

Family Portrait

By Aura_Rei

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*Rei Anul Sama wrote a story a lot like this, but it was *my* original idea. She wrote the story (Demons of Old) her own way, and I didn't approve cause she made Sesshoumaru a total wuss (and she screwed the whole ending up). This is *my* version of it.*

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1 - Servant & Master

Young Sesshoumaru was eager to meet his lord father again, after not seeing him for so long. His father had been out of the castle for three weeks, updating what he knew about his domain. Were there any brilliant fighters awaiting to become his lord's vassal? Or maybe a new clan or enemy to take care of? Either way his father had returned and had summoned him to the conference hall.

As Sesshoumaru approached the screen door of the conference hall, the two kitsune guards bowed and allowed him to pass.

The conference hall was a long room with a table in the center to match the room's length. Along the table's sides were eight mats for the lord's eight vassals, Sesshoumaru included. At the end of the table was only one mat for the his lord alone, where he sat.

Sesshoumaru sat on his assigned mat, the one to his father's right. "It is good to see you, Father. What news comes of our domain?"

"A band of demon thieves have been at work lately towards the south. I went to see what they were up to, and they decided to make a peace treaty right away. They want no trouble from us." His father winked at him and they both smiled. Sesshoumaru knew anyone who was willing to defy his father was a fool as good as dead.

"So what exactly did you agree upon, my lord?"

"They gave me a new servant in exchange for a few gold pieces and their lives." Sesshoumaru was amazed.

"One servant for all that? Surely they gave you more!"

"Ah, but this is a profitable servant. She is skilled in the art of craftsmanship and knows her way around a battlefield."

"She sounds intriguing, but are you sure being a servant is right for her?"

"She needs discipline. Right now she is as feisty as an angered cobra. Would you like to meet her?" Before Sesshoumaru could answer, his father called to one of the kitsune guards outside to bring in the new servant. The kitsune bowed and left the room, carefully closing the door behind him. He came back soon after with a girl who looked to be in her teens with her hands tied to a rope, almost like a leash.

She wasn't as tall as Sesshoumaru, but only about 2 years younger. She had long, black hair that hung loose, with brown eyes and eyelids lined with black. (Sesshoumaru's is line with red, Sango's is lined with pink for example. Hers are black) She wore a black kimono with an emerald green ribbon that was tied in a bow in the back. Sesshoumaru had a hard time believing she was a craftswoman that worked

over a hot kiln all day, or used to.

“Her name is Aura Rei,” his lord informed Sesshoumaru. “I hope you like her.”

Sesshoumaru perked up. “May I ask why, my lord?”

“Because she's yours!”

Both: “What?!”

2 - Runaway

"I can't believe I'm being forced to work for a palace brat! Oh well. At least he doesn't seem to excited about it either," aura thought to herself, as she examined her new bedchamber. It wasn't huge, but it wasn't totally cramped either. She had a small comfortable mat on the floor, with a rectangular-cylinder pillow. There was a convenient little desk in the corner, and a dresser/closet beside the mat. Next to the desk was a medium-sized chest, made to fit any of Aura's treasures. Aura Rei didn't have very many treasures, just a few stories she wrote, and a family portrait she'd kept since she was little. She was seventeen now, and hadn't seen her parents for months.

She had decided to take a stroll early in the morning, before her parents woke up, but she ventured too far, and stumbled on a thieves' camp. Because they were demons, they'd woken up instantly and took her as their slave. For the past few months she had been tending to chores, weapons, and the occasional ambush for the thieves. That's when she was given to the Great Demon Lord of the West, and was now the servant to his son.

She had to admit, though, serving the Prince of the West wasn't entirely terrible. She did after all, get to live in the palace. Even if she was cooped up in a tiny room, it was better than sleeping outside on the hard, cold earth in an even smaller tent.

Meanwhile...

"So what'ya gonna make her do first?! Clean up the room, get free sake delivery service? Or something *else*?" Toyoko, Sesshoumaru's childhood and best friend asked him. They were in Sesshoumaru's room.

"Toyoko, if you're going to be like that, you may as well get out now," Sesshoumaru snapped. The last thing he needed was taunting from his best friend about the "gift" his father had given him.

"Oh, come on. You *know* you *want* her!" Toyoko winked at him.

"Why don't I just give her to you then? I have no use for her."

"I'd be willing to accept," Toyoko bowed, "but I do not think your father would approve."

"Most likely not. But what to do with her then?"

"I'm at a loss of ideas if you can't figure it out by now," Toyoko shrugged. Toyoko was a few centimeters shorter than Sesshoumaru, and was much darker skinned. He had long black hair and keen green eyes.

He wore his hair in a high ponytail, which made him look like a samurai. He wore a kimono similar to Sesshoumaru's, but instead of white, it was a navy blue. He could probably pass as one of Sesshoumaru's cousins. (God forbid he have any)

"Toyoko, why don't you start acting your age?" Sesshoumaru didn't have the sick mind his friend did.

"You're nineteen! It's high time you did something with a woman other than look at one! Fully dressed, I might add!"

Meanwhile...

"Hmph. If he befriends demons like that, he can't be very safe himself. I'll have to make an escape tonight if I want to run without followers." Aura had locked onto Sesshoumaru's mind the first time she saw him (and found out she was to be his servant)

That night...

"I'll have to be completely silent if I don't want to be followed." Aura Rei gathered her treasures into a sack, which she threw over her shoulder to carry with her. Her eyes began to glow a bright yellow, and she started to float (telekinesis, people. Gotta love it...). She floated across the main hall to the outside. Her eyes went to normal and she started running as fast as she could. She planned to live on her own, and become a mercenary somewhere in the demon plane. Maybe one day she would return...

3 - Her Return

"My lord! A new thieves guild wishes to speak with you," a tiny toad imp informed Sesshoumaru.

"Where and when?"

"In the Black Forest at dawn tomorrow."

"Very good, Jaken. That will be all." Sesshoumaru had no expression change.

"My master pays me a compliment! I'm so greatly honored!" Jaken half-cried.

"Just hurry up and get out." Sesshoumaru wanted to think a bit about this.

"Of course, m'lord!" Jaken hurried away, still happy he got a compliment and that he still lived after barging in so rudely.

It had been almost 200 years since a new band of thieves had come along. He decided he would dress to conceal himself, and act as his own messenger, as to not be though so gullible. This new thieves guild reminded him of someone, but he could not remember whom. "Hmph. I must be growing old..." he thought with a joker's smile.

At dawn, Sesshoumaru dressed in his stealth outfit (like a black ninja suit with the same red blossom crest). He headed off for the Black Forest. Almost immediately he picked up scents of various demons. He ran in that direction until he came across the campsite. Already, there was a fox demon waiting to meet him, but due to the disguise, the fox did not recognize Sesshoumaru, and went straight into battle mode. Sesshoumaru lifted a hand to show he did not intend to fight.

"I am a messenger from the Great Demon Lord of this domain. He received word of a new thieves guild that wished to deal with him." Sesshoumaru was starting to like playing the "mysterious ninja" from himself.

"Ah, sorry. I am the leader of this guild you speak of, Kuromori." The fox relaxed.

"Funny. Black Forest's Black Forest," Sesshoumaru thought to himself. (*Note: Kuromori is the name of the fox, and it means "black forest")

"Would you like a tour of our camp, or would you like to get straight to the point?" Kuromori offered.

"I don't have much time to waste," he lied. He didn't have anything else planned for today, so he had all the time in the world to squander.

"Ah, I see. Follow me to our containment tent then." Kuromori led Sesshoumaru to the other side of the

camp, and they entered a rather large tent filled with chests, boxes, over-flowing bowls of treasure and a prisoner tied to the center support pole. She appeared to be asleep at first, but woke up almost immediately after they'd entered. She kept her eyes averted from them, even when Kuromori lifted her head by the chin to show his guest. Once Sesshoumaru got a good look, he suddenly remembered whom the thieves' guild reminded him of.

"She's an excellent weapon maker, and has a few nifty powers of her own. She also has the normal abilities of a housewife. We heard that about two hundred years ago she was the servant of the young lord for a time."

"Yes, for a couple *hours*," Sesshoumaru kept to himself.

"We're willing to part with her for one thousand gold pieces. Take it or leave it."

Sesshoumaru grew angry. All that trouble she must have gone through to stay alive, and she becomes a seller's item once again. "You're lucky if I don't kill you for all the trouble you've caused her!" Sesshoumaru threw one of his famous death glares at Kuro.

"Yes, well, see, we need the money for unpaid debts to some moon elves. We *would* get it the normal way, stealing it, but the moon elves do not wish to be paid in ill-gotten gold, so we are at a stand still. As I said: One thousand gold pieces or the deal's completely off." Kuro looked hopeful Sesshoumaru would buy it.

"If I decline this deal, how shall the girl be treated here?" Sesshoumaru couldn't believe he actually cared, but if that slipped from his mouth, there must be some concern.

"She will be treated as our weapon making slave for the new temporary supply shop we would have to open. Does this change the deal any?" The girl looked up at Sesshoumaru with hopeful and curious eyes. Was he really concerned for her well-being?

"I will take her, but only for half the price." Nope, not really.

"Make it 800."

"650."

"You drive a hard bargain, but if that's the highest you'll go, we'll take it. We must start somewhere." They shook on it, just as Sesshoumaru pass the money to Kuromori. Kuro then untied her from the pole, but handed the rest of the rope to Sesshoumaru.

"Will you not undo her chains?"

"She is a powerful demon, and to keep her powers at bay, we must keep her bound in these magic chains."

"I see. I shall bring her to my lord straight away then."

“Of course. Hope to do business with you again!” Kuro showed them out of the tent, and Sesshoumaru took to the skies, Aura Rei in his arms.

