

Blood bind

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Hiiragizawa-kun comes back frm england oooh.. interesting

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1 - Hiirigizawa-kun!

Blood Bind

Author's Notes: This is Kouri and Karasu's CCS fic. If we screw up any of the stuff with the cards at the end of this chapter, we're sorry, it won't happen again. ::sweatdrop:: This will probably be long, and come out slowly, since we're both working 40 hours a week and working on three other projects.

Warnings: Um, yaoi? You think? Touya+Yuki with a dash of Yue+Clow to keep things interesting. Also Sakura+Syaoran, not that this is yaoi or anything. We might throw in some other pairings later, if we feel like it. Spoilers for the entirety of the series and most likely for the manga, too.

Disclaimer: If we owned them, we wouldn't need to write fics about them, now would we?

Additional Warning: This is a point of view fic, but it's up to you to figure out who's talking. Try looking at the suffixes. And it starts out pretty fluffy but will get more serious later.

Part One

“SYAORAN-KUUUUUUUN!”

Sakura has attached herself to my neck. Not that this is an objectionable thing, but I can just feel the steam coming out of my ears.

Also, I can't breathe.

“Sakura,” I cough, “Oxygen?”

“Hoe?” Sakura gives me a confused look, then loosens her grip. “Sorry!”

I can't help but rub my neck. I would never dream of calling Sakura stupid, but she has a tendency to be rather slow on the uptake. “What are you so excited about, anyway?”

Her faces lights up like a twenty-watt Christmas bulb. “Because -- ”

“Ohayo goziamasu,” Tomoyo interrupts, sitting in her seat.

Sakura whirls. “Ohayo, Tomoyo-chan!” She lets go of me and latches onto her friend. “Guess what guess what?”

Tomoyo smiles. “Are you excited because Hiiragizawa-kun is coming back to Japan?”

What?

“Haaaiii!” Sakura cheers. “Did he send you a letter, too?”

Tomoyo nods, still smiling sweetly. “I just got it yesterday. I tried to call you but you weren't home.”

“When's he getting here?” I ask.

“He's arriving! At the airport! To-morr-ow!” Sakura cheers, dancing in circles around me.

I have a sudden longing to take a vacation. A long vacation. And to definitely bring Sakura with me.

It's not that I don't like Hiiragizawa. After the initial . . . misunderstanding . . . we got along fine. He just needs to stay a safe distance away from Sakura. Continents and oceans did nicely, thank you.

“Aren't you excited, Li-kun?” Tomoyo asks, giving me a sly smile. Tomoyo is way too perceptive for my good sometimes.

“Oh, yeah, excited,” I echo. “He's just so . . .”

“Mischievous,” Tomoyo suggests.

“Not quite the word I would pick.”

“Fun-loving?” Sakura chirps.

I think back to Sakura being buried in sheep and attacked by a stuffed bear that was three stories tall. “He just has a very odd sense about what is and what is not fun.”

“Oh, you'll get along fine once he's here,” Sakura said. Her face suddenly fell. “I feel kinda bad for oniichan, though.”

“Why?” I ask. I must look terribly blank.

Sakura visibly cringes. “Because Akizuki-san is coming with him.”

“Is this bad?”

“Well, to hear Oniichan describe her, she was the devil incarnate,” Sakura explains. “And she is a bit . . . overenthusiastic.”

Tomoyo smiles. “Sakura-chan is polite as always.”

“Eheh . . .” Sakura sweatdrops.

Now that I think about it, I do remember Kinomoto mumbling something about limpets. And never having any time alone with Yukito-san.

Then again, since Yukito-san moved in with the Kinomoto family last year, I imagine even Akizuki would have trouble separating the two. Yue, naturally, wanted to be close to Sakura, and Yukito-san and Kinomoto were both amenable to this idea.

“So where is Hiiragizawa-kun staying?” I'm trying to be neutral about this. Must look neutral. Damn scowl reflex will be the death of me yet.

Sakura sees right through me. “Don't you want to see Eriol-kun?”

“Of course I want to see him.” I want to see him on the plane back to England.

“Good, because he's staying with us!” Sakura chirps.

I must look poleaxed, because Tomoyo is laughing at me. Sweet, polite Tomoyo is snickering in my face.

“Kidding!” Sakura says cheerfully.

Sakura must be picking up her brother's perverse sense of humor.

“Anyway,” Sakura says, ignoring my huge sweatdrop, “Eriol-kun's going to be staying in his old house. You know, Clow-san's house. No one likes to live there.”

Of course not. It's the creepiest house I've ever seen.

“How long is he staying?” That's probably not the right question to be asking right now. Tomoyo is raising an eyebrow at me. Damn it.

