

The Scarlet Devil herself huffed through the corridors of the aptly-named Scarlet Devil Mansion in a state of rather thorough agitation. Dinner should have been ready a good hour ago, and much as with her younger sister, Remilia's mood had a habit of decreasing quite rapidly the longer she was kept hungry.

Her march towards the door of the dining hall was only cut short when a silver-haired woman spontaneously manifested straight in front of it. It would have been a rather startling experience for almost everyone else, but the sudden appearance of her maid only caused the vampire to cock her head and tap one of her feet in order to communicate her thinning patience.

„There better be a good explanation for this delay, Sakuya! Keeping the mistress of the house waiting is not something any servant fond of her occupation or life should willfully do!”

“I am sorry, milady. There were difficulties with the involved logistics, and I had to make some last minute arranges.”

The dark ruler waved away these words as if it were a swarm of annoying flies. “I do not care about logistics or some-such”, she hissed with an air whose contrast to her youthful appearance had something almost comical to it. “A woman of my rank and standing should not have to wait for her meal, come hells or high water!”

“Of course, milady. You will find that dinner is ready to be served now.”

“It better be”, the Scarlet Devil grumbled and stomped through the door which her maid was now holding open and softly closed behind her. Taking a deep breath, the human then mentally counted to ten, took a few steps away from the door, and prepared herself for the worst.

Not one moment later, the door was kicked open from the inside with nearly enough force to blow it out of its hinges, and a decidedly angry vampire stormed through it; her fangs bared and her fingernails elongated into razor-sharp claws.

“How *dare* you, Sakuya Izayoi?!”, she howled with murderous fury. “Do you think I look like a child? Do you think you can treat me like some kind of little brat, you impudent fool? That I am too *small* to eat an adult meal?!”

“N-no, milady.”

“Then why in the name of Dracul himself is there a *child meal* waiting for me in the dining hall?!”

* * *

A torrential flood of apologies and hurried explanations later, the vampire was pacing up and down in front of the battered door; massaging her nose with such intensity that one might fear she could accidentally pull it off.

She stopped, turned towards the visibly nervous maid, and sighed. “Let me summarize this again: The gap witch says there's some mess with the barrier, so she has been too busy to find anything more than this morsel? And she also promised to bring in a proper delivery by tomorrow?”

“That were her words, milady.”

Another sigh. “Looking back, signing that infernal contract was a spectacularly dumb idea. They won't allow us to take our food directly from the village? Fine - it is a bad neighbor that steals from the shepherd's own flock. But to forbid us from hunting those idiots who still are outside of that town at night? I am fairly certain that we are the only ones not allowed to do that.”

“I am afraid Gensokyo's humans needed some reassurance after your initial rampage through it, mistress, but..”

A meek whimpering sound from somewhere nearby caught the attention of both women and cut Sakuya short before she could finish the sentence.

“What of your meal?”, the maid asked with a raised eyebrow.

“What do *you* think? We wait until the gap witch brings my actual meal and send it back. Really now, would you just eat food you did not order because the waiter of the restaurant happens to be incompetent?”

“I doubt she would make us pay extra, milady. And besides, a little bite is better than nothing at all, is it not?”

Remilia vehemently shook her head. “Eating that would only leave me hungrier than I was before. Unless I gobble it up completely, and you know how distasteful I find that.”

“We could still repurpose the delivery into a meal for Miss Flandre, though”, Sakuya cautiously noted.

“And make the gap witch think she could get away with this kind of nonsense? Don't be ridiculous. No person of higher birth commits to making lemonade when life gives her lemons. Not when life should hand over the goddamn lemonade in the first place!”

The vampire shook her head. “Please do take care of your other duties for the time being, Sakuya. I will take care of our guest personally. Let none say that the Scarlet Devil Mansion breaks the sacred laws of hospitality.”

Hiro was scared. Although – no; 'scared' was not even the right word. Hiro was *terrified*. In one moment the twelve-year boy from the outside world had been lying in his bed, sleeping safe and sound. In another, he found himself chained onto the surface of a large table within an unfamiliar place; one whose interior weirdly resembled the European castles and villas that he had seen in TV documentaries. Except the baroque interior of those estates somehow had seemed more inviting than intimidating. That his frantic struggling only proved his chains to be quite a bit stronger than he was probably had something to do with it.

The efforts of the boy came to an instant halt when he heard how the door at the far side of the room was opened. A girl stepped through it. The same kind of girl, more specifically, who has turned into a raging monster and stormed out of the room when she first had seen him.

But whereas her previous appearance had suggested that she would messily tear him in half upon her return to little to no further warning, she now maintained a much calmer composure, and even produced the kind of haughty atmosphere around herself normally exclusive to nobles. Coming to think of it, was she even Japanese? By their looks, the girl and that other woman he had seen before seemed to be Europeans, or perhaps Americans.

“Ahem”, she coughed, and brought Hiro's train of thought to a grinding halt. “I must excuse myself for the the prior scenes you may have witnessed – there had been some ... organizational ... mishaps, and my limited patience for such accidents means I can sometimes grow a bit ... irate ... in the rare event that they do occur.