4 - Ketchup

Aura Rei did not look at Sesshoumaru the whole flight. She was somewhat grateful to him for taking her away from the dreaded thieves guild, but she feared the worst of what would happen to her next. Who was this lord? Would he treat her with respect or as a dog? Maybe this messenger reflected his lord, in which case this would be a good thing. Her train of thought was lost when Sesshoumaru asked her a question. "They say you ran away from the palace 200 years ago. Care to tell me why?"

"I would have stayed if I were not to be a servant of the palace brat," Aura said bluntly.

"`The Palace Brat?' Is that how you saw Lord Sesshoumaru?"

"I never got to know him too well, but I didn't want to take the chance."

"You'll have your next chance very soon." He looked her straight in the eye to see if she understood. She grew wide-eyed as she realized whom he was. After her stare, she pouted, and Sesshoumaru gave a small laugh.

In the library of the palace, Sesshoumaru untied Aura Rei, and let her explore. He on the other hand, sat down in a comfy chair, and watched her as she walked around the room and looked around the bookshelves filled with books and scrolls.

"You must have been busy in the last 200 years. `Mind catching me up on news around the castle?" Aura asked.

"You're right. A lot has happened since you ran away."

"Where's your lord father? On a business trip or something?"

Sesshoumaru's eyes fell to the floor. "My foolish father has met his end."

"Foolish? You make it sound like *you* killed him!" Aura pulled out another book and flipped through the pages.

Sesshoumaru looked up at Aura with vicious, golden eyes. "I did *not* kill my lord! Father found a human mate, and the war that was caused from it killed him."

"Humans killed him?" Aura inquired without even looking at Sesshoumaru.

"No, it was a high class demon from the south. A demon with scales harder than steel: Ryukotsusei." Sesshoumaru's eyes softened, and his grip on the arms of the chair loosened.

"Sorry for the loss. What about your friends, um, Toyoko and Aneko were their names, yes?" She took

another scroll and pretended to be interested in it.

“After my lord was killed, his vassals had no lord to serve, so most of them went home,” he replied solemnly, but he brightened up as he said, “I shall inform them tomorrow of your return. They should be overjoyed.” Aura rolled her eyes.

Outside it had begun to rain, and it grew harder by the minute. Sesshoumaru longed to go out there and get soaked to the bone in the rain, but he knew it would be improper.

“What of your father's mate? Did she have a child?”

“She bore a son, but also died during the war, due to illness and lack of medicine. That was about 53 years ago. Her son survived until he fell in love with a priestess, who put him under a sleeping spell, and he's been that way for 35 years now.”

“And you don't lift a helping hand to your own brother because...?”

“He is only a half-brother, and a half-demon. He is foolish and therefore useless to me.”

Aura sighed and shivered. “Is there any wood in that fireplace?” Aura looked over at the fireplace built in the wall. It was a huge fireplace that could hold a bonfire. She walked and sat in front of the unlit fireplace. She brought her knees to her chest. With a wave of her hand, fire sprung from the wood, and she savored the warmth.

Sesshoumaru got up from his chair and sat next to her. They both stared into the fire as Sesshoumaru asked, “So what's *your* story?”

“Well...”

5 - Betrayal

Curled up by the huge fireplace, Aura began her story....

When I had finally gotten off of your grounds, I searched for the demon plains, which was basically a barren desert with a few small villages. (Kind of like the Wild West stories and towns) I found a town that seemed fine, and started working for the blacksmith there. Unfortunately, he was a wanted man, and was taken by bandits soon after I had been with him for a few months.

recalls memory* Aura's in a room with a kiln and a bunch of sword making devices, with the blacksmith in his living room, sitting in an armchair reading a small scroll. Suddenly, there is a knock at the door, and the blacksmith answers it. He looks stunned and is grappled and pulled through the door while struggling and giving slight yelps here and there. Aura looks through the doorway, but out of sight...or so she thought, until the kitsune who appeared to be the leader averted his piercing golden eyes toward her. She somehow gets the message that he was going to expect her to see them again, eventually. *end of recalling the memory

In the morning after his kidnapping I dressed myself as a male, as to not give the kitsune that captured him the satisfaction of knowing his prediction had been correct. I flew over the forests looking for a clearing where a camp may be or may have been. I finally found the camp, but the kitsune mistook my visit and offered me a place in their guild. I thought it would be wise to join, just to get inside information and access to their prisoner tent. So I joined. Next I found out that the blacksmith had already been sold to whoever wanted him, so my ventures were in vain.

“Why didn't you go after him that night? Right when he was being taken? It seems stupid to wait that long to go after him,” Sesshoumaru commented.

“I wasn't ready. I had been working on a male ninja costume for myself while I was there, and it wasn't done until morning.”

“Did you necessarily *need* to look male?”

“Yes, or they would've sold *me* as a slave as well when I first got there.”

“Then we would've found you earlier.” Sesshoumaru smirked.

“Yeah, I guess so,” Aura replied, not amused, but she continued her story.

I found myself fond of the guild rather quickly. I found out the kitsune was named Kuromori, but a lot of people just called him “Kuro” for short. I grew very fond of him over the decades.

recalls memory* Kuromori had rich gold eyes, with flowing black hair that went down to his waste, and a tail coming out the back of his navy blue and white kimono. He had black claws and white fangs, with two long pointed fox ears coming out of the top of his head. He had always preferred to use plant weapons and techniques in battle and in capture. (Capturing other people, that is...) *end of recalling the memory*

Then there were the people that worked closely with me. They were of higher rank in the guild than I was, but I was always treated as a friend. Well, most of the time. There were times when I was sent to build a weapon for one of the guild members, or be sent to fetch something that took stealth and only one person, but other than that, we were friendly to each other. There was Takeno, who had his own style of clothing. He preferred the western style over the usual kimono, but there was so rare of it that he took whatever dark clothes he could get. He was a bat demon with a precious gauntlet around his wrist that he treasured greatly, and could arguably said have been the cause of his death. Then there was Kyoshi, who didn't live up to his name. (Author's note: Kyoshi means “quiet”.) He was always either arguing with Kuro or playing with him. Kyoshi had shoulder-length black hair, purple eyes, and two horns coming out the side of his head. He liked wearing light armor under an almost toga-like outfit. Then there was Kuromori himself.

“Sounds like you were high in rank to me.”

“I felt like I was accepted, yes. Anyway,” Aura continued.

Then the betrayals began. Everyone thought that Kuro was the most loyal leader of all time. He'd always show up when your life was in danger, even if you didn't tell him where you were going or what you were doing. But there was one mission where he and Takeno went together, but Kuro came back alone. He said Takeno went back for his gauntlet, but fell into a trap looking for it. He tried to help, but Takeno wanted him to keep going, and that there was nothing for him to do. Kyoshi didn't believe Kuro's story, so he decided to take matters into his own hands one day. He'd heard a rumor about a castle in the north, guarded by many traps and mystery. He took some of our finest men, and went out looking for it, but never came back. When I told Kuro about it, he just smirked.

“He definitely set that up,” Sesshoumaru commented.

“That’s what a lot of us believe.”

Then it happened to me. Kuro came into my tent one morning, uninvited, and saw me for a fraud. But I was surprised when he didn’t do anything for the first couple of days. But, eventually, he did seem to remember that morning, and invited me out to the bonfire, where a lot of the group would hang out every night. That’s where he cut my armor in half, in front of the entire guild. All of them had about the same idea: Sell her, use her, torture her, kill her.

“They decided to sell you, then.”

“Kuromori was nice enough to do that, yeah.”

The rest of the night went by, Aura and Sesshoumaru by the fire, eventually fell asleep. But before Sesshoumaru went to sleep, he called in a messenger, asking to gather his old friends for an announcement.

6 - Game Play

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Aura woke up on the floor next to the burnt-out fireplace in the library
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Aura woke up on the floor next to the burnt-out fireplace in the library. Her neck caused her severe pain when she got up. There was no sign of Sesshoumaru, so she merely assumed he had gone off to do whatever he did each day. She decided to explore around the grounds a bit.
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She easily found the front entrance to the den and started with the area around the opening. The entrance was a huge semicircle in a hill. Someone could easily think of it as a hobbit's hole, at least a first sight. When they notice the hole is gigantic, they'll know it definitely doesn't belong to a hobbit. The castle was of normal Japanese style, but of huge proportions. From the hole in the hill (mountain?), there was a tunnel down to the castle, which lay in a huge cavern. That was the inner courtyard. The outer courtyard surrounded the hill.
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Aura went to the side of the opening, and made a massive jump to the top of the hill to get a better view. At the top she could see for miles on end. It was mostly forest surrounding the castle, except for two clearings on either side of the hill. One clearing was a bit smaller than the other, because it was a watering hole, probably for bathing. The other clearing was a training ground, where vassals and demons of the castle could sharpen their combat skills against various opponents. She saw Sesshoumaru by the training grounds with a sword out, though she thought it odd that he only slashed at the sprawled out dead bodies, and after they were cut by the non-blood-stained sword, they'd get up, bow to him, and run off. It was quite a humorous sight.

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But Aura was more concerned/interested in the bathing pool. She hadn't taken a bath for at least a week, due to being taken captive by those she once called friends and being sold to Sesshoumaru and everything. She made it to the bottom of the hill with another mighty leap & flip combo. She walked over to the bank of the watering hole, which was a small body of water that let out into a small stream. It was filled with water coming from upstream that poured into the pond, producing a medium-sized waterfall.

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Aura looked around to see if anyone was near, and she thought since Sesshoumaru was busy looking strange, she'd take a bath and no one would notice. Silently, she got out of her kimono and hid it in the bushes as she slipped into the water. The temperature was cool, and it felt great among the heat of the summer months. She swam around, watching the ripples in the water flow from her arms to create small tides at the bank. She was intrigued by how water could change its form to hold whatever wondered into its arms.