“About a month,” Sakura says. “They have longer summer breaks in England than we get. So we can do all kinds of things like going to the beach and going shopping and stuff like that and it'll be loads of fun, ne, ne?” She glomps onto me again.

I can't help but give her a long-suffering look. “Of course, Sakura.”

Tomoyo giggles.

“So are you going to come to the airport with me tomorrow, Syaoran-kun?” Sakura asks.

Do I have homework? I must have homework. Or a previous engagement. Or anything.

“Ne?” Sakura asks, giving me her best smile.

Damn it.

“Hai, I'll come,” I say, and Tomoyo giggles again.

“I'll join you, Sakura-chan, Li-kun,” Tomoyo says.

“Otosan said we could have a family dinner tomorrow night and he'd make dessert!” Sakura tells us.

“Better lock the stuffed doll in your room,” I advise.

Sakura pouts. “Kero-chan can behave.”

“Of course he can,” I reply. “He just never does.”

“And Oniichan will be there and Yukito-san will be there and you and Oniichan can sit at opposite ends of the table and it'll be fun!” Sakura continues. “Ne?”

“Aa,” is about all I can manage.

If Li-kun was holding any tighter to Sakura-chan's hand, I think it would fall off from lack of circulation. I can't really blame Li-kun for being . . . possessive. It's Sakura-chan, after all. Besides, Hiiragizawa-kun has given Li-kun plenty of reason in the past. Though I must admit it's most amusing to watch the two of them, I hope he doesn't make Li-kun too overprotective. He's bad enough as it is.

Naturally, I'm filming Hiiragizawa-kun's arrival. If for no other reason, Li-kun's reaction is certain to be priceless.

“ERIOR-KUUUUUN!” Sakura-chan is waving her arms around in the air in an adorable, if somewhat manic, fashion. I can't really blame her for being manic; we haven't seen Hiiragizawa-kun in almost three years now. Really, though, is it normal for a sixteen-year-old to be that cute?

I swing the camera around to where Sakura-chan is pointing.

Dear Lord.

Hiiragizawa-kun has matured quite a bit since the last time we saw him. His hair and cheerful smile are the same as ever, but his face is thinner and his glasses are smaller. He's tall now, almost as tall as Touya-san. He's abandoned the shirt and tie for a loose T-shirt and jeans, which suits him quite nicely. I can't help but blink appreciatively at the sight before me. No matter where my interests lie, I can recognize good looks when I see them.

Sakura-chan has a similar expression. In fact, it looks as if her eyes are about to fall out of her head. Li-kun has a very firm hold on her arm.

Poor Li-kun.

Not that he's not attractive himself. Age has done quite a bit for him as well. It's not as startling, as we witnessed the change. Hiiragizawa-kun, however, seems to have blossomed overnight.

Is that steam I see coming out of Li-kun's ears?

Sakura-chan waves excitedly and gives Hiiragizawa-kun a large hug.

That is definitely steam.

She's only giving him a one-sided hug, as Li-kun isn't relinquishing her other arm. I cough slightly, which is enough to startle Li-kun into letting go. Sakura-chan is free to give Hiiragizawa-kun the hug he deserves.

Akizuki-san, meanwhile, is bouncing around, giving Sakura's enthusiasm a run for the money. She's dressed in a bright pink halter top and a miniskirt. And boots that come up to her knees, and buckle up the side. They're quite impressive. I think Touya-san would run for his life.

Hiiragizawa-kun is now turning his smile upon me and telling me he missed me. I find that I've missed him too. It's rather odd.

"Shall we go?" Hiiragizawa-kun asks, picking up his bag and smiling benevolently upon us all.

"Let's," Li-kun says, reclaiming Sakura-chan's hand.

"Otousan wanted you three to come over for dinner," Sakura informs Hiiragizawa-kun and Akizuki-san.

Hiiragizawa-kun smiles brilliantly. "Arigatou, Sakura-san. Your father's cooking is wonderful."

Sakura-chan beams.

"Ne, ne!" Akizuki-san latches onto Sakura-chan's other arm. "Is Touya-kun going to be there?"

Not if he can help it, I imagine.

"I-I think so," Sakura-chan says, sweatdropping.

"WAAAAIIII!" Akizuki-san releases Sakura-chan and begins to dance in circles again.

It's going to be an interesting evening.

"Oniichan! Dinner's ready!"

I can't help but give To-ya a concerned look. His head seems quite firmly attached to the bed beneath his pillow. "Touya, did you hear your sister?"

"Aa," is all he replies.

"Aren't you coming?" I try again.

“No.”

“Well, why not?” The thought of missing one of Kinomoto-sensei's dinners is quite disappointing.