Hiro was not sure whether or not being “irate” normally included suddenly growing monstrous fangs and claws, but decided that it might be better not to give that girl a reason to to enter this state again..

“Allow me to introduce myself: *I* am Lady Remilia Scarlet. Also known under the title of Scarlet Devil. Owner of the Scarlet Devil Mansion. And heiress to the legendary *Vlad Dracul* himself!”

Dracul? Dracula? So she *was* a vampire! He should have know that by those fangs in the first place. But ... wait a minute ... if she was a vampire ... and he was in the Vampire's castle, fixated upon what undoubtedly was its dinner table...

Letting out a panicked scream, Hiro redoubled his efforts to break free from his chains; successfully producing a great amount of noise and very little in other regards. His host seemingly was used to this spectacle, for she patiently waited until raw exhaustion eventually stopped the movements of the boy before she strode towards the table and sat down on its edge.

“Say, little human, what is your name?”

“...Hiro”, her guest whimpered, cold sweat running down from his forehead as if he was a melting ice cube.

“Then how about we make a deal, Hiro?”

Fishing out an elaborate, silvery key from somewhere within her dress, the vampire allowed it to dangle straight in front of the human's eyes before she returned it to its hiding place. “I *could* use this to unlock your chains so that you may shake your legs a little. But I will *not* do that if the first thing *you* do in turn is to run away while screaming your lungs out. So if *you* want me to do *that*, you need to promise that you will *behave*. Understood?”

“...are you going to hurt me?”

“Heavens!”, Remilia giggled. “I think we still are at a bit of a misunderstanding. You are not to be my meal, young man; but my honored guest. Meaning that *I* certainly will not hurt you, and neither will anyone else if he knows what is good for him. So – deal?”

Hiro hesitated. For all he knew this could all be part of yet another trap, one meant to earn his trust, but given the alternative of being left to rot on this damnable table, what choice did he have?”

“Deal”, the boy from the outside world muttered. Approving his decision with a brief nod, the vampire startled him by climbing onto the table and crawling towards Hiro on all fours until she nonchalantly took a seat on his chest; using this vantage point to undo the locks on the various chains holding him down. That her bottom came worryingly close to his groin when she shifted around to take care of those which fixated his legs apparently was not bothering her.

“There we go”, she finally said and turned so that she could face him again. “Rise! Rise, Sir Hiro!”

“Ah ... uhm ... sorry – I would like to, but you're still sitting on me.”

Blinking, the Scarlet Devil looked down upon herself and, but the sight did not appear to be embarrassing to her. On the contrary, the cat-like grin that spread across her face while she playfully wriggled her hips some more suggested that she took some kind of deep, sadistic pleasure in the flushed face of the boy below her.

“You know, Sir Hiro, it is most rude to put the blame on the Lady of the House when your body so masterfully mimics a decent seating accommodation.”

These words only caused her guest to blush even harder, sending his host into a short burst of laughter before she climbed off from him and used a finger to prod his nose.

“Come on! I have so much to show you!”

Lady Scarlet by all means made good on her words. Grabbing him by the hand and thoroughly ignoring his sheepish requests for something other to wear than just his pajamas, the vampire

dragged him through the seemingly unending corridors, halls, and other rooms of her mansion. Every portrait of the dour men and women who lined the walls elicited an avalanche of information from her as if she had known them personally, and while Hiro was no expert of medieval European armors, the various exhibition pieces they came across clearly originated from several different centuries. Every so often, the mistress of the mansion was dutifully saluted by something that looked like a proverbial fairy, along with small, green humanoids whom he could not identify.

They took a brief stroll through a library so large that Hiro could not see where – or if – it actually ended. Risked a peek into a massive kitchen, whose number of stoves and other regular cooking utensils was dwarfed by a gigantic arsenal of knives in all shapes and sizes. Finally entered what clearly was the mansion's throne room; pompous to the point that it more than just bordered the obscene. All until the boy somehow managed to squirm his own hand out of the vampire's and made her turn around in surprise.

“Is there something wrong, young man? I do take the tour is to your liking?”

“It's alright”, her guest panted while frantically trying to catch his breath. “It's just that ... hah ... we've been walking for ... multiple hours now. I'm just ... a little bit tired.”

“Oh dear! Oh dear, oh dear! I must have drifted off while guiding you – oh, it is so rare to have a guest which genuinely appreciates the beauty of the mansion. And we have not even seen half of it!”

Hiro did not reply, but the fact that his face immediately was overcome by profound terror spoke for itself.

Remilia pouted. “You know, it is perfectly understandable that a mere human can not keep up with a vampire's stamina and constitution, but if you needed to take a break, you should have told me so!”

“But I tried to do tha-”

“There there”, the vampire calmed him. “No need to apologize. For mere mortals, the sight of such splendors surely is enough to make them forget about their own petty needs. But no matter. It has gotten pretty late anyway, and given that you seemingly were snatched from your bed in a rather literal sense, it is only logical that you are in need of rest. Let's see ... **Saku-yaaaa!**”

A split-second ago, the weird woman in the maid costume had not been standing right next to her mistress. Now she did, and her sudden appearance was enough to make Hiro stumble backwards until he fell unto his backside.

“You rang, milady?”