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Suddenly, she heard a noise come from behind the bushes from which she entered, and she could

sense a large demonic aura. She caught a glimpse of a flow of silvery white hair. She dove under the waterfall and came up so only her eyes and nose were above the water. She watched silently as Sesshoumaru passed by, apparently done with his work at the training grounds. As he disappeared among the trees, Aura gave a sigh of relief through her nose. Then, her eyes grew wide as she felt someone's hands creep across and cup her breasts. She was pulled closer until she felt his body up against hers. He whispered in her ear, "Nice rack," and he gave her breasts a slight squeeze. "It's good to have you back."

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Aura nearly jumped out of her skin, screaming, but as she jumped up, she hit her head on the rock above her, and she immediately went back down, clutching her hurt cranium. Both she and her uninvited guest flowed out from behind the waterfall, and she got to see who this intruder was.

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He was laughing, as if this was some kind of joke, and she recognized him. She heard Sesshoumaru behind her on the bank. "Toyoko! Get away from her!"

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"Aw, come on, Sess! I was just havin' a little fun!"

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"Fun my @\$\$! Get away from me, you pervert!" Aura exclaimed, trying to cover herself as best she could. Toyoko just laughed. Then he got hit with a rock from behind.

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"Toyoko, you dick!"

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"Aneko, darling! You know I was only foolin' around!"

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Aneko looked up at Sesshoumaru. "Sesshoumaru, would you be a dear and wait for us back at the castle common room? Toyoko needs to get his head straight and poor abused Aura needs to calm down a bit. We'll be there fairly soon."

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Sesshoumaru, without so much as a blink, turned and walked toward the castle.

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"Now then, Toyoko, get out and get your gawddamn clothes on. Aura, honey, don't mind him, he thinks

with his dick, not his brain. If he does anything like that again, you have my and, I'm sure, Sesshoumaru's permission to slaughter him however you wish. Just please be sure he is still in one piece. It's very hard to put together ashes, you know." She winked and dragged Toyoko by the ear farther into the forest.

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Aura got out and dried herself off with a wave of fire over her skin. She put her clothes back on and vowed not to ever take them off again as long as Toyoko was visiting.

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About ten minutes later, Toyoko and Aneko came out of the forest, looking a bit shuffled, but at least dressed. Aneko ran to join Aura. Aneko was a cat demon with dark skin, and black hair & cat ears. Her hair came down to chin level, so it wasn't even shoulder length. She was very slender, and a little shorter than aura. Her blue cat eyes were fierce and scary when she was angry, but when sad, hopeful, and understanding, her eyes were as warm and cute as kittens. She was about as playful as one, too.

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"Hope you're ready for some fun! And it should be more interesting now, since there's four of us and I'm not the only girl!" she squinted her eyes and showed a big grin.

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"Oh yeah! Lots of fun! Hey, I have a new game we can play too! I call it, 'Veracity or Harassment,'" Toyoko joined in.

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"That sounds dangerous," Aura remarked, veering closer to Aneko.

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"It's fun though! I'll explain the rules once we get inside."

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They all met in the common room, and sat on the floor in a circle. Sesshoumaru sat beside Aura and Toyoko, Aneko across from him. "Okay. The game is called `Veracity or Harassment.' In simpler terms, `Truth or Dare.' We start off with one person asking another player `truth or dare?' If the player responds `truth,' then the person asks the player a personal question, and the player has to answer truthfully. If the player responded with `dare,' then the person dares the player to do something and the player must do it. Understand?" Toyoko explained. Everyone nodded. "Okay! So, who shall start? How about our runaway maiden?" He looked toward Aura.

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"Um, okay, uh..." Aura said nervously. She then looked to Sesshoumaru with a mischievous gaze.

"Sesshoumaru!" He looked up as if challenged to a death match. "Truth or Dare?"

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"Truth."
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"Well, that's a first. Sesshoumaru isn't daring?" Aneko sneered.
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"Shoosh!" Toyoko interrupted.
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"What is your greatest fear?" Aura smiled.
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Sesshoumaru looked to Toyoko unsure. "I have to answer that?"
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"Have to. Now answer the question," Toyoko reassured.
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"Hm..." Sesshoumaru had to consider carefully how to answer it. "I have no fear."
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"Oh yes, you do. I can answer for you," Aura smirked and her eyes flashed yellow. Sesshoumaru retaliated with his death glare.
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"I think his greatest fear is that all his secrets will be exposed by a servant who can mind-read. Ha-ha!" Toyoko laughed.
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"If you can answer it, why ask it?" Sesshoumaru snapped.
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“To see if you'd willingly give me the information, instead of me having to dig through your mind.” Aura smiled, and her eyes flashed again. “Your surface through is exactly what Toyoko predicted. Your darkest fear however... (Sesshoumaru: *death glare*)...abandonment. You fear being continuously alone by hatred.”

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Sesshoumaru averted his eyes to the floor beside him. The room fell silent for a while. Then Aneko broke the silence. “Okay, so, Sesshoumaru, it is now your turn.”

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Sesshoumaru looked around, searching for his next victim. He glared at Toyoko, eager to get back at him for all the perverse jokes through the years. “Toyoko, truth or dare?”

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“Dare.” They both exchanged stares peeked with interest.

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“Hope you're as daring as you are perverse. Start stripping.”

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Toyoko looked at him with a smirk, realizing what he was trying to do. Unfortunately for Sesshoumaru, Toyoko was a bit too playful to care about embarrassment, as long as it was among friends. He stood up and put up his finger to get himself together. He breathed in and quickly out to show he was about to make this as hilarious as possible. He stared straight into Sesshoumaru's eyes, and struck a sudden pose. "Ooh! Ah! Mmm..." each new pose came with anew sound. Aura giggled and Aneko found it too funny and burst out laughing. Toyoko grabbed the folds of his kimono and tore it off, screaming as if he were a woman being attacked. Sesshoumaru smirked. Toyoko was now in his light blue under kimono made of silk. He turned around doing something related to a hula dance, and he slowly lifted his shirt. When it was completely off, he flung it backwards accidentally (?) flying into Aura's face. Aura fought it off her face spazzily, and threw it at Aneko, who caught it, and held it as if it were a personal treasure.

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Sesshoumaru couldn't help laughing. It had been a while since he had had something to laugh at, and he laughed as hard as he could. [Unintentionally, of course]. He laughed until Toyoko's pants came off and went flying at him. He immediately stopped and caught them with one hand. Toyoko turned around, still doing his version of the hula dance, but this time, he was only wearing a loin cloth. He stopped and wore a shocked gape on his face when he realized who he'd flung his pants at. He broke out in bellowing laughs. Sesshoumaru didn't find it as funny. He got up with Toyoko's pants in his hand, and calmly walked over to where the hysterical Toyoko was bent over, laughing and gasping for air.

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Sesshoumaru just stood there and stared at him with a calm smile on his face for a few seconds. He then suddenly whipped Toyoko's pants at the owner's @\$\$, snapping the loin cloth right off. As soon as you hear the snap, Toyoko straightened himself quickly and hastily covered what was important to him with his hands. He blushed, holding in a laugh that looked like his cheeks were going to explode. He averted his eyes to Sesshoumaru and gave him a dewy baby expression, almost asking for his pants back.

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“Sesshoumaru, give him at least his pants, if not for his end to embarrassment, then for those who'd rather not go blind in one glance at him,” Aura advised, shielding her eyes from the gawd-awful sight. It wasn't as if Toyoko was unattractive, though. He was a dark tan, and as muscular as Sesshoumaru. Aura just though seeing Toyoko like that twice in a day was twice too many.

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Sesshoumaru sympathized, realizing he didn't want to gaze upon Toyoko either. He turned around still carrying Toyoko's pants. As he walked back to his seat, he threw the pants at Toyoko's face, returning the favor given to him. Because his hands were busy covering important *items*, Toyoko caught his pants with his face, bringing pleasure to Sesshoumaru. Toyoko hastily put his pants on, and sat back. He put his hand out to Aneko, looking for his shirt, but Aneko refused to give it to him.

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She looked to Sesshoumaru. “Sess, truth or dare?”

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He raised his eyebrow. “Truth.”

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“Who would you rather sleep with among us?” she asked, embracing Toyoko's shirt as he was pulling on it, trying to pry it from her grasp.

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Toyoko realized what the question was, though it took him a few seconds, and he added, “Better yet, I DARE you to sleep with that person tonight!” He pulled one last time and was finally able to yank his shirt free and slip it on. “Ooh! And you have to do it, `cause you've been taking `truth' for two times too many! Ha-ha-ha!” Toyoko laughed.

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“Fine. I accept.”

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Toyoko immediately stopped laughing. “Huh?! You're serious?!” It only took a glance at Sesshoumaru's eyes to answer the question. He wasn't joking.

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Aura sighed. “Why don't we play another game?”

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“How `bout we play Sess's favorite?” suggested Aneko.

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“As long as I'm not the first victim!” Toyoko agreed.

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“If it's Sesshoumaru favorite, it must be destructive,” though Aura aloud.

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“It can be. It depend on what your fear is,” Aneko replied.

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“Your fear? Explain.”

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"We call the game `Scream.' Two contestants/players are chosen to go into a torch lit room. One is sent in as a predator, and the other is the prey, or victim. The predator has to make the victim scream out of fear in two minutes. Keep in mind it has to be of fear, not of pain. If it's of lethal pain, the predator is disqualified. It's played using a chart. Normally, Toyoko and I go first, and the winner has to go against Sesshoumaru. With you here, it'll be me and Toyoko, then you and Sesshoumaru, and the two winners go in together for the championship." Aneko explained.

