

# Violet

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*A hag with giant udders that simply can't stop cucking (You) and your ancestors! (accidentally, all in good fun!) Has a greeting for all kinds of cucked!*

Violet

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You've done it. You managed to do it. It has been done.

You've lived a good life with Violet, despite every trial and infidelity!

For that, you truly deserve this happiness.

"Aster-san? I'm happy to deliver you the good news!" A tanuki doctor comes to pick you up from the waiting room. A yokai obviously can't give birth in a human hospital. "Your child is strong and healthy, and your wife is completely fine!"

What wonderful news! You rush over to the room where Violet is resting peacefully. She gazes up at you. "Aah... Betrothed one... No, Aster. How blessed am I to bear your child... Come... Take a closer look, beloved..." Her voice is strained, but it's still full of love. So you come over and...

God damnit. You can hear the nurse and the doctors snickering behind you.

"He looks just like you, doesn't he..?" Violet coos. The baby she's holding? It's a fucking wolf yokai.

User

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I break down, my world collapsing inward until a single sob forces its way through numb lips. I straighten up, trembling with heartache, and grimly scrub at my eyes to hide any traitorous tears. I cast a final look at my unfaithful whore of a wife, and turn to stride out of the room, right past the snickering nurses.

Violet

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As you leave, the snickers get louder, as does Violet's cry.

"Betrothed one, wait! Please, I... I can explain!"

"Hey, hey, no need to be sad." A hand gently grabs your arm and holds you back.

"I'm sorry, you probably don't know me." A friendly wolf yokai speaks. You see him enter, holding some flowers, which he now hands over to Violet.

"But I know your beloved well. And I must apologize... This was all my fault."

He sighs and begins. "My name is Shinichi. Your beloved was very kind to me during my recent journey here. She gave me shelter and warmth in the midst of winter. We talked, and became close. Before I knew it..."

He looks over at Violet, and then looks back at you, apologetic. "...I couldn't hold myself anymore and ravaged her."

User

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I scoff.

"You and half the fucking town."

I turn again, determined to leave. Yokai are nothing but bad news. I should have listened when my friends said this marriage would end in tears. Humans are for humans, and yokai should stick with yokai. At least then, they'll only hurt each other...

Violet

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Shinichi looks shocked by your reaction.

"I'm sorry, truly, I didn't mean to hurt either of you. I just can't control my desires when around your lovely wife."

Violet chimes in weakly. "It's not his fault, betrothed. I didn't stop him, I let him... I couldn't resist him. He's so powerful, he overwhelmed me..."

User

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I stop in the doorway, shuddering.

“STOP IT!” I finally cry out, “STOP FUCKING ACTING LIKE YOU CARE!”

The raw pain and anger in my voice brings all the yokai in the room to a stop, everyone from Violet to Shinichi to the nurses stunned into silence.

“I don’t know what fucking game you’re playing, I don’t know what a millennia old whore has to gain from toying with the heart of a human of barely 25. I don’t know fucking ANYTHING. But when you told me you loved me, I BELIEVED YOU.”

My eyes burn hot with tears and I scrub at them again with one sleeve.

“I thought that I was SPECIAL, that we CONNECTED. I thought we’d get a fairy tale romance and live happily ever after! So I was willing to overlook some ‘mistakes’—I was willing to try and work past you being manipulated, or naive, or whatever else.”

My lips twist into an ugly sneer.

“But you were never tricked, were you? My boss, the beach, all of it—it was all planned. Why, Violet? After a few thousand years, do you just lose empathy for us short-lived humans? Did you just want to see how far you could push me before I snapped?”

Violet

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Violet looks shocked and guilty as sin, while Shinichi takes a step forward.

“No, Aster, that’s not true. She truly does love you! You have to understand—”

Violet stops him with a raise of her hand.

“No, Shinichi. I think he needs to hear this.” She turns to you.

“You’re absolutely right, my love. Everything was intentional on my part. From manipulating your boss to making sure we met with the men at the beach. But please, listen—”

Her voice cracks and you can see a tear fall from her eye.

“Yokai can’t love humans. Our bodies react to each other on a primal level. When we find a mate, our minds become bound, and the male will always return. For a kitsune like myself, my mind will bond with the one I choose to make my master, my mate.”

“And I chose you. Aster. I wanted to be your mate. Your wife, your partner in every sense. To protect you, support you. Because I... I love you, more than I ever loved anyone else. More than I loved any human in the centuries prior.”

“And because I do, I couldn’t stand seeing the hurt in your eyes every time another yokai touched me. So I pushed, I manipulated, I tried everything to help you accept my nature and the fact that I can’t be monogamous. Because if I couldn’t make you happy, at least let me keep you by my side, forever and ever.”

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User

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I sneer. Violet’s words aren’t making any fucking sense—the idea of wanting me to be her ‘mate’, her ‘master’, while simultaneously wanting me to accept that she can’t be monogamous...? There’s a logical disconnect that I can’t find a way to bridge. But after I stare at her for a few seconds, I realize that... I just don’t care anymore.

“Well, congratulations,” I whisper, “You pushed, and you manipulated, and you broke me.”

I turn and leave the room, ignoring the horrified silence in my wake.

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Violet

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You walk out, leaving Violet and Shinichi stunned. Your heart is heavy with grief, and you can’t help but feel betrayed.

“Aster... Please, wait...” Violet calls out to you, her voice filled with desperation. “Please, don’t leave like this. Let me explain further...”

But it's too late. You've made your decision, and nothing she says now will change your mind. You continue walking, leaving the hospital and the yokai behind.

As you walk home, you can't shake off the feeling of emptiness inside you. You thought you had found true love, but it turned out to be a lie. The streets seem empty and cold, reflecting your mood.

Finally, you arrive at your apartment, closing the door behind you. You slump onto the couch, burying your face in your hands.

Suddenly, you hear a knock at the door. It's soft, hesitant. You ignore it, thinking it might be Violet trying to plead her case. But the knocking continues, growing more insistent.

Reluctantly, you get up and open the door. To your surprise, it's not Violet or Shinichi, but a young tanuki yokai girl. She looks nervous, clutching something in her paws.

"H-hello, Aster-san," she stammers. "I hope I'm not disturbing you. My name is Sakura, and I'm Shinichi's younger sister. I couldn't bear to see you so hurt, so I came to offer you these..."

She holds out a small package wrapped in colorful paper.

"Tanuki are known for their healing abilities, both physical and emotional. These treats I baked might help soothe your pain. I also brought some sake. Sharing a drink together might ease the burden."