“Any news from Madame Yukari yet? Specifically, in regard to our dear guest? Little as I like to see him go, I should think it is time for Master Hiro to return home.”

“No, milady. From my understanding, the problem within the Hakurei Barrier is greater than first anticipated, and it is unlikely that Lady Yukari will grace us with her attention until tomorrow.”

“Tsk”, Remilia huffed. “Figures. That stupid thing is broken more often than it is intact. Still, if we can not send our dear guest on his way back home, we are morally obliged to at least offer him a place to sleep. And yet, where?”

“If I may, I could easily escort him to the Human Village, milady. Surely there is an inn with free rooms, or maybe Miss Keine will be willing to...”

“Nonsense! Am I to lead my guests through my own mansion, only to dump them into that glorified backwater? Really, Sakuya, I had not thought you would speak so ill of me!”

“... a room in the servant's quarters, then?”

“No, *no!* Master Hiro is a guest, not a servant! A honorable guest that reserves nothing less than...”
Remilia stopped abruptly. This in itself would have been disheartening enough, and the devilish grin that began to stretch on her from ear to ear only added to it.

Tip-toeing to reach the ear of her servant, Remilia Scarlet whispered a set of instructions towards her underling that made all color drain from the face of the maid at record speed. She hastily whispered several suggestions of her own to the vampire (and Hiro was fairly certain that at least one of them somehow was related to roast beef), but the Scarlet Devil resolutely shook her head at each of the proposals.

“... as you wish, milady”, the woman finally grumbled.

Before Hiro even knew what was going on, Remilia's servant had walked towards him and asked him to follow her; the woman's smile as she did so being so obviously forced and faked that they would have made a pair of breast implants look completely natural in comparison.

“There we are”, Sakuya Izayoi said within an audible lack of enthusiasm as she led Hiro into a room whose luxury was second only to the throne room itself. “Milady's bedroom. Within her *private* quarters. Please don't touch any- ... erm ... please make yourself at home, *Master* Hiro.”

“Wait a minute ... *her* bedroom? I mean ... I mean, I don't want to seem ungrateful, we've more or less only just met and she ... well. Guess she is going to sleep on the couch or something like that, right?”

There was a loud noise, and as a startled Hiro turned towards the maid, he could see that the glass the woman had just picked up was no longer there; having been pulverized inside of her tightly clenched fist.

“My”, she murmured. “How clumsy of me. Was there something else, Master Hiro? I will see to this wound, otherwise.”

The boy hastily assured her that he was fine while quietly telling himself that he should avoid this person for the entire rest of his life, lest he would *not be* fine for much longer. Still, what exactly was he supposed to do? Judging by the reaction of the woman that had just left the room, the couch was not the place where the vampire would be sleeping, and unless the entire situation had taken an incredibly absurd turn, it probably would be better not to occupy it in her place.

Unsure what to do with himself, Hiro picked up a book from one of the nearby shelves and would have probably read it if it had not been printed in English – and a highly antiquated form of English if his own limited language skill in that language did not deceive him. He put it back and tried another, then another, and by the time he finally had found a book that was actually written in Japanese, he could hear a door being closed shut behind him.

“My!” Remilia Scarlet fawned as she approached him; her previous dress having been replaced by an equally lavish nightgown. “So tired is my knight in shining armor – well, shining pajamas, rather – and still he loyally waits for his mistress before he enters the bed.”

“E-enter your ... wha- ... wh-why?”

“Because I am cold, dear Hiro. And *you* ... shall warm me.”

“... eeeeehhh?”

Rolling her eyes, Remilia stepped up towards the human, took one of his hands, and pressed it fingers against her neck.

“Are you feeling it?”

“I ... I'm not really feeling anything.”

“And that precisely is the point. The heart in my chest has stopped beating some five centuries ago, human. No heartbeat means no metabolism. And no metabolism means no body heat. Of what use is the coziest bedspread if your body does not produce any warmth to store under it?”

For a moment; just a tiny, little moment, the boy could see an intense and genuine longing in the eyes of the vampire. But it was gone as quickly as it had come; replaced by her usual amused smile.

“And that's why you really should creep under the covers of my bed now, Hiro. *Or else.*”

“Or else ... what do you mean by that? Y-you said that you wouldn't hurt me!”

“Of course I did”, his host and would-be bedmate chuckled. “And trust me, I am a woman of my word. No harm will befall you from my part. But if you refuse my request, my precious sensibilities will be hurt to such a degree that I would have to banish you from my bedroom while I cry myself to sleep. Oh, and say, have you seen my dear Sakuya lately? She seems to be in such a strange mood today. You wouldn't know anything about that, would you?”

“...that's blackmail”, a thoroughly defeated Hiro stammered.

“I prefer to call it 'aggressive diplomacy’”, Remilia cheerfully replied as she pulled the reluctant boy with her. And, more importantly, straight into her bed. It took no more than a few seconds until only the heads of the weird couple, each turned towards the other, were still peeping out from underneath the fittingly scarlet-red blanket.

“...and now, Lady Scarlet? Because I'm not quite ... well, *sure* how to...”