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"Sounds...cheery."

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"It's a lot of fun! And it's a chance to get to know your friends better," chipped in Toyoko. "Though I'd keep an eye on Sesshoumaru at all times, if you have to go against him. Hope you can see in the dark! Once you lose track of him, he's got you."

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The four friends went across a courtyard to an isolated hut away from the castle. They went inside, one by one. The hut was divided into two rooms, one about a fifth the size of the other. The bigger room had torches lining the wall, but other than that it was made of bare stone and dust. The smaller room had a wooden door, with no light source at all but a large window, alloying view into the other room. Along the window sill there was a desk and bench all made of stone. Apparently the hut was made for this game.

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“An illusionist would have a lot of fun in this room,” commented Aura.

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“Yeah, I think only a very powerful one could beat Sesshoumaru, though. He sees right through illusions,” warned Toyoko.

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“Then what you do is make the illusion into reality,” Aura answered, snapping, producing a small fire ball above her palm. “Anyone here have pyrophobia?” she smirked. They all shook their heads, knowing she was joking. You aren't a demon from hell if you're scared of fire.

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“Okay, me and Aneko first? As usual, and to show Aura how it works?” Toyoko urged.

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“Be my guest,” Sesshoumaru bowed.

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"Oh, I've already taken that position. Took it as soon as I got here," he replied, pushing Aneko into the room.
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"I honestly don't know why we do this round. Aneko doesn't seem to learn," Sesshoumaru commented.
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"What does that mean?"
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"Toyoko has a fear of anything with more than four legs, as long as he can either see or feel them. He's really quite jittery," he explained.
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"And this is how you defeat him?" Sesshoumaru nodded slightly.
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“How does Toyoko usually defeat Aneko?”
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“Toyoko has the ability to blend into the shadows. Aneko hates it when things pop out of nowhere and jump at her.”
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
“And you? How do they defeat you?” Aura tried.
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“Simple: they don't. I don't show fear.”
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“Unless your own family turned against you and used an attack that you were sure would kill you,” Aura stated absentmindedly.
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“Hmph,” he grunted in reply, and continued to watch Toyoko pulling his same old trick by hiding in the shadows and blowing out the torches. This gave Aura an idea.
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Sesshoumaru then saw a twist in Aneko's movement, and he saw her light a torch with apparently a new found power. He lit torch exposed where Toyoko was hiding, and he was quite shocked. She prowled up to him, stood before him, and lit herself on fire. Toyoko could see the burning sensation in her eyes, like that of the intent to kill. She raised her claw up in the air, as if about to strike, and Toyoko felt a surge of fear. Her burning claw rushed through the air at him, and Toyoko gave a wail. Aneko stopped right before she hit the cowering Toyoko. The fire went out immediately. The torches restored to lighting the room. Aneko bent over and kissed his forehead, which astonished him, and made him blush, now realizing his scream was a bit girly.^ “I win,” Aneko said with a smirk.
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They both walked out, Aneko looking proud and Toyoko still blushing. “Since when do you have fire powers?” he complained.
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“Since I learned to make friend in other places.” She winked at Aura. Sesshoumaru glared at Aura, as if saying, “Cheater!”
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“No one said she had to do it alone,” Aura said to him, telekinetically.

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“Don't try that with me,” his eyes replied.

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“Next!” Toyoko called out excitedly. Sesshoumaru and Aura entered the room together and split off to both sides of the room, as if it had been rehearsed.

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“Ready?” Sesshoumaru checked. Aura nodded her head.

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Sesshoumaru calmly walked to the side of the room, lit torches along the side. He glanced at Aura with a smirk and sped down the wall, blowing out the torches with the wind generated from the thrust. He was now in the 4 o'clock position from Aura. Aura just glared in his general direction, no emotion on her face, no movement but her eyes. Sesshoumaru pulled the same stunt on the other three walls. The result: total darkness. Aura's eyes stayed focused on Sesshoumaru's direction until she could no longer see him.

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“You missed one,” she proclaimed as a ball of fire formed around her clenched fist she held to the side of her. Looking at the floor, she could see his shadow over hers, meaning he was right behind her. Her face still showed no emotion.

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Now that his element of surprise was gone, Sesshoumaru was forced to think. He then remembered Aura screaming when Toyoko made his entrance. He slithered his arms around her hips and pulled her to him. Aura's eyes left the floor and grew wide and angry. Her entire body went up in flames and there was a scream. But the scream did not come from Sesshoumaru or Aura. No, it came from Toyoko who had suddenly been reminded of his Aneko burning and looking murderous at him. The other three rolled their eyes in unison, and continued.

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Sesshoumaru decided the big approach was the last option. Making a roaring sound, he began to transform. His grip on her let go, and she turned around to see him go through a major growth spurt. His back broke the ceiling, bits of it crumbling and falling into the room.

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Aura folded her arms. “Aw, a puppy,” a little smirk on her face.

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“That’s a damn big puppy,” Toyoko commented.

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“Heh, no kidding,” added Aneko, a smile appearing on her lips.

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Sesshoumaru pounded his front paw on the ground, making the earth shake under Aura's feet, bouncing her up 6 feet in the air. It was getting increasingly difficult to restrain herself from spouting out an interjection. She searched herself for some kind of inspiration to cause a spark, but all she found was astonishment at how big this spoiled prince had become. Sesshoumaru swung his paw at her, and Aura attempted to jump, but had noticed the attack just a bit too late. She got flung into the wall of the half-demolished building, letting out a shrill cry of pain.

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“It’s not over until one of them screams out of fear. Pain doesn’t count,” Aneko assured herself, Toyoko cowering behind her.

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Aura had found her inner fire. She got up, and straightened out to inquire the powerful Sesshoumaru.

“You know the bad thing about having so much hair?!” A strong wind picked up as Aura gathered her energy. “It’s real easy to BURN!” A huge fireball shot out of her arms and swarmed Sesshoumaru, catching all his fur on fire. He lost his dog form, landing on his knees, his body still engulfed in flames. Aura calmly walked up to him, her eyes flickering like fire. She put up her palm, as if to throw another fireball at him. He stared into her eyes dreading another fiery blow. They stood like this for about a minute, until a burst of force blew over Sesshoumaru, blowing out the fire and forcing Sesshoumaru to fly 50 feet out of the room into the courtyard. He cried out fearing his death.

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After Sesshoumaru slid across the yard, Toyoko zoomed in between the two, his arms spread out, “The match is over! No more! Winner: Aura Rei!” The flames settled down inside her, and Toyoko ran to Sesshoumaru to make sure he was still alive. He offered his hand to him, but Sesshoumaru just pushed it away. He helped himself up and strode over to Aura, who was being praised by Aneko. He confronted her, his famous death glare in his eyes.

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“Believe you me, you *will* be brought down!” he growled through his teeth.

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“Bring it!”

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That night, a demonic child was conceived.

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7 - Death Has a New Face

Sesshoumaru and Toyoko were running through the tree tops of his lord's domain, patrolling the area for any intruders. Toyoko started up conversation. Sess, have you noticed anything different about Aura these past few months?

A little, why?

What difference do you notice?

I have reason to believe the royal meals have gained her some weight.

Really? Her stomach appears too round to hold just food. I believe she's pregnant, Toyoko said, a calm face as his expression.

What?! Sesshoumaru's face wasn't as calm. He looked as if he had taken an insult.

You find this hard to believe? I don't. IN fact, she should be due in about 3 months.

That is ridiculous! She couldn't be&

You want to bet on that? Toyoko challenged with a smirk.

50,000 yen she's not pregnant.

100,000 she is.

200,000, to make it worthy.

Agreed! They shook hands and headed for home.

The next few months didn't look good for Sesshoumaru. Aura's abdomen continued to grow. She knew. She knew the whole reason she was gaining weight. She just didn't feel she needed to break it to them yet.

At least until the deliver came. Maids and servants were bustling around, trying to fetch something to help the woman in labor. Aneko was in the room with Aura, helping and encouraging her through. Toyoko was sitting outside the room, Sesshoumaru pacing back and forth, his hands behind his back. You seem a bit more tense than usual, Sess. You're not gonna faint, are you? Toyoko joked.

Sesshoumaru stopped and gave Toyoko a death glare. How many women have you made pregnant?

Um...none. Toyoko looked down in shame. So, uh, do I get my money?

Sesshoumaru stopped pacing again. It's on my dresser. You're free to go get it, he grumbled.

Toyoko got up happy again and went off to go collect his money.

Just then, a strange scent came to Sesshoumaru's nose. It was a familiar scent, but one he had not picked up for quite a while: the scent of a half-demon.

A maid came out with his new born child, zipping past him to go clean off the baby: its scent confirmed.

Sesshoumaru sped to his room, his stomach churning. Had he been tricked? How did he now have a half-demon heir? How did she hide it from him? Why? The frustration almost overwhelmed him. He decided to wait until dark to carry out his will.

A few hours later, Aura Rei, dressed in a Chinese black dress, entered the room, carrying their new born girl in her arms. What should we call her? Aura asked, smiling. The child's hair was already starting to grow, black with silvery streaks. She had golden eyes like her father, with markings on her wrists and face, a blue crescent on her forehead.

&Rei, Sesshoumaru said. After her mother.

Rei Anul. She really does look like you, you know? I can't wait to see what abilities she inherited!

Or what blood, Sesshoumaru added, remember the scent from before. Aura looked up at him, her face no longer smiling.

What? Aura had a worried expression.

Ah, so you know what I'm talking about. Did you also notice our child's a half-demon?!

Sesshoumaru, I&!

