to drink, yet felt full, felt completely blocked from it's pleasures...

"Noster nostri." The Kuran's voice, bringing him back from his thoughts, was tight and Zero could understand that, if he felt the same dizziness and the same heart pounding that the ex-hunter did.

"Noster nostri," he finished and he felt a horrible tightening feeling in his chest, a splitting in his mind, and screamed. He fell to darkness.

Kaname woke with an unfamiliar, yet telltale nagging in the back of his mind that transmitted nothing but utter peace. Exhaustion could do that to someone, he reasoned, playing with the silver hair resting on his chest. After the bond had dragged them into unconsciousness, they'd wound up reasonably comfortable, Kaname on his back in Zero's big bed, the ex-hunter draped across him like a blanket… or perhaps a teddy bear, he mused as Zero nuzzled his collarbone, curving closer.

His lips curled into a smirk. Already Zero was itching to be as close as possible. He felt the urge himself, part of that small nag in the back of his mind, the part he closed off as bond-related. A vague hunger, the barest throbbing of his fangs. He wouldn't be in need for another hour or so, being the self-controlled vampire he was, but Zero…

Kaname stroked the slender nape belonging to the mere boy buried into his side thoughtfully. He thought it was quite amusing, Zero's expectations of bonded life. He could see it in Zero's eyes—the boy expected to be disgusted by his trysts with Kaname, expected to have to hold himself back from running away.

The moment he woke—Kaname had done much research on the subject when he'd first entertained the notion that he could obtain the object of his desire and save its life in the process in such a way—Zero would be aching for him. It would be that way for a while, months—maybe even a year. Perhaps even two. No one could tell for certain as it varied in different bond mates, but Zero would need him, off and on but always often, for a very long time.

"Kaname," Zero mumbled in his sleep, pressing ever closer to the warmth Kaname knew he would seek.
"Zero," he murmured, stroking his cheek.

"I hope you're happy, Kuran."

He looked up at the familiar vampire standing in the doorway with a neutral expression, though her own was vividly angry. That shock of orange nestled in brown, those fierce green eyes. Very familiar. There was something in her eyes, though, that made his witty retort die on his tongue. Pain, fresh, and some sort of… worry?

"He will live," Kaname said shortly, his hand stroking Zero's hair absently, but they both knew what he was implying by the fond gesture. "I ask for no more and will force him into nothing."

"You had better hope for your sake, Kuran…" she said softly, her fingers twitching and she crossed her arms. "… that you are being honest. I don't stand around and see him hurt." She meant it, and Kaname was vaguely… relieved that Zero had someone who cared about him so much besides himself, despite the fact that the girl was threatening him. "I would do anything for him, risk anything… including my own life." Her words rang with truth, and promise.

"Then I fully support you," he answered firmly, his voice surprising him with its sureness. "If I ever hurt him, I'd hand myself over to you. No questions asked."

Her smile was dry. "You'd better hope so," she repeated, and pulled away from the room, her hand on the door to close it behind her. "I only came to check on him. I'll be back in the morning. Call to tell me it's safe to intrude." She flicked a folded piece of paper in his direction and he caught it without moving more than his arm. He glanced at the hastily written numbers and set it on the nightstand.

"Goodbye, Miyu-san." He didn't have a last name, so her first would have to do.

"Take care of him."

She left them alone and Kaname stroked silver locks, wondering if he'd made the right decision. He hoped he had.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not responsible for any of the most likely shitty Latin (probably Latin? I'm not actually rereading this as I repost this) I used when writing this fic originally. I was like, a freshman in high school. It sounded like a good idea at the time.
His dream had been nice, compared to what he had been dreaming before that night. He had been alone, laying in a clearing, surrounded by trees. It was the most beautiful place his mind had ever taken him and as he laid there he was smiling for what felt like the first time in a long time. He was calm, and happy, but something… something had been missing.

He couldn't place what it was as he rested in the grass, an arm behind his head, the other playing with the hem of his shirt. It came up to trace a little X over his heart, becoming still once it finished. His lips turned downward into a frown and he looked around, feeling too alone.

"Zero," he heard a voice whisper behind him and he was lifted and pulled against a strong chest. The empty feeling in his own went away and he let a small smile make itself known on his features. He looked up at Kuran Kaname through his eyelashes before maneuvering just enough to place a gentle kiss on his lips. The action made a gentle click in his head, like something settling into place—something permanent.

"I was waiting for you," he whispered, about to steal another kiss, when his dream blurred around the edges and though he could still feel Kaname as though he were real, he couldn't see him anymore.

When he woke, he burned.

The first sound from his lips was a groan, a higher-pitched one than he was used to, and a hand slid down to lightly touch what certainly didn't feel like average morning wood. The stroke, however brief, brought tears to his eyes and no relief, making him whimper as he rubbed himself in some attempt to assuage his burning. No matter what he did, it was no good; he continued to feel that horrible ache, the need that was still sweeping through him like wildfire. He needed something, and that something wasn't there.

His hand reached out, but his bed was empty and a single tear slid down his cheek as his groin throbbed desperately. Biting his lip, he slid to the end of the bed awkwardly, trying not to touch the source of his agony, and put those vampire instincts to good use. Once he was listening, he could easily distinguish the sound of the shower in his personal bathroom from the rain outside and he wasted no time in rushing to the door, opening it with no resistance.

Kaname was in the shower, his pale, perfect body bare and wet. Zero couldn't help the passing thought that even the act of washing his hair was something graceful and aristocratic in some way—and he couldn't stop staring, either. Kaname was just so perfect, so terrifyingly lovely that he couldn't help but want to be owned by this man. However, he couldn't focus on that for too long because the moment he'd seen Kaname, the need had doubled and he nearly went down, his cheeks flushing. His erect cock bobbed between his bare legs, no doubt as flushed as his face.

"Zero," Kaname said in his calm, low voice and Zero keened—fucking keened—as he hurried closer, his body slamming into the vampire's. He wasn't surprised that Kaname didn't budge as if
he was waiting for the ex-hunter's attack, or that his lips were already on his own.

It wasn't just the need anymore, it was the want—the deep rooted desire firmly embedded in his core that told him nothing would satisfy or please him until Kaname's cock was buried inside him, snug and warm and closer than they could ever be otherwise. He wanted it, the beautiful, shattering pleasure Kaname had graced him with the night before, and he would settle for nothing less.

He didn't argue as he was pushed against the wall of the shower, or as Kaname's lips moved to the hollow of his throat. Everywhere Kaname touched would burn even hotter before cooling in sweet relief. He felt hands all over him, touching him with those large, warm hands. He'd always expected Kaname to be cold, but he wasn't—he was always warm. Always, always warm.

Zero shivered when Kaname's lips came up to meet his jaw before touching his ear lightly. "You need me," he whispered. "You'll burn without me." Zero nodded desperately, clinging to the brunette's shoulders as large, smooth hands slid to his thighs and hoisted him up. He wrapped his long legs around a trim waist (though not quite as slim as his own) and kissed Kaname again, unsatisfied with the kisses they had already shared.

"Please," he whispered and all at once he was filled to the fucking brim, the sound of the word in his thoughts ringing through his head. He gasped, loudly and almost sobbed in relief despite the pain. It did hurt, yes, it hurt far worse than he'd expected it to, but he couldn't get enough; he needed—more. "You—good god!" Zero let out a great, shuddering breath as Kaname's lips moved to a patch of skin just below his ear, sucking lightly, sending the nerve endings there into a frenzy.

"Zero," Kaname moaned into that little patch of skin and Zero breathed haggardly, thinking to himself that Kaname's voice was just too wonderful for his own good.

He was fucked raw, wet and perfectly willing underneath the showerhead, the sound of his little noises filling the room. He was drawn closer and closer to his orgasm, clinging to Kaname and chanting his name like a prayer—KanameKanameKaname—because Kaname was his sun, his god, his world…

He came and the burning dwindled to a small point that he ignored, slumped in Kaname's arms. He didn't want to move and didn't, letting Kaname sit him on the seat in the shower and wash him. Kaname picked him up again afterward and carried him out, laying him down on the bed before crawling in next to him and wrapping long, pale limbs around his body. When his head cleared, Zero continued to remain quiet, obviously unhappy about his lack of control.

"I'm sorry. I tried to warn you before we completed the ritual," Kaname murmured into his ear, pressed up against his back and Zero shook his head. He wished he could call up his earlier discomfort of being so close to the vampire, but he found he could not. His body was quite happy with the position they were in and why he felt rather odd mentally about being so intimate with the vampire, his body felt quite pleased with the contact. He knew without asking that it was the bond and as if reacting to his thought, he felt Kaname's ire in the back of his mind through that small connection.

"Not your fault," he muttered in response, his face turning pink from embarrassment, though part of him wanted to blame Kaname. He knew he shouldn't, and he knew he was being petty, but he couldn't help but feel a little unhappy about their situation despite the fantastic sex.

He colored as he thought about it; it really had been great, but he was still feeling a bit off about it. He had liked it, sure, but his mind was still rebelling against the idea. He'd had only the faintest notion of homosexuality before this whole ordeal and now he was practically slapped across the
face with it. He felt Kaname press a warm kiss to the back of his neck and he shuddered, his traitorous cock coming to life against his will. "No," he whispered. "You—"

"Your body isn't quite satisfied, is it?" Kaname murmured in his ear and he moaned, the sound of that smooth voice doing strange things to his already interested body. He felt one of his bond mate's hands coming around to his front, flicking over a pebbled nipple before Zero could protest and he cried out at the oddly arousing pang it sent to his groin. He was rolled onto his back, his entire body fitted atop Kaname's, and Kaname's free hand reached around to grasp at his erection. He felt so needy, his cock heavy with blood, his balls swollen. He wanted, so much it hurt and with every loose pull on his erection he wanted more. His body was impossible to please and the more he had of Kaname, the more his body craved him. With no preamble, he pulled Kaname's hand away from his cock and sat up, turning around to straddle his lover. He leaned down, kissing him hard before sliding his ass downwards to where it met Kaname's cock. He reached back, guiding it into his entrance and seated himself in the pureblood's lap. He moaned into Kaname's mouth at the feeling of his bond mate's hardness pressing into his hardness and pulled his hips up until that slick length was connected to him only by the head and slid back down again, drawing a low groan from Kaname's lips as well that made his stomach tighten with heat.

"Wouldn't have pictured you for such an eager lover," Kaname murmured. "I knew you'd want it, but I never thought you'd savor it the way you are." His lips left tiny kisses all over his jaw line and he keened softly, his face heating with some mixture of embarrassment and lust. His hips were moving slowly now, savoring the fullness just as his bond mate said.

"It's just—" He moaned again loudly and Kaname began moving with him, thrusting upward and working Zero into a hot frenzy, knowing nothing but the warmth around him and the feel of Kaname's lips on his as he was drawn into a deep kiss. "God, Kaname, it feels so…" He couldn't come up with a word to describe it and instead just kissed Kaname harder, picking up the pace of his hips and encouraging Kaname to do the same.

He came shortly thereafter, his release just as brilliant as it had been not long before. He collapsed onto Kaname and breathed hard, attempting to catch his breath before the next wave of lust hit him. "How long will it be like this?" he managed to breathe, letting the slow movement of Kaname's hand on his back relax him.

"What do you mean?" Kaname asked, sounding guarded. Zero looked up at him with a dull fire in his eyes. He was obviously trying not to get upset, but the truth of the matter was that he was panicking and didn't know what to do.

"I mean, just how long am I going to be pining for you every other second like some damn whore?" he snapped, his tone offsetting the comfortable intimacy of their bodies. Kaname kept his tone patient, not wanting to upset Zero anymore than he already was. He hadn't expected Zero to be a sweet, patient bond mate at first—nor did he expect Zero to care for him, but he had hoped and to see Zero so bitter, anger directed toward both him and their situation, was a little disappointing.

"You can't really tell with these sorts of things," he answered carefully. "You're going to want me for the rest of our lives, though control is the main issue. The main period of… heat, shall we say, lasts for varied amounts of time. The shortest recorded heat period lasted for a month, and the longest around four. After that you'll learn control over it—essentially, your body will realize you don't need to have sex with me as often as you feel like you need to now."

Zero's expression was rather flat. "What you're saying is that I'm going to be your bitch until I die?"

"I won't abuse the privilege, Zero," he ground out. "Besides, I feel a similar attraction for you,
though I'm able to control it far better than you are, which is because I'm the dominant in this relationship." He paused and examined Zero's expression, kissing him softly. "Zero, I've explained to you that I care for you, have I not?" Grudgingly, Zero nodded, yearning to lean up and kiss the pureblood again. "I won't hurt you, I swear. Can't you trust me, love?" He felt his cheeks heat up at the endearment and nodded.