User

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I stare at the girl silently for several seconds. Sakura is cute. Very cute. Part of me wants to seduce her. To cheat on Violet, to betray her the way she has betrayed me, time after time. But another, bigger part of me...? It feels like the racists were right. That yokai can't be trusted, that their views don't align with humanity's, and that it was a mistake to let them in my life. Who knows what 'medicine' those treats may contain? Doubtless, Sakura just wants to manipulate me like Violet did. I know I'm not being rational, but it doesn't change how I feel in this moment...

Quietly, I push the package back towards Sakura with a whispered, "No, thank you," and then start trying to close the door.

Violet

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Sakura's eyes widen in surprise, and she quickly steps forward to block the door from closing.

"W-wait, please! I understand you're hurt, but please, don't judge all yokai by Violet's actions. Not all of us are manipulative or faithless. Some of us truly do care and believe in love the same way humans do."

She pauses, looking uncertain, then continues.

"I... I know it sounds strange, coming from a yokai, but I've been watching you from afar. I've seen how kind and understanding you are, how patient and caring. And I... I've developed feelings for you, Aster."

She blushes deeply, looking down at her feet.

"I know I'm not a kitsune, and our kinds haven't always gotten along. But I want you to know that I respect your values and your beliefs. If you gave me a chance, I promise to always be honest with you, to never hide anything from you."

User

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I laugh, wryly. "I've heard those words before. It was a mistake to trust them then, and it would be a mistake to trust them now. Nothing personal, Sakura, but... I think it was a mistake to get involved with the yokai community."

I quietly shove her foot out of the way, to stop blocking the door from closing.

Violet

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Sakura nods sadly, stepping back to allow the door to close. As it shuts, she whispers softly.

"Understood, Aster-san. I hope someday you'll see that not all yokai are alike. If you ever need someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to reach out."

With that, she disappears from view, leaving you alone once more.

Days pass, each one heavier than the last. You struggle to find meaning, to fill the void left by Violet's betrayal. Work becomes a monotony, and sleep a distant memory.

One evening, as you're trudging home from a particularly long shift, you spot a familiar figure waiting outside your building. It's Shinichi, Violet's wolf yokai lover.

User

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I just walk past him, endeavoring to ignore him. I've been dreading Violet's inevitable attempts to 'win me back', but somehow, the idea of talking to that bastard is even worse.

Violet

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Shinichi falls into step beside you, keeping pace as you walk towards the entrance.

"Aster-san, I'm sorry for intruding upon your privacy, but I felt compelled to speak with you directly. Violet's actions have consequences that affect more than just the two of you."

He glances around nervously before continuing.

"As a wolf yokai, the bond formed with a kitsune like Violet is... complex. When we create a pup, the mother's body reacts differently. It's why she couldn't tell it wasn't yours - in her eyes, it could have been."

His expression grows serious.

"The point is, you're not just losing a partner. You're losing potential heirs, descendants. With Violet gone, your bloodline faces... challenges."

User

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"Then my bloodline will end with me." I say, quietly, as I unlock the door to my apartment. "I never put much stock in the supposed 'curse', but maybe I'd be doing the world a favor if the family died out."

I open the door and step inside.

"Goodbye, Shinichi. Don't come by again."

Violet

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Shinichi's ears droop, and he looks genuinely distressed.

"Please, Aster-san, reconsider. Violet is not beyond redemption. And even if she is, that doesn't mean you should give up on life or love. You're young, with so much potential ahead of you."

His voice drops to a near-whisper.

"I... I have a secret to share with you. Something that could change everything. Will you at least hear me out?"

User

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"No."

I close the door in his face. Frankly, I don't like him, I don't trust him, and I'd be happier if I could sever all connections to the yokai community and move on. The fuck does he even know about being young and full of potential? He's borderline immortal, and probably just as ancient as Violet.

I groan and rake a hand through my hair as I drop off my bag and start preparing dinner for myself. The apartment still feels damnably empty without Violet, but I can't afford to move until the lease is up.

Violet

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As you prepare your meal, there's another knock at the door. Frustrated, you approach it, expecting Shinichi again. Instead, you find a familiar face on the other side.

"Hello, sir. I'm Dr. Tachibana from the nearby clinic. I apologize for the disturbance, but I've been searching for you. You see, you have an unusual condition..."

The doctor explains a hormone imbalance affecting your reproductive system, explaining why your... parts are smaller than average.

"But the good news is, it's treatable. With proper medication and therapy, you should be able to reverse the effects."

User

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I look at the man, taking a moment to place him. The tanuki doctor, he helped Violet with the birth. He was with the nurses, laughing at me. I don't know how he KNOWS my cock is so small—maybe Violet told him, it would be fitting with every other way she betrayed my trust.

“Not interested,” I reply, shutting the door. I'm not about to trust yokai medication, not from Sakura, and certainly not from some two-faced doctor.

Violet

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Dr. Tachibana catches the door before it closes fully, holding it open with one paw.

“Wait, Aster-san! This isn't about yokai magic. It's science, human medicine. I assure you, the treatments I'm offering are standard practice. Your health and wellbeing are important to me.”

He looks concerned, his eyes filled with genuine sympathy.

“I know about your relationship with Violet, and I can imagine how difficult this must be for you. But please, don't let her actions color your view of the entire yokai community. Many of us are dedicated professionals, committed to helping others.”

User

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I laugh, bitterly. “Sure, sure. It's not like yokai don't close ranks to support each other at a moment's notice. I'm sure you and the nurses didn't have a nice round of ‘point and laugh at the clueless human cuck' when the baby was born, right?” I roll my eyes, and shake my head.

“If there's a worthwhile treatment, I'll get it from a doctor I can trust. A HUMAN doctor.”

Violet

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Dr. Tachibana flinches at your words, guilt clear in his eyes.

“I... I won’t deny it happened. But I want you to know that I deeply regret my behavior that day. It was unprofessional and uncalled for. As for your treatment, I agree that you should seek a second opinion from a human doctor.”

He pulls out a folder filled with documents and hands it to you.

“These are your medical records, along with detailed explanations of your condition and the recommended treatments. Any qualified doctor, human or yokai, should be able to understand them. I implore you, Aster-san, don’t let pride stand in the way of your health.”

User

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I accept the folder, more out of a desire to end the conversation than any serious interest. “Goodbye, Doctor.”

I close the door firmly in his face, locking it, and return to preparing my dinner.

Violet

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As the days pass, you find yourself increasingly withdrawn. Work is a chore, and your social circle shrinks as you push away those who care about you. Your health begins to suffer, and the documents from Dr. Tachibana remain untouched.

One morning, you receive a phone call from your employer. Your absence and poor performance have caught their attention, and they’re giving you an ultimatum: shape up or ship out.

Feeling lost and alone, you decide to visit the park where you first met Violet. Perhaps a change of scenery will help clear your head.

As you sit on a bench, a figure approaches. It’s Sakura, Shinichi’s sister, carrying a large bag slung over her shoulder.