“Firstly, I think you can allow yourself to call me 'Remilia' now. And secondly, leave those worries to me. Just roll on your back and relax. Yes, easy like that. All I have to do now. . .”

Much as he tried, Hiro could not suppress the shiver running through his body as the vampire climbed atop of him and lowered her frame until it rested upon his own. His nervousness only increased when Remilia wrapped her arms around his back and pulled herself against him as tightly as was physically possible – an act which made him aware of the perky twin mountaintops that he could feel pushing through the fabric of her nightgown.

“Y-you *are* wearing a bra, right?!”

“Into bed? Who the hell does that?”

“Everyone does that!”

“Well, then I hereby declare that the Scarlet Devil is not *everyone!* Besides, who are you to criticize me, when your own choice of attire is entirely suboptimal? I demand that you take off your pajama *this* instantly, so that I may bask in your body heat directly!”

Hiro wanted to object by pointing out that he was wearing nothing but boxer shorts underneath his sleepwear, but something told him that the vampire either would not care or, alternatively, would ask him why he made that sound as if it was a bad thing.

One after another, the boy undid the buttons of his shirt. This took a tad longer than usual, for Remilia made no attempt to move off from him, so that Hiro was forced to squeeze his fingers into what little space still lay between them; and that wasn't much. Once he was finished, he did the same for his pants; no longer bothering to ask whether he really had to do it.

“Good boy!”, the vampire giggled, and vanished under the blanket. A second later, he could feel her face slowly rubbing down across his exposed chest until she, seemingly having found the coziest spot on it, came to a halt; the only thing Hiro still felt being the waves of her breath washing across his skin as if it were a sandy beach.

“Mmmmmh... that's it. Soft. Warm. But how fast your heart beats, young man. Why, if I didn't know any better, I should think you are *scared*. Did I not tell you that I don't bite? Or not today, at least?”

“It's...I'm just not used to this.”

She giggled. “Then try to enjoy it while it lasts, Hiro. Give it a few years, and I promise that you will wish something like this happened to you more often. It is one of the big jokes that has settled in between boyhood and manhood.”

To his defense, the human genuinely tried to enjoy it, but this was easier said than done. He really was not used to this – a blood-sucking monster in the form of a girl, cuddled up to him as if she was an oversized house cat seeking the affection of its owner. The feeling of having her arms locked around him. Her tiny, hard breasts pushing against his stomach. Pale, blue hair brushing across his skin.

And one knee that kept brushing across his shorts repeatedly. It likely was not even a conscious move on her part, but his body interpreted this signal very much differently. Something in him was growing.

And as something in Remilia's posture changed, he realized that she probably sensed that, too.

“My, my”, the Scarlet Devil grinned as her head emerged from under the blankets and placed its chin on the very top of his sternum. “Might it possibly be that we are growing a little stiffie, Master Hiro?”

“I-I'm not growing any stiffie!”

The vampire's grin broadened, only to mutate into a mock pout. “What? You are not growing one?”

Why, this kind of thing is normally bound to happen when a boy lies this close to a sufficiently pretty girl. And I *am* a pretty girl, am I not, Master Hiro?”

“No! I mean, yes!, I mean ... I mean ...”

Any further words on the part of the boy were cut short by a sudden gasp as five agile fingers snuck their way into his underwear and gripped the semi-erect piece of flesh hidden beneath it. Even as Hiro stared at their owner, they began to move up and down – gently at first, but gradually growing faster.

“I must admit”, the Scarlet Devil noted,” that I thought you were too young for this kind of thing to happen. But ... well – no use in letting good opportunities go to waste, is there?”

As if to emphasize what she had said, the pace of the hand that Remilia used to molest the boy suddenly made a jump, giving Hiro the sensation as if someone had plunged his private parts into a lake of molten rock. Unfortunately for him, his distress only encouraged the ageless girl girl even further, and before long, the entire length of his shaft was covered in lubricating liquids which produced soft, wet noises with every stroke of the vampire.

“R-Remilia!”, the human begged, his body twitching as if subjected to repeated electrical shocks

“Hmmm? Was there something?”

“Stop!”

To his own surprise, that hand that had constricted around his private parts like a hungry snake indeed stopped abruptly, and Hiro almost made himself believe that his desperate protest had been enough to make the vampire reconsider her approach.

And perhaps she had done that. The issue being that the way in which she now was nibbling at his neck suggested she had not changed it in his favor.

“Poor, little human. So terribly afraid. So terribly scared. And you still have not recognized what should really worry you.”

“...huh?”

“A brassiere is not the only piece of undergarments I do not wear into bed, Hiro. Strictly speaking, you could say I wear none at all.”

His adolescent brain too confused to instantly decipher the meaning of this, Hiro did not quite understand what was going on when the girl still lying atop of him suddenly rose up and turned around. It was only when she bent over to pull down his shorts that he made out the woeful lack of panties that should have been guarding her most private parts.

Not that she seemed to care about it – especially not when she hurried to plant herself straight onto the human's hips and began moving her own back on forth across them. It highly resembled a situation they had already been in, yet back when she merely wanted to undo his chains, the boy only was given a vague impression of her inner thighs and the secret hidden between them.