"I'm sorry for snapping at you," he said softly. "I'm just..." He struggled to keep his temper in check. "Frustrated." Kaname nodded and kissed him again, satisfying his urges. "Will I be locked here until my... heat passes?" He seemed to struggle with the concept of going into heat like a cat.

Kaname winced, and nodded. "You can leave, I suppose, but I wouldn't suggest it—I won't be leaving, either. We need each other now... but if it helps, you can have visitors. Miyu expressed a certain desire to see you once you've calmed slightly." Zero's cheeks turned a harsh shade of red.

"You mean, Miyu... she knows?" The brunette nodded. "Oh, god, just kill me now," he groaned and Kaname chuckled slightly.

"She assumed that I was going to offer before I did so, it seems," Kaname snorted. "Your friend is... clever, it seems. She wasn't happy about the whole thing. Would you like to see her?" Zero bit his lip, thinking about the whole thing, and nodded quickly.

"Yes," he decided. "I want to see the brat." Kaname couldn't help but laugh at that and nodded, reaching out toward his phone, which lay on the nightstand. "I'm going to get dressed." He sounded almost sulky and Kaname had to stifle a snicker, watching him disappear into the closet with a fond look. When Zero emerged again, he was fully dressed in a simple t-shirt and sweatpants, obviously not putting much effort into his appearance, and Kaname was off the phone. Miyu had hung up the moment she heard the 'he's ready to see you' and Kaname couldn't help but admire his lover. He tried to feel badly about forcing Zero into a future with him, but when Zero standing there with his slender limbs and round ass, how could he?

"You realize you're going to be taking those off the moment she leaves?" he asked casually and Zero gave him a half-smile.

"I realize that," he said with a roll of the eyes. "Hence the sweatpants." He paused, then added in a way that could be almost considered affectionate—"Idiot."

They heard a soft knock and Miyu stepped into the room, her footsteps silent, and when she did Kaname calmly stood and walked into his bathroom, closing the door behind him. Miyu didn't comment on Kaname's less-than-appropriate appearance but merely walked over and sat gingerly next to Zero on the bed. He didn't say anything for a long while, just listen to his own heart beat, faintly hearing Miyu's.

"How are you?" she asked at last, running a hand through her hair. A slip of orange slid through her fingers.

"Been worse," he grunted, resisting admitting the truth. He didn't like saying so, but in all honesty, he was feeling good about his life. A far more primal part of him was pleased with Kaname, pleased with the promise of close contact with the vampire, and the human part of him, though washed from his blood, wasn't too upset about the whole thing either. Kaname took care of him in more than one way, cared for him and, if he was reading between the lines as well as he thought he was, had practically promised to love him. He could have ended up with far worse-- Aido, for instance. He would prefer a thousand of Kaname to Aido.

Zero stayed silent, waiting for the lecture he was sure was coming. Miyu had been there for his
years of vampire hatred on the phone every time he needed to rant, been his confidant. Until Kaname, she had been the only vampire he cared for, but now, he could feel warm feelings inside of him directed toward the pureblood. He wasn’t quite sure if it was the bond, or if the bond had just given him the opportunity to let them out, but he knew they were there, underdeveloped and pathetic as they were.

“I’m sorry,” she said quietly after a long while. The ex-hunter blinked, looking over at her in confusion. “I knew Kaname was going to ask you, but… these past few days I was in Kaien’s library, doing some research, trying to figure out another way to stop you from going level E.” She bit her lip. “Honestly, I’ve been researching since that beast did what she did to your family, and every time you called to keep me updated, to talk about Yuuki and Kuran and Cross… I got even more fired up.”

“And?” Zero choked out. He’d seen her worked up like this only once or twice before and he didn’t like the sight.

Miyu hung her head. “Nothing. There was absolutely nothing, besides mating with a pureblood and bleeding your sire.” Suddenly, she looked up, her green eyes sharp. “I didn’t want this to happen to you. I wanted to walk in here and talk him out of it when I heard his plan. I wanted to find some other alternative, but you completed the ritual before I could talk some sense into you.”

“And can you blame me for not wanting you to wind up like my parents?” He tried to come off as offended and instead just sounded hurt.

“You will be a slave,” she snapped. “You may not have to follow his orders, but he has your life in his hands and you know it! He will be able to control you, will be able to blackmail and threaten you if the mood strikes him and even if it were someone I knew and trusted I would not want this for you!” Zero leaned away, taken aback, and Miyu stood, moving in front of him. “It’s not like I resent your precious Kaname specifically—” At her emphasis of his bond-based infatuation, he blushed and looked away. “—but can you blame me for not wanting you to wind up like my parents?”

His jaw dropped and her eyes widened, the blood rushing from her face faster than Zero’s had rushed to his. “Miyu…” He tried to make his jaw work but it wouldn’t and Miyu looked away.

“So now you know,” she said calmly, but he could tell that her blood was boiling, though from what, he couldn’t say. “My mother was a pureblood and my dad was the poor sap that fell in love with her. He was attacked by a pureblood for being in a relationship with her, and Mom, the generous woman she was, made the bond with him so he didn’t go level E.” She said all of this casually, as if it didn’t mean a thing to her, but he could see her eyes growing wider and wider in anger. “She spent all the time I was alive ordering him around like a slave. Having someone at your every whim is hard to resist, Z. My mom loved my dad, but she wound up threatening to stop feeding him, stop everything if he didn’t do as she said because the power got to her. She was a slave master, and he was the slave.”

“Miyu…” he whispered. “Why didn’t you ever tell me?”

“Why should you have to know about my family’s dirty little secrets?” she snorted. “You were friends with me, not them, not my family. You didn’t need to know I’m the product of a loveless marriage and you don’t need to pity me!” She growled in frustration. “I’m not telling you this to make you feel bad for me, Zero! I’m telling you this so you’ll understand my concern.”

“I understood it in the first place,” he murmured. “But Miyu, Kan—Kuran—isn’t like that. He has enough power of his own; he won’t lord it over me. He cares about me!” The human still hiding
inside of him shuddered in something a little less overwhelming than revulsion, but he knew that little human had little to do with who he was anymore. He had a new self, a new consciousness, separate from both his human and his vampire sides, some mixture of the two, and that consciousness found that his relationship with Kaname wasn’t so revolting.

“Now he does,” she said softly. “But that will always change.”

“Miyu.”

They both looked over at Kaname, who stood dressed only in a pair of slacks, a towel hanging around his shoulders. Zero felt his body surge at the sight, but Miyu just looked down in shame. Kaname’s expression was unreadable, but when he spoke, his voice was gentle. “I would kill myself before winding up like Togu Umiko.” Miyu’s jaw tightened at the sound of her mother’s name and her gaze remained fixed on the floor. “Zero is important to me. I won’t harm him.” She nodded before looking up and nodding again, teary eyes determined.

“I’ll trust you, for now,” she announced after a doubtful glance at Zero. "I don't have a choice, it seems." Neither of them mentioned the fact that Hizuri Miyu had been Togu Miyami in another life, or that she’d changed her appearance and her name just to escape her past. Neither mentioned she was famous for being abused because the only thing that mattered was Zero. They agreed on that much, and a silent truce was called between them. They both came with baggage, and Miyu was sure her problems were only just beginning, but Zero was what mattered.

"Thank you," he said calmly, looking far fonder of Miyu than he had a minute before. "And I do hate to say this, but if you take a look at your friend, you'll notice that's time to go, unless you'd like a show."

They both looked over at Zero, whose body was shaking, his pupils dilated, staring at Kaname as if trying to devour him with his eyes. "I'll go," Miyu said softly, then snorted and added, "But get that girl he's so fond of in here soon. Yuuki misses him something awful, and Kaien stuck me in her room, so I have to hear about it all the time." Kaname smiled wryly.

"I will. I assume I'll see you tomorrow, Miyu." She nodded, thankful he was being respectful of her self-made identity, feeling the strength of their truce and left Kaname to his lover. She closed the door behind her and sank against it, closing her eyes and focusing on her breathing. She left shortly thereafter, trying to ignore how her world was crashing down around her.

The pureblood stood and regarded the shuddering seventeen year old, lilac eyes turning violet with need. He was so beautiful, all slender limbs and smooth skin. Zero would always want him like this, would always be looking up at him with awed eyes and bruised lips from hard kisses, yet he would still be his Zero, fiery and strong willed.

He quietly stepped closer, reaching down and slinging Zero's arms around his neck before he knelt down for a kiss. Zero accepted his kiss eagerly, held him tighter to his body and pulled Kaname down on top of him. Zero took his bond mate's face with his hand. "We could work," he whispered. "I want this to work."

Kaname nodded. "You could love me?" He nodded in response.

"I want to," he breathed. "I don't want to be bonded to someone I don't love. I'm sure I could…” He continued to babble, unsure of where all those sappy sentiments had come from, but he didn’t—couldn’t—regret them. Kaname smiled genuinely, a happy smile that made his entire face light up. Zero opened his mouth, probably to say something ridiculous about how amazing Kaname's smile was, but Kaname quieted him with a kiss.
His world melted away.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

More naughty stuff, or at least naughty descriptions.

Zero lay in bed, his body properly fucked and thoroughly sated, with an half smile on his face. The bed was a mess, there was dried cum trailing from his right nipple to his navel, and his entrance was still twitching in satisfaction but he was perfectly happy right where he was at the moment.

Oh, yes. He'd gotten it good. Zero was coming to find that he loved those hours he would spend in Kaname's arms, more than he thought he could. Of course he wasn't going to whine or complain about it; he'd made this decision himself, and besides- he was cared for and treated warmly by a person more angel than man, or vampire as the case may be.

Speaking of...

Zero sat up, ignoring the twitch from his lower body, and gave the bathroom door a dirty look for having stolen his lover. He tried not to pout like a child, but he much preferred basking in post-orgasmic bliss with Kaname rather than without him. Zero sighed and flopped back onto their less than presentable bed. He trailed a hand down his stomach, irritated with himself for feeling lonely. He knew that part of it was their bond- sweet, beautiful thing that linked him with someone he certainly didn't deserve- and part of it was his rapidly developing feelings for the man he shared his bed and his life with, but it didn't stop him from hating the loneliness.

"You look deep in thought, love." Zero opened his eyes and smiled at Kaname, an expression that he found came much easier around his lover, who knelt over him and have him a gentle kiss. His gorgeous bond mate was clean and oh so lovely, muscles under pale skin just rippling with power...

He moaned into Kaname's mouth, his fingers dancing over to touch those muscles when he felt Kaname smile and his hands were pushed away. "Again?" he whispered against Zero's swollen lips, who keened and nodded, trying to pull him back.

"Why not?" he said, his voice deep and husky and god, he wanted Kaname so fucking bad...

"I never said no," the vampire chuckled and without another word Zero’s thighs were gripped and pushed into his chest, something long and hard driven into his all-to-willing body with a loud cry from the silver-haired ex-hunter. He felt that primal part of him, the vampire controlled by the lust from their bond, reach out and though Zero was in control, he couldn't help giving it what it wanted- he wanted it, too. Zero was strong, not at Kaname's mercy, and broke his lover's hold to wrap his legs around Kaname's waist, giving his arms space to reach up and entwine the vampire in his arms.

Zero cried out like a bitch in heat as his bond mate thrust directly into his prostate, sending pangs of need straight through him. He hadn't known, before Kaname, that his body would be so willing, so pliant for another man. He'd also been unaware that he could develop feeling for this particular man, and he'd been wrong on that account as well.
"Mm," he hummed into the brunette's ear, rolling his hips to meet every thrust. "You feel so-" A direct blow to his prostate wrenched a cry from him and made his back arch like a bow. "Good," he finished in a growl, his very erect cock leaking onto his stomach. "God, Kaname, harder!"

He felt the length inside of him disappear for just a moment and he was pulled to his feet. Knees weak, he whined before being pulled into pale arms and lifted. The second his legs wrapped around Kaname's strong abdomen, he was shoved almost violently against a wall and drilled so deeply he screamed. It wasn't an easy thing, making Zero scream, but Kaname always seemed to manage.

"Hard enough for you?" Kaname rasped in his ear, his voice deep and completely saturated in promise. In response, Zero groaned wantonly, knowing how thoroughly debauched he must look. He didn't quite care, because Kaname was going at it with everything he had and he suddenly couldn't care about anything but the feeling of the brunette buried deep inside of him.

Zero came once more shortly thereafter, thoroughly pleased and wrapped in Kaname's arms as he was carried to the shower, the vampire's cum dripping from his entrance. "Insatiable," the brunette chuckled in his ear and he rolled his eyes, smiling fondly.