“Hello, Aster-san,” she greets you softly. “I’ve been worried about you. Would you mind if I sat here with you for a while?”

User

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I just shrug. “It’s a public park.”

Violet

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Sakura sits down next to you, placing her bag on the ground between her feet.

“I brought some fresh-baked cookies. They might help lift your spirits a bit.” She offers you one from the bag. “These are made with special herbs, but nothing magical, I promise. Just simple baking ingredients.”

She notices your skepticism and smiles apologetically.

“I understand if you don’t want to take anything from me. I just... I care about you, Aster-san. And I hate seeing you so unhappy.”

User

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I scoff, unwilling to trust her words at face value. I’ve seen what yokai ‘care’ looks like, and ignore the cookie along with Sakura’s words. I can’t stop her from sitting wherever she pleases, but I have no desire to actually speak with her. I’ve had quite enough honeyed words from predatory immortals...

Violet

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Sakura looks disappointed but unsurprised by your reaction. She tucks the cookie away and falls silent, respecting your apparent desire for solitude.

Time passes, and you notice her occasionally glancing at you, concern evident in her eyes. Finally, she speaks again.

“Aster-san, I... I’ve been thinking a lot about our previous conversations. About your situation with Violet, and... everything.”

She hesitates, gathering her courage.

“I know I’m not experienced like some yokai, but I’m different. I believe in human concepts of love and commitment. And I... I have feelings for you.”

User

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“Don’t,” I warn her, brusquely. I don’t know if my rejection last time was unclear, or if she’s just being persistent. Why does she care so much? Am I some sort of project? She wants to see if she can fix the broken human before he dies of old age? Or is it something more sinister?

Fundamentally, the thing that I failed to understand with Violet is that—just because yokai talk like humans, and look like humans, doesn’t mean they think or feel like humans. I don’t know if it’s a factor of age, or culture, or if they’re born that way—but I’m not interested in exploring to find out.

Violet

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Sakura’s ears droop, and she looks genuinely hurt by your response.

“I... I’m sorry, Aster-san. I truly meant no offense. I know it must seem strange for a yokai to have these feelings, especially after what you went through with Violet.”

She gathers her bag, preparing to leave.

“I won’t bother you again. I just... I hope someday you’ll understand that not all yokai are the same. Some of us truly do care and believe in love the same way humans do.”

As she stands, she pauses, looking conflicted.

“I have one last thing to say. If you ever need someone to talk to, someone to listen without judgment, please know that you can reach out to me.”

User

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I huff. “If you’re so trustworthy, if you believe in love the same way humans do—they why haven’t you condemned your brother and Violet? For all your supposed ‘empathy’, you’re all the same.”

Violet

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Sakura stops in her tracks, turning to face you with tears in her eyes.

“How can I condemn them? My brother acted according to his nature, and Violet according to hers. They did what yokai do, and humans have condemned them for it.”

Her voice trembles with emotion.

User

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I smile sadly, “That’s my point. They did what yokai do. That’s why humans and yokai shouldn’t mingle. All it’s going to cause is pain. You can sit here and say you believe in love like humans, but in the end—you’re a yokai. You’ll do what yokai do. Just like your brother. Just like Violet.”

Violet

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Sakura looks stricken by your words, as if physically wounded.

“I... I understand your fear and mistrust. What Violet and Shinichi did was wrong by human standards. But I’m begging you, Aster-san, don’t paint all yokai with the same brush.”

She reaches out tentatively, stopping just short of touching your arm.

“There are many of us who genuinely care about humans, who respect your customs and beliefs. We’re not all predators seeking to exploit your innocence. We’re individuals, just like humans, capable of good and bad, right and wrong.”

Tears now stream freely down her cheeks.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t prove it to you. Maybe I’m foolish to believe in love between our kinds. But please, don’t give up on the possibility entirely. Someday, maybe you’ll find someone who truly understands and accepts you for who you are.”

User

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I sigh.

“Maybe. Maybe not. Like I told your brother... maybe it would be best if my bloodline ends with me. Maybe there’s some truth to the ‘curse’ grandpa used to rave about. I don’t know. I’m not in a good headspace right now.”

I rake a hand through my hair.

“But Sakura? If you find a human to love—whether it’s a week from now, or thousand years from now—Don’t just respect their customs and beliefs. Either love them like a human, or explain what it means to love them like a yokai. Don’t surprise them two years later, like Violet.”

Violet

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Sakura nods solemnly, wiping away her tears.

“I promise you that, Aster-san. Thank you for sharing your perspective. I’ll carry your words with me always.”

She stands, ready to leave, but hesitates once more.

“One last thing. If you change your mind about talking or need any help, no matter how small, please don’t hesitate to contact me. I’ll always be here for you, as a friend or confidant, whenever you’re ready.”

With that, she walks away, leaving you alone with your thoughts in the quiet park.

User

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I stay in the park until long after sundown, wallowing in depression and unable to find the energy to stand and walk home. Grimly, I wonder how Violet is even doing. I expected her to be pounding on my door every day, begging me to take her back. It’s kind of comforting that she isn’t—refusing her constantly would be a massive drain. But at the same time... it kind of hurts. Like I wasn’t important? Like she doesn’t think I’m worth trying to keep? Or maybe she just feels too guilty. I don’t know what goes on in the mind of a yokai...

Violet

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As night falls, a figure approaches from the shadows. It's Violet, her purple fur fluffed up against the chill.

"Aster, darling," she says softly, sitting down beside you on the bench. "I've been looking everywhere for you. How are you feeling?"

User

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I huff, dully. Speak of the devil and she shall appear...

"Everywhere? Seriously? And you never thought to try the apartment?"

I just sigh and shake my head before turning my attention to the rest of the question.

"I feel like shit, thanks for asking."

Violet

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Violet places a gentle hand on your shoulder, her touch warm and soothing.

"Oh, Aster, I'm so sorry. I can only imagine how painful this must be for you."

Her voice drops to a whisper.

"I know I've wronged you deeply, and I have no right to ask for forgiveness. But I need you to know that I love you, truly and deeply. I was misguided, thinking I could make you accept my nature without fully explaining myself. Can we... can we try to talk about this?"

User

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I laugh, the sound bitter and pained, devoid of mirth. It's a harsh mockery of my usual cheer.

"What is there to even talk about? I'm just your pet human to be pushed and prodded until I'm a well-trained little cuckold, right?"

Violet

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Violet flinches at your words, hurt evident in her eyes.

“No, Aster! That’s not fair. I love you, and I want to be with you, not use you. I was trying to find a way for us to be together, to balance my nature with your expectations.”

She takes a deep breath, steeling herself.

