

seeing is deceiving

By tohruxkyoxyukilover

Submitted: May 16, 2007

Updated: May 17, 2007

It's the most wonderful time of the year... or is it?...christmas is not the only thing lurking around the corner, as inu and his mate, kag, will learn. Their new foe has many gifts for them, all wrapped in silver bows.

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/tohruxkyoxyukilover/45637/seeing-is-deceiving>

Chapter 1 - the winds of change part 1	2
Chapter 2 - Neko coffee club	7
Chapter 3 - silver kiss	14
Chapter 4 - unerving	18
Chapter 5 - mirror! Mirror!	24
Chapter 6 - If at first you don't succeed...	32
Chapter 7 - First encounter	39
Chapter 8 - I'll try	45
Chapter 9 - winds of change part 2	54
Chapter 10 - Mood swings	61
Chapter 11 - I know so	68
Chapter 12 - Half wolf	76
Chapter 13 - I Can't But You Can	86
Chapter 14 - Together Forever	94

1 - the winds of change part 1

Kagome barged into the small, shabby apartment, wrapped in a thick coat that she didn't bother to take off.

"It's freezing in here!" she complained to Sango, who was relaxing on the couch with a fashion magazine, dressed in a feather parka.

"It's your fault," the other 'girl' retorted lightly, reaching over to the coffee table and taking a sip of her cocoa. "It's your room they're adding on. Don't worry, they should have the glass on the windows in the next half hour."

"I don't think I can WAIT a half hour!" Kagome muttered through chattering teeth. "It's no warmer out there then it is in here!"

"Sorry, Kag-chan."

Kagome sighed and looked out the window, where a heavy blanket of snow was slowly covering downtown Tokyo. "This'll make the full moon a hassle. . ."

"It always * is * a hassle," Sango growled to herself, turning the page to her magazine so forcefully she ripped it. "I love it as much as the next werewolf, but by the goddess is it a pain in the @\$\$ to drive to that park!"

"I hear ya. . ." the ebony hared teen sighed. "It's almost as big of a pain in the @\$\$ as the LACK OF WARMTH IN THIS ROOM!"

"You're just not gonna give that up, are you?" Sango laughed softly as Kagome rubbed her arms for heat.

"Not until I'm warm. Damn, maybe I should just sleep in Inu-Yasha's room for the rest of my life," she sighed as she yanked a thick quilt over herself. "Wouldn't have to be bothered by no heat in the middle of December. . ."

"I'm sure he would have no complaints," the brown hared girl snickered. "By the way- you two having fun in there?"

Her laughter came to an abrupt halt as Kagome chucked a pillow into her face.

"Shut up, San-chan! I told you- we don't even share a bed!" she cried, her cheeks turning a rosy shade of pink-

And this time it wasn't from the cold.

"Uh huh," Sango drawled dryly, giving her a knowing look.

"I'm telling the truth!" Kagome insisted.

"Kag, my nose is perfectly fine. I can smell that you're mates," the older werewolf said pointedly, looking at her friend from over the rim of her hot chocolate.

"Yeah, well. . . that wasn't in his room!" the black hared 'girl' muttered darkly, her pink tinged cheeks flushing dark red. "But as we brush upon the subject of love and mating- how's YOUR potential mate?"

Kagome smirked in triumph as her friend's superior gaze faltered and * her * cheeks flamed.

"Nothing's going on between me and Miroku! We're just really close."

"Close enough to hug. . . to kiss. . . to make l-."

"He's just a friend!"

"Do you enjoy making out with ALL your friends?" Kagome asked in amusement, her eyebrows raising as she jokingly began to scoot away.

She laughed as Sango chucked the pillow back at her.

"Shut up!" the brown hared teen giggled, sending both girls into fits of laughter.

"Okay! Your windows are all set in," a werewolf named Hiten proclaimed as he walked proudly out of Kagome's to-be-room, jotting down some notes on a clipboard. "And if you ever need my brother and my services again, don't hesitate to call the Thunder Brother's."

"With a name like that," Kagome commented as Hiten handed them the bill, "you'd think you'd be dealing with lightning rods or something to do with. . . well, thunder."

"We did for a while," Hiten shrugged. "But one time my brother got hurt in a shock wave. Lost all his hair, and never grew it back."

From his place in the doorway, reminded of his lost hair, Maten- the other brother- burst into uncontrollable sobs, dropping his toolbox with a loud bang. "My HA-A-A-A-A-AIR!" he screamed in angst, throwing a hammer towards the living room windows- which Sango caught just in time.

"Oh gods," the elder brother groaned. "What have I started?"

"A really long day?" Sango suggested as Hiten dragged his little brother out of the apartment by the collar.

"Looks it. Have a good day," he sighed as he closed the door behind him.

"Sango!" Kagome cried as she happily leapt to her feet. "I'm beginning to feel heat again!"

"I'm happy for you," her friend drawled, fiddling with her newly acquired hammer.

"My blue feet are slowly donning a color I recognize!"

"I'm thrilled for you."

"My running nose as stopped it's race!"

"I'm ecstatic."

"What's your problem?" the ebony hared girl asked as she looked down at her sarcastic friend. "Aren't you happy about the warmth?"

"Yeah. . . I was just thinking about how Inu-Yasha's gonna be actin' like Maten when you leave his room for your own. I can see him now: My KAG-O-O-O- O-OME!"

"My Kagome what?" Inu-Yasha asked, slamming the front door behind him as he and Miroku entered the room. "Christ, it's like the Arctic in here!"

"Maybe they're Arctic wolves and didn't tell us?" the black hared male joked as he peeled off a scarf.

"The Thunder Brother's just finished the windows to my room," Kagome smiled gleefully, moving to meet her other friends. "Soon it'll be warm in here again, and by Christmas my room will be all ready for me!"

"But I'll miss you!" the silver hared half wolf pouted, his ears drooping.

"It starts already," Sango rolled her eyes.

"Shut up, Sango," Inu growled as he wrapped his arms possessively around his mate's middle.

"Make me."

"You know you'll just miss sneaking into Miroku's room at night 'without getting caught'," he smirked, pleased at the embarrassed blush he was able to get out of his female friend. "You think I couldn't hear you two?"

"The idea was for you not to hear," the perverted male shrugged, sitting next to Sango and placing his arm around her shoulder. "But at least it's not a secret from them any longer!"

"I wasn't aware it was ever supposed to BE a secret," Kagome whispered to Inu-Yasha in slight surprise, smiling softly as Sango whammed Miroku over the head for groping her breast.

Her koi* chuckled and kissed her neck, sending shivers of pleasure down her spine as she sighed in content.

Ever since she had become a werewolf, life seemed new, fresh-

Better.

Kagome felt as if a missing part of her had been found.

And perhaps she had literally found that missing part in Inu-Yasha.

But whatever change she owed her feelings to- her physical changes, her emotional changes, her changes in home-

She had never been happier in her life.

And that was something she hoped * didn't * change.

*

But change is inevitable, be it good or bad.

Like the wind, change blows through and mixes things up- bringing them closer together or pushing them far apart.

Sometimes these winds of change even bring in new things.

Or people.

So is the case of the new teen in town.

Barging into his new, dank, dreary apartment with a loud bang of the door, a tall, dark clad man walked out from the shadows of the hall and into the soft moonlight pouring from the cracked window.

"Bring in my things, Kagura, Kanna," he commanded, never once turning to look at the two girls that stood behind him.

"Yes, Naraku," the dark haired girl, Kagura, grumbled, turning around and doing as she and her silent sibling were told.

Naraku smiled mysteriously as he took a step closer to the window, basking in the soft, silvery glow of the moon.

"Soon, I'll find you, Inu-Yasha. . ." he chuckled to himself, pressing his hand against the cold glass. "You and your clan, too. . ."

~*~

Okay! End of chapter one.

Yes, yes, very short, I know!

I already said I was sorry- I'll try to update soon!

And for those who remember- yes, Naraku WAS mentioned in Blood and Chocolate, I did not forget, so please don't start accusing that I did when I really jump into the plot, okay?

Thank you! ^_^

Anyway, please R&R!

Ja ne!

*Koi- 'love'. Koishii means 'beloved'. ^_^ I'm Inu-Yasha's koishii!

Inu-Yasha: >< No you're not! KAGOME is my koishii!

Kagome: -^.-

Maiden of the Moon: ^_^ I know, only kidding, Inu-chan.

Inu-Yasha: ::eye twitch::

Kagome: ::rubs his ears:: It's okay, koi. . .

Kikyo: ::bangs in, wearing a very frilly, lacy, pink nightgown:: NOOO! Inu- Yasha is MY KOI!

Kagome: Screw you. ::flips Kikyo off and pulls Inu-Yasha into their closet::

Kikyo: o_O

Maiden of the Moon: ::knocks Kikyo out with the rock bass (type of fish) her brother brought back from fishing:: Die.

Kikyo: x_X

Maiden of the Moon: Buh bye! ^_~

2 - Neko coffee club

"Come on you guys, we're gonna be late for school!" Kagome called in frustration from the kitchen.

Buttering a piece of toast, she rolled her eyes as groans echoed from every bedroom.

"Kaaaagoomeeeee," whined Miroku as he crawled to the table, looking as if he had just fallen out of bed- which he had. "How can I sleep if you're out here screaming?!"

"Try and stay in the same room with her," Inu-Yasha grumbled as he walked out of his room, scratching his bed-head hair. "With her clanging and clanking through the closet and banging around. . ."

"Stay in the same room with her?" the perverted one repeated, his head snapping up from its previous position in his hands. "Sure, I'll-"

"PERVERT!" Sango screamed in annoyance, chucking the first thing she saw at his head, which happened to be a frying pan.

"Hey! I was gonna use that for bacon!" the ebony haired girl exclaimed in disappointment as the pan whammed Miroku in the face, sending an metallic echoing through the small apartment.

"Oops'," Sango smirked, plopping down next to Inu-Yasha- who was poking the unconscious Miroku- in satisfaction.

"God damn, Sango," the silver haired wolf snickered, still poking his friend. "You do good work."

"Thank you, thank you. No applause, just money."

"Speaking of money," Kagome sighed as she sat down with her toast, whapping Miroku's now wiggling hand out of the way as she did so, "We're about \$300 in the hole. Anyone got some cash?"

The wolves around the table began to slowly shake their heads no.

"shoot," Sango sighed. "I forgot how much adding Kag's room was gonna cost us."

"We'll all need to find some jobs," Miroku advised. "I know this one ice cream store-"

Inu-Yasha glared dryly at the male. "You moron, it's the middle of December!"

"Look, why don't we all just look for jobs after school?" Kagome interrupted calmly, playing the peace maker.