Their shower turned out to be fairly innocent for the first ten minutes or so, but as far as Zero’s libido was concerned, there really was no limit on how many times he could become aroused so long as his lover’s body was within the vicinity. Kaname brushed up against him as he washed and Zero couldn’t help but want to please him. Kaname hadn’t been surprised as the silver-haired ex-hunter slid to his knees eagerly. He wasn’t by any stretch of the imagination an expert at giving oral sex, but he found himself more and more fond of the act, despite how he might have looked on it before their bonding. Looking up at Kaname’s face as he was brought to orgasm when not blinded by his own… well, Zero liked it, in the most simplest terms.

He paid careful attention to the head, suckling and licking, and lapping up the precum like it was something sweet. It certainly wasn’t, of course—more salty than anything though he found it oddly pleasant. Kaname made him feel so wonderful, though, so why shouldn’t he return the favor? His lips wrapped around Kaname’s shaft tightly, hollowing his cheeks and he couldn’t breathe but why should he want to? He felt a hand in his hair and he moaned around the length in his mouth, warm, a pleasant weight on his tongue.

By the time they clambered out once more, Zero was grumbling about the half-hardness that plagued him because his lover was, admittedly, just that good. Kaname dried him off, smirking the entire time, and Zero tried to hit him at least twice for being a tease. He said 'tried' because he succeeded once, but every attempt after that was thwarted. Kaname left him dry and wrapped in a very large blue towel to dress, and knowing that he wouldn't be allowed to touch Kaname again until that night (though Zero didn't really approve of this 'learning control' plan), he sat and watched the show until Kaname glared at him and nodded in the direction of his own clothes.

"You're such an ass," Zero grumbled as he pulled on a pair of jeans. He buttoned and zipped them, pulling on his white button up, wondering briefly when it had gotten to the point that he was so lazy that Kaname had to pick out his clothes.

"Kaname! Zero! Are you decent?"

Zero perked up at the sound of Yuuki's voice and looked out of the bathroom at his friend then scrambled out, fully dressed. "Hey, Yuuki," he greeted her somewhat breathlessly, his cheeks just somewhat pink.

She looked up and smiled at him, removing the hand covering her eyes. "Thank god you're
dressed!” she chirped brightly, coming over to give him a hug. "I promised I’d visit today and I was able to come over a bit earlier than I was going to."

"You do remember Kaname and I see going out for lunch, right?” he asked and Yuuki nodded.

"I figured I’d leave when you two do… that is all right, isn’t it?” Zero shrugged and nodded. "So, other than lots of gay sex, what's going on in your neck of the woods?” she asked, making herself comfortable at the table in Kaname's miniature kitchen. They'd moved into his chambers after the bonding, having decided that they were technically married in the eyes of the vampire laws and Zero's dorm was way too small for them both even if they weren’t.

Zero put water on the stove for tea, trying to come up with an answer other than ‘more gay sex?’

“You seem to be getting on well,” Yuuki chuckled as he handed her a cup of tea after several minutes of thinking and coming up with no answer. “The bonding is going well, then?”

He smiled almost unwillingly, his cheeks turning just the slightest shade of pink. “I… well, yeah, I guess,” he mumbled as he sat across from her. "Erm, fairly well.”

Yuuki chuckled at him. “You know, it’s silly of me to say so, but I never thought you and Kaname would be so happy together. You have no idea how shocked I was when Miyu explained to me what happened.” She paused, and perked up even further. “Oh, Zero, Miyu-san is just wonderful,” she gushed with her wide, open smile. “You told me about her, a little bit, a long time ago, but she’s so much more wonderful than you said. I’m rooming with her now and I couldn’t ask for a better roommate.”

"Miyu is wonderful, isn't she?” he agreed, sliding into the seat across from her. "I owe her... more than I'd like to admit." Yuuki laughed and he joined her. When Zero’s laughter died down, he took a sip of his tea, knowing what he wanted to ask her and feeling uncomfortable with asking. His dilemma was postponed when Kaname walked in, dressed simply in slacks and a button-up. He came up behind Zero, giving him a quick kiss. Yuuki watched with a raised eyebrow as Zero smiled against his lips, his cheeks turning a light shade of pink.

“You two are like newlyweds,” she commented, her tone almost suspicious.

“Said simply,” Kaname answered with a shrug. “We are. There will be no one else for us for the rest of our lives.” Yuuki’s expression was one of pure curiosity.

“And that’s okay with you?” It was obvious her concern was for Zero, who merely shrugged, unable to keep his eyes from Kaname for too long.

“I couldn’t picture being with anyone else now,” he replied almost absently, then stilled as the meaning of his words occurred to him. He hadn’t thought about it with any depth before, but the idea itself was a bit startling. He peered upward at Kaname like he’d been in some sort of trance, though he knew he wasn’t, and examined his face, open for the moment and so beautiful it made his heart pound.

“You act like a schoolgirl in love,” Yuuki added, but this time her voice was less suspicious and more soft. "I admire that. The idea is a little weird, but then, I should have expected that. I guess I never really pictured you two together.” She did sound a little unsure, like she wasn’t quite certain how her words would be received. “Not that it’s a bad thing,” she continued quickly. “I just meant I hadn’t thought so much of the possibility. You do sort of look good together, and all—”

“Do we?” Kaname chuckled. “I suppose I haven’t thought so far.”
Yuuki’s smile was a bit warmer this time. “Yes, you do, actually. It’s weird, because you’re both men—I’d never thought any two guys were cute together before, but you are. It’s… really strange,” she admitted. “But cute. Zero’s tall, but he’s still shorter than you and a bit more… slender, I guess. He still manages to be manly and all that, but it’s still obvious that you take care of him, that you’re the one in control…” Her cheeks turned red and Kaname laughed, his hands on Kaname’s shoulders, massaging gently.

“I resent that,” Zero grumbled, but Kaname leaned down and kissed his cheek, quieting Zero and leaving him to pout.

“You guys dressed?”

Zero threw his hands in the air in defeat, his pouting increasing significantly. Did everyone think they had nothing on their minds but sex? Would their friends always visit and first ask if they were dressed? Such would be their luck!

“Oh, good,” they heard and Zero watched with a sour expression as Miyu sashayed into the kitchen, immediately going for the tea. “Sorry to intrude, Kaname-sama,” she said cheerfully. She’d taken to speaking to the taller vampire so formally, though they all knew it was in jest. “Hello, Z, what has you looking like a strawberry?”

He didn’t answer, only glared and crossed his arms. She snickered at his expression and took the seat next to him, putting a hand on his shoulder and squeezing comfortingly. “You’re rude,” he grumbled and she just laughed at him. “No, I’m serious, you brat. You’re rude.”

“And you’re getting fucked in the ass by the prince here,” she teased, poking Kaname in the stomach lightly.

Zero’s cheeks darkened. “And you swear like a sailor,” he muttered, making his friend roll her green eyes. He watched as she brushed a strand of orange out of her eyes and couldn’t help but smile when she grinned at him.

A month had passed since their bonding and the heat was passing. Still very much present, primarily during the morning and evening, but passing, and Zero was almost surprised with how comfortable he was with Kaname. The vampire was warm and romantic. He doted on Zero like none others had since he was a child. He could remember being so small, wrapped in his mother’s arms with his brother’s hand in his own…

Yuuki watched him with a half-smile as he thought. “You know, Zero, everything is all right now.” He nodded, but couldn’t help thinking back. It seemed that his family was the only thing he was missing, yet he felt like there was a gaping hole in his chest.

As if he knew what the ex-hunter was thinking, Kaname leaned down to press another kiss to Zero’s cheek and murmur in his ear, “Your brother will come around, love.” Zero ducked his head. Nearly two weeks ago, he’d sent a letter—old fashioned, but preferred amongst the hunters—to Ichiru, begging him to visit, hoping for approval. He knew that his relationship with Kaname would be just fine without his brother’s blessing, but he’d hated Zero for so long and now, he wanted little more than to make amends. Being with Kaname reminded him of the family he lost and he reached out, hoping to gain it back to no avail.

“Is that what’s got you all worked up?” Yuuki asked curiously, if not a little hesitantly. “Ichiru? I don’t think I’ve heard you talk about him in… way too long.”

Miyu stiffened, looking over at Yuuki, but Zero spoke before she could. “He’s still pissed at us for
Shizuka’s death, and he was never fond of Kaname in the first place. He’s like I was about vampires.” He winced and Kaname kissed his temple soothingly. He’d been a bit surprised to find how affectionate Kaname really was, but he wasn’t complaining. “Or, more specifically, he hates Kaname and I and uses the fact that we’re vampires as an excuse. I really couldn’t tell you what he’s up to now, only that he’s living with some pureblood.” He tried to roll his eyes in exasperation, but the attempt was half-hearted.

“Zero,” Miyu said softly. “Have you gotten in touch with him?”

He looked up at her. “Yeah. Sent him a letter and everything, no response.”

Miyu didn’t look too happy about that—almost unsettled. “I—nevermind. Um, it’s about lunchtime, isn’t it? You guys were going out to eat, yeah?”

Zero looked over at her, his eyebrows furrowing together in confusion. “Well, yeah, but since you guys came over, Kaname and I were going to go a bit later. You just got here, and—” Miyu shushed him, waving his words away.

“No, it’s fine, you should go! I only meant to stop by to check on how things are going with you two; Yuuki-chan and I have to do a bit of research today, so we’ll be going.” Yuuki’s eyes gave away her own confusion, but she nodded, giving Kaname a ‘what?’ look that he returned with a shrug. “Besides, I’m not all that comfortable watching you two being all sweet and cuddly… gross.” She gave Kaname, who had his arms wrapped around his bond mate comfortably, a pointed look that made them all laugh. While they both knew this was probably a legitimate reason, Zero didn’t think that was all. She had looked too alarmed a moment ago for it to have been nothing.

“It’s not gross,” Zero grumbled a second after they heard the front door open and close, playing with his tea. Kaname pushed Miyu out of his head, deciding he could analyze her worry later, leaning down and giving Zero a kiss that was eagerly returned. “So, lunch, then?” Kaname nodded, laying another soft kiss on the corner of his mouth.

“Sounds good,” he agreed. “Where do you want to go?” Zero grinned as he twisted in Kaname’s arms and stood, pecking him on the lips before going over to the counter and grabbing their picnic basket. Kaname watched him go affectionately. It still surprised him somewhat that Zero was adapting so easily. He could remember the silver-haired teen swearing up and down that he would ever only tolerate Kaname and here they were, kissing more than the average couple even touched and practically living off of sex. He had a sudden desire to go back in time and give his lover’s past self a huge ‘I-told-you-so’, but he had a feeling that would be counter-productive.

“I was thinking the garden, just inside the woods behind the day class dorms that the headmaster doesn’t think I know about,” Zero answered, sliding the picnic basket onto his arm with another grin. Kaname nodded, picking his phone off the kitchen table where it had been resting and slipped it into the pocket of his slacks.

“Sounds good to me,” he replied and they left. Their walk was pleasant, joining hands as they walked through the sunlight. The few students around did their best not to stare—the night class students were asleep, but all the day class students were switching between classes and had enough time to watch in amazement. Most of the school knew they were together, though not on any certain terms when it came to why, but the majority of the school was still in shock, it seemed.
Lunch was a quiet affair just as pleasant as their walk. Zero spent most of the hour they spent in the middle of the lovely garden talking, asking Kaname questions and debating the answers. Personally, Kaname loved hearing Zero speak, especially about things he was passionate about. Zero’s voice was very expressive and Kaname was convinced he could listen to his lover ramble on all day if it were in his nature to do so.

As it were, Zero only spoke after thinking, and didn’t speak as much as Kaname would have liked. He kept him going during lunch, but the only time he could get him to ramble was when he was angry. He didn’t quite mind that, though—it made his voice more of a treat for when he did hear it and he was perfectly fine with that.

“Are you listening to me?”

Kaname raised an eyebrow. “Hn. Of course I am.” He leaned down, peering down at the ex-hunter, who was laying down on their picnic blanket with his head in Kaname’s lap. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

“You have that creepy smile on your face again,” he answered with a half-chuckle, his expression thoughtful. He motioned for Kaname to lean down and when he did he leaned up himself and kissed his lover lightly. “Mmm. It’s weird how much I like doing that.”

Kaname couldn’t help but laugh and just kissed him again.
Chapter 6

"A wedding?!!"

Zero was fond of Kaname, maybe even beginning to love him, and he knew that they were going to be together forever anyways, but it didn't change the fact that he was not prepared to admit that in front of everyone. His expression gave that explanation away without the wordy shrieking it was sure to have induced, however—jaw dropped, violet eyes wide, a flush rushing to his cheeks faster than it normally rushed to his groin when Kaname was being his usual sexy self.

Really. He’d been all ready to ask Kaname to lunch—or perhaps a little wrestling of the sexual variety—and then his bond mate had to drop this on him.

"Zero-" Kaname sighed, but the level D cut him off, his voice high and almost squeaky in panic.