This secret had been revealed now, and he could feel the vampire's lower pair of lips as she, her back still turned to him, rubbed them across his meat at a deliberately slow pace. The sensation of their texture send small bolts of lightning through him, and every so often, they would twitch as if demanding that their prize should be handed over already. But just as they were on the very edge of embracing the latter; just its very tip was building up pressure against the door to the hidden valley, his tormentor suddenly halted.

“Do you still want me to stop?”, Remilia calmly asked.

“No.”, Hiro answered, and was quite baffled about himself.

“Good ... *good*. Teasing boys a bit is all fine and dandy, but even my villainy has its limits. And stealing your first time against your will lies well beyond those. If I am going to enjoy this, I want you to enjoy it, too.”

“As for now”, the vampire softly whispered, “close your eyes, young man. I assure you it will be worth it.”

The boy did as told. Bereaved of his vision, his other senses grew sharper to compensate for this loss. His hearing, for instance, allowed him to perceive the soft rustling of the blanket as his lover

rose from her position on his groin and changed it until she was facing him. His sense of touch registered how his shaft was grabbed and propped upright. Met some kind of obstacle. And, after a seemingly infinite moment of tension, broke straight through it.

Odd. Judging by the field research he had done with the adult magazines of his older brother, the interior of a girl's body was supposed to be warm and wet. And wet the interior walls whose bumps and folds now moved across the most sensitive parts of his shaft certainly were.

But warm?

“Don't worry.” Remilia apparently had noticed the distress which this alien experience produced in the human, and her voice – notably shakier than just a few seconds before – had a strangely apologetic tone in it. “I know it feels weird. But it'll get better. I promise.”

And so the vampire began. Moved her hips; back and forth, all in the slow, sensual pace of someone who clearly found delight in the act. Her breathing, barely audible before, grew into a series of quiet moans, and like a flower that was watered for the first time in many long years, her lifeless form slowly absorbed the heat that was spreading inside of her. Alas, who could blame her? Much like feeling the warming rays of the sun on her skin, it was a sensation that the undead creature had not enjoyed in a long time. That something in her desperately screamed for more was only natural.

For Hiro, the act likewise was weirdly ambiguous. It felt good, yes. Felt wonderful, in fact – not just from the flood of endorphins which drowned his mind right now, but also from the way in which the girl atop of him would sometimes bow down to caress his cheek or rub her lips against it. Still, there was something building up in him; a kind of wild, feral urge that was smashing against the bars of its prison like a rabid dog that had been pushed into a cage far too small for it.

He did not understand what he was doing when he suddenly found his hands clawing into the small, firm buttocks of the vampire to pull them down. But he more than clearly heard the startled yelp produced by Remilia when his groin suddenly shot upwards, thrusting his member into her quite a bit deeper than it had hitherto been. His eyes shooting open, he was about to sputter an entire flood of apologies, but found himself too baffled as he saw that the Scarlet Devil somehow had managed to produce a scarlet blush on her face.

“Ru-rude!”, the vampire awkwardly stammered.

“Y-you started it!” the boy replied with equal ineptitude. And found himself surprised once more when Remilia quickly started to laugh over the absurdity over the entire situation.

“If I did not know better, Master Hiro, I would think you are starting to like this far more than you're willing to admit. Though I suppose I should see it as a compliment. When someone who lost his virginity mere moments ago already shows such eagerness, it clearly speaks in favor of his partner.”

“That's....that's not fair! A-and I don't like this at all! I don't like it at a-..!”

A tiny hand with a surprising amount of force behind it placed itself across the mouth of the human and sealed it shut. Not one moment later, the vampire once more started to softly nibble on his neck; careful to not actually puncture the skin before she moved on to his ear and whispered a single word into it.

“Liar.”

Hiro desperately wished to voice some kind of defense against this accusation, but quickly found himself far too busy with holding his breath when the fiend pressed her mouth against his own and began to kiss him. Yet unlike her previous behavior; one that could certainly be called rapacious, this act was of a much calmer nature. Gentle. Caring. The long, continuous kiss of a woman who sought to hypnotize the terrified thing in her arms

And it worked. Little by little, the struggling of the human stopped. For a moment, he just remained still; perhaps trying to process this hot, fluttery feeling that now spread throughout his inside. And then, when he finally did, he no longer tried to push the bloodless girl away from him. Quite on the contrary – one of his hands began to stroke through the pale, blue hair of his lover. Partially because he instinctively knew she would like it, and partially because it allowed him to keep her lips exactly where they were.

His other hand, meanwhile, had returned to its original position on the vampire's backside. The move seemingly encouraged her, for Remilia accelerated the already considerable speed at which she made the boy's shaft push in and out of her. Soon enough, the recurring collisions of the two bodies produced audible creaking sounds from the bed they used in this act, and individuals with

more prudish beliefs likely would have stopped out of fear that others might hear them.

It didn't matter. Hiro could no longer hear anything anyway. All he still registered was the overwhelming urge to bury his meat as deeply as possibly in the interior of the girl above him. To kiss her until the stars themselves flickered out and died. To take her, and hold her close; to fill her with his own warmth so she would never have to be cold again.