Mumbled 'sure's 'whatever's and 'keh's were heard around the table.

Another articulate morning.

*

Kagome was used to school by now.

After she had become a werewolf, she found that- wherever she went-, stares and whispers followed her.

But no matter how silent the teens were, she was always able to hear every word.

Some of the choice phrases were 'slut' 'whore' 'dog' and. . .well, some just didn't need to be mentioned.

All because she was hanging out with 'the wrong crowd'.

How *dare* anyone hang out with that weirdo freak Inu-Yasha and his gang?

And so kids she once considered friends all avoided her, and teachers that had once respected her now ignored her.

But she had gotten used to it.

Who cared what they thought? They'd never understand.

So after yet another day of school in it's usual hellhole form, Kagome decided not to pay any attention to the pair of eyes she could feel piercing her back.

Instead, she simply walked up to the job board in the middle of the almost deserted hall- everyone else had already left for the busses or their cars- and began to search for an interesting ad.

But though she continued to ignore the staring person, they didn't go away.

Finally fed up, the ebony haired girl whipped around- - -

And found no one was there.

She stared blankly left and right, fruitlessly trying to find her pursuer.

But there was nothing. . .

Nothing but the stench of a person who had already left.

What was going on. . .?

*

Kagome stood chatting with the manager of the Neko* Coffee Club; a woman named Kagura.

The coffee house was really spectacular. Made mostly of red velvet, large, squishy arm chairs and couches littered the floor, and books of every subject imaginable lined the walls. Pictures of anything and everything adorned the walls, and beautiful crystals dangled from the ceiling.

However, it got its name from the many kittens and cats who prowled the floor, weaving through the legs of the many customers, relaxing in the winter sunbeams that were pouring through the large glass windows, and slumbering on unused chairs.

"You need a job, hun?" Kagura smiled kindly, working behind the counter and toying with a rope in her hands.

"That's why I'm here," Kagome smiled back, ignoring one of the cats she hissed at her.

"Well, you're in luck. I'm in need of one more new hand. Just moved here myself, you see."

"Really? How did you get to be manager so quickly?" the teen asked in astonishment.

"Oh. . . just a few pulled strings," Kagura smiled sweetly, tugging the rope in her hands in emphasis.

Kagome frowned slightly as she heard a thud from the back room, but ignored it. No one else would have been able to hear it.

"So would you like to be a waitress? You'll make good money," the manager grinned, cocking her head as she rifled around for an application.

"I'd like that very much," the ebony haired teen replied politely, gratefully taking the pen and paper Kagura handed her. Sitting in one of the chairs, Kag became so wrapped up in her application that she didn't notice the scent of blood that was beginning to cling to the air.

*

Kagura stepped into the back room, locking the door carefully and smirking at the sight before her.

The previous manager and all his hired hands were back here-

Dead.

The manager hung from a rope wrapped around his neck, having been strung up and toyed with from the ceiling. The new manager smiled softly as she tugged the rope in her hands one more time, enjoying the sickening crunch of the old, dead man's head against the ceiling as she pulled. A stray cat batted at the male's shoe strings as he dangled.

"Stupid old fool. . ."

Littered around her feet were the three hired hands, each stabbed to death with knives and the cat's claws.

"I suppose we'll need more silverware. . ."

Snickering softly to herself, Kagura walked leisurely around the room, casually spraying air freshener so as not to scare away customers.

The smell of death was rather strong.

Not that she didn't enjoy it.

"Blood," she sighed happily, skimming her fingers across the surface of a pool of the liquid, scattering the cats that had gathered around to take a drink. "How I love it when you're shed."

Laughing quietly to herself, she picked up a stained knife and licked the end of it before throwing it into the stomach of the dead manager.

"Serves you all right," she smirked, slowly heading back to the door. "My master will get what he wants. And so will I."

*

"Done," Kagome smiled as she handed the application back to the manager.

As Kagura smiled and took the papers, the teen couldn't help but frown.

"Um. . . if you don't mind my saying so. . . it smells rather. . . bloody back there. . ." Kag mentioned slowly, not wanting to give away her powers.

But it seemed she wasn't the only one able to smell it, considering quite a few customers were leaving, holding their nose.

Kagura nodded sadly. "Yes, well, there was a bit of an accident back there with one of my other hired hands. Cut herself badly."

"How could that cause so much bl-"

"It was also her time of the month," the manager whispered.

Kagome nodded slowly, not quite believing but deciding not to press it.

She needed this job.

"Well, hun," the manager smiled happily as she glanced through the application. "You look qualified! How about you start tomorrow, say, after school?"

"Really?" Kag gasped. "I got the job already?"

"Of course," Kagura cocked her head. "Was there any doubt?"

"I guess there was. . ." Kagome grinned sheepishly. "Well. . . gods, thanks!"

"No problem," the woman replied softly as the teen ran happily out into the snow. "No problem at all. . ."

With a small smirk, she walked towards the backroom, another knife clenched in her grasp.

*

The ebony haired teen walked happily out of the coffee house, smiling as she slowly began down the path towards the apartment.

But as she was passing an ally-

Someone or something that she hadn't sensed suddenly grabbing her hands and pushing her against the brick wall, locking her arms above her head.

"What the fracking god damn hell?!" Kagome hissed her surprise, her arms already killing her in the person's ironclad clasp.

"My, my. . . language, my dear, language. . ."

Looking slowly up into the face of the speaker- and her attacker-, the teen wolf found herself staring at a man with a pair of dark eyes, framed by long, wavy black hair.

"Hello, Kagome Higarashi," the man smirked, leaning into her and whispering in her ear.

Kag flinched as his icy breath hit her body, causing goosebumps to rise on her skin.

How did he know her?! She didn't recognize his scent. . .

No, wait. . .

Hadn't she smelt it in the hall. . .?

"Who are you?" she asked, trying to ignore the way he gently nuzzled her neck.

"I don't think names are important," he smiled into her skin, slowly backing away to stare into her eyes. "But what I have to say is. . ."

"Then say it and let me go," she glared.

"Patience my dear, patience. . ." he chuckled, taking a long pause before continuing.

"Have you ever heard," he began softly, "of the werewolf?"

Kagome fought to keep the surprise out of her voice. "Sure I have. In myths and legends."

No way in hell was she admitting anything to him.

"Don't you ever wonder where those myths and legends came from, Kagome?" he whispered, his eyes glinting.

"What are you getting at?!" she spat, wiggling her sore limbs. "Let me go!"

The man 'tut'ed quietly. "My dear Kagome, please listen. It's for your own good. I'm trying to warn you. . ."

"Of what?!" she barked.

"Of the kids you hang out with," he replied smoothly, his hands tightening around her arms.

Kag's eyes widened.

"What about them?" she hissed slowly.

"Don't be fooled by appearances," he murmured in her ear again, leaning forward and kissing her neck with white-hot lips. "For seeing is deceiving. . ."

With that, he slowly released her arms and stepped back, a smirk toying with his mouth.

"I'll see you around, Kagome," he whispered, bowing his head slightly in her direction before calmly walking out the ally.

The ebony haired teen stood there for a moment, simply catching her breath.

Then what had happened hit her.

"WAIT!" she screamed, racing in the direction the man had disappeared. "WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!"

But he was already gone.

*

"Kagome, where have you been?" Inu-Yasha bellowed as soon as she walked through the door. "We've all been back from job hunting for AGES! What the hell took-"

But as she walked into the hall, he suddenly stopped screaming.

Instead, he ran up to her, his eyes narrowed, and pulled her into his arms, sniffing her.

Kagome arched her eyebrow in confusion. "Inu-Yas-?"

But she cut herself off at the look of surprised horror on his face.

"What the hell were you doing with Naraku?!"

~*~

Yes, I know. Second chapter and I've already given you an evil cliffie.

I'm a dog, blah blah blah. . .

^_^;; But I'm a lovable dog!

3 - silver kiss

Naraku?" Kagome asked slowly, confused and slightly frightened by the furious glint in Inu-Yasha's eyes.

"Yes! NARAKU! WHAT WERE YOU DOING WITH HIM?!" her mate growled, leaning forward and smelling her neck with his eyes shut in concentration.

"Stop that!"

"You were all over each other, weren't you?!"

"HE WAS ALL OVER ME!"

"I'm SURE you didn't want him to be!"

"I *DIDN'T*!" the 'girl' insisted, glaring at the pissed off Inu. "He cornered me in an ally! Sniff my back, you'll be able to smell the brick! And he had me by my arms too, so I couldn't escape!" she told him, showing him her bruised wrists.

"Why didn't you KICK him?!"

Kagome blinked.

Why the hell hadn't she thought of that?!

"I was scared! I wasn't thinking straight!" she cried, banging her fists on Inu's chest in emphasis. "I wasn't cheating on you, I know that's what you're thinking!"

The silver haired wolf stiffened slightly, looking away in outrage and embarrassment.

"Don't you believe me. . .?" Kag pressed sadly.

"Of course I believe you, koi. . ." he finally grumbled. "Besides, you don't even know who Naraku is, do you?"

"No!" the 'girl' glared angrily. "I'd appreciate an explanation! That bastard wouldn't tell me a thing about himself. . ."

"All right, all right," Inu sighed.

He began to take a deep breath to explain, but cut himself off before he had even begun.

"Well?!" Kagome sighed in exasperation.

"Could you take a shower first? You stink of him. . ." her mate growled softly. "I don't like it. . ."

Rolling her eyes, the female stormed off, grabbing a towel as she went.

*

Stepping through the excess steam of her shower, Kagome sighed and wrapped a fluffy blue towel around herself.

'I have to admit, though,' she sighed, rubbing her neck. 'I do smell bet- ow!'

Hissing in soft surprise, the girl withdrew her fingers from a tender spot on the side of her neck.

Pulling her hair back and looking into the mirror, she found herself gazing at a large, red welt.

As if she had been touched by silver. . .

But the only thing that had touched her there apart from her hair was- - -

Naraku's lips.

But what had he given her?

A silver kiss?!

"How-?" Kagome murmured to herself, quickly applying foundation makeup on the spot to cover it. 'How did that happen?'

*

A little while later, Kagome and Inu-Yasha sat on the couch, the 'girl' glaring expectantly at the silent 'boy'.

"Well?" Kag finally questioned. "Who is this Naraku?"

The silver haired werewolf sighed. "Way back- okay, so it wasn't really way back. It was a few months before I met you. Anyway, I was going out with Kikyo."

"Kikyo?" Kagome raised an eyebrow.

"Remember? That dead fracking whore-slut-dog who kept threatening you?"

"Oh yeah! Her." Kag shivered slightly. "I didn't like her."