"I'm not ready for that!" Zero moaned, flopping down onto their bed with a loud whimper. "Not even close! I would have to wear a ring, and everyone at school would know that we're married, and I'd have to wear a dress or something!" His breathing escalated into hyperventilation.

"Zero," Kaname said softly, kneeling down next to the bed and taking his hands, wondering for a minute how they could be so soft despite all the rough housing. "We're already bonded, love. The Council just requires that we have a ceremony; that's all." He rubbed circles into the back of Zero's hands. “Besides. There will be no dress.” Zero groaned and buried his face in Kaname’s neck when the vampire chuckled at him.

“I would still have to wear the ring,” he mumbled. “And people would still know.”

“Most of the school already knows we’re together anyway,” Kaname pointed out. “All of the vampire community knows, as well. It’s not a secret.”

“But who gets married at eighteen?” he whined as Kaname pulled him down to where he sat on the edge of the bed, into his lap. He relaxed slightly when his lover’s hand began rubbing circles into his lower back, but they both knew he wouldn’t be calmed so easily. “I mean, seriously. Not to be clichéd or anything, but won’t most of the school think I’m knocked up or something?”

Kaname sighed heavily, but Zero pulled back to see a smile twitching his lips upward. “Zero. You know as well as I do that even vampires cannot get men pregnant and even if they knew about our kind, no one in school is going to jump to that conclusion, I assure you.”

Zero couldn’t help but chuckling under his breath, knowing full well he was being melodramatic. “I still have to wear the ring,” he repeated as if this was his biggest worry—it wasn’t, really; he knew it would be tasteful, but the fact of the matter was, Kaname was avoiding it.

“Yes,” Kaname replied with a roll of the eyes. “You would have to wear the ring. You actually wouldn’t be able to take it off, but that’s beside the point.” Zero pulled back and glared at his bond mate.

“What do you mean, I wouldn’t be able to take it off?” he hissed. He really hadn’t seen that one coming.

Kaname winced. “Well, the thing about bonding is that the rings would be magicked, for all intents and purposes… basically, we have to be very careful and very certain about the rings we want because they won’t be coming off until one of us dies.”
Zero had a moment of weakness, thinking to himself that he probably wouldn’t take it off even if Kaname did die before him. “You’ve turned my life all topsy-turvy,” he muttered, but kissed Kaname softly and tried to ignore how he was being held like a woman, all curled up in his lover’s arms. “I hate you.” His voice was muffled, but unfortunately Kaname heard the petulance.

“You don’t,” he murmured with a half-smile and Zero felt him press a kiss to his temple.

“I don’t,” he agreed quietly, and wondered to himself why that was. He had enough reasons to hate Kaname, but he just couldn’t remember for the life of him what they were. “I hate that I don’t, sometimes,” he said gruffly, running his sensitive lips over the material of Kaname’s shirt. “I don’t understand what happened to make me want you so damn much.”

“You didn’t even hate me before we bonded,” Kaname said gently. They both knew that was true. “God knows I didn’t hate you. Maybe for five minutes, here and there. I was jealous of your relationship with Yuuki, for a while. But it doesn’t matter now, does it?”

“I’m not a child, Kaname,” he muttered, turning his head to press a kiss to the soft, pale skin of his lover’s neck. “You don’t have to talk to me like I am.”

“I think you’re confused, not a child,” the vampire responded. He slid Zero off of his lap and slid backwards, arranging himself to give Zero room to lay next to him. Without questioning it, as was their custom nowadays, he crawled over to him and laid down with his head on Kaname’s shoulder.

“I am,” he sighed, tugging Kaname closer. “I’m graduating,” he whispered. “I didn’t think about the fact that keeping up with my classes online meant that I’m still graduating. I’ll have to leave the school… where will that leave me?”

“With me,” was the response, but Zero could tell that he’d given Kaname something to think about as well. He just curled up closer, closing his eyes.

He knew his body was reacting to their proximity, knew his pupils were dilated, blown so wide they swallowed the iris- he could just control it. Another month, and he was finally learning to keep his libido in check. He rolled his eyes at the thought. He felt like he was going through puberty again and he couldn’t decide whether he hated it or not. By closing his eyes, he could hide his arousal for just a little while, just until his scent clued Kaname in. Within the next month, the “heat” period would be officially over, and Zero could begin his life as a normal vampire.

He looked up at Kaname, unable to help it. He hated to love these sweet moments and he liked the calm on Kaname’s face every time. He knew with absolute certainty that Kaname loved him and knew that he was well on his way to fully reciprocating. These moments were his happiest, just him and Kaname without their daily gaggle of girlfriends, as Zero lovingly referred to them.

“I’m fond of you,” he said thoughtfully. Kaname peered down at him with a smile.

“I’m fond of you as well,” he replied in turn and rearranged himself, nuzzling Zero’s temple, kissing that spot again. He inhaled deeply and Zero watched as wine colored eyes turned crimson, knowing the game was up. “You smell so good, Zero,” he whispered. He knew he did; Kaname liked to tell him how heady his scent was when he was aroused and he’d heard it enough times to know he’d never forget it.

“You do, too,” he hummed against Kaname’s lips after another soft kiss. It was true; Kaname smelt musky and manly with just a hint of something lighter, like lilac, and Zero normally just described it as such because he was partial to the idea of his bond mate smelling like the flower that shared
the color of his eyes.

Zero found that he’d never loved it more than when Kaname was inside of him, peppering kisses all over his face and looking at him with those eyes that were never quite so open when they weren’t tangled together. He didn’t need to read his eyes when he could just pick emotions out of Kaname’s head through their bond, but he liked to read the love and lust and want in them. He liked knowing that he drove Kaname crazy the same way the vampire drove him.

“Will you marry me?” Kaname whispered against his throat and Zero almost did a double take—Is this really the right time to ask that?—but Kaname didn’t move, his erection pressing into Zero’s prostate and he stuttered out an affirmative before he could even think about it. “God, you gorgeous little—“ Kaname cut himself off with a groan and Zero rolled his hips, crying out, his fingers tangled in Kaname’s gorgeous hair. "You will never want for anything, Zero. You will be fed and wanted and loved, and you will be treated like a god. I will be so good to you, Zero."

His promises made Zero dizzy with need, knowing everything he said was true. "Kaname," he breathed, shifting to roll the vampire on top of him and wrap his long legs around his trim waist. "Kaname- ow!"

Kaname sat up in alarm and Zero followed him, his hand going to his shoulder. He blinked in shock, not registering Kaname's low growl, when his fingers came back flecked with blood. As efficient as ever, Kaname pulled him from the bed and ran his tongue over the small wound until it healed. Zero's jaw was slack, uncomprehending, as Kaname ripped apart the mattress.

"Is that a knife?" he asked in confusion. It wasn't, really - just the long blade of one in Kaname's palm.

"It's time to up security, it seems," Kaname said grimly. "It was positioned where your neck would normally be. Any more pressure and the cut would have been much deeper." His frown worried Zero. "It wasn't there last night."

"When we went for breakfast earlier?" Zero suggested, feeling numb. Why would anybody be trying to hurt him?

Kaname knew something was wrong and came up, kissing him softly as a distraction. "It's okay, Zero." Zero didn't return his kiss, just stood there in shock. Kaname sighed, pulling his phone out. "We have a problem," he said into it when his contact picked up.

Their kitchen had become a conference room. On Zero's left, Kaname sat with a death grip on Zero's hand. On his right, Miyu was silent, her hand on his knee. Aido - an interesting choice in Zero's opinion - and Kain were across from them, along with a vampire from the Council Zero neither knew or recognized by appearance.

"Who could possibly bear any ill will toward Zero?" Aido asked, his voice more serious than the ex-hunter had ever heard it. "He hasn't even been introduced to the public yet. Your marriage hasn't been announced yet!"

Zero bit his lip, unsure of what to say. He was sitting closer to Kaname than he usually insisted on and he knew that worried Kaname. He'd never reacted like this to being threatened before; normally, he would shake it off and threaten the bastard back. This time, though, he was unsettled. He didn't know who was threatening him, and judging by the situation, it was a little more serious
of a threat than a bored vampire.

"Unfortunately," the Council vampire droned quietly. "There is very little we can do other than increase security, which would have been done when your marriage was announced either way."

"There must be something," Miyu began, but Zero's own hand on her shoulder stopped her. She groaned, gritting her teeth. "Toki-san," she said calmly, her voice controlled. "I request to be apart of the protection force." The vampire slid his gaze from Kaname's frustrated expression to Miyu's.

"We may need you elsewhere, young soldier," he murmured. "As part of our police force-

"You can spare me," she insisted. "I've technically been off anyways, Toki-san. I'm still young; I can be spared should it come down to that, and I have the experience to do what needs to be done." They all knew that her age was part of his hesitating. While vampires intending to be part of the police force were trained and started young, they were only very rarely as young as Miyu. They usually waited at least until after graduating high school before joining, but it Miyu was a special case and they all knew it. "I have more reason to protect them than anyone else," she said softly. There was another underlying reason, Zero was sure of it, but it didn't matter so much to him.

"I suppose that can be arranged," he sighed and they all heard her sigh of relief. "But as I said before, there is little that can be done. Aido and Akatsuki here will be keeping a careful eye out, as well." Suddenly, their presence made more sense. They were the two vampires at Cross Academy that Kaname trusted most to be his eyes and ears, so of course he would go to them for help.

Zero's relationship with Aido had been rocky at first - everyone knew that the ex-hunter wasn't fond of him - but recently, he'd found himself far more amiable toward the blonde. While vampires intending to be part of the police force were trained and started young, they were only very rarely as young as Miyu. They usually waited at least until after graduating high school before joining, but it Miyu was a special case and they all knew it. "I have more reason to protect them than anyone else," she said softly. There was another underlying reason, Zero was sure of it, but it didn't matter so much to him.

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"Speaking of weddings," Kain said quietly, drawing his attention away. Zero had never noticed before, but his voice was a low contrast to Aido's and complimented it well. He had no doubt that together, they would be harmonious. "When are you announcing yours?"

"I was going to meet with the Council again this afternoon," Kaname sighed. "I was informed last night that we had to have a ceremony, and I wanted to give Zero time to adjust to the idea of publically announcing our relationship before telling everyone we were to be married."

"I can take care of that, since I'm here," Toki offered. "I should warn you, Kiryu-san - once announced, weddings among our kind are taken care of quickly and efficiently, usually before two months have passed. The only question is whether you'd like a traditional wedding or more of a
modern one, and the rest will be taken care of by a planner and the Council."

"What does the modern wedding imply?" he asked, looking up at Kaname.

"A party," Miyu answered in his stead. "Basically. Refreshments, et cetera. All of which would be planned by me and paid for by Kaname."

Zero shook his head quickly. "I don't want a party." Taki nodded and pulled out a notebook, writing something down - taking notes, most likely, so he knew what to tell his fellow Council members. "If that's okay with Kaname, I'd like something simple. We'll take care of our outfits and rings, if that's okay, and our personal invitation lists. Other than that, I want as little involvement in the planning as possible. Miyu can take care of all that; it's right up her alley."

Miyu grinned proudly, leaning up to kiss his cheek. "Do I get to help pick out your tux, too?" Zero rolled his eyes, not even deigning her question with an answer. "All right, be a stickler," she pouted and they both laughed.

"That's more involvement that we normally see," Toki told him, sounding somewhat surprised. "Picking out your own outfits is a big job, Kiryu-san. Are you sure you're up for it?"

Zero rolled his eyes. "I can pick out something to wear, even if it has to be gaudy and ceremonial. I'm sure you have people among your - our - kind that will be capable of helping. And as for the rings, if I have to live with it for the rest of my life, I have a right to pick it out myself." He puffed up, feeling mature, and Kaname chuckled against his hair and kissed the side of his head lightly.

"Who's going to be best man?" Aido asked, trying to sound casual and failing. "For either of you, I'm not picky." Kaname bit his lip to hide a smile, but Zero immediately went quiet. Miyu, apparently, didn't need the ability to peer into his thoughts. Aido looked between Miyu, her expression concerned, and Zero with a look of increasing alarm. "I'm sorry if I said something offensive--"

"It's fine," Zero said softly. "I was just... my brother." The room went quiet. "I was sort of hoping he would be my best man, not that I've thought about it much... but still. He hasn't even responded since I sent him a letter about our bonding." He shifted uncomfortably. Kaname was pressing light kisses up and down his temple and Miyu contented herself with smoothing out his hair comfortably. Zero sighed. "I'm not a child, you guys. I appreciate the support, but you don't need to cradle me."

"There's been a lot of that lately," Kaname murmured. "We don't mean to treat you like you're a child, Zero. It just so happens that--"

"--We enjoy coddling you," Miyu finished for him, a small smile on her lips. "Taking care of you is my one joy in life, next to dying my hair crazy colors." Zero raised an eyebrow at that day's bright pink and his lip quirked upward.