“TOUYA-KUN!” There is a shrill yell from downstairs.

“She's why,” Touya says direly, as if dinner is going to be his last meal.

I consider this. “Technically, Akizuki-san isn't a she . . .”

“I don't care. I'm not leaving this room until she's gone.”

More consideration. “Given the fact that we've been dating openly for two years and I've been living here for one, I'm not sure there's anything she can do.”

“She will attach herself to me, and once she has, I'll never get rid of her.”

“I could pry her off,” I try.

“With what, a crowbar?” Touya's voice has a distinctly hopeless air to it.

“To-ya,” I say, severely, “you're not being very nice.”

Touya groans. “Go ahead to dinner, Yuki. But I'm not coming.”

I can see that he's not going to yield. I resort to my last option. It's shameless and cruel, but sometimes these things must be done. “Touya, you know that bed in the room that your father added to the house for me? The one that I almost never, ever use?”

Touya's head emerges, looking suspicious.

“Don't make me start using it.” I give him a cheerful smile. “I'll see you downstairs in a few minutes, ne?”

And with that, I bounce out of the room. Sometimes it's fun to tease Touya, just a little. Never much, though. He gets crabby.

“Tsukishirou-kun!” Akizuki glomps me for lack of the preferable option. It's all I can do to not pry her off. I don't dislike her, per se, but she has a tendency to annoy me. Her voice alone grates on my nerves.

Still, I give her the same cheerful smile. “Konban wa, Akizuki-san.”

“You can call me Nakuru!” she chirps.

I blink at her. It's about all I can muster.

“Where's Touya-kun?” she asks brightly.

“He'll be down soon, I think.”

“Nakuru,” Eriol-kun speaks up to save me. “Please remove yourself from Yukito-san.”

Eriol-kun is my new best friend. I can only hope that he can save Touya from her attentions as well. As it is, Nakuru releases me and bounces back to Eriol-kun. I resist the urge to brush off the arm she was latched onto.

Sakura-chan, at this point, comes over to greet me. Syaoran-kun is hovering behind her like a jealous second shadow. Given Eriol-kun's much matured appearance, I'm not sure I blame him. They never did get along, anyway.

Touya comes down the stairs, looking sullen. He gives Nakuru a glare that would shrivel slugs, then directs a glare that is only slightly less in intensity on Syaoran-kun.

He returns it. It appears the fireworks will start now.

Kinomoto-sensei is trying to shoo us all into the dining room. Nakuru, predictably, has thrown her arms around Touya's neck and is doing a very good impression of someone applying a stranglehold. Touya has a very cute long-suffering look on his face.

And where did Nakuru get that outfit?

“Akizuki,” Touya begins, “I can't fit through the door with you attached to me like that.”

Nakuru just smiles and lets go. “Sorry, To-ya!”

Touya and I cringe in unison. Nakuru and I will have words later on this subject.

Kinomoto-sensei is at the head of the large table; Spinel and Kero have little dishes at the foot. Sakura-chan is on her father's left, Syaoran-kun next to her, Tomoyo-chan next to him. Eriol-kun, as the guest of honor, is at Kinomoto-sensei's right. Nakuru is next to him, then me, then Touya. This is a small issue. At least Touya and Nakuru aren't next to each other, though I certainly don't relish being in between them.

Sakura-chan is giving the seating arrangement an alarmed look. I can see the gears turning in her head as she tries to figure out how she could rearrange us and prevent bloodshed. Unfortunately, she can't seem to find a way, and neither can I.

I can already see the vein in Touya's forehead swelling.

This is not good.

“Nakuru,” Eriol-kun says calmly, “what did I tell you about antagonizing Touya-san and Yukito-san?”

She blinks. “Not to?”

I think she's guessing.

“Precisely. And why are you?”

“Because it's fun?” she tries.

“Not for them, Nakuru. Kindly cease.”

“But . . . but . . .”

Eriol-kun gives her a Look.

“Oh, fine.” She pouts. “You're no fun.”

“Eriol-kun is lots of fun!” Sakura-chan is protesting Nakuru's statement. This ought to be interesting. For one thing, why is Syaoran-kun mumbling something about stuffed sheep?

Everyone looks at Sakura-chan.

“Well, he is,” she says defensively.

“Of course, Sakura-chan,” Tomoyo-chan says, soothingly.

Kinomoto-sensei's cooking is wonderful as always. After dinner, Sakura-chan drags Eriol-kun up to her room. For what, I'm not sure. This leaves Touya and I with an overly enthusiastic Nakuru with no Eriol-kun to call her off, and a Syaoran-kun who is the color of a ripe tomato and not looking too pleased with the current situation.