"I don't either. Not any more."

"I hadn't gotten that."

"But moving along- she dumped me for some guy named Naraku, a really rich werewolf from another clan."

"Did you ever see him?"

"No, but I smelt him on her. I heard Kikyo say he was really cool; he had a lot of piercing and liked to wear 'manly' jewelry. She called him a daredevil. But like I said, never saw him myself."

Kagome frowned slightly.

She hadn't seen any jewelry. . .

Then again, all she saw of him was his eyes and his hair.

"Didn't he ever go to the park on the full moon with you?"

"No. Each different werewolf clan has their own park or location to go to on the full moon. Otherwise mortals would get suspicious."

"But what if werewolves of a different clan mated?"

"Then the female would go live in the male's clan. Now are you ever gonna let me finish this story?!"

"Sorry," the ebony haired teen smiled nervously. "Continue."

"Right. Well, after a while, Naraku's money disappeared. He has some sort of weird job- I don't know much about it; but he's either marvelously rich or spectacularly poor."

"Hm. Well, he still has it better than us. We're always spectacularly poor."

"Look, are you gonna let me finish or not?"

"Er- sorry again."

"Thank you. Well, after all his money left him, so did Kikyo."

Kag was silent, waiting for him to continue.

"That's all. You can talk now."

"Okay. Well, can you tell me anything about Naraku from his scent?"

Inu-Yasha raised an eyebrow. "Can *you* tell me? Your nose is probably better than mine."

"No. . ."

"Well, there ya have it."

"But-"

"Kag-chan, you can't even tell if a man is a werewolf by their scent."

The female wolf looked shocked. "Really?" 'But I suppose now that I think of it, there's nothing outstandingly different between, say, Sango and Ayumi's scents. . .'

"Nope. When dogs smell each other, you think they can tell what type of canine the other is*? You smell the same as you did as a human."

"Then how can you tell if someone is a wolf or not?"

"You can't. That's why werewolves generally only trust those in their packs."

"Oh. . ." the 'girl' murmured, deep in thought.

Inu watched his mate coolly while she pulled her legs to her chest and rested her head atop them.

As her hair tumbled over her shoulders, the male noticed a spot of her neck covered in makeup.

"What's that?" he asked, his brow furrowed as he wiped off the foundation.

"Ow! Don-" she began, but cut herself off with a wince of pain.

Inu-Yasha growled as he saw the welt. "Were you touching silver?!"

"No. That's where. . . he kissed me. . . "

The male's expression became murderous as his growls became louder. "What else did he do?!"

"Well. . . I already told you about how he pushed me against the wall. . .he kissed me. . .and. . .he told me to beware of you and the rest of the wolves. He told me seeing is deceiving."

Her mate was silent for a moment, biting his bottom lip in thought as he pulled Kag into his lap, resting his chin on her hair.

"I think. . ." he said softly, "we need to tell Kouga about this. Something isn't right. . ."

4 - unerving

~*~

Kagome stood silently in the freezing, high rise parking lot the werewolf clan used as a large garage.

And a meeting place.

Shivering slightly, she wrapped her arms around herself and rubbed her goosebump adorned skin, trying to keep warm as werewolves slowly trickled into the parking lot, whispering curiously amongst themselves as to why they were called here.

"Cold?" asked a husky voice located next to her ear. "Let me help keep you warm. . ."

The girl flinched as she felt freezing arms snake slowly around her middle-

Until Inu-Yasha came bounding up and punched Kouga in the face.

"KEEP THE frack OFF MY MATE, KOUGA!" the silver haired werewolf snarled, wrapping his warm arms protectively around the female's middle and glaring down at the clan leader, now sprawled on the floor.

"Damn you, Inu-Yasha!" the other male glared, trying to fix his damaged jaw. "She should be my woman! Finest wolf in the pack, she is! Ergo, she should be mine!"

"You didn't want me when I was human!"

"Well. . . you were human then."

"Pig!" Kagome glared, kicking Kouga in the side before storming off to talk to Sango.

"No! I'm a WOLF!"

"It's a saying, you nimrod," Inu snickered, couching down beside the battered and bruised pack leader.

"Whatever," the black haired male groaned, rubbing his side before looking icily up at Inu-Yasha. "So what the hell is this all about?"

"Naraku."

"What about the bastard?"

"You know what he's been doin'?"

"No. Haven't heard anything from him since Kikyō dropped him like a hot potato."

"That's what I thought," Inu-Yasha replied seriously, flopping down next to Kouga and putting a thumb to his chin, deep in thought. "Only today, I smelt him on Kagome."

"You WHAT?! Not my-!"

In an instant, the silver haired wolf grabbed the collar of the leader's shirt and yanked him painfully forward. "Finish that sentence and I swear I'll kill you."

"Er- You WHAT?! Not YOUR woman!"

"Better."

Kouga rubbed his sore neck as Inu released him from his grasp. "So what had he been doing with her?"

"Cornered her in an ally from what I can smell. She told me he warned her about us. And he kissed her neck. . ."

The clan leader arched an eyebrow. "What? No growls? No snarls? He kissed your woman on the neck and you aren't storming around Tokyo, trying to kill him?"

"Believe me, I WANT to," Inu-Yasha spat out, clenching and unclenching his fist. "But that's not what concerns me at the moment."

"Ho? Then what, pray tell, what does?"

"Kagome. Come here."

The wolf in questioned glanced over her shoulder, apologized to Sango for the interruption in their conversation, and then slowly walked over to her mate, sitting next to him on the ground.

"Show him," Inu commanded quietly.

Kag nodded and slowly shifted her hair from her neck, showing the black haired werewolf the kiss mark.

"By the goddess. . ." Kouga whispered, reaching out trembling fingers that didn't quite touch the girl's skin- after all, Inu-Yasha was still there. "It's like she's been kissed by silver. . ."

"I know. . ." Inu-Yasha sighed.

Kagome just nodded, slowly moving her hair again.

Her stomach was churning nervously and she wasn't feeling very articulate.

"But she couldn't have, could she?" the leader continued. "I mean, from what Kikyo said, the boy had a lot of piercing- he could have easily had a lip ring- but he'd have had to be wearing silver jewelry for that to happen."

"Exactly! And if he was another werewolf, then how could he be wearing silver?!" Inu concluded, slamming his fist down on the floor in frustration.

"But Kikyo wouldn't have gone out with a mortal!"

"He could have lied. . ."

"He could be wearing jewelry with only a little bit of silver on the tip of the stud. That wouldn't really affect him, would it?"

"I don't know!" the silver haired, half-werewolf growled angrily. "But we need to figure this all out. That's why I think we should all go out and find him."

Kouga glanced at Kagome. "Is this what you wish?"

Kag raised an eyebrow. "Yeah. . . I want to see him explain himself. . ."

"Right then. If that's what Kagome wants, it's what Kagome shall get," the pack leader smiled kindly, ignoring Inu-Yasha's jealous/angry/murderous snarls.

"Excuse me," Sango piped up. "But someone needs to stay with the pups. Not everyone can go searching."

"Right then," the pack leader clapped his hands. "You, Sessho-Maru, and Kagome will stay."

"And WHY must *I* stay?" Sessho-Maru questioned coolly. Though his voice was just about expressionless, it was easy to tell he was annoyed.

"Because we need to keep someone with power here. Sango is staying because she suggested it, Kagome for her protection. I need someone I can trust here to watch the whelps."

"And you can't trust Sango and I?!" Kag cried, half exasperated and half annoyed.

"Er- well, I also want him here to protect you. . ."

Sango rolled her eyes but didn't argue.

"Right!" Kouga called. "Everyone else- in the cars! We're going to find Naraku!"

*

"They still haven't found anything," Kagome informed her friend, hanging up the phone two hours later.

Sango sighed and returned her eyes to the pups.

Though adult werewolves generally kept their children with them, there were a surprising number of

orphans. They lived in a group with a motherly wolf named Rose- who was currently out with the others- to watch over them.

Even pups with living mothers and fathers spent most of their time here, however, playing with the others in the large, light blue apartment, decorated with posters, toys, and huge, comfy couches.

Sessho-Maru said nothing when Kag announced the lack of findings. Instead, he just turned to face a pup named Rin, who was currently playing with his hair, tying bright pink ribbons into it.

"Would you stop that?"

"But Sessho-Maru sama! You look so pretty!" the little girl giggled.

". . . But I don't want to be. . .*pretty*."

Kagome covered her mouth to stifle her giggles.

"Let's talk over here," Sango smirked, pulling her friend into a corner, but making sure to keep pretty Sess in sight.

The pair sat in silence for a few moments, watching Sessho-Maru get his hair done rather than talk.

But a question had been nagging at the back of Kagome's mind, and she couldn't ignore it any longer.

"Sango-chan?"

"Hm?"

". . . Kohaku's your brother, isn't he?"

The older werewolf glanced at her friend from the corner of her eye before slowly answering. "Yes. . ."

"So. . . um. . . Why doesn't he live with you?"

Sango was quiet for a moment, pulling her knees to her chin and resting her head upon them.

"Well. . . our parents both died. . . that left us alone. . . And I'm not old enough to take care of him myself. . . so he lives here."

"Oh. . ."

"But when I'm old enough, he'll be living with us."

Kagome smiled. "That's good."

The older girl allowed a small grin to tug on the corners of her lips. "Yeah. It will be. . ."

Another moment of silence passed, and then-

"Hey!" giggled a little male pup, bounding up to the girls, his bright orange hair falling out of a pony tail as his green eyes sparkled. "I'm Shippo! Will you play a game with me?"

"What kind of game?" Kag laughed, allowing the child to tug her to her feet.

"Um-um-um-um-um-I know! I know! Okay- we color!"

With that, he sat down and motioned for the teen to join him as he pulled out some paper and crayons.

Kagome rolled her eyes and sat down again.

"Would you like to draw too, Sango-chan?" the ebony haired wolf smiled, handing her friend a piece of paper and a blue crayon.

Sango laughed softly and took the items in question.

*

"This is the full moon!" Shippo showed the girls a few moments later, displaying his paper of colorful scribbles. "And this is me an' Rin an' Kohaku all playin' in the snow!"

"And what's this?" Kagome asked kindly, pointing to an unnamed piece of the portrait.

"That's Miroku-san getting beaten up!" he smiled innocently.

Sango squinted. "Looks sorta like him. . . Only he's usually flatter than that. . ."

The boy looked at the picture too. ". . . I guess you're right. . ."

"I still think it's a lovely picture, Shippo-chan," Kag beamed, hugging the pup.

Shippo grinned widely back before running off to show Rin and Kohaku his masterpiece.