"I know," he intoned. "I'd just appreciate it if you guys didn't forget I'm fully capable of taking care of myself." He gave them both meaningful looks. "Even if I have to submit to you--" Here he glared at Kaname. "--or if you're some big bad soldier or whatever, doesn't mean I'm not just as big and bad. I was a hunter, you'll kindly remember."

"I know that," Kaname murmured.

"No, you don't," he sighed. "I'm not breakable, you two. I know that these past several months have been weird, and I haven't been myself. I get that." He paused, to make sure they were listening.
“But I’m getting back on track. Really. Back on track to being a complete bad-ass again.”

Miyu laughed. “You’re right, Z. You were pretty badass back in the day.”

“*Back in the day?* I’ll kick your ass here and now if you want it to go down like that, I swear to god, pixie girl—”

“You couldn’t kick Yuuki-chan’s ass, and she’s more of a girl than you are, pun intended!”

“I don’t want to hear it out of you, Five-foot-one-san! I wouldn’t even need training to deal with your tiny little—”

“Shut your mouth! I’m five-foot-two, thank you!”

Kaname sighed and rolled his eyes, unable to stop the smile that turned the corner of his lips upward. He shushed his lover and pulled him back down into his seat, causing the ex-hunter to pout.

“I missed you,” he murmured into his ear and Zero’s cheeks turned pink. He pressed a small kiss to his cheek before Zero rolled his own eyes and turned to give Kaname easy access to his lips.

“Okay, no more of that!” Aido complained and Toki looked like he agreed, though his mouth was shut tight. They all laughed when Zero turned the color of a tomato and looked about ready to start yelling again. “*Anyways. The wedding?* I was thinking a purple theme, to match Zero’s eyes. And, you know, it’s the gay pride color, so…”

Zero settled into his seat, preparing himself for wedding talk. Despite himself, he smiled when Miyu jumped in with her agreement and her own ideas. He could leave this to them, he thought as he turned and gave Kaname another soft kiss.
Chapter 7

Zero couldn't quite believe this was happening. There was a permanent smile fixed on his face (even though he couldn't help it, he was sure it looked as odd as it felt) and an arm around his waist. Normally, he didn't let Kaname treat him like a woman, but at the moment, he was acting like one, and they were planning their wedding. It gave Kaname certain privileges, he was sure.

“—I’m thinking violet… maybe lilac. Matches his eyes and everything…”

"We are not having a purple-themed wedding!" Zero hissed suddenly as he caught the last half of Yuuki's conversation with the planner. "No-freakin'-way." He broke free from Kaname's grasp, who was trying not to laugh at him. Zero personally thought he should have been far more interested in what Yuuki wanted to do because honestly, it was their wedding (loath as he was to admit it).

A few feet away, Yuuki, Miyu, and the planner—a rather frightening woman in her late forties with the darkest eyes he’d ever seen—looked away from the checklist and over at Zero, who was huffing with his hands on his hips. Great, Zero. Way to be gayer than normal. He crossed his arms instead. While he may have come to terms with the fact that he was marrying and having fantastic sex with a man, it didn’t mean he wanted to act the part.

"Zero-kun," Yuuki sighed. "You don't really know anything about wedding planning--purple would be so lovely and more than a little appropriate. I mean, you said all you wanted to be involved in was your tuxes and the rings--"

"That doesn't give you free reign to turn my wedding to a gay pride festival!" He watched as Yuuki’s lips twitched upwards and a blush rose to his cheeks faster than lightning. “Don’t say it.”

“You’re so cute,” Yuuki managed before he groaned in frustration, throwing his hands into the air and making his friend laugh. “I mean, really, Z, you’re just…”

“Adorable,” Miyu finished in agreement, smirking. She tucked a strand of hot pink hair behind her ear and appraised him. “She’s right, you know. You just get cuter and cuter!” She laughed when Zero’s blushed darkened and Kaname felt the need to come up behind him and wrap his arms around the ex-hunter’s slim waist.

“Calm down,” Kaname murmured in his ear, pressing a kiss to the skin just below it. “Your anxiety is driving me mad, just sitting there in the back of my mind.”

Zero wished that he could feel Kaname’s emotions the way Kaname could his. He’d been assured that one day, the bond would fill out equally between them—that some day, they would probably be able to even speak through the link between them. Instead of complaining about it like he normally did, he just focused on the irritation and pulled back in time to watch as Kaname’s expression went from half-concerned and half-amused to incredulous.

“How old are we?” he asked with a raised eyebrows before pulling Zero in again. “Two?”

“Fourteen,” Zero shrugged. “I mean, the whole pulling pigtails things… combined with sex… yeah, fourteen. Maybe fifteen.” Kaname just rolled his eyes and granted Zero a chaste kiss on the lips. “Hey, stop, Kaname!” He pulled away, a reluctant smile on his lips.

“Still set on turning down the purple theme?” Miyu asked, her voice bored. She was sitting at one of the circular tables with a carefully trimmed eyebrow lifted, watching them. “Because with that
display, seriously, it’s starting to make more and more sense. Really, Zero… as your best friends, can’t you trust Yuuki-chan and I to make this decision?"

Zero just glared at her for a minute, ignoring his bond mate’s kisses, laid up and down his jaw line. “You’re dead set on it, aren’t you?”

"Unfortunately for you, I am," Yuuki agreed. "It's not like I plan to deck you out in pink and rainbows, Zero."

"I think you would if you could," he grumbled, but the soft lips on the side of his neck made him smile anyways. "But you're not going to... right, Yuuki-chan?"

“Maybe not pink,” she agreed with a smile. “The color would definitely clash with Kaname.” The smile became a smirk. "Look, Z, we're definitely going with purple, for several reasons. So if you can't deal with that, then maybe you shouldn't attend the wedding."

Zero blinked confusion. "But-"

Her smirk widened. "Exactly."

"Congrats," Miyu forced out, trying not to laugh. "Yuuki, I think I'm a good influence on you."

Yuuki spared her a small smile before turning back to Zero. She didn’t say anything at first—just smiled faintly and examined him, her dark eyes searching for something.

“Trust me,” she said finally and Zero just sighed, nodding. “Thanks. I think that someone wants to talk to you, though—Kain-san, what’s wrong?"

Kaname dropped the arms around Zero’s middle, turning to face his tall friend. Kain's expression was grim, his mouth set into a hard line. "I was patrolling and found this sitting on the doorknob of your room," he told them quietly and Zero watched as Yuuki's mouth dropped open. "I think you should read it, Kaname-sama." Miyu stood and moved to Zero's side, her green eyes wide.

Kaname silently took the letter, opening it with hands only barely kept from ripping it apart. Thankful for the weak connection he did have, Zero took told of Kaname's arm, coming close to his bond mate's side. He could feel the turmoil and gently took the letter from Kaname’s hand, staring down at the name on it.

"Dear Kiryu," he read out loud, his voice the slightest bit shaky.

You're making a mistake, Kiryu, and I want to help you. Call off the wedding and kill the pureblood. Marry him and you will regret it for the rest of your enslaved life, trust me in that. Save yourself, or I will do it for you whether you like it or not.

-A friend

"A friend, my ass," Miyu hissed, her bright eyes burning with anger. There was a recognition in them and a fierce determination in them, as well as fear, only barely concealed.

"I'm not killing Kaname," he said softly, his voice hard. "Whoever wrote this is either insane or stupid." He handed the letter back to Kain and wrapped his arms even tighter around Kaname's. The pureblood didn't say anything, just pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead and tugged his arm free to pull Zero into an embrace.

"I know that," Kaname reassured him, but Zero could tell by the stiff line of his body that he was worried. He knew it probably wasn't because he thought Zero really would attack him, ruin
everything they had carefully built, but he still felt the need to reach up and cup his soon-to-be husband's face, peering into his eyes.

"I would never hurt you, nor would I sit by and let someone else," he murmured, searching Kaname's dark, wine-colored eyes. "Even if it meant my own demise. Promise." He nodded, hoping that would back up his statement, and Kaname smiled faintly, nodding in return.

"I know that," he repeated quietly, leaning down to kiss him softly before turning to the girl standing by Yuuki's side, a good inch shorter than her, hands clenched into fists. "Miyu-san. Speak." Even if they weren't friends, they all knew Miyu had come to respect Kaname since the first threat and when he nodded in her direction, her mouth opened immediately.

"I know that handwriting," she explained promptly, her eyes narrowed. "I know it very well, actually - we're dealing with more than the usual idiot who doesn't support inter-level breeding with purebloods. Your "friend", Zero, is dangerous."

"We assumed that when the letter spoke of killing Kaname instead of Zero," Kain answered, his low voice hard. "But who is it? If you know the handwriting-"

"Stop," Kaname said softly, his eyes going from the letter to Miyu, who was rightly trembling in rage. "Miyu, is it who I think it is?" No one commented that he dropped the suffix. Zero blinked, remembering a hazy conversation that had been buried from the heat. Miyu didn't say anything, but looked away, biting her lower lip to avoid speaking. Her eyes told everything she didn't say out loud and Zero pulled away from his fiancé to gather his friend into a hug. He'd never been very good at comforting people, not Yuuki, not himself, not anyone, but he had to do what he could for Miyu. She'd always been there for him; he owed her. On the other side of her, Yuuki rubbed circles into her back, sending a confused look toward Zero, who shook his head tightly.

She was rigid, shaking slightly. "If she hurts you, I'll never forgive her," she mumbled into his shirt before breaking and pressing her face into his chest. Her arms wound around his waist and Zero was reminded what it was like to be the protector instead of the protected, doing his best to take care of one of the few people that mattered to him.

He heard Kain ask Kaname what Yuuki had wanted to know, who answered quietly in his soft voice. Yuuki gasped quietly and Miyu just crushed herself closer to him. He couldn't remember the last time she'd ever let herself appear anything but strong, angry, or bubbly, and seeing his friend like this just broke his heart, already fragile enough.

"If she hurts anyone I care about I won't forgive her," Zero said to Miyu in a fierce voice. "Not you, not Kaname, not Yuuki. Not anyone." Miyu let out a deep breath and nodded, pulling away. Reluctantly, Zero let her and watched her wipe her red eyes, though no tears had actually escaped. "I will do anything to protect you all, anything at all." His eyes met Kaname's and they not knew what he was promising.

"She's not going to attempt anything here and make it out with her life," Kaname said grimly, his voice suddenly tight, ignoring the wedding planner that was giving him frightened looks. She wasn't a warrior, though a vampire, and was more of a delicate flower than a fighter. "Zero, I need to talk to you. Yuuki, Miyu-" Still, no one commented on the dropped suffix and Zero felt his throat tighten as he realized how fully his bond mate was accepting her. ".-do continue to plan the wedding. It should be the grandest event any have seen." He spoke through clenched teeth and wrapped his arm around Zero's shoulders. His grip actually sort of hurt, tight and unyielding, as he steered Zero away from the beautiful garden (royal-sized and owned by the Council) they were planning to have the wedding in.
"Kaname," Zero said slowly, his voice firm. "Let me go. You're hurting me." But Kaname didn’t let go, just loosened his grip and led him inside, dragging him into an open room and shut the door behind them. It was a cathedral, huge with spiraling staircases and paintings that spanned several feet. The room they were in was lovely too and appeared to be a sitting room of sorts, small, with several couches. Finally Kaname’s hand left his shoulder and Zero stepped away, glaring at his fiancé.

“What is your problem?” he hissed, poking Kaname in the chest. His shoulder was definitely going to bruise; he was only glad that he was a bit sturdier than a human, because he probably would have broken a bone otherwise. Kaname was never that rough with him; something was seriously bothering him, which, given the circumstances, wasn't surprising. "I realize you're upset about the letter, but I'm not going to let you man handle me!"

"I can't let anything happen to you," Kaname breathed and Zero went still, looking up at Kaname wordlessly. "Zero, you don't understand, you don't. People want to hurt you, Zero, more people than those who want to hurt me, I can assure you. I don't matter now, Zero."

"What are you going on about?" Zero asked hesitantly. "You silly man," he huffed when Kaname just gave him that look. "You want me to forget about your safety and only look out for myself."

"You need to protect yourself, Zero," Kaname told him hotly. "Your safety is more at risk than mine - the knife told us that! It's only the beginning, Zero. As the wedding nears more and more threats are going to come."

"I can take care of myself and take care of you at the same time, Kaname. I don't have a choice, do I? Because you're not going to let anyone protect you. You're going to make all of the guards watch over me and leave you on your own! This isn't a normal situation, Kaname. You've been threatened, too, by someone far more threatening than some back alley conservative!"

"How do you know anything about this woman?" Kaname asked through gritted teeth.