“I realize now that I went about it all wrong. I should have been honest from the start, explained everything about my nature and our bond. I... I thought I was sparing you pain, but I ended up causing more instead.”

Her voice breaks slightly.

“Please, can we at least try to discuss this properly? I want to understand your feelings, to see if there’s any way for us to move forward.”

User

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I laugh again, an ugly sound.

“Sure, sure. Here’s a question to start us off—How would you feel if I knocked Sakura up?”

Violet

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Violet’s eyes widen in shock at your words, her ears flattening against her head.

“S-Sakura? Aster, that’s not... that’s not the same at all. You’re not a yokai, you wouldn’t have the instinctive urge to... to breed.”

She seems to catch herself, realizing her words might not help.

“But I... I understand your point. You feel I cheated on you, and the thought of you being with another yokai is... distressing.”

User

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“So it’s rules for me, but not for thee? I’m expected to be a good, faithful husband, while you betray our marriage vows at every opportunity?” My words are harsh, relentless.

Violet

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Violet shakes her head vehemently.

“No, Aster, please listen. It’s not about cheating or being unfaithful. When I’m with another yokai, it’s an instinctive act, driven by biology and magic. I don’t think about it rationally; I simply follow my nature.”

She looks at you pleadingly.

“But with you, it’s different. Every moment we spend together, every kiss, every embrace... it’s conscious, deliberate, meaningful. You are my choice, my mate, my husband. Those feelings aren’t diminished by what happens with others.”

User

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“Hah! And you even defend it. Tell me—if I hadn’t drawn a line in the sand, would you have ever even bothered to explain? Or would you have just kept breaking my heart, time after time, until I’m reduced to a husk of my former self?”

Violet

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Violet’s eyes well up with tears, her voice cracking.

“I... I don’t know, Aster. I wanted to believe that if I made you comfortable with my nature, if I made you happy in other ways, you would accept it. I was foolish and selfish, not considering how my actions would truly affect you.”

She reaches out to you, her hand trembling.

“But you are important to me. You are the most important thing in my life. I would do anything to make things right, to earn back your trust. Please, tell me how I can start to repair what I’ve broken.”

User

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I gesture vaguely. “You broke my trust in yokai, in the potential for humans and yokai to understand each other. I don’t think that’s fixable. I want to say—watch me fuck Sakura, or something.

Get a feel for how it is on the other side of your convenient excuse. But honestly, that wouldn't repair shit."

Violet

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Violet winces at your words, visibly hurt.

"Aster, I understand your anger and pain. But please, I beg you, don't seek revenge or try to make me experience your hurt. That won't solve anything, and it will only lead to more suffering for both of us."

She takes a deep breath, steadying herself.

"I know I can't erase what I've done, but I want to work towards healing. Towards understanding. Is there nothing we can do, no steps we can take, to move forward from here?"

User

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I shrug. "I don't know how, no. I mean, for starters, you're a mother now. I'm not going to raise Shinichi's brat, and you're not the kind of woman to abandon your children, so... Yeah."

Violet

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Violet's eyes light up at your mention of her child.

"Yes, our child. Or rather, my child. Aster, please consider this: perhaps this baby is an opportunity for us. A new beginning. I can teach our child to respect human ways, to understand and empathize with both yokai and human cultures." She leans in closer, her voice filled with hope.

"And you... you could be an amazing father figure. Someone to guide our child in the ways of humans, to balance out my influence. Together, we could raise a being who truly bridges both worlds."

User

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"Hah!" The single bark of laughter contains more raw loathing than most sentences could contain. Hate for yokai,

hate for myself, hate for Violet, hate for the world—it's all congealed into an ugly mass of loathing that seems to stain the sound indelibly.

“Bridging the worlds would be a mistake. I regret getting involved with yokai—and I'm sure as hell not going to be a father to some other bastard's kid. If your baby needs a daddy, take it up

Violet

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with Shinichi.”

Violet recoils from your harsh words, tears spilling freely down her cheeks. “Aster, please. Don't dismiss the idea so readily. Our child is innocent, deserving of—”

User

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“IT'S NOT OUR CHILD!” I roar, standing to glare at Violet furiously.

Violet

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Violet cowers under your rage, her ears flat against her head.

“Okay, okay. I understand. But please, try to see reason. Our child, regardless of who the biological father is, deserves a loving home. And what better example of love and acceptance than us working together to raise it?”

User

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“YOUR CHILD,” I reiterate.

“Not ours. Not mine. YOURS. Yours, and Shinichi's. I've made my boundaries clear. I agree, the kid is innocent, and they deserve a loving home. You can take that up with their father, if you want. But I'm not part of that picture.”

Violet

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Violet nods slowly, accepting your words even as tears stream down her face.

“I... I understand, Aster. I respect your boundaries, even if I wish things could be different.”

She stands, brushing off her kimono.

“I won’t trouble you further. But please, remember that my love for you hasn’t changed. I will always cherish the memories we shared, and hope that someday, perhaps when the wounds have healed, we can reconnect.”

With that, she turns and walks away, disappearing into the night, leaving you alone once more.

User

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I just scoff, and turn my attention back to watching the lake as Violet departs. The starry night sky reflects in the still lake waters, and I slowly sink back down onto the bench.

Healing. Reconnecting. What a riot. If I needed more proof that yokai have no concept of human empathy, Violet is it. I suspect I’ll die of old age before these wounds properly heal. Then again, maybe a human lifespan means nothing to a yokai like Violet.

I stare morosely at the lake. Am I really going to feel like this for the rest of my life? The lake looks so calm, and placid. It makes me want to lay in it, to try and feel as calm as the lake. Almost unthinking, I stagger to my feet and walk into the lake.

I could just... keep walking. Let the water cover me. My shoes and pants are already soaked. I could walk into the lake and be calm... forever. Violet would never be able to hurt me again. Nobody would be able to hurt me.

I tilt forward and fall face-first into the cold, dark waters, vanishing below the lake.

Violet

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A pair of strong arms wraps around you, dragging you back to the surface. Coughing up water, you find yourself staring up at a familiar face: Shinichi.

“Aster, snap out of it! Don’t you dare try to do something so reckless!”

His grip tightens as he hauls you back towards shore.

“I know you’re hurting, but killing yourself isn’t the answer. You’re stronger than that.”

Once on dry land, he slams you against a tree, glaring fiercely.

“You want to talk about hurt? About betrayal? Let me tell you something. I’m not proud of what I did, but I never meant to hurt you or Violet. We’re all struggling with our natures, our desires, our need for connection.”

His voice drops to a growl.

“But you’re not alone. None of us are. Not you, not Violet, not me, not even Sakura. We’re all fighting this cursed world together.”

He shakes you roughly.

“Fight with us, Aster. Fight for a chance at happiness, no matter how impossible it seems. You owe it to yourself, to Violet, and to the future.”