Tomoyo-chan's smile is starting to look a bit forced, but she's trying valiantly to distract Syaoran-kun. I'm just beginning to fear the worst when Kero, of all people (well, cats), comes to our aid.

He does this by drop-kicking a cookie into Spinel's mouth.

Needless to say, all other quarrels were forgotten quite quickly.

“I'm so glad you're here right now, Eriol-kun!”

Sakura-san's smile is making me just a bit nervous. Not much, mind you. But she's pacing a little, and that's never a good sign with Sakura-san. “What's wrong?”

“We-ee-ell . . .” She grins suddenly. “I just had a couple questions, that's all! And I didn't want to put them into a letter because I wasn't sure you'd be able to explain on paper, and if I brought it up downstairs during dinner I don't think that would've been such a good idea.”

“What do you need to know?” Sakura-san has a tendency to talk around the subject on occasion.

“How did you make Nakuru?”

That, of all things, was not what I was expecting. “I’m not sure you would understand the technicalities of it, Sakura-san.”

“But do you think I could do it?” She’s giving me a very hopeful stare.

I’m confused. It’s not often that this happens to me.

“Why?” Last time I checked, she and Yue were getting along fine . . .

“Well,” she says again, “Yue-san and Yukito-san have been having a few problems lately. And they don’t say anything, because, well, Yukito-san’s too nice and Yue-san’s too . . . self-sufficient.”

Very nice choice of words, there. Yue definitely has an `I must suffer through these problems on my own’ complex.

“Because Yue-san’s pretty lonely, and Yukito-san has Oniichan, but he’s Yukito-san’s, not Yue-san’s, and they can’t really share. And Yue-san can’t really do anything but watch because he doesn’t want to mess up Yukito-san’s life, and Yukito-san still has those lapses in memory whenever Yue-san has to take over. And neither of them are really too pleased, and whenever I ask why Yue-san created a separate personality in the first place he just gives me this awful, awful glare.”

That’s not really surprising. Yue gives awful glares at pretty much no provocation at all, and he’s had plenty of time to perfect the art.

“But you created Nakuru to have a false form that was still her,” Sakura-san is winding down, I think. And looking very earnest. “So I thought maybe you could help me fix it.”

I give this due consideration. “So what you’re really trying to do is create Yue a new body that would be a false form without having a separate personality.”

“And still keep Yukito-san,” Sakura-san adds anxiously.

“Of course.” I think it would be possible, especially now that she’s matured and her magic is more powerful. Especially if she could enlist the help of the Cards. I wouldn’t want to teach Sakura-san magical theory. The Cards are easily understood. “Hmm . . .” I love puzzles like this. They’re so much fun. “You could use the Create card to make a new body . . . and I think you could make it an identical body with the help of the Mirror card . . . then Change could move Yue into it, I think.”

“Really?” Sakura-san is a bit shrill.

“Once they’ve separated,” I continue, “I think you would be able to sustain Yue with your own magic. Which means there’s a chance your brother could have his back.”

Sakura-san's eyes are wide as dinnerplates. "Honestly?"

I nod.

"Hanyaaaaan!" Sakura-san throws her arms around my neck. I'm suddenly very glad that Li-kun is downstairs. He might feel the need to murder me if he saw this display of affection. "Arigatou goziamasu!"

I hug her back. For once I have the opportunity with none of Nakuru's comments, Li-kun's glares, or Tomoyo-san's camera. We should talk shop more often.

"So will you help me out with it?" she asks, letting go.

"Of course." I don't have anything better to do with my vacation, anyway. And it would be nice if Yue would mope a little less. Plus the image of Yue in a sweatshirt and jeans is terribly amusing.

She's left. Finally. The house is quiet. The Brat didn't want to leave until Hiiragizawa did, but Tomoyo finally managed to drag him away. Saying something about how he and Sakura weren't going to do anything. I should certainly hope not; that would make two people I have to defend my baby sister from. One's enough, thanks.

Hiiragizawa sent Akizuki home to baby-sit a very sugar-drunk Spinel. Now Sakura has dragged Yuki and I into our room with Hiiragizawa and is giving us both a very unusual serious look. I can't wait to see what she's come up with now.

"What do you want, kaijuu?" I pretend to be irritated. "Don't you have homework?"

She makes a face but doesn't argue. That means she's going to stomp on my foot next time I'm not looking. It's worth it, though.

"Well, Eriol-kun and I were talking earlier," she says with a big grin. "Aaaaand we think, if it's okay with you three . . ."

Three? Oh, she's including Yue.

"And I already cleared it with otousan, and checked the weather and there'll be lots of stars for the next three nights so I'll have tons of energy . . ."

This just isn't looking good.