"I knew about her before, Kaname. I just didn't know she was Miyu's mother. You'll remember I was a fucking hunter - I knew all about the high profile vampires." His voice dropped down enough to be classified as husky and he stepped forward, pressing himself against Kaname. "I knew all about you, the pureblood boy who always acted twice his age. And now you're everything to me." He gritted his teeth too, glaring at his soon-to-be husband, hating that his voice cracked. "I need you safe as much as you need me safe. I love you, you bastard, so don't tell me you don't matter here."

Kaname went still, then sagged. Neither of them had expected Zero to say it first and mean it, but it was obvious that he did.

"Zero," he whispered. "I don't think you understand. You are my everything- my only weakness." Kaname took a deep, calming breath that, unsurprisingly, didn't seem to calm him. "I love you, too," he said in a soft, defeated voice and Zero went still at the returned admission. He wasn't quite sure it had actually sunk in that they were really both in this for good. "Is it so bad that I want to keep you safe?"

Zero hated crying but couldn't stop it. "We'll have to figure something out," he whispered, breathing hotly against Kaname's parted mouth. "Because I can't stand to lose you either, bastard."

Kaname swept him up, a primal sound of anguish coming from him. His lips were on Zero's before the vampire could object and instead let Kaname kiss him like his life depended on it. Kaname's hands were all over him, up and down his back, on his waist. His lips were hungry, his hands were
desperate and Zero could feel Kaname's heart thundering in his chest. He didn't resist as his lover pulled them toward a sofa before landing on it and tugging Zero into his lap.

He straddled his fiancé and kissed him back, hard. He knew what Kaname wanted, knew they both needed it, and he knew any vampires around would be able to hear them and smell the sex, steering clear of them. Automatically, he rocked his hips over Kaname's hardening cock. He wouldn't have gotten hard in this situation under normal circumstances, but their instincts were gently pushing them toward what they needed. They needed reassurance, needed intimacy.

"I love you," Kaname choked, sounding so utterly defeated that Zero whined, pressing harder against him.

Clothes were wrestled off and erections were briefly played with before Zero’s impatient keening drove Kaname’s hand closer to where it needed to be. The fingers pressing into his entrance were a relief, dry as they were. Neither cared and Zero's body was slowly accommodating, though he appreciated it when Kaname pulled them out to suck them thoroughly into his mouth before replacing them.

Zero was quickly coming undone, not caring that he was supposed to be planning his wedding or that he was in a holy place, or that he was still a tad sore from the night before. He just whimpered and rolled his hips into them, needing them.

“Kaname,” he groaned into the brunette’s ear, bucking his hips desperately. “Please, just—“ Kaname’s fingers dug into his prostate and he let out a low moan, the muscles in his arms flexing as he gripped Kaname’s shoulders even tighter. Kaname buried his head in Zero’s neck, biting down into his shoulder to keep from making those little noises much closer to growls than anything else and Zero had to bite his lip to stifle his cry. Fingers slipped from him with a wet pop, his entrance contracting and twitching in want, too impatient to wait.

“You’re so fucking beautiful,” Kaname murmured and Zero opened his mouth in surprise to comment on his language, so unusual from his fiancé, when he was suddenly filled with the thick length of him and no sound came out. His back arched against his lover, his toes curling, his head thrown back in pleasure. It wasn’t as good as being under him, but he it was still amazing, still intense, and his entire body was still thrumming with want.

“You can’t say things like that,” he managed to gasp as Kaname’s hips thrust up at the same time Zero rolled his hips, driving his cock into Zero’s prostate. “Kaname!”

He couldn’t say how long they desecrated that couch, only that it seemed to last forever, knowing only the powerful beat of Kaname’s thrusts and the pounding of his own heart, tight and hot in his chest. He knew Kaname’s breathing, he knew the soft gasps that came from those pretty lips he adored so much. He knew Kaname and the sound of his name, over and over again as he chanted it.

When he came, the blow was intense, so incredible that he screamed. The sound was harsh and animalistic, so hoarse and pleasure-filled that anyone who heard it would know exactly why it had been made. Kaname groaned against him, his hips losing rhythm as they thrust once, twice, more before stuttering to a halt and he filled Zero in hot spurts.

He knew that when he stood, it would run down his leg and they would have a field day cleaning up. He knew that his clothes were now most likely wrinkled and that there was no hiding the mark on his neck, or the limp he’d be walking with for the rest of the day.

He didn’t bother getting up, just let Kaname maneuver them to a horizontal position, Zero still
firmly seated on his softening cock, and the ex-hunter shifted just enough to bend into a half-laying position on Kaname’s chest.

“I love you,” Kaname whispered.

Zero nodded. He knew.
Zero honestly couldn't remember the last time he'd been this nervous. He was pretty sure that his nails would leave marks in his palm and his lower lip would flush from the thorough biting on his lip. His stomach seemed to rebel and Zero could only hope he didn't puke all over his husband-to-be in the middle of the rehearsal dinner.

"It's only the rehearsal."

The voice and the reminder both made him sigh. He knew that Yuuki was right, but Miyu's tugging on his suit wasn't helping calm his nerves; if anything, it was making him think about it even more.

"Chill your ass down," the vampire told him calmly, rolling her eyes. "Drink your tablet-water and breathe. You're not actually getting married until Saturday."

"Don't you think I know that?" he hissed, wincing when she pricked him putting the final touches on the sleeve. He didn't touch his "tablet water" for fear that he would drop the glass if he tried. "It's still a lot to wrap my head around." His self-defense was meager at best and both of his best friends ignored him. "Look, I just... it's weird. Contrary to late belief, I didn't spend most of my time daydreaming about getting married."

"I still don't know where that rumor came from," Yuuki snickered. She had found it incredibly funny that most of the school was under the impression he'd been a flaming pouf all his life and had jumped at the chance to marry Kaname. Several members of the night class liked to tease him and say he'd coerced Kaname into the blood bond for that purpose. He couldn't do much about it, but it still sucked. Kaname thought it was funny as well, even though Zero was embarrassed beyond belief. Just because he was marrying a very good-looking man at the age of eighteen didn't mean that he was a wishy-washy girl who'd wanted to.

"Really?" he asked conversationally, though his voice trembled still. "Because I thought it might have been you."

Yuuki laughed and Miyu pricked Zero again, causing him to glare at her with impressive intensity considering the situation. "I wish I had," the brunette girl chuckled. "It was a stroke of brilliance, just because of how badly it riles you up." She smiled at him impishly and he rolled his eyes. Her teasing, surprisingly, was calming him down. His trembling slowed to a stop with several deep breaths.

"He really loves you," Miyu said gently, though he caught her roll of the eyes to accompany it. "Heavens know why, but he does. I mean, you didn't even want this at first. You used to say horrible things to him-"

"Not helping," Zero growled, flushing.

"He really loves you," Miyu said gently, though he caught her roll of the eyes to accompany it. "Heavens know why, but he does. I mean, you didn't even want this at first. You used to say horrible things to him-"

"Not helping," Zero growled, flushing.

Miyu ignored him. "- and you hated him for years! But he loves you. He's marrying you, not just because he has to, but because he wants to. It was his idea to bond with you in the first place, because he cares about you. So quit panicking and just be happy you're so lucky!"

He stayed silent for a moment, contemplating. Then he picked up his glass and took a sip of the brightly colored liquid. "This is disgusting," he said quietly, setting the glass down again. "I want Kaname." His words were significant enough that Yuuki smiled in satisfaction.
Miyu obviously understood that he’d gotten her message as well and dropped it. ”Not in this suit, you’re not,” she snapped, finishing the sleeve of the silver jacket. ”You can wait to bleed Kaname until after the dinner and you change.” He would have argued that he couldn’t wait, thank you very much, but she gave him a stern look and he sighed.

”Fine,” he caved, and she smirked at him. ”How do I look?” He spun slowly, unable to believe that he had actually asked that question. What was with him and being a teenage girl?

”You look amazing,” Yuuki assured him with a warm grin, but Miyu just snorted, unsurprisingly.

”You look fucking hot,” she corrected proudly. ”Mm, I love the sight of a job well done. I think you’re my best completed project to date.”

Zero rolled his eyes at her, not sure how to respond to that. On one hand, he was incredibly proud that he looked nice – he knew he was a pain to deal with and finding colors that went with his strange coloring and personality at the same time was difficult. Silver was pretty much the only color that matched him entirely and the suit itself was incredibly expensive. Miyu had insisted on buying it herself for unknown reasons – an apology, maybe. Perhaps it was just her mothering instincts. Either way, he loved the suit, and looked good in it as well, so he supposed he shouldn’t argue.

”You do look nice,” Yuuki agreed, musing over his outfit. ”It almost matches your hair! Miyu-chan’s right. It’s perfect.”

He stood a bit taller, forcing a calm, powerful expression onto his face. ”So,” he said in a clear voice, giving Yuuki and Miyu a small smile. ”Do I look like the proper consort of a Kuran?” Miyu smirked, her green eyes flashing with pride.

”You look perfect,” she agreed. ”The only one for the job.” She looked around him, giving the clock a glance. ”All right, Consort, knock ’em dead. All of Kaname-kun’s relatives are out there and they’re just waiting to pick you apart. Show them they don’t have what it takes.” She grinned wolfishly, her eyes glowing red for only a moment. ”You are better than them and their pure blood, you hear me? Kaname chose you and don’t let them forget it!”

”I am better than them,” he said calmly. ”And Kaname will tell them that if I ask so I don’t really have to try… but I think I’ll prove it anyways.” He frowned. ”I really hate pureblood niceties.” Miyu rolled her eyes, pushing him to the door. They were borrowing a Council house, one of the older (and far nicer) ones in the district for the dinner and the bathroom they were using to get ready was upstairs, so he would have to walk down the spiral staircase into the entrance hall. He wasn’t happy about the princess entrance he would have to give before they could all proceed into the dining room and eat, but he had no choice in the matter and it would do no good to complain.

”It’s time,” Miyu whispered in his ear, nearly jumping to reach over his shoulder from the back as she pushed him out. ”Confidence, gorgeous!”

”I’m always confident,” he responded weakly, but he allowed himself to be led to the door. Yuuki opened it for him with a wink and Miyu gave him a little shove through it. He easily fell into a smooth gait in a way that no one at the bottom, now whispering amongst themselves, could tell he’d been pushed into it.

Holding his head up high, he gracefully descended the staircase to where Kaname stood at the bottom, smiling at him proudly. A hand extended when he was within reaching distance and he took it. Only Kaname would know how slightly his hand was trembling, and only ever Kaname.
“My fiancé and husband to be,” Kaname announced in a loud, strong voice. “Kiryu Zero.”

The whispering got louder and Zero kept his back straight, his posture tall. He was almost as tall as his consort when he stood at his full height and he did then. He could use all the help he could get.

“Your family is terrifying,” Zero hissed as they swept into the dining hall. “They keep glaring at me!”

“The only one glaring at you is Great-Aunt Ren,” Kaname whispered back. “And she’s insane.”

“She’s not even your great-aunt!,” Zero grumbled and Kaname rolled his eyes. “If she even really counts as a relative. Isn’t she only a distant relative?”

“All purebloods are related in some way, Zero, with few exceptions. Most of the pureblood families are connected.” Zero rolled his eyes, pursing his lips as Kaname pulled his chair out for him. Zero sat down primly, feeling tense as his fiancé took the seat next to him. Kaname’s other relatives swelled around him, taking their seats.

He was in for a shock, however, when the seat on his other side was taken.

He blinked, his mouth dropping, unsure of what to say or how to react. Grey-violet eyes slid to meet his and Zero sucked in a sharp breath. Kaname, who had been saying something quietly, went silent before sucking in a breath of his own.

“You don’t look too excited to see me, brother.”

Zero didn’t know how to respond to that. “I thought-“ He didn’t know what he thought. That Ichiru hadn’t received his letter? That Ichiru didn’t care? There were infinite possibilities since Zero couldn’t quite pinpoint a single one. His thoughts were garbled, but Ichiru just sat back in his chair and reached out, picking up his water glass and taking a sip. Instead of saying anything substantial, Zero said dumbly, “Did you know you’re the only human here?”

Ichiru gave him a brief half-smile, tucking silver hair behind his ear. The smile was bitter, the only kind Ichiru had given him since Shizuka’s death – hell, since before that. “Yes, Zero. I’m perfectly aware. I’m also aware that as family, I have any reason to be here as anyone else.” He paused as Yuuki and Miyu came in, taking their seats as well, across from the siblings. Both girls stiffened automatically, but Miyu mechanically pulled her chair out and sat, glaring at Ichiru with undisguised anger. She hissed something to Yuuki, who quickly sat down as well. “Well, look at that. Second human here.” He gave Zero a charming, entirely fake smile.