"So. . ." the brown haired teen smiled, examining her nails innocently. "When do you and Inu-Yasha plan on having whelps?"

"Sango-chan!" Kagome cried, whapping her friend over the head and trying to hide her blushing cheeks.

"What?! You know you BOTH want them. . ." Sango snickered, ducking another blow.

"What about you and Miroku? I think the pair of you will probably intoxicate this pack with pups!"

"Shut up!" the now blushing Sango muttered.

Kag rolled her eyes, hid a smile, and glanced out the window at the city, trying to quell the sudden rush

of adrenaline fear and anxiety she felt.

Speaking of Inu-Yasha, Miroku, and the others. . .

How was their search coming?

*

"Nothing," Kouga sighed, kneading his temples as he finished talking to another werewolf pack leader.

"Not one pack in the Tokyo area has a member named Naraku! Hell, no one's even heard of the bastard!" Inu-Yasha growled in frustration, rubbing his face with his hands and muffling a line of profanities.

"Well, we still have one more pack to try," Miroku stated, trying not to sound as weary as he felt.

"Well, let's go then," called one of the other wolves in monotone as everyone tramped for the cars.

This lack of information. . .

Was unnerving.

*

The group of searching wolves parked silently in front of an old building near the sea side, where they had heard the final wolf pack generally hung out.

Rough and rude, most people- and wolves- generally avoided them.

But Inu-Yasha and the rest were desperate to find more information on this 'Naraku'.

The crawled out of the car and stepped onto the sandy parking lot, their footsteps muffled by the crashing of the sea.

Slowly tramping into the large, rotting wooden shack with the words 'Charlie's Bar' blinking in dying green and red lights, the group of wolves silently slid from the darkness of the cold, gray winter twilight and into the shadows of the building's inner depths.

And that unnerving feeling grew

5 - mirror! Mirror!

Inu-Yasha led the group of silent wolves into the dark, dingy bar.

The inside was almost worse than the outside.

The lamps continually flickered, bathing the building in soft, grungy light. The small shack was decorated with old, rickety poker tables and chairs, old darts and dartboards falling off the wooden walls. The bar itself was made of rotting oak, with a silent, black haired teenager wearing a name tag with 'Nazuna' on it, wiping out dingy glasses behind the counter; not paying attention to the small gang of leather-clad 'people' in the corner.

Their noses intoxicated by and unable to smell anything but the strong scent of smoke and alcohol, Inu's pack gingerly made their way to the foreign wolves.

"You the Oda clan?" Kouga grunted, sliding into the seat next to the biggest 'man' there. Roughly the size of an elephant, the man was, like his friends, bedecked in leather. He wore an eyepatch over his dark, left eye, and his gray hair was pulled back into a small ponytail.

"Yeah," the man replied slowly, taking a swig from his tankard. "What ya wanna make of it?"

"We don't mean any harm," the black haired pack leader responded. "We just want some information."

"Ho?" What about?" the man drawled, taking another gulp of his drink.

Kouga took a long, deep breath, ready to try and sugar coat their story again.

Inu-Yasha was fed up.

"Look," he snarled, pushing Kouga out of his chair and glaring at the man as he sat down. "What do you know about a wolf named Naraku?"

The leather clad wolves glanced at one another before looking back to their leader.

"We know nothin' of a wolf named Naraku. . ." the man said slowly, pushing his glass aside and crossing his arms on the table.

"Damn it!" Inu hissed, banging his fist on the table as his clan glanced warily at one another.

"But we do know of a MAN named Naraku. . ." he continued, causing everyone around the small table to silence themselves.

Inu-Yasha, his fist halfway down to banging the table again, stopped, gazing with wide eyes at the old wolf.

*

A silent, white haired girl, her hair adorned with identical flowers, walked into the bar, her footsteps so soft that not even the wolves in the corner heard her.

Padding up behind Nazuna, the girl grabbed a glistening knife from under the counter, clasped her hand over the bartender's startled mouth, and jammed the sharp weapon into her back.

The albino teen mentally smiled as she felt the knife connect with the black haired girl's spine, causing it to splinter under pressure and paralyze her. Sending a jolt of unsurpassable, unexpressionable pain through the dying bartender, she fell silently to the floor, blood seeping through the wound in her opened back.

Ripping the bloody knife from the Nazuna's body, the white haired teen noticed the female was still gasping for breath.

'Hm. I'll let her die slowly,' the expressionless female thought, flipping the bartender over and slowly slitting her wrists, causing more red liquid to spurt out of her, drenching the floor in warm blood.

Her task finished, the albino girl's attention was sparked as she heard someone say:

"But we do know of a MAN named Naraku. . ."

*

". . .Man?"

"Yes," the man nodded, his voice hoarse as he took another gulp of his beer. "And not just a man. . . but a hunter."

"A. . . hunter?" Kouga asked slowly, still sitting on the floor.

The second leader nodded. "One of the only werewolf hunters left. . ."

"Werewolf hunters?!" Inu-Yasha hissed in shock, leaning closer to the man to hear every word through his black leather cap.

What the hell was Kikyo doing going out with a werewolf hunter?!

"Yep. Made a fortune a time back after killin' some silver wolf. Banished werewolf, musta been."

All eyes turned to Inu, who'd felt his blood freeze.

"Believers in the werewolf paid him big time for the pelt of the canine, and he's been searchin' for more werewolves ever since."

". . . Do you know where he is now?" Kaede asked slowly.

"Nope," the man grunted, taking a swig from his almost empty glass. "But he's probably out there somewhere, lookin' for more wolves. . . He's a dangerous one, that Naraku. It's most tribe's ignorance that's gonna get 'em killed. But not us," he continued, indicating his pack. "Nope. We've known 'bout him for a while, and we're gonna stay safe that way. He's got a silver touch, he has. And we're gonna avoid it."

The wolves behind him all nodded, raising their glasses as if to toast their leader.

A moment of silence passed over the wolves as half of them took deep gulps from their tankards, and the other half starred blankly at Inu-Yasha.

". . .Let's go," Inu finally muttered, standing up and wiping off his leather pants, causing the metal chain around his waist to jingle, and- unnoticed by him- fall off.

Nodding to the leather clad wolves and muttering silent thanks, the pack tramped out to the cars, the silver haired half wolf playing with the sleeve of his black turtleneck.

As they left the bar he could feel the hairs on the back of his neck prickle, and it wasn't from the cold.

*

The pack was about to drive away when Inu suddenly stopped and hopped out of the car.

"My belt chain fell off!" he called to the confused Kouga, who made a frustrated noise and exited his car as well.

"What?!" the black haired wolf cried in exasperation as he caught up with the half werewolf. "You're making us stop for THAT?!"

"It was expensive!"

"Damn it, Inu-Yasha!" the leader bellowed as the two re-entered the bar. "Can't you just buy a . . . new . . . one . . ."

His voice trailed off as the two looked in wide-eyed shock at the scene before them.

The already disgusting bar was a mess.

All the tables were overturned, the dartboards shattered on the floor. Glasses and tankards full of beer were broken, spilling their contents onto the floor and mixing with slowly running blood.

Blood from the leather clad wolves.

All of them were dead.

They were strewn around the room like toy dolls, lifeless, pale and cold. Their bodies were pierced with shards of mirrors; big shards, small shards, all sparkling in the dim light like crystal knives, reflecting the blood on the floor, and their dead friends around them.

"By the goddess. . ." Kouga whispered, kneeling next to one of the bodies and examining a long, splintered piece of mirror; a drop of blood running down the looking glass and leaving a red trail in it's wake. "These are all from silver gilded mirrors. . ."

Looking into one of the pieces of broken looking glass he shook his head. "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the deadest of them all?"

"Him," Inu-Yasha pointed to the wolf in front of him.

The silver haired wolf was in the far corner, where the Oda pack leader was.

He was, most definitely, the deadest of them all.

Pinned to the wall with the dull, rusty darts from the dart board games, he looked as if he had been crucified; his hands and feet's bloody skin and muscle slowly being torn farther and farther open with small, sickening 'riip's as his dead weight pulled him towards the floor, but the darts commanded he stay there.

But that he hadn't just been 'crucified'.

No.

Instead of just hanging, he had been split and pealed open from his neck to his abdomen with a sharp piece of silver gilded mirror- which now lay, bloody and cold, on the floor next to his warm, still moving internal organs. Stomach, spleen, lungs, heart, and more-

They were all there.

Holding his nose against the stench of blood and alcohol, Inu noticed that, into the pack leader's now empty body cavity, his belt chain had been shoved. Shoved up through the Oda pack leader's remaining intestines and esophagus, and was now protruding from his mouth.

"You're right, Kouga. . ." Inu-Yasha whispered. "I'll just buy a new one. . ."

Taking a small step back, he could feel his feet shatter more pieces of blood covered glass.

"Let's go," he finally muttered in soft disgust. "Before whoever did this comes back."

The pack leader nodded once, unable to find his voice amongst the pile of bodies.

And so they turned and left, the bloody, broken looking glasses still shimmering in the dull light as they went.

They say that if you break a mirror, you experience seven years of bad luck.

This is untrue.

The only ones that were going to experience bad luck-

Were the werewolves.

* ((WARNING! LIME STARTS NOW! I REPEAT: HEAVY LIME STARTS NOW!))

"Inu-Yasha?" a soft voice called through the darkness.

Inu glanced over at Kagome, who was lying on her side on the bed and looking down at him on his mattress with concern filled eyes.

It was nighttime now. Inu-Yasha and Kouga had decided not to tell anyone what they had seen in the bar. Instead, they just reported that Naraku was a hunter and not to be trifled with.

That alone frightened the pack.

"Yeah?" he grunted, watching his mate from the corner of his eye.

"Why aren't you asleep?" she whispered.

"Why aren't you?"

"Because you aren't."

The male chuckled softly. "Like a cycle, isn't it?"

Kag smiled softly before frowning again. "Koi, what's the matter?"

The silver haired wolf sighed but didn't answer, rolling over so his back faced Kagome.

"Inu-Yasha? Inu-chan, talk to me."

He didn't.

She sighed in frustration as she rolled over to face the wall.

He could be so annoying at times!

Why couldn't he ever share his feelings? His emotions? Why did he have to keep them all bottled up-

"I'm scared," a quiet voice finally murmured into the silence.

Kagome whirled around in her bed to look at Inu-Yasha, who on his mattress, had turned to look at her

again, too.

". . .Excuse me?"

"I'm scared, okay?! I'm scared of the people I care about being killed, like. . ." his voice trailed off momentarily, his eyes filling with pain before shaking his head and glaring at his love. "I'm scared that our clan will get hurt. I'm scared YOU'LL get hurt! I love you too much to have anything happen to you!"