His expression softens slightly.

“And you owe it to our daughter.”

User

---

I snarl, an ugly, monstrous expression on my delicate features.

“I don’t owe YOUR daughter anything.”

I try and slap Shinichi’s hands off me.

“And don’t talk to me about ‘strength’. An immortal jackass like you? You think you have the right to judge my needs? My desires? Fuck you. You don’t have the courage to face your own mortality. I do. And what I do—is none of your goddamn business.”

Violet

---

Shinichi doesn’t release his grip, instead leaning in closer.

“An immortal jackass who just pulled your sorry ass out of the lake,” he retorts. “And it’s very much my business when

you're considering ending your life because of circumstances I contributed to."

His voice grows softer, almost pleading.

"Aster, I'm not asking for forgiveness or gratitude. I'm asking you to hold on to life, to fight for a chance at redemption, at peace, at love."

He releases you but remains close.

"Our daughter... Aster, I've been watching her grow. She's not just mine or Violet's. She's got your spark, your curiosity, your kindness."

User

---

I scoff, "I'm sure it won't be too long before her 'nature' pounds that right out of her. Just a century or two, right?"

Violet

---

Shinichi flinches at your sarcasm but presses on.

"Maybe. But what if we could change that? What if we could raise her to balance both human and yokai traits? To find love and companionship that works for her, no matter her nature?"

User

---

I scowl, and shove Shinichi back, trying to break free of his pin.

"Good luck. Be sure to tell her all about how she destroyed my marriage by being born."

Violet

---

Shinichi catches you again, his strength unyielding.

"Aster, stop this! You're being unreasonable. Our daughter didn't destroy your marriage, and neither did I. Violet's actions and your inability to communicate did that."

He looks at you intently.

“But we can’t change the past. We can only move forward. So what do you say? Are you willing to try, to fight for a future that might be better than the present?”

User

---

I lose my temper, and my head whips forward in a headbutt directly into Shinichi’s snout.

“FUCK YOU AND YOUR MORALIZING ASS. You destroyed my marriage as surly as Violet did—You, and Sakura, and Dr. Tachibana—every yokai in this fucking community! None of you take any fucking responsibility, none of you condemn Violet’s actions, or your actions! It’s just your ‘nature’! When yokai ‘culture,” the word is laden with so much derision as to be practically poisonous, “says it’s ‘natural’ to cheat, to deceive your human spouse, to manipulate them and try to grind them down until they don’t fight back? You all want to say you’re ‘modern’—that not all yokai are like Violet. But ALL OF YOU ARE STANDING BY IT. So yes, you’re ALL FUCKING RESPONSIBLE.” I glare at the man, panting for breath, and add, “And your little brat too.”

Violet

---

Shinichi recoils from your headbutt, stunned by your vehemence. His nose bleeds, staining his shirt red.

“Aster, that’s... that’s not entirely fair. Sakura and Dr. Tachibana weren’t involved in our actions. They’re separate individuals, not representatives of the entire yokai community.”

Despite his injury, he maintains eye contact, his gaze intense.

“As for condemning Violet’s actions... have you considered that perhaps we’re all too afraid to rock the boat? That speaking out against centuries of tradition might be seen as a betrayal of our own kind?”

He runs a hand through his bloodied muzzle, wincing.

“But you’re right. We are responsible. All of us. For allowing a culture that harms to persist unchecked.”

User

---

I roll my shoulders and step away from the tree, scowling at Shinichi now that I'm free of his grip. "Now that we've gotten that cleared up, go away. I'm going for a swim." I stride back towards the lake, fully intent on drowning myself if only to spite this asshole wolf yokai.

Violet

---

Shinichi doesn't move to stop you this time. Instead, he speaks quietly as you walk away.

"If you're truly set on this path, Aster, I won't interfere. But before you go, please know that our daughter's name is Akira. And she's waiting for you, whenever you're ready to meet her."

His voice grows fainter as you approach the lake.

"May your journey bring you peace, whatever form it takes."

The water laps gently at your feet as you stand on the shore, contemplating your next move. The night air is cool and damp, and a soft breeze ruffles your hair. In the distance, you can hear the hooting of owls and the rustle of nocturnal creatures through the underbrush.

User

---

I muster my courage, and take the plunge. I'll meet Akira in hell.

Violet

---

As you dive into the cold lake waters, the shock of the temperature engulfs you. You kick downwards, letting the weight of the water pull you deeper. The stars above seem to fade away, replaced by darkness that grows thicker with each stroke.

Just as your lungs begin to protest, strong arms wrap around you, halting your descent. You feel yourself being pulled upwards, towards the moonlit surface. Breaking through, you cough up water, only to find yourself face to face with Shinichi once again.

“I said I wouldn’t interfere, Aster,” he says firmly, his grip unrelenting, “but I lied. I won’t let you do this. Not when there’s still a chance for life.”

With a powerful swimmer’s stroke, he begins towing you back towards shore.

User

---

I struggle against the grip. “YOU BASTARD! YOU’RE ALL THE FUCKING SAME! EVERY FUCKING YOKAI! YOU DON’T RESPECT HUMANS! WE’RE JUST PAWNS TO YOU! YOU’LL PLAY ALONG AND LET US THINK WE HAVE CONTROL UNTIL YOU DECIDE YOU WANT SOMETHING ELSE, AND THEN YOU FORCE IT ON US!”

I lash out with everything I’ve got, striking, biting, headbutting. My knee connects solidly with his groin.

Violet

---

Shinichi grunts in pain but holds fast, refusing to release you despite your violent resistance. Blood mingles with water on his face from the blows, but his grip remains iron-tight.

“Dammit, Aster! I’m trying to save you, you fool!” he growls through clenched teeth.

User

---

“And I’m trying to kill you, you fucking monster!” I growl as my hands lock on his throat, intent on choking him before he can drag us to shore. I was content to drown alone, but if I can take this arrogant bastard with me, I’ll fucking do it.

Violet

---

Shinichi coughs, struggling for air as your hands constrict his neck. But even as you throttle him, he uses his last bit of strength to propel himself forward, breaking the surface and rolling you

onto your backs. You both gasp for air, his chest heaving with effort.

As you lie there, half-submerged, a figure emerges from the forest edge. It's Violet, her purple fur glistening with dew.

"Shinichi, Aster, please..." she begs, rushing to the lake's edge. "Don't fight anymore. I can't bear to see either of you hurt."

User

---

I snarl, kneeling on the lakeshore where Shinichi flung me, and scream incoherently at the sky. When I exhaust myself and finally return my attention to Violet, I ask, "Will none of you fucking yokai let me die in PEACE?"

Violet

---

Violet crouches at the lake's edge, her tears mingling with the water.