"I . . . thinkIcouldgiveYueaseparatebody."

I picked out the important words in that sentence, enough to know that she needs to repeat it, slower. Yuki is just blinking. "What?"

"I think I could give Yue a separate body. One that, you know, looks like him. So you two wouldn't have to share anymore. `Cause my magic is a lot stronger now and Eriol-kun is here to help me and I know you three are always moping about it even if you never let me see that. Aaaaand when it's finished I ought to be able to supply Yue with power on my own, since it'll only be one person, not two, so Oniichan can have his magic back."

She's grinning. Manically. I think this must be too good to be true, so I look at Hiiragizawa for confirmation.

"I think it would work," he says, catching my glance.

"So Yuki and I can still be together, and Yue can have a life of his own?" Just want to double-check this fine point.

Hiiragizawa nods.

Definitely too good to be true.

Yuki is still blinking. "Well, it sounds okay with me," he says uncertainly, then there's the familiar blue glow which indicates Yue's arrival.

Sakura beams cheerfully at him. "Isn't this great, Yue-san?"

Yue somehow keeps a straight face. "I'm interested to know how you're going to accomplish this."

Sakura goes off into a long, complicated explanation. Something about the create card and the change card and a few dozen other cards, from the sound of it. Hiiragizawa just nods along with her.

Yue looks thoughtful through all of this.

"Kero-chan thinks it would work," Sakura adds at the end. "And you could have your own room and some of Oniichan's old clothes until we could take you shopping for new ones and you wouldn't have to waste time transforming every time you needed to protect me."

"I'll have to think about it," Yue finally says.

"Well, we should be ready in a few days, and I don't know when we'd get another chance," Sakura says. "So don't think too long, `kay?" She gives Yue a hug, which earns her a very startled look. "Anyway, Eriol-kun is leaving now, so I'm gonna walk him to the door."

With that, she whisks her way out of the room with Hiiragizawa in tow. Sometimes that monster of a sister can be very perceptive.

Yue is about to transform, I can tell, so I grab hold of his arm before he can. "Why don't you want to do this?"

He's glaring at me. Not that it matters. I became immune to Yue's glares a long time ago. He owes me,

anyway.

“Don't tell me that you're going to pass up on this chance because you like to hide behind Yuki,” I continue.

He's still glaring. “I wasn't going to say any such thing.”

“Because you weren't going to say anything at all.” I roll my eyes. “Do yourself a favor and take the opportunity to be yourself. And don't say people like your other self better. Because we all like you fine, you just have no self-esteem.”

He heaves a sigh. “I said I'll think about it,” he says coldly, and transforms before I can stop him.

Yuki looks confused. “Where'd Sakura-chan and Eriol-kun go?”

“Hiiragizawa went home,” I say, “and Sakura went to show him out. Yue wants to think about it for a few days.”

“Oh.” Yuki looks a little disappointed.

“They weren't going to do it tonight anyway,” I remind him. “Give him a little time to get over himself.”

Yuki looks a little hurt. “Be nice to Yue . . .”

“I am nice to Yue,” I say. “I'm trying to help him.”

Yuki sighs, sounding remarkably like his other form. “I suppose.”

2 - Question.

“So why did you want to come over?” Sakura-san is giving one of her usual confused looks. “I mean, not that I mind having you . . .”

Somehow I don't think Sakura-san is ever as confused as she pretends she is. I think she's doing it to make us feel better.

“I wanted to talk to Yue,” I tell her, just in case she really doesn't know. “He seemed rather uncertain, and I thought I might be able to help. If you suggest it too firmly, he'll take it as an order, and if Touya-san suggests it too firmly, Yue will feel like he's ruining Yukito-san's life.”

“Ohhh . . .” Sakura-san nods vigorously. “Arigatou, Eriol-kun!”

She tugs me up the stairs, as if I need her prompting, and knocks on Touya-san's door. “Oniichan? Yukito-san?”

The door opens and Touya-san looms. He's very good at that. Yukito-san is in the background, sitting on the bed. “What do you want, kaijuu?”

“Oniichan!” Sakura-san pouts. “Eriol-kun wanted to talk to Yue-san. About you know. The thingy.”

Touya-san looks pained. “The thingy.”

“You know what I mean!”

He grins suddenly. “Of course I do. Okay, if he wants.” He holds the door open to let me in. I resist the urge to make a comment about how astounded I am by his generosity. I give them both a pointed look and wait for them to go away. Yukito-san is just blinking at me, probably wondering what on earth I can say to Yue to change his mind.

Touya-san looks between Yukito-san and I for a moment before he gets it, rolls his eyes, and tows his sister out of the room. She's protesting volubly. I'm not sure if she's protesting leaving or Touya-san dragging her. Most likely the latter. I wonder sometimes how someone so small can be so loud.