Kagome watched him silently as he pulled his comforter to his chin; his eyes averted to the window.

There was a moment of heavy silence.

"Come here. . ." the 'girl' finally whispered, scooting over in bed and raising the blanket so Inu-Yasha could join her.

His drooping ears perked as he glanced over at her.

"You heard me, get in here," she laughed softly, smiling as he crawled slowly into the bed like a frightened puppy.

Cuddling into his bare chest, Kag grinned into his skin. "Don't worry, Inu- Yasha," she murmured, wrapping her arms around his muscular body. "Everything will be okay. . ."

"How can you be so sure?" he asked softly as she looked into his eyes.

"Because we've got you to protect us," she smiled filling his worried heart with love as she tapped him on the nose and captured his lips in a gentle embrace.

Yet the sweet kiss very quickly became heated and hungry as Kagome pressed herself as close as she could to her mate, wrapping her arms around his neck.

Snaking his arms around her middle, Inu smiled as he straddled his koi, their lips still locked in a passion, their tongues battling for dominance.

"You're such a playfully puppy tonight, for being so depressed," Kagome giggled breathlessly as they broke their kiss for air, lazily raising her hand and caressing his velvety ears.

With a whining moan of pleasure, the half wolf nuzzled into the touch before claiming Kagome's neck, trailing warm, sweet kisses down to her shoulder, where he was stopped by her nightgown strap.

He whimpered slightly as she giggled, her intoxicating scent of tiger lilies driving him insane.

"Silly puppy," she reprimanded while smiling. Pushing him gently off of her, she slid the nightdress off her body, leaving her only in her bra and panties.

He smirked as she lay back down, nodding for him to continue.

Pouncing on his mate and continuing to cover her in kisses from her toes to her head, Kagome took a moment to even the odds and rid Inu-Yasha of his pajama pants, leaving him in a pair of red boxers.

"I love you so much, koishii. . ." Inu whispered huskily as he reached her ear and nibbled gently on it, sending chills of pleasure down Kag's spine.

"I love you too," she replied, wrapping her arms around him and locking their lips in a heated kiss, allowing their tongues to resume their dance as she pushed him against the bed, their legs becoming tangled in sheets.

Kagome smiled into the kiss as she felt her love's hands fumble with the straps of her bra. "So impatient, Inu-chan. . ." she giggled softly into his ears, slowly grabbing his hands and pulling them away from her back. "Allow me, before you snap my favorite underwear. . ."

"What are you doing, wearing it to bed, anyway?" Inu-Yasha asked, as his mate discarded of her bra in a tantalizingly slow fashion.

She shrugged, her ebony hair spilling over her ivory skin, which was glowing in the light from the thinnest of crescent moons. "Dunno. I always like to wear one in case there was a fire or something. . . Better safe than sorry."

"But you're not wearing one now," he smirked mischievously, trying not to drool.

She grinned back, leaning forward so their noses were touching. "Yes, well- right now I'd be sorrier if I didn't."

Capturing her lips once more as they rolled on the bed, their legs and hair tangled, Inu-Yasha broke the embrace a moment later, much to Kagome's confusion.

"Hey," he grinned. "If you can live without your bra. . . why not your panties?"

She giggled and blushed softly, running her hands up and down her mate's toned body, causing him to moan in pleasure. "Only if you can live without your boxers."

He chuckled and pounced on her once again. "Deal."

*

In Miroku's bedroom, Sango cracked an eye open, moving the blankets of her koi's bed to cover her bare chest.

'What's that smell?' she thought goggily as she cuddled into Miroku's arms.

The heavy scent of mating drifted through the apartment, seeping into every room of the house.

As she realized what was going on, the brown haired werewolf smirked slightly and rolled over, closing her eyes again.

Looks like everyone got some tonight.

~*~

Wow! That was the lime-y-est thing I have EVER written!

I hope you all liked it. . .

Gore and mating. . .

What a combo.

6 - If at first you don't succeed...

~*~

Kagome sighed as she opened the door to her locker the next day at school.

It have been hard to wake up the morning. . .

With Inu-chan's protective, warm, loving arms around her. . .

Giggling as she flushed slightly pink, the girl squirted herself with a little Tiger Lilly perfume, made to match her personal scent. She and Sango had bought some scent-matching cologne for each other as early Christmas gifts. It was too much fun to give out presents just to give each friend only one!

She was about to put the bottle away when she sniffed her arm.

Hmm. . .

As an after thought, Kag decided to put on a little more of the sweet smelling liquid than usual, to hide her scent a bit. She felt fine, but for some reason, she smelt a little. . . different.

Shrugging, she quickly checked her hair in her mirror. As she batted a bit behind her shoulder, she noticed the welt she had received from the 'silver kiss' was just about gone.

Thank the goddess for ointments and makeup.

Gathering her books in her arms, Kag closed the door to her locker without paying attention.

She paid for that by coiled into a solid body right in front of her; causing her to drop all her things.

As she looked into the body's face, she gasped.

"We meet again, Kagome. . ." the man in front of her smirked.

And for the first time, the were-girl got a good look at the man.

The man named Naraku.

He was dressed in tight black leather, looking very much like a punk; adorned in many silver studded belts and no-finger gloves on his fingers. His face was bedecked in multiple pieces of jewelry- on his lips, his ears, and his nose. All were punctured parts decorated with silver studs. His long, wavy black hair tumbled all over, and his dark eyes glittered maliciously.

"Naraku. . ." Kagome whispered, backing slowly into her closed locker door.

"Ah, so you know my name. . . Did your little friends tell you it?" he frowned slightly, yet his eyes continued to sparkle dangerously. "I told you- warned you to avoid them, Kagome-chan. . ."

"Don't call me that! We are NOT friends!" she spat, trying to quell the shivers of fear threatening to run down her spine.

The wolf hunter pressed a hand to his heart, looking wistfully away. "You hurt me. . ."

"And you want to hurt my friends!"

"Do you even know what your friends ARE, Kagome?" he hissed, grabbing her arms and pressing them to her side against the lockers.

"Good people!" she glared, trying to stay out of range of his silver jewelry without looking as if she were avoiding it.

"They're WEREWOLVES. . ." he whispered softly into her ear, causing Kagome to stop wiggling.

So he did know. . .

She had hoped. . . he was just. . . assuming. . . guessing. . .

But no. . .

"What are you TALKING about?!" the wolf lied. "Werewolves aren't real!"

"Oh, they're very real, my dear," the boy lectured gently, sounding as if he were explaining 2 and 2 equaled 4 as he waved his arm, indicating the passing students. "I guarantee that at least 1/12 of all the students here are wolves in disguise. They could be on your bus. . . in your class. . . next to you. . ." he finished softly, his hands snaking around her waist.

Kagome instinctively pulled away, whirling around to glare disbelievingly at a smirking Naraku.

"Join me, Kagome. . ." he murmured, clenching his fist. "Together we can rid this school of those disgusting- disgusting THINGS. . ."

Kag stood stock still, shaking slightly, her voice wavering. "I don't know- who or WHAT you are, Naraku. . . But you- you stay away from me and my friends!"

With that, she spun on her heel and raced down the packed hall way, disappearing from sight.

Naraku sighed slightly.

Disappointing.

But no matter.

He'd try again later.

After all-

If at first you don't succeed. . .

Smirking, the dark haired teen turned around and melded into the crowd.

*

Panting, Kagome raced into the girl's bathroom and bolted into a stall; locking the door as she sank down on top of the toilet seat, panting and clutching her books to her wildly beating heart.

'Kouga and Inu-Yasha were right. . . This Naraku. . . he knows. . . but how? There is no way. . . he could learn all this from books. . . '

Sighing and banging her head against the back wall, the girl gently closed her eyes, ignoring the bell as it rung.

'But. . . for all his knowledge. . . he doesn't seem to realize I'm a werewolf too. . . '

Her brow furrowing slightly in confusion, the girl sighed one more time before standing up, deciding it would be best if she got to class.

As she reached to open the door of the stall, she stopped.

Well. . .

She'd go to the bathroom first.

Suddenly, she really had to go. . .

*

"Kagome!" Sango whined that night as the two ran to the mall's bathroom for the umpteenth time in the last 2 hours. "This is- what- your 5th stop here?!"

"Sixth," Kag laughed nervously as she left the stall, washing her hands in the slightly soapy sink.

The brown haired werewolf sighed. "How much water did you drink today?!"

"More than usual," the girl shrugged as they re-entered the mall. "I was thirsty."

Sango rolled her eyes. "Well, next time don't do that right before a Christmas Shopping trip."

"I take the warning to heart," Kagome giggled.

"By the way," the older wolf mentioned casually, her lips tugged into an unseen smirk as she innocently examined a jacket as they passed a clothing rack. "I happened to have woken up last night. . ."

"Mm?" Kag murmured, showing she was listening as she picked up a small, crystal trinket; trying to figure out it's purpose.

"Oh yes. And when I did, I smelt the most curious of scents. Do you have any idea what it might have been?" Sango grinned, watching her friend almost drop the item she was holding in embarrassed surprise.

"No?" the brown haired wolf cocked her head, trying her best to hold back a laugh. "Well, I'll tell you then. It was the hot, heavy scent of sweet love ma-"

"Okay, okay! Shut up!" Kagome hissed, her cheeks flaming as she clamped a hand over her friend's mouth.

But as she did so, her brow furrowed slightly.

She leaned in closer, sniffing once or twice.

"Ho? And what is this. . .?" the ebony haired teen whispered, a large grin slowly spreading across her face as Sango's eyes widened.

"Get off," the older female glared as she pushed her smirking friend away. 'Damn! I thought my personalized scent perfume would cover it up. . .!'

"I guess I wasn't the only one that mated last night, huh, SANGO?!" Kag laughed loudly, poking her bright red friend continuously in the shoulder.

"Shut up. . ." Sango grumbled, looking away.

"No way, Jose! Not after the ribbing you gave ME!"

"How could you even smell it?!" the brown haired werewolf sighed. "I used my special perfume!"

"Well, tough. You must not have used enough of it," she giggled before breaking into song. "Sango's got a maaaate! Sango's got a MAAA-"

"Sango's gonna have an injured friend if someone doesn't shut up soon!"

Kagome quieted herself, but even her silence spoke volumes.

And her large, unnerving grins didn't help.

*

Twenty minutes later, both girls had calmed down and come to an unspoken truce.

"So how long have you two been a couple?" Kagome asked as she rifled through more trinkets, trying to find one Inu-Yasha would like.

"Since last night," Sango blushed, examining a few male necklaces for Miroku.

"Oooh? Details, girl!"

"Well," the brown haired wolf grinned, her cheeks still pink, "it started out like any other night, you know?"