All of it were laudable or at least understandable goals. There only was one problem. One tiny, little problem that grew bigger and bigger with each subsequent push he made into the secret place of the vampire. Like a soda bottle that had been given more than a good shake, and whose contents now sought to blow off its lid.

“Remilia”, Hiro breathlessly panted; well aware that he was about to lose control. “Remi, something's.....s-something's....”

“It's alright.” Without so much as a further warning, the vampire slung her arms around the back of her human bedmate and pulled him upwards; tightly burying her face inside of his shoulder while she pressed his against hers. “It's alright. Just come inside. Come inside, come inside, come insiiiiiiii...”

Crying out in deafening silence, Hiro experienced what the French lovingly called the 'Little Death'. A macabre name, to be sure, yet also one very fitting for this brief moment when the consciousness of a human simply gave out. When he could do nothing but watch on as his own groin triumphantly made some last, powerful thrusts into sanctuary of the the female womb; each filling it with sticky, life-giving fluid. A short infinity of pressure, followed by an all-consuming flood of relief. The sensation as Remilia's own body immediately began to undergo violent convulsions in an attempt to squeeze every last drop of juice out of him only added to it.

Nearly a minute passed until the weird couple eventually awoke from the torpor of the feverish afterglow that had enveloped them. Still, neither of them seemed to be in any hurry to unwrap the arms that they had locked around each other, and the only sound that broke the darkness which had spread within the room was their shared, heavy breathing.

It was the vampire who finally broke the embrace, using gentle force to half-drop, half-push Hiro's upper body back onto the bed before she herself climbed off from his lower parts and laid herself

down next to him.

“You know”, she whispered after several moments during which both simply stared at the ceiling, “it’s kind of funny. Many self-claimed experts paint vampires as some kind of lecherous sex fiends because they associate our natural hunger for blood with extreme carnal desires. And actual answer flies so far above their heads that the Lunarians might mistake it for another invasion.”

The boy had no idea what Lunarians were supposed to be, but still asked for the actual answer. Remilia, in response, took one of his hands and placed it upon her cheek as she had already done once before. It was warm to the touch.

“It makes us remember how it feels to be alive, Hiro. How it feels to be human. Just for the teeniest, tiniest moment of the climax, when you can hear the angels themselves sing. Each time a human feels this, they turn die a little. And each time a vampire does it, they live a little.”

Hiro moved his eyes away from his lover, back to the ceiling. There suddenly was a question burning on his mind, but he did not have the slightest idea how the Scarlet Devil would react to it. As if to reassure himself he searched around under the covers until he found Remilia's hand and grasped it; and his confidence grew when she gently squeezed his one in return.

“Remilia, can I ask you something?”

“Please do”, she purred.

“... do you miss being human?”

The hand whose fingers had been locked in his was withdrawn immediately as her owner angrily crossed her arms across her chest.

“Of course not!”, the Scarlet Devil puffed. “Why would I miss being a pathetic, miserable creature that only exists to serve as livestock for higher beings? A piece of glorified cattle which thinks that it rules the world when they are watched and manipulated by powers they could not even hope to understand?! Why would I . . . !”

Remilia suddenly stopped. Hesitated. And turned her back to Hiro. When she resumed speaking, her

voice was eerily quiet.

“Yeah, I miss it. Sometimes. Constantly being cold is something you quickly get used to, but... *sometimes*, this feeling simply won't go away. And then you start to miss all the other things. Going outside on a bright, sunny day. The mild drizzle of rain on your skin. Or the waves of the sea sweeping across your feet during a stroll on the shore. Even hearing your own blood pumping through your ears when you are scared or nervous.”

The vampire rolled around so that she once more faced the human from the outside world. The sad smile on her face made his heart cramp up.

“It doesn't happen often. But when it does, I miss it so badly that it hurts.”

Without so much as a single conscious thought, Hiro grabbed the horrible monster known as the Scarlet Devil. Pulled her close; the side of her head pressed against his chest. And quickly began to move around the blanket covering both of them until their two bodies had disappear inside of a protective cocoon; the only signs of life within it being the occasional signs of movement that surfaced on its outer hull as the boy began to love and caress the girl in an attempt to console her.

It was good that no light could pass through the covers. It would have allowed him to see something Remilia did not want him to see.

* * *

The awakening that Hiro received was much less pleasant than the one he had imagined after falling asleep while cradling the Remilia in his arms. For one thing, because said vampire was no longer there. For another, because someone or something was shaking him quite violently; clearly opposed to the idea of allowing him even a mere second of additional rest.

Drowsily crawling out from underneath the blanket, the boy was very quick to at least move a part of his nude body back under it; for it was no-one other than the crazy maid that still was trying to drag him out of the bed. And that with a look which more than just suggested she was about to murder him on the spot.

“Get up”, Sakuya Izayoi barked. “And get dressed, while you're at it. The servant of the gap witch is

waiting for you in the entrance hall.”

“W-where’s Remilia?” Hiro sheepishly replied.

“The mistress does not wish to see you. Now get up already.”

“B-but why?”

The hands of the maid clenched so tightly that Hiro thought he could hear the skin stretching over it as if it were old leather. “Because the mistress does *not* wish to *see* you!” she hissed.