You what? What did you hide from me? He got up from his seat and walked over to her. Fear had frozen her body. Little Rei wrapped up in her dark red cotton blanket stared up at him with curiosity. His hand caressed Aura's frozen cheek. How did you hide your HUMAN FACE?! His claws ripped across her face, throwing her down to the floor with a scream. By now, Sesshoumaru's eyes had turned a deep red and blue, his claws longer than normal.

Aura still couldn't find the courage to speak. Tears had formed in her eyes. I will not have that DISGRACE as my heir! He lashed out his whip towards Rei, but Aura held Rei close and turned her back, the whip cracking on her skin, and Aura screamed again.

From the other side of the castle, Aneko's ears perked up. She looked to Toyoko. Toyo, did you hear that?

Yeah, and it definitely didn't sound like a scream of joy. They looked at each other, both worried. Then they heard Aura's next scream.

AURA!! they both exclaimed, and burst out of the room. They got to the inner courtyard, and saw Aura running from the den to the outer courtyard, Sesshoumaru, rushing after her, a murderous look upon his form. Aura's blood left a trail where she had run, leading to the forest at the left.

Toyoko and Aneko went after Sesshoumaru, in hopes of stopping this massacre. Sesshoumaru! Toyoko called out.

Sess! Stop! Aneko cried. Sesshoumaru was too fast for them. They heard Sesshoumaru's claw attack, and Aura's final shriek. They found Aura's corpse in a clearing, and Aneko gasped.

Aneko, that way! Sesshoumaru's taken Anu! Toyoko ran after Sesshoumaru pulling the traumatized Aneko by the arm.

Sesshoumaru dangled the wrapped up Rei over a well. He studied his daughter's eyes for a moment. There was no fear from the child, but laughter. Rei was laughing, holding up her arms to be held by her father, warmth in her golden eyes. Sesshoumaru's form returned to normal, seeing this face, and he turned his head, closing his eyes.

Sesshoumaru! cried Aneko coming from the trees. Don't do it! Sesshoumaru's face broke into a grim

smile, as he let go of Rei, dropping her into the well. Aneko gasped again, and ran to the well.

NOOOOO!! She looked into the well, searching for any sign of the baby. Seeing nothing at all, Aneko lost strength in her knees, and slowly fell to the ground. As Sesshoumaru began walking back, Toyoko came out of the bushes to Aneko's side. They both looked up at Sesshoumaru with wonder, as he calmly walked in silence back home, smiling.

8 - Vengeance

A few days had passed since Aura Rei's death and Anul's disappearance. Sesshoumaru was in the library, studying something on a scroll. Toyoko and Aneko were playing a game of Chinese checkers in the common room as Toyoko pointed out his observations. Aneko, have you noticed Sess's behavior lately? It's as if he really wasn't content with getting rid of Aura Rei.

It probably seemed like a good idea at the time to him, and maybe it still does, but did Aura seem like a half-demon to you?

I didn't sense any human in Aura, which brings me to wonder how Anul could've had any human trace as well.

gasp Do you think she had previously mated with a human or a half demon, and therefore Anul isn't, or wasn't, Sess's child at all?

And interesting point&he never did say he ever detected human traces in Aura, only in Anul. *jump jump jump* Ha! I win! Should we bring it up to Sess?

I don't think Sess is very preoccupied with our little checker's tournament, Aneko joked.

I was referring to your theory on Anul's human side. It does seem that he has been searching for an answer to that for the past few days.

I suppose we could, though I'm sure he's come up with an answer similar to that.

They walked together to the library to find Sesshoumaru studying another scroll. They stopped in front of the door after softly closing it. Sesshoumaru was mumbling something as he read the scroll. It sounded like some sort of incantation. Suddenly, a human aura began emanating from him. His hair turned black, his eyes brown, and the markings on his face and claws faded into his skin. He studied himself but did not look pleased. Then he looked up at Aneko and Toyoko.

Do I appear human to you? Sesshoumaru stared up at them with serious curiosity.

About as human as it gets! I can't find any trace of demon in you! claimed a shocked Toyoko.

Hm, funny, I don't see a difference at all. Sesshoumaru put his hand to his nose. He grimaced. Ugh, that's a human scent all right.

But what did you do? Some sort of spell? asked Aneko.

Yes, actually. It's supposed to make the target appear more human. I believe there's one in here that makes one appear more demonic, Sesshoumaru explained, as he sifted through various scrolls.

And that's the spell Aura was using! Yes! That makes sense! They both let out a sigh of relief.

Why? You thought she'd had an affair with some human male? Sesshoumaru questioned expressionless, though one could possibly say one could see laughter in his eyes.

Uh&well, um& Toyoko and Aneko averted their eyes and blushed. Sesshoumaru rolled his eyes and started looking through the scrolls again. He picked one from the pile and started chanting the spell. It must have been the demon spell, for Sesshoumaru went from human to his metamorphosis stage. Now they had a smaller version of Sesshoumaru's dog form sitting in a chair with his paws on the table.

Aneko giggled and Toyoko tried to hide his laugh&he failed.

Sesshoumaru looked at them curiously. Toyoko decided to show him what had happened. He poured some ink into a small tray, took Sesshoumaru by the wrist and dipped Sesshoumaru's hand in the ink. Sesshoumaru felt a little disturbed, but he realized what Toyoko was trying to do. Toyoko placed Sesshoumaru's hand on a blank piece of parchment, and when he lifted his hand, there was a paw print. Sesshoumaru understood and smirked. He almost laughed, but thought better of it, not wanting his friends to hear his bark. Instead, he took his inked up paw and wrote to Toyoko, Get the dispel magic

scroll.

Aneko was still having small fits of giggles, thinking to herself how cute Sesshoumaru looking in this form. Toyoko smiled and began searching for the scroll. He found it, put his hand on Sesshoumaru's forearm, and started casting the spell. Sesshoumaru transformed back to his normal self and started burning Toyoko's hand with his poison talons. Toyoko quickly removed his hand. Ow! Sheesh, you could've just told me or somethin'! You don't have to maim me! He caressed his wound.

I did it to dissolve the ink on my hand.

Yeah, sure&*glare* Aneko had stopped laughing. Sesshoumaru looked toward the small window in the wall. He had a strange tingle in his nose of a minor demon somewhere in the outer courtyard. It smelled like a large cat. He knew he might regret it later, but decided to let it alone for now.

What are you thinking about, Sesshoumaru? asked Aneko, tilting her head to the side.

Ha! If anyone knew that they'd be the most powerful being on this Earth! Toyoko laughed. Which is why Sess is still alive. ^_~

Sesshoumaru smirked at this. Heh, right.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Two years later&

Aneko and Toyoko had left and Sesshoumaru was out on the training ground resurrecting his subjects on whom he'd taken out his anger. He felt somewhat calmer now; swinging a sword around, practicing his form always calmed him down. He decided to go do another calming activity: relaxing in his personal hot springs. It had been a while since the last time he'd just let himself go, and he decided he was greatly overdue.

With profound swiftness and grace he sunk himself into the warm, soothing waters, his silvery hair blending into the white mist, making him hard to distinguish from an outsider's view. He didn't do this very often, always trying to avoid vulnerability, so he relaxed his body and soaked his eyes and face in the water. His ears he kept alert, picking up sounds of crickets chirping, birds taking flight, and leaves falling to the ground. He could hold his breath for an unbelievably long time: about 3 minutes on average. His right ear picked up the sound of a footfall behind him. He lifted his head ever so slightly, enough to emerge his eyes and nose. His eyes were surrounded by the steam, but his nose, through the surrounding scent of water, caught a familiar scent. It was a haunting scent, one he'd thought he'd never pick up again.

Did you miss me? Aura Rei smirked, leaning against a nearby tree. Sesshoumaru lifted his head some. Those who died should stay dead, his face unchanged.

So is that a no? she giggled at Sesshoumaru's tough-guy act.

You have no reason to be here. Your child is dead. Aura was shocked to hear the news, and bent her head down in sorrow.

Do you regret it? she asked.

Not a bit, and he sank back into the water. This is what he said, but Aura heard in his mind, sometimes&

I'm here to kill you, y'know? Lady Shizuko resurrected me to gain revenge on you, she said, half smiling.

Go ahead and try, but you won't succeed. Sesshoumaru didn't move. Aura's eyes went yellow, and using telekinesis, sunk his head completely underwater. She stood like that for a few minutes, and then Sesshoumaru began to writhe. After several seconds, he was still.

Good, very nicely done.^ The panther came from the bushes, smiling. The dumb dog was so over-confident he forgot he could drown. Ahahaha! Shizuko morphed back into a humanoid form.

And the dumb cat was so over-confident she forgot she could be betrayed. Aura's eyes glowed again, and she clenched her fist.

I beg your pardon! Ahhhh!! Shizuko was crushed from the inside out, her innards turned to mush. She fell to the ground, dead.

Sesshoumaru burst out of the water, and gasped for air. He looked over the side of the water's edge and saw the imploded Shizuko. I guess she bought it. Aura nodded, and they both laughed.

9 - Past Meets Present

A young girl was running through the forest, her child wrapped in a scarlet blanket and held to her chest. Sesshoumaru was behind her, hunting her down. His urge to kill her was strong, and his talons ready to strike. He could smell her fear and the child's ignorant bliss as he cracked his knuckles. Throwing a mortal claw strike, the girl's final scream filled his ears, and satisfaction the result. He held the child by the blanket wrap over a well, but was disturbed by the child's happy expression. Suddenly, the child's face morphed into Inu-Yasha's demon form, and it lashed out at him.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Sesshoumaru woke with a start. Sweat was at his temples, and he was breathing heavily. He lay back against the tree and looked at Rin, sleeping by the fire with Ah-Uhn. He thought of her as the daughter he would have had, though she would be much more demonic than Rin.