"Go on. . ."

"So I snuck into his room when I thought you guys were asleep so we could talk."

"Talk?! Just TALK?! Only TALK?! I don't believe it!"

"It's true. He can actually be rather civil when he wants to be."

"And when you promise you'll let him touch you afterwards."

"Shut up, whose telling this, you or me?"

"Sorry. Continue."

"Right, so we're just talking, when the subject suddenly turns to Naraku. He told me he had heard of Naraku, but he had been praying it wasn't the same one. Turns out his great-grandfather had met up with him before."

Kagome stopped dead. "What? How could that be? The only thing that could live that long would be a . . ."

"A werewolf, I know. Since we live by re-mixed dog years- we age one year every seven. That was why Miroku thought that this must be a different Naraku. Guess it's not."

The ebony haired teen frowned, but edged her friend on, pushing the information to the very back of her mind.

"Anyway, so he tells me how his great-grandfather and his pack died by Naraku, and how he was afraid history would repeat itself. He told me his great-grandfather had watched his love die by that hunter's hands, and he was afraid that would happen to me. He told me he loves me so much, sometimes he wasn't sure that I was just a happy dream he would someday wake up from." Sango giggled slightly as a wide smile overtook her pretty magenta face.

"So what'd you say?" Kag grinned back, leaning carefully against a shelf.

"Well, I said- and a I quote- 'let me prove I'm not a dream'. And, well, one thing led to another. . ."

Kagome laughed and beamed at her happy and embarrassed friend. "Well, I'm glad you're finally, officially together."

"Me too," her friend sighed dreamily. "Me too. . ."

They stood in a comfortable silence for a few moments, until Kagome finally held up an item made of mock silver, black crystals hanging from it like fruit on a tree. "Do you think Inu-Yasha would like this?"

"Hmm, yeah! What about this?" Sango questioned, displaying a blue beaded necklace with little claws on it.

"Mmm, nah. I think Miroku'd like that purple one over there. . ."

"Who said I was talking about my koi? I was talking about yours!" she laughed, putting the rosary down and picking up the violet necklace as the two began gossiping about normal teenager things; anime, other boys, classes. . .

*

"Well?" Naraku pressed as Kagura walked out of the mall, back into the moonless night. "Did you find them?"

"Yes," the girl glared, crossing her arms. "I found them."

"And. . .?"

"They were talking like normal girls! Nothing suspicious at all! That Kagome even picked up some sort of silver thingy, I think."

"What about the other girl?"

"She didn't touch it."

"Of course she didn't you idiot!" he hissed. "She's a wolf! No, I'm talking about if she was doing anything odd."

"NO," Kagura sighed.

"Good. They're both totally preoccupied. That means everyone is out of that apartment building- Kanna just called and told me that Miroku idiot went out to buy a Christmas tree. Everyone is gone but Inu-Yasha and Kouga," Naraku smirked. "And so while I 'chat' with our friend Inu, you occupy the pack leader. Make sure he doesn't hear or smell anything. Is that clear?!"

"Transparently," the female grumbled, whipping out a fan and cooling herself.

True, it was a cold night.

But she liked things icy.

"Let's go," Naraku commanded briskly, heading back to their car in the dark.

Smiling to himself, he quickly ignited the engine after he checked to make sure his gun was loaded with 'special' bullets.

It was time to deliver some early gifts.

All wrapped in pretty silver bows.

~*~

7 - First encounter

~*~

Inu-Yasha stared moodily out the living room window, his knees pulled to his chin and his ebony hair tumbling around him.

'Curse the new moon,' he thought in annoyance, his lavender eyes absorbing the moonless sky. Stars tried their best to brighten the night, but their glow was dim in comparison to the city lights.

'Curse my human blood, too. Curse the fact that I'm *half*,' he grumbled. 'A freak. . . I can't think of anything good about being human for a night. . .'

But little did he know. . .

He was going to soon.

*

Kouga's ears perked as he sat in his bedroom on the bottom floor.

Was that the front door of the building opening?

'Just some wolves coming back from shopping,' he thought firmly, mentally reprimanding himself for being so jumpy.

Sighing and leaning back on his red quilt, he looked around his room, which was covered in books and odd whirling contraptions that he liked to watch when he was bored. He picked up a glass of water from his bedside table and took a sip of it, grabbing a gold embossed volume from the shelf and opening it, ignoring the way the hairs on the back of his neck seemed to be prickling.

Turning a page softly, he heard a soft slam.

Narrowing his eyes he looked up.

It was the front door again. . .

Only it was the door to his apartment, not the building.

"What the hell-?" he hissed to himself, preparing to stand and follow the unrecognizable stench of a new being in his lair.

But before he could move, his bedroom door opened, reviling a woman he had never seen before.

She smirked at him, her cherry red lips parting slightly.

"So you're Kouga?" she murmured, closing the door behind her and walking slowly towards him, emphasizing every movement of her body as she tapped her blood colored nails to her chin. "Here I thought you would be an ugly old man. . .you're not bad. . ."

"Wh- who the hell are you?" he stuttered, scooting away from the woman until his back was pressed flat against his headboard.

"My name isn't important," the girl whispered seducingly, crawling up on the bed next to him and loosening her hair- which had been up in a complex sort of bun-like pony-tail; allowing it to cascade down a little past her shoulder blades.

"What the frack are you doing here?!" he tried again, attempting to scoot away once more.

"Ironic choice of wording. . ." she grinned, grabbing a lock of his hair and lazily twirling it around her finger, her maroon eyes glittering softly in the dim light. "I'm here to frack you, actually. Aren't you lonely, by yourself?"

"I have Kagome. . ." he choked out trying to keep his mind clear as his world reduced to his room and the woman in front of him, whose scent of pine and cinnamon was slowly intoxicating him.

"Mm," the woman drawled, laying on her side and resting her head in her hands, her loose blouse slipping down her shoulder and loudly proclaiming her lack of underthings. "Haven't you given up on her yet?" she asked disappointedly, running a finger up and down her inner thighs, which were being shown off by her incredibly short skirt.

"Yes- I mean- no- I mean. . . what was the question?" he asked stupidly, his eyes locked on her moving hand.

She chuckled as she knelt in front of him, slowly unbuttoning his shirt as his mind and senses almost literally turned off.

"That's what I like to hear. . ." she whispered before leaning into him and locking their lips in a deep kiss.

*

Inu-Yasha started as a soft knocking echoed through the apartment.

'Who the hell could that be?' he thought curiously, slowly edging his way to the door, wishing her could still smell scents.

He lingered momentarily in the foyer, unsure of whether or not to answer.

The person knocked again.

Oh, hell.

"I'm coming, I'm coming," the ebony haired teen growled, throwing the door open.

His lavender eyes fell upon a boy around his age, wavy black hair cascading down his leather clad body and punk-like silver jewelry.

And even without his dog-like senses, Inu could tell who he was.

Naraku.

*

Naraku's eyes narrowed slightly.

This boy didn't look like the silver wolf he had killed so long ago. . .

He looked purely human.

Perhaps Inu-Yasha had moved to a different room, or Kikyo had lied about the one he resided in?

Maybe he had just moved and Kikyo hadn't told him.

It had been a while since they'd talked.

But maybe he was all he seemed; a human.

Another wolf hunter, perhaps, trying to get inside information?

"Hello. . ." the boy said slowly, his eyes cold. "And who the hell are you?"

Naraku chuckled darkly. "No beating around the bush for you, eh?"

"Cut the shoot and just tell me who you are."

The punk like teen smirked. "Tell me your's first."

"Look, asshole," the lavender eyed male glared. "You're the one that's knockin' on my door and intruding in my privacy. Why the hell should I answer? Tell me about you first."

"Fair enough," the second man nodded. "Very well. You want information? I'll give you some."

*

"But before I say anything," Naraku smiled, taking off a silver earring. "I want you to hold this."

Inu-Yasha raised an eyebrow, trying to act dense. "Why?"

"Just do it," the man glared, slapping the piece of jewelry into Inu's palm.

The half-wolf inwardly smirked.

So there was a good thing about turning human. . .

"Hmm. . ." Naraku murmured, grabbing the earring back and examining Inu- Yasha's palm.

There were no injuries. . .

"Very well," he finally announced, putting the jewelry back on as the lavender eyed boy leaned casually against the door frame. "I'll tell you a little about myself."

Inu raised an eyebrow and waited, keeping his face calm and cool as his insides squirming in nervous excitement.

"My name is Naraku. I am a werewolf hunter." 'No problem in being blunt, this idiot won't believe me anyway.'

'So I was right.' "Werewolf hunter? Are you insane? There is no such thing," the half wolf scoffed.

Naraku's smirk widened. "Oh, but there is, my friend."

"How do you know?" Inu-Yasha sneered.

"Because I-" he began, but cut himself off.

After a moment he began again, but it sounded as if he had changed his answer. "Because I have killed one before."

"Ho? And how did you know it was a werewolf and not a real one?"

"For starters," the hunter hissed, irritated at the teen's tone. "It was a full moon."

"Coincidence."

"Second, the creature's silver coat."

"Hmph."

"And third- well, let's just say I know my way around wolves," he finished coolly. "But by the way- I wasn't the only one to think it was a werewolf."

"No?" Inu replied, an eyebrow arched.

"No. In fact, I had many believers wanting to buy the creature's pelt. I was paid well for him. But alas, time has passed and I have run out of money. Ergo, I need to kill more wolves and- well, I know a few

people who can help me find them. And him."

"Him?"

"Well, though I'd like to take down a pack of the beings, I do have my sights set on one *specific* wolf," Naraku smirked, patting his pistol.

Inu-Yasha eyed the gun briefly before glaring at the man in front of him.

"And what are you doing *here*?"

"I must have mistaken your apartment for a friend of mine's," he replied calmly, moving the revolver from view. "I apologize for interrupting you and whatever you happened to be doing."

With a small bow and a final smirk, the hunter walked down the hall way and disappeared down the steps, leaving Inu-Yasha alone with his thoughts.

So they had finally met. . .

But Inu knew, even as he turned to enter the apartment once more, that wouldn't be their last encounter.

Damn.

*

Kagura sat on the edge of Kouga's bed, quickly and quietly dressing as the pack leader slept, still naked under the comforter.

Whipping out a fan and cooling herself off, the maroon eyed girl smirked and blew Kouga a silent kiss.

'Later, love,' she sneered before silently exiting the apartment, disappearing into the shadows of the night.

Her job was done, and- if all had gone well- so had Naraku's.

And it was only 8.

At this rate, this shooty job would be soon over and she would be free to leave her stupid father and start her own life.