Naturally, no-one could blame a twelve-year-old boy for being confused after all what happened. But this did not change the fact that, of all the questions he could have asked, the one whether he had done anything wrong was the perhaps singularly worst one, for it caused the servant to launch herself at the perceived invader with a howl of murderous fury. That she, pinning him down, also was pointing a knife at his throat which likely could punch straight through the latter with relative ease made it all the more dramatic.

“Oh, you did nothing wrong, you brainless imbecile! You did not make her cry, you did not make her lock herself in the highest chamber of the tower! You did not open old wounds that might have healed at some point if some goddamn, miserable *fools* would not keep picking at them, time and time again! And you most certainly did not manage to make her fall in-”

The maid stopped. Took several, deep breaths to calm her shivering hands. And threw her knife at a nearby wall, where it buried itself quite a bit deeper than her slender arms should possibly allow. When she let go of the boy and took a seat at the edge of the bed, it was with a sigh of resignation.

“Forgive me. And no, you did nothing wrong. You did everything right. Too right, in fact.”

The raw lack of understanding in the rapidly blinking eyes of the boy actually managed to draw a soft chuckle from Sakuya, and little as she understood why, she quietly began to pat his head.

“There are not many men who have managed to conquer the heart of my mistress, Hiro. Not to speak of young boys. And if you wish for nothing more than to care for her, I will let you know that I can

understand that desire. It is, after all, the same one that made me stay at her side for the many, long years that I have served under the Scarlet Devil.”

She bowed forward towards him, so close that their noses nearly touched and the boy could finally realize that an intensely pleading expression had formed in her eyes.

“You have probably noticed it by now, but none of these men have remained with her, Hiro. Some died. Others abandoned her of their own accord. And yet others simply vanished from the fate of the Earth. I do not know whether fate itself has grown to hate her because of the few times that she directly messed with its strings, but whenever milady has opened her heart to someone – someone in which she saw more than just a beloved servant – it ended with the former being broken. And much as I try, it becomes more difficult to repair it each time this happens.”

Something in the head of the human from the outside world clicked. During his previous encounter with the maid, he had rapidly come to believe that her hostile behavior towards him was little more than the product of rampant jealousy. But Sakuya was not jealous. She was *scared*. Afraid to see the repetition of the same scenario that she, for all he knew, might have seen a dozen times over. Afraid that he, too, might end up hurting Remilia. And that, this time, even she would no longer be able to piece her broken heart back together.

“But *I* won't leave her!”, Hiro shouted, determination of a kind he had never felt before filling his voice. “I know I'm not like her! I know that she's a vampire and I'm not but I . . . if she turns me into a vampire, too, I could protect her forever, right? Right?”

The woman next to him quietly shook her head.

“That is a promise I have heard far more than once. And you know what? In your case I might actually be tempted to believe it. Alas . . .”

She stood up. Picked up his clothes – well, his underwear and pajamas – which had been sent flying out of the bed when the latter had been used for purposes other than sleeping. And handed them to the boy; polite enough to look the other way while he awkwardly began to slip inside of them.

“Gensokyo is no place for humans, Hiro. Or to be more precise, none from the outside world. Like a living organism, it recognizes them as foreign bodies and tries to remove them with increasingly

brutal means they longer they remain. There is a reason the food supply of this mansion chiefly consists of those who will be dead before they can irritate this hidden force.”

“But what if she would turn me into a vam-”

“Then Gensokyo itself might spare you, perhaps. But owing to certain, unbreakable rules, others will not. Please, I beg of you – understand that you must turn back from this road. However many forks may lead away from it, however much will all of them lead to your untimely death. And that is something Lady Remilia will not; can not accept. *Not anymore.*”

Sakuya had expected an angry response. Some kind of furious, stubborn reaction. Him insisting that she was lying. That there had to be some way. Heavens, she would not have been surprised if the boy would have tried to attack her; angry little fists banging against her body in an attempt to change something which they knew could not be changed.

No such reaction came, and the only thing the maid heard were the quiet sounds as he resumed to put his clothes on. She should be grateful – from her point of view, the boy just giving in like that was the best possible outcome. Hells, it was the best possible outcome for all three of them. Hiro would live. Remilia would be hurt, but her wounds would heal. And she herself would have no more trouble of this kind for at least a few decades.

And she still felt horrible.

* * *

Roughly a minute of silence passed until a light tap on her shoulder told Sakuya that the boy had finished to get dressed. They spoke no further words as they, the maid leading the boy by the hand, moved through the Scarlet Devil Mansion; both doing their best to avert the gaze of the other until they reached the entry hall of the estate.

Idly waiting at the foot of the gigantic staircase that dominated the room was a woman. With her long, blonde hair, Hiro could have sworn he had seen her before. Somewhere. Somewhen. It was a vague, blurry memory, as if torn from a long-gone dream.

“Lady Yakumo?” The maid did her very best to sound polite, but there still was noticeable tension

at the very edge of her voice. “You honor us with a personal visit? It is not that I take offense, but given that it was Ran who asked me to fetch the delivery, I thought. . .”