I wait politely for Yue to make his appearance, which he does after a long pause. “What do you want?” he asks, hardly gracious. I know that Yue isn't really fond of me, which is perversely amusing given how fond he was of Clow.

I try to look innocent, something I was always fairly good at. “Just to talk to you.”

He folds his arms and leans against the wall in classic Yue ‘I don't want to talk to you’ posture. “About?”

“About you moving on with your life.” I have a suspicion that being blunt may be the only way to get through this alive.

He gives me a look. “Go away.”

“No. Your continual moping is going to drive the rest of us crazy.”

“Only if you have to put up with it,” he says. “Which you don't, when I'm being Yukito.”

I have to admit he has a point, and a rather good one. “It would really be preferable if you would just stop moping altogether.” I glance out the window, expecting to see a pig fly by. Yue? Stop moping? Right. That will happen on the day that Yamizaki-kun tells the truth. And Touya-san runs off with Li-kun.

“Why do you care?” Yue asks. “It's not as if it's any of your business.”

I raise an eyebrow. “Yue, if I didn't know you better, I'd say you might be bitter. But since I do know you better, I can say that you are definitely bitter. Clow didn't choose to die, you know.”

He looks away. “And you didn't choose to let me know you were back.”

I resist the urge to tear my hair out. “Yue, as we've gone over before, I'm not Clow. I have his memories, but that doesn't mean I'm him.” I take off my glasses and rub the bridge of my nose. “Are we clear on this point?”

“Yes.” Yue is giving me a glare worthy of . . . well, Yue is the king of glares.

“Then let's move on.” I'm glad Sakura-san didn't stay for this little heart-to-heart. “We all know you're upset, and we all know you feel betrayed, but hiding for the rest of your existence isn't going to help. Especially since you feel guilty about impeding Yukito-san's life.”

His glare, if possible, intensifies.

“So specifically, why don't you want to do this?” Might as well attempt to institute logic.

“I don't know how to behave in normal society.”

“You'll pick it up fast enough. Besides, Li-kun didn't either, and he's doing fine.”

Yue blinks at me, completely missing the joke. We'll have to work on his sense of humor.

“And I shouldn't impose on the Kinomoto family.”

“How is it imposing? You can have Yukito-san's room. And Kinomoto-sensei is already feeding you both; Yukito won't need to eat as much once you've separated and you won't need to eat at all.”

His glare is letting up a little, but his arguments are still going strong. We work through most of them, then we get to the real kicker. “Sakura doesn't want me around. She's frightened of me. She only wants

to help Yukito.”

“Well, you are a bit foreboding,” I admit. “But acceptance comes with familiarity. The more you're around, the more Sakura-san will get used to you. But she is doing this to help both of you. She really does like you.”

Yue just looks away, obviously not believing a word of it.

“Yue, would you rather stay miserable or take a chance at ending up happy?”

He shrugs.

“You're just used to being miserable,” I say with a sigh. “I suppose it's safer that way. But you know, Clow wouldn't want you to be like this.”

I'll admit that it was not the nicest thing to say. Given that, however, who but me would have ever said it?

He's glaring again. “How would you know? I thought you weren't Clow.”

I resist the urge to thud my head against the wall. “I'm not, but I do have his memories, and he did care for you. He gave you the ability to keep on going; you should take the chance he gave you to be happy. Think of it as honoring his last request.”

“And how is having my own body going to make me `happy'?” he asks, his voice disdainful.

“To begin with, you'll have to face your problems instead of hiding from them.” Probably not the wisest thing to say.

I'm beginning to think Yue's face is going to freeze in his current expression, he's been glaring at me for so long. “I think that would make things worse, not help,” he finally says.

It's time to try a different tactic. “Do you like Sakura-san?”

He blinks. “She's the Mistress.”

“That's not what I asked. Do you like her?”

He shrugs. “I suppose.”

“Then it might be nice for both of you if you spent some time together.”

“I'm around her all the time.”

“No you aren't. Yukito-san is. How is Sakura-san ever supposed to get to know you if you're always hiding behind him?”

Apparently Yue can't think of a way to argue with that, because he's turning his back on me and looking

out the window.

“So you'll give it a go?”

“If it's what Sakura wants.”

I give up. He's agreed, that's enough for now. We'll be able to make more progress after it's done.

For some reason, my sister didn't warn me that she was going to fall asleep, and it's all I can do to dart across the room to catch her before she gives herself a concussion. Actually, it looks like everyone could use a nap. Yue looks . . . well, if the word 'woozy' can be applied to someone as dignified as Yue, now would be the time for it. Yuki is wobbling visibly. Even Hiiragizawa is pale, which is funny, because as far as I can tell, he didn't do anything. He looks displeased, too.