"Ready to go?" called a voice through the darkness, cold, winter night; startling Kagura from her thoughts.

"Yes," she glared, her eyes flashing. "And don't scare me like that."

"Quit whining and get into the car," Naraku commanded.

Shooting a glare at the man, she crawled into the passenger seat.

After a few moments of silence, the female finally asked the question which had been nagging at the back of her mind.

"So did you kill him?"

"No. He wasn't there," the punk-like man replied calmly, though his eyes glittered in annoyance.

Kagura mentally sighed, flicking the radio on.

It was looking like she was going to be stuck for a long time. . .

~*~

8 - I'll try

~*~

"I'm HOME!" Miroku cried cheerfully as the clock struck 8:30.

He proclaimed his arrival with so much enthusiasm, one might think he was about to announce his victory in some great battle.

In actuality, he had just returned from buying a Christmas tree. No where near as impressive, but a battle won in it's own sense.

However, Inu-Yasha was not at all impressed.

Nor cheerful, for that matter.

"Goody goody gumdrops," he drawled, drumming his fingers over the table as he stared into space, his mind still on his encounter with Naraku. "Would you like me to give you a sticker?"

"Humph," the perverted one grumbled. "You're such an ingrate! Where are the lovely ladies? I'm sure they'd appreciate my return."

"Mmm."

Miroku's pout deepened. "FINE. I'll just set the tree up in the living room."

"You do that," Inu-Yasha replied blankly, obviously not paying the least bit attention.

"And I'll jump out the window."

"You do that."

"And I'll tap dance naked on the roof singing 'I'm a Little Tea Pot' while hot gluing feathers to my body."

"You do that."

The black haired teen looked dryly at his friend before pulling up a chair and plopping next to him-leaving the tree in the foyer. "All right, what's wrong?"

"You do that."

If this had been an anime, the violet clad wolf would have sweatdropped.

"Hello in there?!" Miroku yelled, whapping his friend over the head. "I asked what's wrong?!"

Inu snarled half-heartedly, rubbing his noggin while glaring at the male next to him.

"Well?"

The human sighed and looked away again, allowing silence to blanket the pair as he tried to think of an answer.

Miroku waited patiently.

For a while, anyway.

"Look, are you going to tell me or not?" he finally asked in exasperation. "Because there are plenty of other things I could be doing right now, like tap dancing naked on the ro-"

"It's about Naraku," Inu-Yasha interrupted, clenching his fists.

The second teen shut up as his eyes widened.

"Naraku?"

"Yeah," the lavender eyed male grumbled, tugging on the forelocks of his hair in frustration. "While you and the girls were gone. . . he came looking for me- must have been me. Since it's that time of the month," he added dully, flicking a piece of his ebony hair, "he didn't recognize me. Thought I was a human, so he told me that he was basically hunting down the pack that a wolf he killed was from. Our pack."

"But the only wolf from our clan that was killed by a hunter was-"

"My father. Which was why he must be looking for me specifically," Inu sighed, laying his head in his arms, which were crossed on the table. 'Sessho-Maru's right out, since he came to MY door. . .'

"But how would he know so much about wolves? How would he know that we were the pack your father was from?"

The normally silver haired wolf glanced up from his arms, wheels beginning to turn in his mind. 'Wait. . .'

"Kikyo. . ."

Miroku raised an eyebrow. "Excuse me?"

"Kikyo. . . he must have tricked her into believing he was a werewolf and used her to spy on our clan. That dog knew me damn well! She could have told him anything about me! That's how he knew my fracking apartment number!"

Inu-Yasha's eyes widened as things began to click into place. "And that would be why he doesn't think Kagome is a wolf- Kikyo dumped him before Kagome and I even started going out! Stupid Kikyo dog believed anything and everything! She must have thought his jewelry false and all his falsehoods true!"

The perverted wolf sat silently, his brow wrinkled in thought as his friend ranted.

"Those two, no good, lying- hey, Miroku, what's wrong?"

The teen in questioned looked Inu up and down. "Well. . . your theory is a good one, and very, very probable. . ."

"But. . .?"

"But it's common knowledge that you're only half a werewolf. If Kikyo ratted to Naraku your apartment number for Christ's sakes, don't you think she'd have mentioned the half bred thing? No offence or anything, I'm just sayin' that while she was going out with him, she loved to diss you."

"So. . .?" the lavender eyed boy asked slowly.

"So then, why would he come on the night your wolf blood ebbs away? He's got more knowledge of the werewolves than I think even the werewolves may have. How could he screw that up? Unless. . . he thought being a half wolf meant something else. . . meant your body would react in a different way. . ."

"What other way would my body react?" Inu-Yasha questioned irritably. "It's not like there are many options-"

"Does every pup in a litter look and act the same?" Miroku asked harshly, his eyes cold. "Does every mortal with blonde hair have to have blue eyes and enjoy chicken?"

"What the hell are you trying to get at with these stupid analogies?!" Inu snapped.

"I'm just saying that Naraku may be working off of information of a different half wolf- he may know more than we think, even now!" 'He may be more than we think, even now. . .'

However, the two's discussion- or argument, whichever you wanted to call it- was interrupted by the muffled sound of the door opening.

"Um? Guys?" called Sango's voice. "Could someone move this tree out of the way? We want to get inside, damn it!"

*

After around ten minutes of shoving, pulling, and grunting, the four were able to dislodge the Christmas tree from its cozy spot in the small foyer, where it had somehow gotten stuck between the door and the walls.

"Oof!" Kagome panted as Miroku finally dragged the pine into the living room and set it in a stand, cussing profusely as he did so. Tree's just never seem to want to stay correctly.

As the violet clad teen worked on the greenery, Sango and Kag worked on freeing themselves of

purchases.

"By the goddess, did you leave anything for the other shoppers?" Inu-Yasha asked, an eyebrow arched in exasperation as he watched the girls dump bag after bag from their arms and onto the kitchen table. "Anyway, I thought we had nothing to spend!"

"We both got our paychecks earlier," Sango informed him cheerfully as she rooted through her purse, pulling a few smaller items out of its inner depths.

"What about paying for Kag-chan's room?" the human turned wolf asked in disbelief as the girls slowly finished dumping their purchases out of every crevice and pocket of their beings.

"Aw, don't worry, Inu-chan!" Kagome beamed, kissing him on the cheek. "We'll make it though. 'Sides, what's Christmas without a mountain of presents?!"

Both girls high-fived before dragging all their things into Sango's room to hide before wrapping.

"They've both lost it. . ." Inu-Yasha sighed deeply, falling back onto the couch and rubbing his sore temples, the scent of pine oozing strongly from the tree- detectable even to his mortal nose.

"No we haven't! We've gained it! Gained the holiday spirit!" the brown haired female gushed, running into the living room with her friend and flopping on the floor near the tree, dropping the boxes of decorations the two carried.

"And because of that," the second girl proclaimed, "we are going to spend tonight having fun! If anyone dares think an unhappy thought about ANYTHING or ANYONE-" with this she shot a meaningful look at her mate, "they will be punished by being hugged and forced to eat Christmas cookies!"

"I'm thinking about Naraku!" Miroku announced as he crawled out from under the tree, opening his arms in Sango's direction.

Sango shot him a dry look before chucking an ornament at him. "You don't count."

*

"Let's play a game while we do this," Kagome suggested as the four sat on the floor, eating cookies, drinking hot cocoa-

And untangling colored lights.

"I know!" Inu-Yasha proclaimed sarcastically. "Who can list the most profanities! I'll start! A-"

"NO," Kag glared. "I meant more like 'Truth or Dare'."

"You're no fun," the lavender eyed male pouted.

"Aww. . ." she smiled, kissing him teasingly on the cheek.

"Get a room or knock it off," Sango reprimanded, biting off the head of her Santa cookie.

"So are we going to play or not?" Miroku asked mildly as he straightened out an obscenely large knot in the wiring.

"Sure," the ebony haired female smiled. "But let's play a different way. I'll ask a question and then we'll go around the circle, answering it one by one."

"Sounds sorta like another game I've heard about once," Sango murmured to herself as she fumbled through a tangle. "Some fanfic or another. . . 'One Question' or something like that. . ."

"What was that, San-chan?" Kagome questioned, cocking her head in confusion.

"Hm? Oh, nothing," the teen smiled back.

"Okay. . . Well, anyway, let's see. Oh, I know! What would your dream date be like?"

"As in a person?" Miroku asked.

"Yeah. Sango starts!"

"Umm. . ." the brown haired wolf muttered thoughtfully. "I'd say a guy who's thoughtful, kind, makes me laugh, understands my needs, and is cute. Oh- and doesn't mind being dominated!"

Inu coughed loudly, shooting pointed glances at Miroku, who was still calmly straightening his lights, oblivious to those around him.

"Your turn, Miroku-chan," Kag grinned. "Who's your dream date?"

"Sango," the violet-clad wolf replied without missing a beat.

A brief silence passed before-

"Kawaii!" the mentioned female gushed, feeling incredibly warm and fuzzy inside as she dropped the lights and hugged her mate tightly around the neck.

Christmas time always made her especially emotional.

"Yes! There's my hug!" the perverted wolf beamed as he tightened the embrace.

Inu-Yasha rolled his eyes as Kagome giggled.

"Inu-Yasha?"

He replied by pulling the ebony haired girl into his lap and nuzzling her neck.

"You know, perhaps we should play this game more often?" Kag blushed as she grinned at her friend, who nodded profusely.

"Let's do another round, then," Miroku smirked, winking at Inu. "What would our dream dates be, dates meaning places to go and things to do."

"Oh, I'd say the usual. . ." Inu-Yasha sighed, trying to hide a large, disturbing grin. "Romantic dinner. . ."

"Followed by a romantic walk," his friend added.

"Followed by watching the stars in the park. . ."

"Followed by frackng under said stars," Miroku nodded.

"Yep!"

The girls looked blankly at one another before pushing themselves away from their laughing mates.

"Perverts!" Kagome screeched.

"Don't you have any innocent fantasies?!" Sango glared.

"Innocent?" Miroku asked. "What does that mean?"

He looked to Inu-Yasha for help, but the half-wolf just shrugged.

Kag sighed. "Never mind. Let's never play this again."

"Well, *I* had fun," Inu chuckled, smirking as he watched the brown haired wolf beat up her mate.

*

"Finally!" Sango cried tiredly. "Lights untagged!"

"Now we can decorate the tree!" the second girl gushed.

"Joy!" the guys giggled mockingly, earning mugs over the head from their kois.

"What is it about males that is so- so- so-" the ebony haired female struggled as she and her best friend pulled glass balls of red, gold, and green from boxes.

"So idiotic?" the other girl filled in with a sigh.