It had been about 13 years since he last saw Aura; the day she parted after spending only one lustful night with him. He didn't blame her. He probably would have just killed her again, though now he could at least resurrect her himself. (not like he couldn't before, but..)

He decided to go for a walk to clear his head, figuring Jaken was used to being ditched as baby-sitting duty. A little time had gone by when a strange scent came to his nose. He stopped to analyze this scent. She didn't give him much time before she hurtled out of the bushes, out of breath, and turning to look behind her, as if she was being pursued. She didn't even seem to notice him. He hardly recognized her, so he waited to be acknowledged and studied her.

She had short, mostly black hair, with a few silvery streaks mixed within. Her facial features were greatly similar to his: red stripes across the cheeks, a crescent blue moon on her forehead, golden eyes, but without the red lining. She was dressed funny too: some sort of black pants made of durable material, and a short-sleeve shirt with a drawing of a man with long silver hair, black clothes, a long coat, silver shoulder pads, and an immensely long sword. The label on the shirt said Sephiroth.

Some soldiers from what Sesshoumaru supposed was a nearby castle came from the bushes, seeming hostile towards this girl...until they saw Sesshoumaru behind her. He gave them a glare, just as the girl made a menacing pose. The soldiers started to back off, until they eventually turned tail and ran.

The girl turned around and finally noticed Sesshoumaru. Her jaw dropped. ...Oh my gawd...you're so pretty!^^ Am I related to you? Like a cousin...a brother maybe? You look a lot like me...

death glare I don't know you. Sesshoumaru turned the cold shoulder. He knew who she was the scent was unmistakable but he didn't approve of this chatterbox. Even Rin was less annoying than this brat had been in the first two seconds of their meeting.

Aw, come on! That's mean! That's no way to treat Death! *menacing pose* This piqued

Sesshoumaru's interest.

Death? I suppose you would know more than I do how it feels to die... >_> His back was still toward her, as he examined his claw.

I would? Uh...of course I do! I'm best friends with Lucifer. ^^

Sesshoumaru didn't know the significance of this Lucifer, but there was something about this girl that seemed like a lie. How high is your tolerance to pain? Before she could answer he lashed out his whip toward her, cracking on her arm. It resulted in a big gash on her shoulder. She fell to the ground, clutching her wound.

Ahh! F*ck! What the hell was that for? Damn, that hurt! Geez, what did I ever do to you?! Sesshoumaru drew out tenseiga. Aw man, I just got here and now you're gonna kill me?

This brought a connection to Sesshoumaru. Rei had just gotten into this world when he killed her. He could do it again right here, but there was something holding him back. He spun around and slashed at her with his sword. Holy sh*t! she flinched. It took her a few seconds to realize she'd been healed. She opened her eyes and examined her arm. Whoa! Nice sword! Sesshoumaru gracefully sheathed his sword, and was about to turn and walk off in another direction when a scream echoed through the trees. It came from the direction he'd left Rin and Jaken. With a mighty leap, he took to the canopy, and the girl followed underneath him.

Rin, you stupid girl! Shut up before you get me in trouble! Jaken tried to calm her down. Sesshoumaru and the girl met them in a clearing, and Rin ran to Sesshoumaru.

Lord Sesshoumaru! You're ok! I woke up from a nightmare that you were killed and Lord Jaken told me you'd walked off to go kill yourself! (Sesshoumaru to Jaken: *death glare*)

M Lord! Please don't punish me! It was a simple sarcastic remark! I would never wish you dead! Sesshoumaru approached him, and Jaken got even more desperate. The two girls started to giggle finding the whole scene quite funny. Oh please spare me! ... *BONK*

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

It was around mid-day and the group decided to settle down for lunch. Sesshoumaru sat against a tree, Rin tended to Ah-Uhn, Jaken sulked in a corner (a bump on his head), and the girl lay down in front of the roasting boar, her ravenous eyes gazing in the flames. Rin started conversation. So what's your name? I'm Rin.^^ She sat down next to the girl.

Robin, she said at the same time Sesshoumaru said Rei. They gave each other the same glare.

Robin's an interesting name. You look a lot like Lord Sesshoumaru, y'know? Aura's words came back and echoed through Sesshoumaru's head. (See chapter 7)

I know, but he doesn't seem to treat me any nicer for it. There was a long pause. Ok! I think it's done! Let's eat!

Sesshoumaru got up and started to go for another walk. Rei, he addressed her.

The name s Robin, she retorted, and greedily bit into some boar meat. Of course, your highness, ruler of all hells works too. ^_~

Sesshoumaru rolled his eyes. Rei, when you re done, come with me. There s something you must see again, and he walked off.

Again? Robin shrugged. Whatever. *chomp*

Robin later found Sesshoumaru waiting for her by a stream, gazing at the waterfall. He seemed so calm, and deep in thought. There was a slight breeze and his hair flowed in the air. He blinked and looked at her out of the corner of his eye. With sharp movements, he jumped from rock to rock, expecting her to follow him to the other side of the stream. She tried to follow him, but lacked his grace, balance, and speed. He waited for her on the other side, and took off running at human speed through the forest. She attempted to keep up, and thanked her parents for making her do volley ball for school. They continued for about a mile, until Sesshoumaru suddenly stopped at the edge of a clearing; Robin accidentally ran into him. He turned around swiftly, his face changed to his rage form.

Robin gasped and fell to the ground. She recognized that face. Images of the past flashed before her eyes: her mother s face, his face in rage, the picture her mother had showed her of her father, the screaming of her mother as her father tried to kill her, and Sesshoumaru s calm expression as he dropped her into the well.

Sesshoumaru returned to normal. Rei Anul sat on the ground looking up at him with wide eyes. Daddy?

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Author s Bit: Ok! That s a wrap for the Sesshoumaru hour. The next chapter will introduce some new characters and check-up on how Aura s been doing for the past 13 years. Don t worry, we ll go back to Sess and Rei every other chapter. (until Rei finally gets to see her mother again that is) ^_~

Yes, I do realize it would be almost impossible for one face to remind you of the first day you were born at the age of 15, but hey, that s fiction for you. She probably didn t know what a father or mother was at the time either. All she saw were faces and pictures.

And oh, before anyone asks, his face wasn t what Sess meant when he said, there s something you must see again.

10 - The Other One

Get away from me! I'm warning you! Mother's gonna fry all of you into iron residue if you don't stop! Ayura Laura cried.

Yo mama couldn't do a thing to us! She gets her income from our parents, and I don't think she'd be making very much money after even touching us, now would she? the ring leader of the Tri-Bully team, Keiron, scoffed back.

W-well, Father doesn't work for your parents. And if he finds you there will be nothing left! In a mocking voice, Oh no! Father Dearest is going to show up one day and kill us all! The group laughed at her.

Come on, Laura, everyone knows you don't have a father. He ditched your mom before you were even born, one of the side kick bullies reminded her.

The other one chipped in. He probably doesn't even know you exist. They all laughed again.

Laura got angry. She gave them a death glare and said in a menacing voice, One day you'll see. You will be cursed by an invisible hand that will haunt you everywhere you go, and that invisible, unmerciful hand will be manipulated by ME. With that, she simply turned away to walk back home. Luara entered the house (similar style to Kaede's hut). Mother it's not fair! When is my staff going to be ready? I want to look like I can actually hurt something!

Aura was busy working on a new piece of armor. Dear, it's not like you're human. You've inherited more powers than anyone's ever seen.

Being able to hear really well and cure plants aren't very menacing, nor are they more powers than anyone's ever seen.

Just because those are the only two powers you've seen doesn't mean those are the only two powers you have. Why do you need to look menacing now anyway? You're only 12!

That's old enough to have enemies, Mother.

How many times have I told you to find a friend? Besides, what about your wolf companions? They can be ferocious when together. Aura was still working on molding the armor.

They're a bunch of cowards. They don't even have the guts to come out of the forest. Laura bent her head down in sorrow. I'm going outside to tend the garden, and she did.

Outside, Laura walked through her small garden of exotic demonic plants, some poisonous, some fruitful, some just there to be pretty. All she had to do was look at them and concentrate, and they became healthy again. It was a useful skill when creating demonic weapons. Most weapons required an

elixir or a seed from the plants in her garden. After tending to her plants, she went passed her fence and closed the gate to cross the meadow into the forest. She had made friends with a small pack of telepathic wolves there.

Their names she couldn't pronounce, so she gave them all new names, after characters of her favorite fairy tales. There were 6 of them, all orphaned at a young age. Laura came to believe they kind of depended on her. There were 2 girls and 4 boys. The old had the darkest coat and his name was Kuro. The second oldest had a lighter brown coat, her name being Mori. The twins were in the middle, one speckled and the other a rich brown. They were called Takeno and Kyoshi. The second youngest was a girl too, with a curiosity like a cat's. Laura called her Aneko. The last and youngest boy she named Maru. She was very close to the little one.

Maru! Come out to play! she called. A tiny silver wolf pup came from the bushes. He had tiny features and a shiny silvery coat. His bushy tail wagged as she sat down to pet him.

Laura! he said, using telepathy to speak Common. The rest of the wolves filed out of the bushes too, youngest to oldest. Takeno and Kyoshi began to play tag, running around Laura in circles. Mori and Kuro sat together in front of Laura, content that their younger siblings were happy.

It's good to see you, Ayura. You look well, Mori greeted her.

Your visit is early today though. Something wrong? Kuro asked, tilting his head and lifting his ears.

Nothing new. Keiron's the same jerk he's always been. I'm glad I have you guys though. At least *someone* doesn't mind being my friend. Mother's too busy to understand.