“What are you doing here?” Zero asked weakly, his voice sounding off, even to himself. Kaname slid a gentle, reassuring hand onto his knee and gave it a squeeze.

“Attending my brother’s wedding,” his brother said with a snort. “Really. Don’t ask questions you should know the answer to, Zero.” He calmly accepted his plate when the waiter came around, whereas Zero just stared at his brother in open shock, making the vampire passing out dinner sniff in irritation and set it down in front of the ex-hunter with a clang. Kaname took his, eyes never leaving Zero’s face in concern.

“I – thank you?” Really how did any of them expect Zero to respond? Miyu looked uncomfortable and Yuuki looked to be in shock herself, which wasn’t surprising given the circumstances.

“Kiryu-san,” an unfamiliar voice said quietly and Zero forced himself to look away from his brother, ate silently, calmly, without giving him a glance. On the other side of Kaname, one of his fiancé’s numerous, distant relatives was watching him with a curious expression. “Forgive my
intrusion. I was simply wondering... are you not of the Kiryu hunter family?"

Zero winced. This was just one bad thing after the other. He knew several of the people attending the dinner were not happy he was an ex-hunter, but he couldn’t very well lie about it. “I am, yes. I’m no longer practicing, however.” Kaname squeezed his knee and he gave the brunette a brief smile before turning to his food. His stomach was fluttering like mad, but he forced himself to eat. *Discipline, Zero, Discipline.* He also would not puke all over the table. Certainly not.

“Because you fell in love.”

The table went silent and Zero felt cold all of a sudden. Every vampire and human in the room was looking at him, expecting him to say something. He knew some of them would laugh if he denied it. He knew some would get angry if he confirmed it. He knew some didn’t care, and he knew that some of them were waiting for him to say it was true and move on.

The thing was, however, that Zero had only said it a handful of times, and most of them were while Kaname was asleep. The words tasted strange on his tongue and he had yet to get used to it, though he kept trying. He’d never *loved* anybody before Kaname, and there wouldn’t be anyone else.

“Ichiru—” Kaname began angrily, feeling Zero’s mix of emotions through their bond, but Zero held a hand up silently.

“It’s fine, Kaname,” he said softly before turning to face his brother, who was watching him with an odd expression. What was Ichiru hoping to gain from this? He didn’t know and he wasn’t going to ask now. “I didn’t bond with Kaname because I loved him.” He was simply proud that he didn’t stutter on the word. “But I have... come to.” He shifted, uncomfortable. He heard a giggle and didn’t even have to look over to know that Kaname had glared at the offender.

“Well, now that that’s settled,” another, unfamiliar voice snorted. “Can we continue talking wedding plans? Because there’s some specifications I’d like to throw out there…”

Frowning, Zero turned away from Ichiru, who actually looked troubled. He *would* find out what was going on – he was determined.

**INSERT LINE HERE**

“What was that?” Zero hissed, pulling his brother into an empty room. They were going home until the night before the wedding, which they would spend at the location, but they couldn’t leave until Zero had a talk with his brother. “Why are you here, Ichiru?”

“Quick to accuse as always, brother,” Ichiru sneered, but his eyes were still betraying worry. For what, Zero had no idea, but it worried him, too. “Look, I came to figure some things out and warn you, okay? Give me some credit here.”

“You came... to warn me?” Really, he probably shouldn’t have seemed so puzzled, but could he be blamed?

Ichiru sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “Is it so hard to believe? Yes, Zero. I may be unsure of whether I want you alive or not, but hell – I don’t want you suicidal.” Zero wasn’t sure how to respond to that.

“Ichiru, what are you talking about?” He’d thought Ichiru was being funny for half a second before, but suddenly the conversation was serious and Zero was incredibly glad he’d left Kaname downstairs to show his family to the door because he wasn’t sure that this was something he wanted his fiancé to hear.
“I’m talking about Togu-san,” Ichiru snapped, obviously distressed. “I didn’t know anything about her at first, but she took me in after Shizuka-sama was killed but now, I don’t know what to do!”

His face drained of blood. “Togu Umiko?” Ichiru nodded, biting his lip.

“I didn’t know,” Ichiru said softly. “About what happened to her husband, to her bond mate. She’s insane, Zero. I didn’t know. I got that letter from you, but Togu-san got it first, and she was suddenly obsessed with killing Kuran-san and ‘saving you’, whatever that meant.” He took a deep breath, examining Zero’s expression.

“What the fuck,” Zero hissed, unable to think of anything more to say. “Saving me? By killing Kaname? You’re damn right she’s insane!” He was getting angry, his chest tightening. It hurt to breath and he wanted to scream. He couldn’t understand why the world was against him. First the bond, then he’d actually fallen for his lover – and now, someone was trying to take him away.

“You love him,” Ichiru said softly. “I didn’t know that, you know. Neither does she. It’s a bit of gossip going around, even for those of us who don’t stay in touch with the general population very well, you know. What happened to you. Kaname bonding with you to save your life… well, it’s very romantic. A lot of people support it outside the pureblood family. I thought Togu-san would be happy for you. I wasn’t really happy myself, and I didn’t know if I was going to go to the wedding –“

“Did everyone know I would have to get married except for me?” Zero muttered to himself and his twin shot him a glare.

“- but Togu-san was less than pleased, which you’ve probably already figured out.” He finished with an uncomfortable shift of his weight. “I just had to know whether you really cared about Kuran-san, because if you didn’t and you were unhappy, I would have stood by and let Togu-san have her way.” Zero wasn’t exactly pleased to know that his brother would just let his caretaker murder someone, but it was a fight he wouldn’t start. “Of course, now I know you do love him, so I figured I’d give you a warning past the note she left you.”

“Thanks.” Zero itched to hit something in a way he hadn’t felt since before the bonding. Was it normal to be so violent? He hadn’t questioned it before; he’d merely assumed it was an unchangeable part of his personality. But now? He forced himself to take deep breaths and gave his twin a level stare. “I actually kind of mean that.” Then, in a gentle tone of voice, he added, “If it helps, I still care about you, too, otouto.”

Ichiru winced. He hadn’t been called that in so long that Zero could tell he was uncomfortable. “I never said I cared. I just… thought you ought to know.”

Zero rolled his eyes, forcing himself to stay calm. “Troll in the dungeon,” he muttered to himself, and Ichiru gave him a strange look. He coughed, blushing, and continued on. “I’m not kidding, though, Ichiru. You’re still my brother, even if we’re somewhat…”

“Estranged?”

Zero nodded in agreement. “My brother, the wordsmith. I would be kind of pissed if anything happened to you, too.” Ichiru rolled his eyes, obviously shaken up by the whole situation, but Zero stepped closer, unable to ignore the ache in his chest as he took his brother’s face in his hands. His silver hair was soft against Zero’s fingers and he resisted the urge to play with it. He peered into Ichiru’s eyes, determined. “You’re the only brother I have, Ichiru, and even if I don’t do this sappy shit… you know I give a damn about you.”
Ichiru took a deep breath. “I know, a-“

“Zero?” The door opened to the small room they were in and Kaname peered in, visibly relaxing in relief. “There you are.” He gave a nod in Ichiru’s direction. “We should be leaving soon – the car is ready. Do you need much time to finish here, or…”

Zero inhaled slowly and smiled at his fiancé. “Yeah, we’re done.” Then, to prove his point, he leaned in and kissed his brother firmly on the cheek. “I love you, Ichiru.”

Ichiru’s smile was wry. “I love you, too, Zero. Don’t die.”

Odd, as goodbyes went, but Zero knew he meant well. Ichiru waved him out, following them to the door. “Goodbye, brother.”

“Bye, Ichiru,” Zero said softly, allowing Kaname to pull him through the door and out toward the entrance.

“You okay?” Kaname murmured in his ear as they stepped out into the warm night. Zero didn’t answer at first; just stared off into the distance. The sun had gone down long ago and the sky was littered with stars.

“I will be.” He looked over his shoulder to peer at his brother, who stood in the doorway of the Council hall, an awkward smile twisting his lips upward. “I just hope he is.” Kaname didn’t answer, just pulled him closer and kissed his temple. He took the comfort at face value, and let Kaname lead him to the car.
Chapter 9

Zero's body slammed into the wall of the building, his head snapping back against the plaster. Pain blossomed in his lower back, feeling like his spine had snapped, and he crumpled to the ground, everything spinning. Somewhere in the distance - he seemed so very far away - Kaname was doing battle, dodging blows, and Zero tried to force his body up so he could help. Tears stung his eyes as he realized that he couldn't move. His limbs weren't listening to him.

"Kaname," he tried to cry out, but it was more of a hoarse whisper. It was their wedding! It wasn't supposed to be like this.

“Kaname,” he tried to cry out, but it was more of a hoarse whisper. It was their wedding! It wasn't supposed to be like this.

“I’m so nervous.” Normally, the words, true or not, would never had passed his lips. If he wasn’t scared shitless, they wouldn’t have even been thought with his permission, but he was alone in a room with his two closest friends and holy fucking shit it was his wedding day. “I think I’m dying. Tell me one of you knows CPR. For when I have a heart attack.”

“You’re not having a heart attack,” Miyu snorted as she tied his tie, tucking it down with a gentle pull. “You’re being overly dramatic. Retard.” Zero didn’t reply, just sat there wondering why it was always these two who were messing with his clothes. Granted, Miyu had done all of the hard work on the damn thing so he shouldn’t be so surprised, but still.

“Shut up,” Yuuki said with a laugh as she smoothed the fabric over his wrist, putting on the cufflinks. “You look amazing, Zero… and by the way, I have it on good authority that Kaname does, too.” He gave her a weak smile at that. It wasn’t that comforting of a thought, even if the mental image of a smiling Kaname in a white suit was vastly appealing. Then the white suit image reminded him of the seriousness of the situation and he took a deep breath, trying not to hyperventilate all over again.

“It’s my wedding,” Zero breathed, his eyes still wide and panicked. "Kaname and I are getting married - I'm not ready for this! He's not ready for this! Oh my god this is going to be an epic failure! Something is going to go really, really wrong, I just know it.”

"Unless you psych yourself out and trip or forget your vows - which is bullshit, because you've had them memorized for a week - you'll be fine," Miyu said firmly, tightening his tie in a way that could be considered threatening. He gulped, knowing she could probably choke him with it if she wanted. Instead of tightening it further, she just gave him a knowing smile and stepped back.

Yuuki nodded, far more calm as she pinned a flower the lapel of his jacket. "This is going to be one of the happiest days of your life, Zero. I know you're a little freaked out, but it's your wedding, not a death sentence. Just a formality, since you'll be together forever anyway." She sounded so sure of herself that Zero couldn’t help but believe her despite her eternal optimism.

Yuuki nodded, far more calm as she pinned a flower the lapel of his jacket. "This is going to be one of the happiest days of your life, Zero. I know you're a little freaked out, but it's your wedding, not a death sentence. Just a formality, since you'll be together forever anyway." She sounded so sure of herself that Zero couldn’t help but believe her despite her eternal optimism.

Zero took a deep breath, giving the two women a miserable look. "I know that." He sighed heavily. "I do love him, you know. And he knows it. I'm just... really uncomfortable with admitting it to a room full of people I barely know."

"We know that," Yuuki assured him. "But unfortunately, you have to do it." She pulled away, smoothing her dress and giving him a faint smile. She looked almost sad and her eyes were glossy with unshed tears. “I didn’t expect to be so emotional,” she grumbled, turning away to wipe her
eyes. "I hate weddings."

Zero took a shaky breath, rolling his eyes. "We could skip it," he offered weakly and Yuuki chuckled, taking his arm. "I'm about to walk myself down the aisle."

"Figuratively," Miyu shrugged, smiling wryly and taking his other arm. "Since there isn't really an aisle to walk down. You both just sort of meet at the altar."

"Not helping," he said tightly as the two women led him to the door. "I'm dying, I think. This really isn't okay. Yuuki, Miyu, I'm not just fucking scared – I'm terrified! I really shouldn't go out there!" He started pulling against them weakly, not really fighting as they pulled him down the hall to the door that would lead to the side of the altar-stage. He would be getting married in less than ten minutes and he was about to faint, he thought faintly.

Then he took another step and he could feel Kaname, close enough that the string between them grew taught. It was something that grew steadily with the strength of their bond. It wasn't painful - just a metaphorical rope that tied them together so one could find the other with no problems. Now it extended only several feet, but it would grow to extend miles.

Calm washed over him, as well as a feeling of extreme happiness. Kaname. Zero took a deep breath, a smile turning his lips upward. This was his Kaname, who had never hurt him, never done more than take care of him. He tried to remember the burning hatred, the anger, that would swallow him whenever he saw the pureblood’s perfect face, and could not.