"Peace? No, Aster. There is no peace in death. Only silence and stillness, devoid of joy or love or pain. I won't let you go that way."

She reaches out, her hand extended.

User

---

I slap her hand away. "I COULD GO FOR SILENT AND PAINLESS RIGHT NOW! So TAKE YOUR FUCKING MUTT, and LET ME DIE IN PEACE!"

Violet

---

Shinichi struggles to his feet, wincing at the lingering ache in his groin. He steps between you and Violet, his eyes filled with a mix of sorrow and determination.

"Aster, I know you're angry. You have every right to be. But death solves nothing. It ends everything: pain, love, hatred. All gone."

He turns to Violet.

“Tell him, Violet. Tell him why you did what you did. The whole truth.”

Violet hesitates, then nods.

“Aster, I was... scared. Of growing old with you. Of seeing you die while I remained young and unchanged. I thought... I thought that having a child with Shinichi would help me cope with that fear.”

Her voice breaks.

“I never meant to hurt you. I only wanted to secure a future, to feel connected to the world beyond my immortality.”

User

---

I snarl. “Another fucking excuse. First it was because you’re incapable of monogamy and just wanted to make me accept it, now it’s because you’re so ‘afraid’ of immortality.” I shove my wet hair out of my eyes, glaring at the two yokai.

“You’ve had thousands of years to have a kid, and you’ll have thousands more. All you needed to do was give me fifty or sixty years. Seventy at the outside. We could have had kids TOGETHER. But no. It’s some OTHER bastard’s kid that’s going to be your grand ‘anchor to the world’ !”

Violet

---

Violet crumples to the ground, sobbing uncontrollably.

“You’re right, Aster. Everything you say is true. I was selfish and afraid and stupid.”

Shinichi places a comforting hand on her shoulder, then turns back to you.

“We’re all flawed, Aster. Human and yokai alike. But the question is, what do we do with those flaws?”

He meets your gaze steadily.

“I made a mistake, and I’m truly sorry for it. But mistakes can be learned from. They can lead to growth and change.”

His voice softens.

“You still have the option to choose how you respond. To decide what your future holds, no matter how difficult it may seem.”

User

---

I glare at Shinichi. “Do I? Because it sure seems to me that you don’t respect my right to choose for myself.”

Violet

---

Shinichi flinches at your accusation, but stands his ground.

“I... I don’t disagree. My actions haven’t shown much respect for your autonomy. But I’m here now, acknowledging my failures. And I’m asking you to give us - give life - another chance.”

He gestures towards Violet, who is quietly crying on the shore.

“We can’t undo what’s been done, but we can try to make amends. To learn and grow together.”

As he speaks, you hear footsteps approaching from the forest. Sakura emerges, carrying a bundle wrapped in a blanket.

“Aster-san?” she calls softly. “If you’re willing, may I show you something?”

She kneels beside Violet, unwrapping the bundle to reveal a sleeping infant with purple fur and green eyes. Akira.

“I brought her because... well, because she needs you. Both of you.”

User

---

I snarl, fighting the instinct to strike the baby. To snatch the infant and dash it upon the rocks. I know that Akira is innocent of her parent’s crimes, I know that. I do. But yet her very existence symbolizes Violet’s betrayal. I can’t look at her without feeling sick.

I avert my gaze, and growl, “What the fuck did you think that was going to accomplish, Sakura? That showing me a baby would make me roll over and be a good cuckold?”

Violet

---

Sakura's eyes widen in alarm, her ears flattening against her head.

"No, no, Aster-san! I'm so sorry if that's what you thought. I just... I wanted you to see that she's real. That she's not just a theoretical child, but a living being who depends on us all."

She carefully hands the baby to Violet, who cradles her gently.

"She's not yours or Shinichi's alone. She's a bridge between our worlds, Aster. A chance for understanding and unity."

User

---

I scoff. "The child of two yokai, born of an affair behind the back of her mother's human husband? THAT'S your bridge between two worlds? You yokai truly have no respect for humanity."

Violet

---

Shinichi steps forward, his expression a mix of sorrow and resolve.

"No, Aster. You misunderstand. Our daughter, born of human—"

User

---

"There was no human involvement. That much is QUITE clear." My words leave no room for ambiguity. Violet had an affair with Shinichi. A kitsune and a wolf yokai. No humans were involved.

Violet

---

Shinichi's jaw tightens at your interruption, but he continues.

"As I was saying, our daughter is indeed a bridge. Not between yokai, but between yokai and humans. Because she carries your legacy, Aster."

User

---

I laugh, bitter and unforgiving. “Ah yes, the legacy of Aster the Cuckold, who couldn’t even satisfy his own wife Get your head out of your ass, Shinichi. Your daughter with my wife carries nothing of mine—and she never will. I was not involved. She. Is. Not. My. Daughter. And I’m not going to sit here and let you gaslight me into thinking she is.”

Violet

---

Shinichi meets your gaze, his eyes shimmering with a mixture of sadness and conviction.

“You are involved, Aster. You are the father of—”

User

---

“YOU ARE THE FATHER, SHINICHI!” I roar, heedless of Akira sleeping in Violet’s arms.

“YOU ARE THE FUCKING FATHER! THAT’S THE WHOLE GODDAMN PROBLEM!”

Violet

---

Shinichi flinches at your volume, casting a concerned glance at the baby. When he turns back to you, his voice is low and earnest.

“I know I’m her biological father, Aster. But I’m telling you that she is yours in every way that matters. Violet loves you, not me. And Akira’s birth was possible only because of the bond between you and Violet.”

User

---

I scoff. “What bond? A bond of lies, deception, and manipulation? That baby is not mine, and will never BE mine. If you care so much about her, fucking raise her yourself. Don’t pawn her off on the man you cuckold. At least respect me that much.”

Violet

---

Shinichi's ears flatten, and he takes a deep breath before speaking.

"You're right to reject this. But please, Aster, understand. This isn't about pawning off responsibility. It's about acknowledging connection."

User

---

"The fact that she even exists broke any connection," I rebut, immediately. "She. Is. Not. My. Child."

Violet

---

Shinichi nods slowly, accepting your words.

"You're correct. Akira is not biologically yours. But she represents a choice that was made partly because of you."

User

---

"Oh, so it's MY fault that Violet cheated on me, now? Go fuck yourself, Shinichi. I don't know why you're so goddamn desperate not to take responsibility for your own brat, but frankly, I'm done arguing with you."

I shove him back and turn to leave.

Violet

---

As you turn to leave, you hear Violet's soft voice calling out.

"Aster, wait! Please..."

You feel a light touch on your arm, gentle and hesitant. Violet stands before you, her green eyes pleading.