Aneko came around. What kind of friend are you looking for? We're pretty good at hunting. Want us to go roughen this guy up for ya? she wagged her tail in excitement.

Deer,* you know we can't leave the safety of the forest, Mori warned.

That's just cause you're scared! I'm not scared! Let's take 'em! ^^

Ha ha, yeah, don't I wish you were just a bit older, Aneko, Laura joked.

I'm bored. Let's play! Maru suggested, impatiently.

You want fun? I'll give you fun, said the voice of a boy above the group, hanging from the trees. Laura looked up, but she didn't see anyone. She blinked and looked at the wolves. They were all making funny faces at her. She couldn't help but laugh. The wolves woke up and realized what they were doing and corrected themselves.

What happened? asked Kyoshi.

I have no idea! One moment I hear a voice, the next you all look so silly! *lol* Laura laughed. Suddenly, the leaves from the bush behind Kuro and Mori began to line themselves up in the air to form a word: waterfall. That looks so cool! I think someone's trying to tell us to look at the waterfall! The leaves

change form and re-align themselves to make a happy face.

To the waterfall! cried Aneko. Laura and the smaller ones were very excited. Kuro and Mori were quite amused, so they followed the clue to the waterfall. Look! The person s writing something in the falling water!

Letters began to form in the waterfall as if someone was writing them. The words Behind You fell with the water in to the small pond.

Behind...You...behind us? What... Laura suddenly felt a huge push and she fell into the water. Ah! One after another the four little ones fell in too (*oof!* *ack* *Uh!* *yikes!*). Laura looked back to see the culprit. There was a dark boy with shiny blue hair and a plain kimono with a huge grin on his face. He seemed only a year older than Laura.

Heya! Havin fun yet? ^^

*Deer: This is not a typo. You know how people call each other honey? Because it s sweet. Well, what do you think is sweet to wolves? ^_~

11 - The Training Begins

It has been some time since Sesshoumaru's first encounter with Rei. All 5 adventurers (and yes, I do count Ah-Uhn as an adventurer) now make their way up the last hill towards the Great Demon Lord's den. Rei is much more serious looking now, Jaken still pondering/daydreaming about who-knows-what, and Rin taking a nap on Ah-Uhn's back. Sesshoumaru (in the lead) looked up for a moment, took a whiff and realized where he was. He took to the skies, eager to be the first one to see home.

Jaken and Rei stopped a moment to register this, and, Jaken being the only one knowing what it meant, leaped for joy and started running as fast as he could up the hill. Oh me lord! What a joyous day! We are home!! and Jaken disappeared over the hill. Rin began to wake up as Ah-Uhn got excited and followed his master to the sky.

Home? Rei wondered, still standing there. She calmly walked up the hill to see the Great Den. There it was. The big hill with the castle hidden inside, the bathing pool to her right, and the training ground to her left. There was something new though (not known by Rei.) The big tree in the middle of the outer courtyard. She noticed Sesshoumaru sitting on a branch, gazing out over the ground, almost perfectly still. She ran to him.

She was going faster than normal, though; a LOT faster. The world was a blur as she ran. This wasn't something Rei was used to, so she put both feet in front of her and tried to slide to a stop. She managed to stop at the tree, but that's because that's where her feet slipped to too far in front of her and she fell, right on her @\$\$. Sesshoumaru softly laughed at her. She gave him a death glare in response. He just laughed at her again.

That's not funny.. she grumbled.

Yes it is. Sesshoumaru smiled and continued to gaze out at his castle. Rei thought he was one of the most beautiful things she'd ever seen. His long, shiny, silver hair flowed in the wind, his face almost feminine. His silk clothes looked flawlessly clean and his swords gleamed like his smile in the evening sun. The sun was setting right behind the hill that concealed the castle.

There was a peaceful moment as Rei and Sesshoumaru watched the sun set behind the castle. They both sighed. It really is the castle of the West.

Yes..*sigh*..it most certainly is. But you'll be starting your training towards the South tomorrow.

What?! What training? Training for what?

You've already shown you've inherited some demonic capability. If I'm going to have an heiress, she'd better be well trained before I die. Sesshoumaru jumped back to the ground.

*gasp*You're going to die soon?!

No, but it will probably take you that long before you can beat me back to the castle. He grinned and sped down the hill towards the den.

Hey! No fair! Rei grimaced but followed after her father at the same speed.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Rei awoke in a room she didn't recognize. It was rather small, yet not cramped, had a small desk and a chest in the corner. She had been sleeping on the floor on a thin mattress and a rectangular pillow. She sat up and looked around the room. There were some white clothes lying on the desk. There was a note that went with them:

Rei, this is the standard issue training uniform. Meet me outside when you're ready. You have a great deal to learn.

~Lord Sesshoumaru

Wow, it really wasn't a dream! I actually met him! Now how the hell do you put *this* thing on?

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Rei went outside and looked around. Suddenly, a knife shot straight past her face and pinned the side of the hill. A note was tied to it. The paper had the hexagonal flower printed on it, or painted, she couldn't tell. She took the note with much curiosity.

Wind creates a void

And those with heightened senses

Can find the main source.

Flowers are deadly

With their green toxins and waves.

Knives hide within them.

Skills put together

Defeat the one that betrayed

To prove your kinship.

Wow, haikus. I guess he was there when the teacher was covering the poetry unit, Rei mumbled to herself. Unfortunately, he also seems to like stupid riddles. What the frack does all that mean?! Wind creates a void. Yeah, maybe at high speeds..*blink blink*..Hey! Give that back! Rei ran after the speedy thief. She got to the forest, but couldn't find whatever, or whoever, took the note. She began thinking to herself, trying to figure out what was going on.

Ok, what did tousan say yesterday? Oh right! Training. Then this has to be some sort of test..maybe the note was supposed to hint me about something..damnit, I hate mind games! Ok demon, come out come out wherever you are! Come on, this isn't funny!

We have very differing humors then, for I think this is hilarious, said a voice that echoed through the trees.

Your humor sucks. Why don't you come at me, coward?

Ooh, I'm feeling a wind picked up, circling around Rei. The temperature seemed to drop quite a bit. a little cold air between you and I.

Gee, I wonder why.. >_>

And look! Quite a breeze has picked up. Wait a second! Isn't it getting a little harder to breathe? The wind around Rei picked up speed. As soon as he had said breathe Rei noticed the air was thinning around her. It really was getting harder to breathe!

The wind is creating an air-deprived vacuum! Rei fell to her knees, losing energy. Then she remembered the note. ..or a void! Now what did it say? Heightened sense, main source, something like that..*gasp* Rei was running out of time quickly. Heightened senses, heightened senses, what has heightened senses?! *gasp* Animals! Animals have heightened senses! And..and..shoot, my visions getting blurry.. Rei was barely breathing now, air being so scarce. She suddenly had a moment of clarity.

Wind created a void and those with heightened senses can find its main source..its main source..the demon..find the demon.. Rei focused on the surrounding tornado. She concentrated with all her might to look for the demon creating the wind. Then, she saw him. He was running around in circles, making it seem like he was all around her. She could see him! She just had to find a way to stop him from running. *If only I could..could just..grab him..* She focused on his legs, trying to see some fault, some weakness. As she stared, it appeared as if his legs were slowing down, and as they got slower, breathing seemed to get easier. She was able to sit on her knees and concentrate, and she could hear the demon getting tired. Now he was the one breathing hard.

Guh! What are my legs getting heavier?! This isn't supposed to happen! complained the demon. Eventually the pull on his legs became so strong, he was stuck in place. Rei stood up, now giving him a

death glare. Her eyes glowing a bright red.

This was planned? Even the outcome? Who planned it? Why?

I m sure you can figure that out. If you re really his daughter, you can t be that dumb.

Daddy did this? And what was the expected outcome? I suffocate and die, so I m not his problem anymore?

Maybe, if things went my way. The demon smiled maliciously.

Like he did Mommy? Rei s eyes stopped glowing, a solemn aura about her.

Nah, he did that himself. Course he probably sent me cause he couldn t k another knife came out of no where, right into the demon s back, killing him.

Couldn t kill me the first time. A breeze picked up, petals being carried by it flowed in the direction toward the training ground. Ok, Daddy, I m coming.

12 - Shen Ki's World

Who are you? Laura asked the blue haired boy.

Name s Shen Ki, Shen Ki the time saver, he answered, a wide grin across his face.

Time saver? What do you mean? Mori tilted her head to one side and lifted her ears.

I move really fast. So as far as I m concerned, I save time.

How do you do it? Takeno and Kyoshi jumped excitedly around Shen Ki.

Well that would be telling, now wouldn t it? he winked at Laura.

Yes it would. So tell! Laura laughed.

Nah..it s a family secret. Besides, he leapt up to a tree branch hanging above the water, you wouldn t be able to even conceive how it works. Another smile crossed his face. He lay down on the branch, focused on Laura. Laura noticed some sort of charm around Shen Ki s neck. It was round, with a little button popping out of the top. Its face had tick marks around the circumference, and two tiny needles that spun around a center pin, and they pointed at the tick marks. It was made of a shiny metal, and Laura had never seen anything like it.

Does it involve luring innocent wolf pups to a deserted location and contaminating their minds with your humanoid ways? Kuro got defensive, and growled at Shen Ki.

I m humanoid? So what s Laura? She s the weirdest looking wolf pup I ve ever seen! *lol*

We can sense great potential in Ayura. We know what she can be, to say in the least, explained Mori.

Laura looked to Shen Ki. They keep saying that, but nothing has happened yet, she whispered.

I don t need a sacrifice or anything, but accompaniment would sure be nice. He looked intently at Laura.

Kuro got defensive again and growled. You re not taking any of the pups!