"I love him," he said quietly to himself, taking a deep breath. Then he shook his hair back, squaring his jaw. "We're going to get married and we'll be happy. Right?" Yuuki and Miyu shared a look, grinning, and Zero rolled his eyes. "Okay, you guys suck."

“No, that’d be you,” Miyu snickered as she centered him in front of the door. “Or does Kaname-san-""

“I’m going to stop you right there,” Yuuki groaned, blushing lightly, and Zero couldn’t help but chuckle. “I don’t want to know any details of your guys’ relationship. I mean… really. Of course I don’t want secrets between us, but there is a point where sharing becomes sharing too much.”

He rolled his eyes, looking over at the door anxiously. “This is really weird,” he murmured, fidgeting with his cufflinks. “I never actually thought I’d make it to this day. I kind of always assumed I’d be dead before I ever settled down."

“If it helps at all,” Miyu started with a wide, impish grin. “I thought you’d be dead by now, too.” Zero wondered how difficult it was for her to joke about his death, considering how much time she had invested in trying to save his life.

By way of comfort, he leaned over and pressed a gentle kiss to her temple. He’d never been one for affection, especially in public, but Miyu deserved it. She had done so much for him and he so little in return.

“Cheating on your husband before you’re even married, brother?”

Zero felt a strong surge of happiness at the sight of his brother’s face. “Don’t even joke about it, Ichiru. I’m surprised you came.” His tone was fond enough that it was clear he didn’t mean it in a bad way. Ichiru smiled in return, his face warm and open. Zero hadn’t seen him so amiable since they were children.

“I managed to sneak out. I wouldn’t miss your wedding for the world.” Ichiru’s smile was a relief
in and of itself, at least until he turned it on Yuuki and it became borderline lecherous. “You’re looking lovely, as usual, Cross-san. And Miyu-chan! I love what you’ve done with your hair.”

“Flattery will get you no where, Kiryu Ichiru,” Miyu snorted with an eye roll, but Zero could tell she wasn’t as irritated as she would like them to believe.

“Same here. Didn’t you have me last time we saw each other?” Yuuki asked with her hands on her very dainty hips.

“I was blinded by rage and annoyance with everything that had to do with my brother,” he shrugged. “I always thought you were lovely.”

“That doesn’t explain why you’re so friendly with me, however. You’ve hated my guts since we met,” Miyu said with a raised eyebrow.

“You’ve only seen each other like, three times,” Zero snickered, nudging her with his elbow. “Don’t you think hate is a bit too strong of a word?”

“With this one? Never,” she retorted with a reluctant chuckle. “I give in. Friends, Ichiru-kun?” Her raised eyebrow made it obvious she was playing on the familiar suffix since he’d used it with her.

“Friends, Miyu-chan,” he replied teasingly and Zero was relieved to see that his grin was still relaxed and not at all forced. “So when does this shindig start? Because I’m not really wanting to wait here for an hour.”

“Five minutes, idiot,” Zero snorted, lightly pushing Ichiru. “Go, find your seat. Real quick, though – are you coming to the dinner afterwards?”

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world, brother,” Ichiru said, patting Zero on the shoulder. “Go on, a whole new world waits for you.” Zero rolled his eyes, his cheeks darkening slightly at his brother’s teasing. “By the way? Your husband? He’s sort of attractive. You lucked out.”

“You’re straight!” he hissed as his brother dodged a blow to the back of the head, laughing as he made his way back down the hallway to go sit down.

“Doesn’t stop me from appreciating!” he replied with a grin he hadn’t seen in too long. He disappeared around the corner just as a soft knock interrupted them and the door in front of him opened.

“Kiryu-sama?” an unfamiliar man said quietly. “It’s time.”

Zero nodded, gulping nervously. He was never going to get used to being called ‘sama’, but he didn’t really have a choice in the matter. He lined himself in the doorway, a deep sense of calm settling through him when he saw, across the stage, his fiancé standing in a doorway identical to the one he stood in, smiling at him warmly.

The tension in his body left and he took a deep breath.

“And now, to join two young men in the bonds of matrimony-“

Miyu pushed him forward gently and he fell into a step forward. With an unsure glance backwards at Yuuki and Miyu, who smiled at him brightly even though Yuuki was tearing up again, he turned back and fell into a confident step. He was anything but confident, yet the false strength got him to the altar, to Kaname.
Kaname was watching him with dark eyes, a smile curving his lips upward that had Zero sighing almost wistfully, letting Kaname take his hand. Behind them, Miyu and Yuuki snuck to their seats in the front row.

“You’ve asked for a simple ceremony,” the pastor said with a smile. “So we will proceed as quickly as possible.”

This was followed by a long line of gibberish Zero couldn’t make sense of because he quite frankly wasn’t listening. His heart rate was accelerated, his throat inexplicably dry, and all he knew was the warmth of Kaname’s hand against his. His beautiful, beautiful soon-to-be-husband.

It could have taken anywhere from a half an hour, a few quiet agreements on their end, before they finally got to the vows. Kaname was going first, moving to stand where he could look at Zero, presenting a profile to their audience. The family, the friends, the strangers.

“Zero.” Kaname’s voice was deeper than usual, warm and so lovely that Zero’s body thrummed with happiness at the sound of it. “I won’t say much, only that we had a rough start. You were everything I never thought I’d have – fierce and strong. You were beautiful and even more so when you were riled up. That was something I was quite good at – riling you up. Now even more so.” His words were accompanied with a wink.

Zero blushed lightly, settling his features into a disapproving scowl even as his lips wanted to twitch upwards. Kaname grinned at him, waiting for the laughter to cease, before continuing.

“I love you,” Kaname continued. “Everyone here knows that. I bonded with you to save your life because I couldn’t bear to see you die. From the moment you said yes, it led to this moment without a quiver of a doubt. We were meant to be together and I can’t say that there is anyone else I’d rather have standing here with me.”

Zero gave him a weak smile, knowing his voice would tremble when he spoke. Everyone was staring at him, waiting for him to speak, and with another deep breath that did nothing to calm his nerves, he met Kaname’s gaze.

“I hated you,” he began, his voice shaky and unsure. Kaname allowed himself a quick smile, finding the declaration hilarious while the rest of the congregation seemed unsure of how to react. “You were so perfect and everyone just went crazy over you every time you left the moon dorm to go to class. It was exhausting keeping them away from you and it was exhausting to live in the same atmosphere as you. Everyone loved you, except me.”

He looked down at their hands, still loosely tangled together. “Now, everyone still loves you, but the difference is that –” He cut himself off, swallowing uncomfortably. “- the difference is that I do, too. When we bonded I just wanted to be safe. I didn’t want to die and I didn’t want to hurt anyone else. I trusted you and I knew you wouldn’t take advantage of me. Then of course you were just too perfect to resist. Everyone else had fallen for you already. I guess I was a little late on the uptake.” He shrugged, blushing a bright shade of red. “But everyone else didn’t get you. I did. I got an attractive, loving, kind of annoying mate who saved my life. I owe you everything and even if I didn’t, something tells me that I’d probably wind up here anyway.”

God, he’d known there was a reason why he didn’t do the soppy romantic stuff, he thought as he flushed even darker at the applause.

“We’ll make this short,” the pastor said with a little smirk, obviously enjoying Zero’s embarrassment. Zero glared at him and he chuckled. “Kuran Kaname-san, do you take this vampire as your lawfully and eternally wedded husband, to cherish and protect as your mate ship calls for?”
Kaname nodded, bowing his head. “I do,” he answered, his voice strong and sure.

The pastor turned to Zero. “Kiryu Zero-san, do you take this v-“

“I object.”

Zero and Kaname both rose eyebrows, knowing that objections weren’t part of the ceremony. The wedding itself was a formality anyway, so there wasn’t much of a point. Zero glared at the woman who was rising from the stands in an elegant dress. She was dressed for the occasion, long brown hair swept back from her face in a bun.

“I’m sorry, but your objection means absolutely nothing to us,” Kaname said calmly, his voice rumbling over the crowd. Underneath the tight, polite smile, he looked angry – and worried?

Zero examined the woman, feeling that she was somehow familiar to him but he found himself unable to place her – until, at least, he noticed Miyu’s expression, frozen in horror. The vampire was slowly rising to her feet, her wide green eyes locked on the woman Zero realized was even more familiar to her.

Togu Umiko, his shocked brain managed to throw at him and he acknowledged through the daze that she did match the description. Dark brown eyes, long hazel-colored hair, fair skin and a slim build. Zero knew not to take her small size at face value – they all knew the damage a pureblood could do, tiny or not.

“Togu-sama!”

Zero heard the voice of his brother, so close to his own, amidst the whispers filling the chapel and cringed.

Ichiru fought his way out of a row of people, stumbling into the aisle. “Togu-sama, please, stop!”

“Ichiru-kun,” she cooed, a smile turning her lips upward. “Get out of the way, you silly boy. Don’t you understand?” She turned her gaze to Zero. “I’m trying to save the boy. I won’t hurt a hair on his head unless he gets in the way.”

“I won’t let you hurt him,” Zero snapped, wishing he felt nearly as strong as he sounded. “You’re misguided.”

“I’m misguided?” she snorted, raising an eyebrow at him as she casually pushed Ichiru aside, walking up the aisle toward them. Her hips swayed, her step sure, as if she wasn’t attempting to murder a fellow pureblood, who was subtle moving into a defensive position. “My dear sweet boy, don’t you understand? It’s him that’s misguided, thinking that he could just save you like this. Neither of you realize the burden he’s placed upon you. You need him. Think of the power he holds over you!”

“He would never abuse it,” Zero hissed, too angry and too afraid to feel embarrassed about the things he was saying. Acting like a teenaged girl was never something he enjoyed, but it was the truth and the only defense he had. “Kaname loves me! He has enough power of his own; he doesn’t need to lord any over me.”

“But he will,” she said with a twisted smile. “He will. I did and do I look like someone who would want to hurt someone she loves?”

Zero very much wanted to reply that she looked like a complete psychopath even if she looked more like a queen of some sort, but he didn’t. He just clenched his teeth and moved in front of
Kaname just the slightest bit, holding Kaname’s hand tighter than before.

“Free will exists for a reason,” Kaname said tightly, glaring her down. “And it’s time for you to leave, Togu-san.”

Her eyes flashed and suddenly she was in front of them, glaring Kaname down. “See if you can take me, impudent brat. I am older than you, stronger than you, and quite frankly I have far less patience. I want this over with. Zero-kun, get out of the way.”

“No!” he growled, pushing her away. He was no weakling – many present knew exactly how impressive his muscles were under his suit. He was a vampire, strong and capable of protecting himself and his bond mate.

It was because of his strength that everyone gaped in confusion when his shove only managed to move her about a foot before she let out a roar of outrage at his defiance. He didn’t see it coming when she lashed out at him; he only heard the whip of something through air before he was sent flying backwards, crashing into the wall with the loud sound of a wall being cracked.

Something was wrong, Zero realized as he tried in vain to move, to stand and rejoin his mate at the altar. His head was aching, the pain just growing, and he couldn’t feel the lower half of his body very well. Everything was out of sync. He was so dizzy and he wasn’t even moving. He tried calling out before releasing a half-hearted sob. “Kaname,” he whispered, his hand reaching out blindly.

Kaname’s form was a white blur and he could only barely make out the features of the vampires in the audience rushing to the stage to stop Togu from killing the prince.

He couldn’t keep his eyes open. He tried and failed, trying in vain to listen and make sure his mate hadn’t been killed. It didn’t take long for the sound of yelling and a loud shriek to fade away.

Zero sat in bed nearly a week later, watching his toes wiggle with interest. According to the doctors, he would have been paralyzed were he mortal, so it gave him no little satisfaction to know that he wasn’t. It seemed that his husband had saved him once again. If it weren’t for Kaname, he would have been dead twice now.

With a soft smile, he turned his head to watch the gentle rise and fall of his husband’s chest. They’d finished the ceremony in private the moment Zero had woken up, groggy and almost unable to form the words ‘I do’, but they’d done it and the silver band around his finger was testament to that.

It was weird, the silence. Everyone had been go-go-going for days, hustling and bustling around his room. Yuuki, Miyu, even Ichiru. Kaname was a permanent fixture, but everyone else was in and out. The moment of calm was a nice change and pace.

He would be out of the hospital in a few days, and then he would be going home. He’d graduated, Kaname had graduated, and they were due for a long stay in their new home. He’d only seen it once or twice, but it was a beautiful building and he looked forward to his life there.

He gave Kaname’s exhausted form a small smile. In the end, everything had worked out, he mused before settling in for a nap. He was sleeping a lot, recuperating, but it was always nice to wake up to Kaname there, sometimes napping, sometimes just holding his hand. They’d gotten through it. Together.
Kaname may have been his weakness, and he Kaname’s, but he wouldn’t give him up for the world.

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