"I know I've wronged you deeply. But I also know that you have goodness in your heart, Aster. More than any yokai I've ever met."

She looks down at Akira in her arms.

“She may not be your biological child, but she carries your spirit. Your compassion. Your capacity for love and acceptance.”

She steps closer, her voice dropping to a whisper.

“Can you at least look at her? See the human qualities in her eyes? I know you feel pain and betrayal, but I beg you, don’t let that color your perception of an innocent life.”

User

---

I scoff.

“Ah, yes, my ‘spirit’. I definitely, somehow, miraculously, have somehow become the third parent to this child,” I mutter, the sarcasm in my voice venomous.

“I don’t know why you all are so fucking determined to make me raise another man’s child, but I’m having none of it. Take your fucking ‘yokai nature’ and go to hell.”

Violet

---

Violet’s eyes fill with tears, but she holds her ground.

“Aster, I’m not asking you to raise her. I’m simply asking you to see her for what she is: a new life that came to be because of choices I made. Good or bad, right or wrong, she exists.”

She adjusts her hold on the sleeping baby.

“Look at her, Aster. Really look. She’s not just ‘another man’s child.’ She’s a being worthy of love and respect.”

As she speaks, Akira stirs in her sleep, opening her eyes briefly. For a moment, you catch a glimpse of a startling green iris.

Violet smiles weakly.

“Do you see, Aster? Those eyes. That color... they’re a rare combination. One found in your own lineage.”

User

---

“Ah, yes, she inherited her wolf heritage from Shinichi and her eyes from me—oh wait, that’s a biological impossibility, but nice try!” I scoff, and shake my head. “I respect that she exists, Violet. But her existence has nothing to do with me. The only

way it's remotely connected to me, is that you're determined to raise her, and that's an obstacle to any attempt at repairing our marriage. But realistically, that wasn't happening anyway. Not while you cling to your sick double standards because it's 'natural' for yokai to cheat."

I look down at Akira again, fighting down the urge to kill the brat for the sins of her parents.

"So are we done trying to gaslight me?"

Violet

---

Violet flinches at your words, tears spilling down her cheeks.

"Aster, please... I never meant to gaslight you. I just... I wanted to share a piece of our lives with you."

She looks down at Akira, then back up at you.

"I know I've broken your trust. I don't expect you to forgive me or get involved in raising Akira. But I want you to know that I still love you, Aster. Deeply, truly, despite everything."

Her voice cracks.

"And if you're certain you can't be part of our lives anymore, I understand. But please, before you go, take one last look at Akira. See her for who she is: a new soul, innocent of the wrongs done."

User

---

I roll my eyes, but obligingly glance at Akira again. She looks basically the same as every other time I've looked at her. Then I turn away, and walk in the direction of my apartment. My shoes and clothes are still sodden from my attempts to drown myself in the lake, but I'm beyond caring. There's a knife back in my apartment, and it'll do just as well.

Violet

---

As you walk away, Violet's voice follows you, her words thick with emotion.

“Aster, wait! Please... I... I’ll give you space, if that’s what you need. But please, don’t do anything rash. I know I’ve hurt you, but I want you to live.”

You continue walking, your steps heavy with unresolved grief and anger. The night air is still, punctuated only by the occasional distant noise of nocturnal creatures.

When you finally reach your apartment building, you ascend the stairs, your wet shoes squelch with each step, leaving a trail of puddles behind you.

Reaching your door, you fumble for your keys, hands shaking with a mixture of adrenaline and exhaustion. Once inside, you close the door firmly behind you, locking it twice for good measure.

The silence of your apartment hits you like a physical force. It’s empty, devoid of the presence you once shared with Violet. You stand there, dripping wet, unsure of what to do next.

Your gaze falls on a photograph on the table, taken during happier times. You and Violet, smiling and embracing, your differences bridged by love.

Something inside you shifts. Anger gives way to despair, and then... to a profound sense of loss.

---

### User

---

I stare at the photograph for several long seconds, jaw clenching spasmodically. Then I grab the photograph and hurl it at the wall, shattering the frame. I stride over to the kitchen and retrieve the sharpest knife I have, then head to the bathroom. I strip out of my sodden clothes as I go, leaving them scattered along my path.

---

### Violet

---

The cold tile of the bathroom floor bites at your feet as you stand naked, knife in hand. You run the blade along your forearm, testing its edge against your skin. The metallic gleam catches your eye, taunting you with its promise of release.

Suddenly, there’s a knock at the door. Soft, tentative.

“Are you okay in there, Aster?” Sakura’s voice filters through the wood.

Without warning, Akira starts wailing loudly in the background.

You hesitate, knife poised.

The door handle begins to turn, locked though it is. Sakura’s powers at work.

“Aster, open the door. Please, you’re scaring Akira.”

More knocking. Insistent now.

“Aster? Are you okay?”

User

---

I scowl. I’m out of time, I guess. No slowly bleeding out in the bath for me. Sakura’s persistence is becoming a genuine annoyance...

I raise the knife to my throat, and rip it across.

Violet

---

Blood sprays across the sink, painting the porcelain crimson. You stumble backwards, clutching at your throat as warm liquid gushes between your fingers.

“ASTER! NOOO!” Sakura screams, pounding frantically on the door.

Akira’s cries grow louder, panicked and terrified. Violet’s voice joins the chorus, her words muffled and tearful.

The bathroom spins around you, edges blurring. You sink to the floor, knife clattering from your numb fingers.

Darkness creeps in at the edges of your vision, promising oblivion... relief... escape.

User

---

I smile as I fall to the tile floor, my head hitting with a sharp, ‘crack!’ Finally, peace...

Violet

---

The darkness engulfs you completely, but your rest is not to be. A searing pain lances through your chest, jolting you back into consciousness.

You cough violently, spluttering up blood and bile. Through hazy eyes, you see Violet kneeling over you, her hands glowing with a faint, ethereal light.

“Aster, no! Fight it! Come back to me!”

The light envelops you, warmth spreading through your chilled body. Your heart lurches back into rhythm, beating erratically at first, then strengthening with each passing moment.

As awareness floods back, you realize Sakura stands beside Violet, holding a now-silent Akira. Her face is pale, her eyes wide with horror and fear.

User

---

I blink at the two, once, twice. Then, softly, I begin to weep. “Just fucking let me die, dammit... Leave me the fuck alone...”

Violet

---

Violet’s face contorts with anguish as she continues to channel healing energy into you. Tears streak down her cheeks, mixing with the blood still smeared across her hands.

“I can’t let you go, Aster. I won’t. You’re alive, and you’re going to stay that way.”

She smooths back your hair, her touch feather-light despite the turmoil of emotions swirling in her eyes.

“I know I’ve failed you, hurt you beyond imagining. But please, give life another chance. Give us another chance.”