You re right, I m not. The wolves blinked and Laura and Shen Ki were gone. There wasn t even a scent left to follow.

How d he do that?! Aneko asked, surprised.

I don t care how he did it! We have to find Ayura! I knew that boy was trouble! Mori! Go warn Lady Aura Rei! She must know! Kuro s nose went frantic along with the other wolves. Mori ran as fast as she could

to get to Aura.

How could he have disappeared so quickly?

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Ayura Laura opened her eyes to look at her new surroundings. In a matter of a nano-second, she had gone from wading in a pond, the wolves on her defensive, and Shen Ki hovering above her on a branch to somewhere deep in the forest, completely alone. It was starting to get dark, and Laura had never been by herself at night before. It scared her.

Kuro? Maru? Mori? ..Mother?

Shen Ki came up behind her and grabbed her shoulders. Boo! Laura screamed Shen Ki laughed.

Why did you take me here? Where are the wolves? Where is here?!

Calm down, Laura. I know the way back. And I promise to walk you home. We re just going to take the scenic route.

I want to go home now! It s getting dark and the wolves, and my mother, are going to come looking for me!

I promise. You ll be home in a matter of a second. He kept his hand on her shoulder, and clicked a button on the time piece he kept around his neck. Laura had noticed it before, and was now positive she knew what it was for. She felt as though a bubble blew up out of the charm and consumed everything around it, and the world was still.

Laura gasped. You don t move faster, you stop time!!

Hey, whaddya know? You *are* smart! Cmon! Lemme show ya around! I bet you ve never looked at the world in this perspective before! Shen Ki grabbed Laura s wrist and pulled her over to a pile of leaves. He slowly picked up a leaf and let go of it in mid-air. Laura expected it to flutter down to the ground, but it just floated there. Then she realized that if the leaf did fall down, it would be defying the laws of time. Since time was stopped, the leaf did not have time to fall, so it didn t. She tried to pick up a leaf, but it shattered as soon as she touched it.

You re moving too fast. You have to pick up the leaf very slowly, and with as little power as possible, otherwise, that happens, he advised. Laura tried it again, this time more slowly, and she tried to be as gentle as she could, but still the leaf shattered.

What did I do wrong that time? she wondered.

Your heart beat. The pulse sent a wave of vibrations through your fingers, and the vibrations were too strong and fast for the leaf to handle.

How do I stop my heart beat?!

You die.

..Huh?

You don't want to die.

No, I don't.

Well good. You dying would be bad. To not break the leaf, you just need to calm down. He showed her by demonstrating, taking leaf after leaf and lining them up to make a heart. Laura still thought it was remarkable. No pop them for added affect. You've shown you're already good at that.

Laura poked each leaf in the center, and each of them shattered like tiny explosions. Cmon! Wait til you see what you can do with water! Shen Ki grabbed her wrist and pulled her to the lake that separated their forest from the wolves' forest. He made her wait on the bank while he calmly walked on the water.

How do you do that?!

I don't have time to sink completely, as long as I keep moving.

So I can do this? Laura jumped on to the water. Her feet submerged about an inch under the water, and behind her there was a big wave of bead-like droplets.

Cool! I've never done that before! Hey, wait, stay there! I wanna make something! Shen Ki walked over to Laura and carefully picked up one of the droplets. Don't move, he said. He placed the droplet right below her neck. Then he lined up other droplets to make her a necklace.

It's just like crystal!

Too bad that with a click of a button it'll be nothing but wet clothes.

Wha..Oh. Haha. Right. Hey are we sinking?

I told you we have to keep moving. Water isn't really a solid.

Wanna race back to my house then?

I'll beat you.

Not if we both use the time stopper.

It's called a clock.

That's a funny name.

Still sinking.

Onetwothreego! Laura ran across the lake, making even bigger waves of droplets behind her.

Fine. I'll still beat her though. He rushed after her.

Laura ran as fast as she could. Once she was on the other side of the lake, she knew where she was going. All of a sudden a huge gust of wind came from behind her. It picked her up and flew her straight at her house. Aaaaaaaaahhhhhh! Shen Ki stopped as he got to the house and looked back.

Whoa! Laura crashed landed into him. She rolled off. See? I told you I'd still beat you.

Ugh..what happened?

I kicked you out of my timezone, he said with a grin.

Cheater.

You're the one who got the head start!

Whatever. I have to go inside. See you tomorrow? I have a feeling I could put your power into very good use.

Sure. Laura went inside and started going upstairs. Night Mom!

Night dear, Aura calmly replied. Laura headed to her room. A few minutes later Mori got to the house.

Lady Aura Rei! Ayura has been kidnapped!

What? Mori, come in, and calm down. Mori came in.

Ayura was taken by a strange blue haired humanoid boy. He snatched her so fast they were miles away in a blink! The other wolves went out to look for her! I..

Mori, Laura just got home a few minutes ago. She's fine. I suggest you go back to the others and tell them to settle down. I'll have a talk with her in the morning.

Mori sniffed the air. She was right: Laura was there. She couldn't detect anything different about the scent, so she relaxed slightly, though greatly confused. I suppose you're right. I'll tell my brethren to stop, though we'll be on our guard if we see the blue haired one again. Then she left.

Meanwhile, Laura sat at her window, looking up at the stars. She couldn't stop thinking about Shen Ki's power. All the time in the world piled into the tiny golden thing.

It's a clock, or a watch, if you prefer. Shen Ki hung upside down from the roof and startled Laura. See you tomorrow, he said with his enormous smile. Then he dropped down and zipped off.

13 - Flowering Toxins

Rei Anul followed the flower petals across the outer courtyard, towards the training grounds. She arrived, and the entire clearing, what used to be dry dust and dirt, was now blooming with beautiful white flowers. The petals had a hint of red on the tips, looking very similar to Sesshoumaru's family crest. Rei could sense something wrong with these flowers though. There was a green haze hovering over the field, like an ominous shroud of some sort of poison.

Great. He wants to poison me now. Another knife flew passed her, striking her arm and landing in the dirt. Another note was attached to it. Nice aim, jackass! Rei shouted out to an absent Sesshoumaru. She looked at the note. It was the second haiku.

Flowers are deadly
With their green toxins and waves.
Knives hide within them.

There was an added note at the bottom this time.

Avoid the poison.
Find the note and you find me.
Die and you will fail.

Geez, who knew demon lords liked poetry? And of course if I die I fail. I'd be dead, so there wouldn't be a retake session. Now let's see&knives hide in the flowers. Notes are attached to the knives. Find the knife, the test is over. Sounds simple enough. Rei began to walk through the flowers covered in the green miasma. She suddenly recoiled and ran back out. It was acidic gas! Rei felt as if her entire body was being digested from the outside in! Ok, I think we have officially established that poison is bad. So, to find the knives, poison has to go bye-bye. She looked around, searching for something that might disperse the gas cloud. Then she looked at the note. Paper! She folded the note into a fan. She walked back up to the field of flowers and tried to fan the poison cloud away. At first, it started working, but as the area around the fan dispersed, it pushed the cloud around Rei, consuming her once again with the acidic gas. She quickly stopped fanning, and started thinking to herself.

The field isn't that big, right? I don't see my skin flaking off, so I guess if I just endure the pain until I find it, it should be okay. Yeah&I'll just suck it up. I'm the Grim Reaper. No, I'm a demon. I ignore pain. Pain is life. Life is pain. Yay, pain! shoot this hurts...

That's what she was thinking as she shuffled through the flowers, looking for her knife with her feet. No luck, and the pain was starting to get to her. She fell to the ground, bowing to the shim of the flowers. The pain became almost unbearable. She couldn't move. A burning sensation consumed her on the outside, and was starting to seep through her skin to her chest. The burn got closer and closer to her heart, and she breathed harder, slightly moaning.

The burn got to her absolute core. The pain had gotten truly unbearable. A surge flew through her limbs and her eyes burst open, glowing a bright red. She felt as if she had been consumed by fire. It got to the point where bursts of fire came from her eyes and the flames ignited the roots of one of the lowers. In seconds the entire flower was engulfed. Rei was screaming, the excruciating pain throughout her huddled-up body. She managed to lift her body off the ground, though she could only make it to her hands and knees. Her hands dug into the earth, and she tried to concentrate the pain through her hands like a lightning rod. It was working. Flames were exerted from her hands, and it spread across the ground, consuming the flowers it reached. The circumference of the short blasts grew larger each time. Eventually, the entire field was burning.

Sweat trickled down the sides of Rei Anul s face. It was incredibly hot, yet as the fire was exerted from her she felt a cooling feeling. When all the pain was gone, she returned to a calmer state, and remembered she was looking for a knife. She stood p and looked around. Above her there was dark green smoke. All around her were the burning red and white flowers. She felt a wave of exhaustion come over her and she now bore an expressionless face. She walked through the flames, completely immune to their scorching affects. She soon spotted something shiny that glinted a pink light as it reflected the sun. She concentrated fully on the object, her eyes red again, and the knife lifted itself off the ground. She held out her hand as if to catch it, but it stopped in mid-air. She touched the piece of paper tied to it instead and pulled it off. Her eyes turned normal as the knife dropped to the ground. She read the note:

Second test is passed
With poison immunity.
The third is fatal.

Rei shuddered. Something big was behind her, and she could feel it. Suddenly a gust of wind shot out and blew her forward. She could feel tiny darts stinging and pricking her skin as the wind flung her toward the flames. She screamed as she landed among the burning poison flowers. The wind blew out some of the flames, and the poison still had a slight sting on her skin.

I think you can see these notes were pre-written. You are not my heiress, you are hers. For that, you shall die.

~*~*~*~*~*~*

Author s Note: Ooh the suspense! =P Back to Laura, and then a double, no, triple chapter of Rei. =D