I, on the other hand, feel like I have a sugar high and caffeine high combined into one. Maybe add speed to that.

“It's your magical power returning,” Hiiragizawa explains, apparently able to read my expression. “That's why you're so . . . energized.”

I nod. “Why do you look like you've just run a marathon?”

“Disturbingly enough, I don't know.” Hiiragizawa sinks into a chair. “You might want to do something with the three of them.”

“I'm fine,” Yue is protesting, but he sounds pretty vague. Like he's going to fall over any minute now.

“Right, sure you are,” I say. “Why don't you go lie down?”

“Where?” he asks.

“Your room, where else?”

He blinks. “I have a room?”

“Obviously. You can have Yuki's. Didn't we tell you this?”

“Probably,” he admits.

“Then go, lie down.”

Yue attempts to wobble his way out the door.

“Second thought, let me help you.” He looks even more like he might fall down. Sakura would kill me if he hurt himself.

"I'm fine," he repeats.

"I know." It's probably safer to humor him. He lets me help him over to his room, however. "Lie down for a while and you'll feel better."

Yue just blinks at me.

"I'm going to take care of the others," I say, and I'm satisfied to see Yue lie down as I leave the room. His hair is trailing on the floor. We're going to have to do something about that.

Yuki is easily taken care of; he curls up on my bed and falls asleep. I'll bring him some food later. Hiiragizawa is still sitting in my chair, rubbing his eyes. I put Sakura in her own bed and bring up some tea.

"Here."

"Eh?" Hiiragizawa looks startled.

"It's tea; you look like you could use it."

"Oh." He accepts it, thanks me, and starts to sip it. He really does look pretty awful.

"Maybe you should go home," I say. I don't particularly like him, but he did do us a favor.

Hiiragizawa nods, stands, and then sits again. "Sorry," he says vaguely. "Just a little dizzy."

"Did you even do anything?" I ask curiously.

"I was just showing Sakura-san how to do some of it," he replies. "It was nothing big. I'm sure I'll be fine in a minute."

I decide to bring Yue his tea and wait to see if Hiiragizawa starts feeling better.

Yue's eyes are closed, but he looks up when I come in.

"I brought you some tea."

"I'm fine." He closes his eyes again.

"Drink the tea, Yue."

"I don't eat."

"Well, why not?"

He looks startled. "Because I don't need to."

“That doesn't stop Kero, Spinel, or Akizuki. Drink the tea.”

He grudgingly accepts the mug and starts to sip it. He's trying pretty hard to look like he doesn't like it, but he's failing. Mental note: Yue likes green tea.

“I'm going to go check on the others,” I announce, and leave the room.

Yuki is still sound asleep, as is Sakura. I'll wake them for dinner. Hiiragizawa has taken his glasses off and is rubbing the bridge of his nose. “Feeling any better?”

He jumps. Never seen him do that before. “Much better, thank you.” He stands up and heads for the door, trips over his own feet, and catches himself against the wall. Never seen that before either. “Why don't I call Akizuki to come walk you home? You don't look very good.” Did I just offer to talk to Akizuki? What is my problem?

Hiiragizawa sits down again. “I'd appreciate that, thank you.”

Great. Now I have to talk to her.

“Moshi moshi!”

“Akizuki?”

“TOUYA-KUUUN!”

I wince. “Stop it. Can you come walk Hiiragizawa home? He's a little sick.”

“Ohhh . . .” She sounds incredibly disappointed. “You didn't want a date? I know a great little restaurant around -- ”

“Akizuki. Come get Hiiragizawa.”

“Will you be there when I come over?”

I sigh. “Yes, Akizuki, I'll be here.”

“KAY! I'll be right over.”

Great. Just great. I hang up and go back upstairs. Hiiragizawa is regaining a little color. “She's coming,” I report.

“Thanks.” Hiiragizawa leans against the wall and looks tired. He has a sudden resemblance to Yuki when he kept fainting. It's strong enough to give me some chills.

Akizuki arrives in record time. She probably flew. Spinel is perched on her shoulder and peers at Hiiragizawa. “What's wrong? It's not like you to get tired.”

He shrugs. I get the feeling he has no idea what's wrong and doesn't really want to discuss it.

Akizuki, naturally, has attached herself to me. Fortunately, Hiiragizawa manages to pry her off and the three of them depart.

I actually think I'm worried about the kid.

Weird.

"I look ridiculous."

Sakura-chan is muffling `hoe' noises.

"You look fine," I hasten to reassure my previous other form. "Navy is a really good color for you."