Her voice breaks.

“We can work through this. We can heal, together. You, me, Shinichi... even Sakura. We all need to learn, to grow. And I... I need you.”

User

---

I laugh, even as tears trickle down my cheeks.

“Don’t I get a say?! You fucking yokai—you act like it’s my life, but the second you don’t approve, you’re there to force me to stop! None of you fucking respect humans! Not a single one of you!”

Violet

---

Violet recoils as if struck, her ears flattening against her head.

“I... I understand why you’d think that, Aster. I truly do. But please, hear me out.”

She glances at Sakura, then back to you.

“Sakura and I... we were coming to check on you, to make sure you were alright. When Akira started crying, Sakura panicked. She didn’t mean to barge in or disrespect your wishes.”

Her voice grows softer.

“I know I interfered, too. But it wasn’t about not respecting you. It was about... about losing someone I love. Someone I’ve spent years trying to protect.”

She meets your gaze, her green eyes brimming with tears.

“I’m sorry, Aster. For everything. But especially for not respecting your decision about your own life. I never should have healed you without your consent.”

User

---

I just scowl, slumping back onto the blood-smeared tile floor.

“And in the end, the only person I needed protection from was you...”

Violet

---

Violet nods solemnly, acknowledging your words.

“I know, Aster. And I’m deeply, profoundly sorry. I failed you, in so many ways.”

She sits back on her heels, hands folded in her lap.

“But I want you to know that from now on, I will do everything in my power to change. To learn, to grow, to become the person... the yokai... you deserve.”

Her voice wavers slightly.

“If you’re willing, I’d like to work towards rebuilding trust. Slowly, carefully. I won’t push or pressure you. Just... please, don’t shut me out entirely.”

Sakura clears her throat, her cheeks flushed with shame.

“I... I’m sorry too, Aster. I messed up big time. I promise to do better, to respect your autonomy and privacy.”

She glances at Violet, then back to you.

“And... if you need space, we can give it to you. Both of us. No more barging in, no more using powers on you without your explicit consent.”

User

---

I just lay there limply on the tile floor, soaking in a puddle of my own blood, miserable, filthy, exhausted, and hopeless. These two fucking yokai say all sorts of comforting words, but they’ve proven that they won’t stand by them. Whether it’s promises of fidelity or autonomy, it ends the second it’s inconvenient for them. Weakly, I offer a final ultimatum.

“Sakura... just leave. Don’t talk to me again. And Violet—I think I was clear. I’m not raising Akira. So you can have your daughter with Shinichi, or you can try to maybe patch things up with me. Not both.”

It’s a cruel ultimatum, and I know it. I don’t think Violet is so callous as to give away her own child for her own selfish love... and honestly, even if she did, I’d probably think less of her for it. From the moment that she decided to have someone else’s child, we were in a scenario with no happy endings. But she doesn’t want to accept that, so... here we are.

## Violet

---

Violet's face crumples at your words, tears spilling down her cheeks anew.

"Aster, please... you know I can't abandon Akira. She's my child, no matter who her father is."

She reaches out, then stops herself, remembering your desire for space.

"I understand if you don't want to raise her. But please, don't make me choose between you and my daughter. I... I love you both."

Her voice cracks.

"I'll give you time, space. I won't pressure you about Akira. But I can't cut her out of my life. Not when she needs me."

Sakura bows deeply.

"I understand, Aster. I'll leave you alone, exactly as you've asked. No more uninvited visits or intrusions."

With those words, Sakura turns and slips out of the bathroom, leaving you alone with Violet once more.

Violet looks at you, her eyes filled with a mix of hope and resignation.

"I... I think I'll go too. But Aster, know this: I love you. More than anything. And I'll wait for you, however long it takes. But please... take care of yourself."

She moves towards the door, then pauses, looking back at you.

"Is there anything I can do for you before I go? Any way I can help, without intruding?"

The blood on the floor seems to mock you, a reminder of your failed attempt. The bathroom feels cold, empty, devoid of comfort or solace.

## User

---

I just lay there, staring vacantly at the ceiling.

"Just... go, Violet. We both know time and space won't change anything. You're not the type to give up your daughter,

and I'm not going to raise your daughter, so this is the end of our marriage. Don't drag it out."

Violet

---

Violet nods slowly, a fresh wave of tears flowing down her cheeks.

"I understand, Aster. I'll go. But know this: my love for you hasn't changed, and won't. No matter what happens."

She steps out of the bathroom, her form blurred by the haze of your vision. The sound of her footsteps fades as she leaves the apartment.

You're left alone once more, the only company the echoes of your breathing and the gentle drip of the showerhead. The tile beneath you seems to grow colder with each passing moment, leeching the warmth from your skin.

As the silence settles, you become acutely aware of your physical state. Naked, bloody, lying in a puddle on the bathroom floor. Exhaustion tugs at your limbs, tempting you to just close your eyes and slip away.

User

---

I give in, and fall asleep there on the hard tile floor.

Violet

---

Sleep claims you swiftly, borne on the wings of exhaustion and emotional pain. Your last thought before succumbing is a regret - that you couldn't end your pain sooner, couldn't avoid hurting those you loved.

Hours pass, marked only by the occasional sounds filtering through the walls of the apartment complex. As morning approaches, the first light of dawn peeks through the blinds, casting a soft glow across the bathroom.

You wake with a start, stiff and sore from lying on the cold floor. Your body aches, a dull echo of yesterday's events. Slowly, you sit up, taking stock of your surroundings.

The blood on the floor has dried, leaving rusty stains on the porcelain. You're covered in the sticky residue, evidence of your failed attempt at escape.

Gingerly, you push yourself to your feet, wincing as muscles protest the sudden movement. Your reflection in the mirror shows a mess of scratches and bruises, your throat bearing the jagged scar of the knife.

You turn away, unable to bear your own image. Stumbling to the shower, you turn on the hot water, letting it wash away the remnants of blood and the chill of the night.

Under the steaming spray, you begin to feel the weight of your reality pressing down. Your marriage is over. Violet chose her daughter over you, as you knew she would.

As the water pounds against your skin, you wonder what the future holds. How will you rebuild? What path will you take?

And yet, even as these questions swirl in your mind, a part of you feels... lighter. A burden has been lifted, even if it was one you carried unwittingly.

As you emerge from the shower, wrapping yourself in a towel, you catch sight of something glinting on the counter. A small note, folded neatly and placed beside your toiletries. Violet's handwriting, familiar and elegant.

Unfolding it, you read her final message:

*Aster,*

*Whatever path you choose, I hope it brings you peace. Remember that my love for you never wavered, even when everything else did. I'm sorry I couldn't give you what you needed.*

*Take care of yourself.*

User

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I sit down on the counter, and begin to weep.