“It is alright, Miss Izayoi. Since it was one of my rare personal mistakes which lead to this unpleasant situation, I thought it a necessary act of courtesy to personally end this *affair* myself. Please do express my sincerest apologies for this mishap to Lady Scarlet, will you?”

“. . . as you wish.” Releasing the boy's hand, the maid performed a brief bow before she turned around and disappeared in a side corridor, leaving Hiro alone with the mysterious stranger who now gifted him with her undivided attention.

“As for you, I am happy to see that you are still in good health. Not exactly something I would expect from a human who spent an entire night in the residence of a vampire.” Something in the catlike grin which the woman suddenly flashed was deeply unsettling to the human.

“But anyway – shall we? If you wish to go back home, you need only to ask.”

A sizable part of Hiro did *not* want to go back home. It wanted to stay here. In the mansion. With Remilia. It screamed and kicked in roaring anger as his unhelpful mind projected a mental image of her sitting all by herself in a lonely room, her arms tightly wrapped around her legs. Crying. Shivering. She was *cold*.

He made a step towards the gap witch. Another one. And another one, until he stood at the feet of the gap witch. When he raised his head and stared up to hers, he could not help but feel like a tiny mouse that had voluntarily placed itself at the paws of a gigantic cat.

“Please take me home, ma'am.”

“Good choice”, Yukari Yakumo laughed as she playfully stroked through his hair. “Now, do yourself a favor and keep your eyes shut. The means of transportation we are going to use is very fast, but – well, not exactly suitable for eyes such as yours.”

A short ride through a nightmarish hole in reality later, the human from the outside world found that he had been returned to it. And into his room, to be more precise. The rays of an early morning sun pierced through the cloudy sky outside of his window, and Hiro felt at least a glimmer or relief over the knowledge that the rest of his family was still asleep; making any explanations about his hour-long absence unnecessary.

He looked over his shoulder to face the gap witch. She was intently studying his room, seemingly taking such great interest in it that she did not immediately realize how he was staring at her.

“Lady . . . uhm, Lady Yakumo?”

“Oh! Excuse me, young man. I have a bit of an interest in how the rooms of humans from here look like. It helps me keep track on the state of the outside world, if you understand what I mean. Heavens, it changes so fast nowadays . . . ”

“. . . why me?”

There it was again. This enigmatic, sardonic grin that made the blonde woman look like she was a puppeteer and everyone else mere dolls on a string without knowing it.

“As I already said, my dear Hiro, it was a mistake on my part. There were important matters requiring my oversight elsewhere, and in my haste – well, you could say I accidentally picked the wrong address.”

Even an idiot could have seen through this lie, and Hiro most certainly did. Still, what was he supposed to do? Confront a being that could probably undo him across several layers of existence with nothing more than a snip on her fingers?

“Anyway”, Yukari concluded the event, “I trust my presence here is no longer necessary, and thus will take my leave. Although – dear me! I nearly would have forgotten!”

She drew a letter from somewhere in her voluminous dress, handing it over to the baffled boy with an insufferably friendly expression on her face.

“It appears that Lady Scarlet approached my little Ran and asked her to give you this while the head

maid was busy fetching you. I have a feeling it was important to her.”

* * *

Dearest Hiro,

In light of the fact that I dropped you out in the very cold that you promised to save me from, I feel the least thing I could do is to clarify certain things.

Firstly, this never is, and never will be your fault. It is mine. That of a selfish woman in her late five-hundreds who deemed herself mighty clever after seducing a boy that still has to fully grow into a man; only to end up being seduced herself. That I allowed this to happen when I knew that our attachment could – nay, necessarily would – spell your death unless broken at once is unforgivable.

Secondly, I want to admit that I am a coward. It should have been I who woke you up and explained the unpleasant truth about this brief midsummer night's dream of ours to you. Instead, I hid myself away in the most remote chamber of my own mansion like a sniveling rat and asked a servant of mine to see you off – well aware of how her reaction would be. This, too, is unforgivable.

Thirdly: Please, please don't be mad at Sakuya. She yearns for nothing more than to protect me, and I, more than once, have proven to her that she may need to go to extreme lengths in order to keep me from hurting myself. I promise you that, were the circumstances different; were there even a chance of us becoming happy lovers, she would have supported your actions with all the power she can muster. She is a good girl, and I beg you to see her as such.

Fourthly: Don't attempt to return. I pray that my favorite servant has already explained the involved problems to you, but our wonderland is no place for humans. It would be a suicidal undertaking, and if you were willing to die on my behalf, I would ask you to ram a stake through my heart. The results would be the same.

Fifthly: Do take good care of yourself. All the misery this separation brought about was solely meant to ensure that you will live. I know, know by experience, the pain a broken heart can produce, but you must promise me that you will have a long, happy life. Anything else would make me feel like an even bigger monster than I already am.

And lastly: Forget me. Gensokyo, by its very definition is a place for things that have been forgotten in the outside world. A garbage place for broken dreams, if you will. In a way, it does not really exist. In a way, I do not really exist. And I think my actions have shown that I deserve to be forgotten. Don't make the memory of me a burden which you should never have carried in the first place.

*Yours,
Remilia.*

PS: Hiro – thank you. I always thought vampires could only feel alive by bedding someone. At least in a way, I was mistaken.