Yue surveys his T-shirt and khakis. "I still think I look ridiculous."

"A T-shirt isn't ridiculous," To-ya tells him firmly. "Why do you think it is?"

Pause.

"See, you don't even have an answer." Touya's never really been the patient one between the two of us. Yue is dressed in his old clothes and a worn pair of dress shoes. I think they don't fit quite right, because Yue keeps shifting back and forth, but that just might be because he's far too used to bare feet.

"What about your hair?" Sakura-chan asks tentatively.

Yue turns a death glare on her. She turns rather pale. "What about it?" he asks.

"It's going to drag on the ground," she says, cringing. "Could we braid it and double it up, somehow?"

"But then he'd look like a girl," Kero observes.

Yue turns his glare onto Kero. Sakura-chan grabs him by the tail and crams him into her backpack again.

"I'll just braid it," Sakura-chan said, running out of the room only to return seconds later with a hairbrush. Yue sends a suspicious look in her direction, but lets her braid his hair. "Okay, let's go!"

"Where are we going again?" Yue is trying to look bored. It's rather endearing. No one had ever told me that my other form was so . . . impressive looking, in an extremely exotic way.

"Clothes shopping," Sakura-chan explains for the tenth time.

“To get more things to make me look ridiculous?”

“Yes. Now let's go.” Touya has him by the wrist and is dragging him out the door.

I'm interested to see how this is going to happen. Touya, fortunately, has his own car by now. “Shoes first,” Yue announces. I guess the ones he has really don't fit.

Yue apparently is a 'cheap sneaker' kind of person. The thin canvas kind. I have a feeling that we're going to be buying him shoes often. He also refuses to wear socks. Maybe we can get him some sandals later.

“So what kind of clothes do you want?” Sakura-chan asks brightly.

He blinks at her. “My old ones?”

Sakura-chan face faults to the floor. “Hoe . . .”

“Yue, you can't wear your old ones out of the house.” Touya is trying to sound patient. It's rather amusing. “We need to get you some new ones.”

“I don't want new clothes.”

“Too bad,” Touya says.

“I think some appropriately sized jeans would be good.” It's definitely time to put my two cents in. “And some sweaters for when it gets cold. T-shirts and maybe some short-sleeved button-up shirts. No socks, right?” He nods. I cringe to mention underwear. I think Yue would bolt.

For the next hour, we tow Yue around the department store and bully him into trying things on. Well, To-ya bullies, I wheedle, and Sakura-chan gives him puppy dog eyes. Some things he flat out refuses to ever be seen in, but most of our choices are acceptable. He likes dark colors, but it makes him look rather like a vampire. I wonder, if we brought him out in the sun, would he tan . . .?

Near the end of the trip, Sakura-chan suddenly realizes the underwear quandary. “I'm gonna go get Yue-san a hairbrush and some elastics so he isn't always using mine,” she says. “Can you two . . . takehimovertomen'sunderwearandgethimsomestuff? Thanks! Bye!” She bounces away.

Yue and I blink.

“I wish she wouldn't do that,” Touya says, and heads off for another part of the store.

“You understood her?” Yue asks.

“You'll be able to after a while,” Touya promises us.

We meet up with Sakura-chan at the registers and take our purchases out to the car.

“Let's shop for a while!” Sakura-chan declares, and proceeds to drag us around for more than a while.

Yue is entranced by the pet store. The kittens, to be precise. “They're cuter than Kerberos,” he says. “Less sarcastic. More affectionate.”

“And they don't talk,” Touya adds.

I give him a Look, but Yue apparently doesn't realize that Touya was being sarcastic himself. “Also a plus.”

I make a mental note to buy Yue a cat later. I think I had better check it with Kinomoto-sensei first.

“Let's go get some lunch,” Sakura-chan says. We settle in a restaurant and order. Yue refuses to order anything, stating as usual that he doesn't need to eat. No glares from Touya can change his mind on this subject.

I get my usual sized meal, and discover halfway through it that I'm not anywhere near as hungry as usual. Odd, that.

“What is it?” Touya asks, noticing my bewildered expression.

“I'm not hungry.” I push aside the rest of the food. “It's rather . . . bizarre.”

“Eriol did mention something along those lines,” Yue says.

Nice of him to have told me that. However, this provides me with a singular opportunity. I take my takoyaki and place it in front of Yue. “Eat that.”

He looks at me.

“Go on. It's good.”

“I don't eat.”

“You do now.”

He glares at me.

I smile back.

I think we're going to be sitting here for a while.

Yue pokes at the takoyaki and finally, after what seems an eternity, starts eating it. Sakura-chan looks thrilled. My job here is done.