"Yeah."

"Well, God could only make perfection once, and he did it with the female."

"Hey!" Miroku pouted. "I'm insulted!"

"Good, because it was an insult," Inu replied dryly. "We'd be worried if you weren't."

"I-"

But Miroku's retort, comment, or complaint- whichever it was going to have been- was cut off by sound of scratchy Christmas tunes drifting through the window.

"What the hell is that?" Inu-Yasha questioned, wrinkling his nose in disgust. Even with his human ears it was obvious that the singers were terribly off-key.

"Christmas carolers!" Kagome beamed. "Ooo! I want to hear!"

She and Sango rushed to the window and threw it open, looking down at the carolers from above.

"Aww! Look, it's Sessho-Maru and some of the pups!" the girls giggled.

Sessho-Maru glanced blankly up at the laughing pair, ignoring the singing children crawling up his limbs and rather fluffy coat of fox fur.

"Gods, make the racket stop!" Miroku groaned, clenching his ears.

Inu's annoyed face suddenly bloomed into a full fledged smirk as he motioned for his friend to follow him.

Curious, the violet clad wolf did so.

"Aww! Look at Shippo! Isn't he the sweetest?" Kagome cooed as she pointed out the child.

"And look at Rin! All sweet in her little Santa hat. . ."

"And-"

"Coming though, ladies," Miroku called cheerfully as he and Inu-Yasha suddenly pushed between their mates, a large pail of water in their hands.

The female's eyes widened.

"DON'T YOU DAR-!"

Too late.

SPLASH!

"INU-YASHA!" a soaked Sessho-Maru screamed from the ground. "I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!"

"My, my. . ." the lavender eyed wolf murmured thoughtfully. "All the little brats got out of the way just in

time. . .Only poor Fluffy-chan got soaked. . ."

Kagome bit her lip in an attempt to hold in laughter as she glanced down at the sopping Sess.

But she- and Sango- both failed.

So all four eventually ended up laughing hard on the floor, trying their best to catch their breath.

*

CRASH!

"Oops!"

"Miroku, you're such a clutz!" Sango sighed, picking up a dust pan and brush from next to the couch, where it had currently been residing for convenience purposes. "I believe you two are aquatinted?"

"Sorry, Sango-chan," he replied happily as he knelt down to sweep up the pieces of a broken ornament he had been attempting to decorate with. "But when I see you, your face, and your perfect body glowing in the soft lights of the Christmas decorations, I cannot help but lose control of my actions! Drop things, bang into things. . ."

"Grope things," Kagome added dryly from behind the tree, seconds before a SLAP! rang out.

"Good timing," Inu-Yasha smirked as he handed his mate an star to place atop the pine.

"Thank you," she smiled cheerfully, getting up on a stool and positioning the star just so.

From his spot on the floor, Miroku- beaten and bruised- smiled up at Sango. "By the way- when are we putting up mistletoe?"

Well, needless to say, that got his another round of slaps. . .

"When *will* we be putting up mistletoe?" Inu asked Kagome, grinning mischievously as he scooped her off the stool, holding her bridal style in his arms as he nuzzled her neck.

"Probably never, with Miroku around," the teen sighed, her cheeks pink. "But that's okay."

She beamed at him. "You can kiss me anyway."

"That's generous of you," he smirked before locking their lips in a sweet embrace.

"No fair!" the perverted wolf complained. "Inu-Yasha's getting some! Why can't *we* get it o-"

SMACK!

*

Later that night, Inu and Kag sat in the dim living room, basking in the glow of the Christmas lights; their soft, multicolored glow comforting as the couple cuddled under blankets on the couch.

Sango and Miroku had gone to bed earlier, Miroku intent on making his mate apologize for hitting him in a suitably snuggly fashion. That had been all the information the other pair needed- or wanted.

"So do you feel better?" Kagome softly asked her mate, cuddling closer to his body and scent for warmth.

Inu-Yasha sighed quietly, a small smile on his face. "Yeah. . . but. . ."

"Don't worry so much," she whispered, her eyes lightly closed as she pulled the quilt to her chin. "Everything will be okay in the end. . . Don't fret each little thing and face the day when it comes. . ."

"I'll try. . ."

"Then we'll make it though."

A moment of silence past, only the distant sound of traffic detectable.

"By the way," Kag yawned, nuzzling closer, "we're gonna. . .go to my house for. . .a holiday meal. . . in a few days. . . okay?"

"Mm. Whatever. . ."

Kagome made a quiet sound of content acknowledgment before drifting off into a light sleep, a small smile on her face.

Noticing this, Inu, chuckling softly and shaking his head, carefully picked her up and carried her to bed, thoughts and worries still whirling though his mind.

But he had promised Kag he would calm down, 'face the day as it came', not fret every little thing. He supposed worrying wasn't healthy, and didn't help them, anyway-

But with so much at stake, who *couldn't* fret?

Still. . .

Kagome didn't want him to.

And for her. . .

He would do his best not to.

~*~

9 - winds of change part 2

~*~

"Do we have to do this?"

"Don't you want to?"

"No!"

"Come on, you wanted to a few nights ago."

"That was a few nights ago! I'm tired now! I'm sore! I'm- oh, come on, no!"

"Aww, please? You know you want to. . ."

The sound of sagging bed springs- coming from Inu-Yasha's bedroom- echoed though the apartment.

In the living room, Miroku's face broke into a rather perverted smirk while Sango rolled her eyes.

Grabbing the back of her mate's collar, the brown haired wolf dragged her koi out the door, ignoring his protests.

"Please, Inu-chan?"

"No! I don't want to! Not now!"

"You promised!" Kagome pouted.

"I don't care!"

"Don't lie to me. I know you want to. . ."

"No! I do NOT want to go to your family's house!" Inu-Yasha pouted, his ears flat against his head as he glared at his mate, his arms and legs crossed Indian style on the bed.

"But Inu-Yasha-!" the ebony haired girl whined, poking the amber eyed teen next to her painfully in the shoulder. "I already told them we'd come! Sota's so excited! You wouldn't break his heart, would you?"

"Sure, I would."

"My mom made lots of Ramen, since you told her you liked it so much. You wouldn't break her heart, would you?"

"Sure, I would."

"My grandpa is hoping that you won't come. You won't make his day, will you?"

Inu-Yasha was silent for a moment, his forehead wrinkled in thought.

Kagome grinned.

She already knew she'd won.

"All right, all right, let's go. But let's make it quick!"

*

"Inu-Yasha niichan!" Sota screamed in delight as he threw open the front door, ignoring his sister entirely as he grabbed his idol's hand, dragging him off into the depths of the shrine.

"Great to see you too, Sota," Kagome rolled her eyes, stepping into her old home. Taking off her shoes and slipping on her slippers, she grinned as her mother came bustling in from the kitchen, beaming at her daughter.

"Kagome dear! It's so wonderful to see you!" Mrs. Higarashi gushed, giving her daughter a bear-hug.

"Mama! It's great to see you too!" the girl smiled, nuzzling her mother's neck in an almost canine-like fashion- but neither really noticed. "It feels like it's been so long. . ."

"It has, silly!"

"Yeah, it has. . ." Kag whispered, feeling a painful throb in her heart as she and her mother broke the embrace.

"Dear, between you and me, a little lighter on the perfume next time." The older woman winked as she backed away, chuckling softly and causing a small smile to appear on her daughter's face again. "I'm sure there are better ways to attract men, other than that sweet smelling stuff."

"WHAT OTHER MEN WOULD SHE WANT TO ATTRACT?!" Inu-Yasha bellowed from somewhere unseen.

"YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN FOR ME, INU-CHAN. STOP EVESDROPPING!" Kagome called back, her face slightly pink as her mother blinked curiously.

"My, he has good ears," Mrs. Higarashi commented cheerfully, linking arms with her daughter as they walked into the kitchen, Kag admiring the lovely Christmas decorations her family had put up.

"Yeah, he does," the younger woman smiled. 'And their very fuzzy and cute, too. . .'

*

"So tell me what's been going on!" the older female exclaimed, peeling potatoes with extraordinary grace and speed.

"Not much," Kagome lied, flicking a strand of her hair behind her shoulder.

"You're still a virgin, of course?"

"Mama!"

"Just asking!" Mrs. Higarashi defended herself. "But fine, I'll drop the subject."

"Thank you."

A moment of silence past.

"So you are, right?"

"MAMA!"

"Sorry, I'm sorry!" she smiled apologetically, dumping a few peels into the garbage disposal. "It's just that you're growing up so quickly- and you still look so young!"

Kagome forced a slightly nervous grin. 'I never thought about that. . . I'll still be looking like I do now for years. . . I'll have to tell them someday.'

She glanced momentarily over at her happily chattering mother and sighed.

'But not today.'

*

"So," Mr. Higarashi drawled in what he must have thought was a sly manner, clenching a scroll behind his back "where no one could see it." "Are you going to admit you're a spawn of the devil yet, demon?"

"Hmm?" Inu-Yasha questioned, only half paying attention as he creamed Sota at 'Street Fighter'* in the little boy's bedroom.

"Wow! Good move, Inu-Yasha niichan!"

"Thanks, runt."

"ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?!" the elder roared in exasperation.

He was met by an echoing silence, broken only by 'bloops' and grunts from the game.

"Well?!"

"Hm? Did you say something, old man?"

"ARGH!"

*

"Inu-Yasha! Sota! Grandpa!" Kagome called up the steps. "Come help set the table for dinner!"

"Aww! Do we have to, sis?"

"Yep! Especially since you didn't even acknowledge me earlier! Get your butts down here, all of you!"

A chorus of groans rang from Inu-Yasha and Sota as they bounded down the steps, Kag watching the little parade with amusement.

Sota ran ahead of the others, talking to Inu-Yasha a mile a minute. The silver haired teen sauntered slowly after the little boy, continually tearing up the demon wards Mr. Higarashi kept trying to paste on him.

"Damn it, demon! Stop tearing up those scrolls so I can exorcise you!"

"Why the frack should I let you exorcise me?!"

"A-HA! So you admit to being a demon!"

"I admit to not wanting to be 'exorcised'!"

"If you don't exercise, don't you get fat?" Sota pondered- though he was ignored by the two arguing men.

"Admit it, hell-thing! You only want to be with my granddaughter so you can impregnate her with your demonic seed and some day conquer the world!"

An exasperated laugh escaped Inu-Yasha's lips. "I think someone's been watching too many horror movies!"

"I'm **sure** that if you don't exercise you get fat!"

"SHUT UP!" Kagome screamed though the assembly of fighting males, causing all three to jump.

"Grandpa, stop being mean to Inu-Yasha! Inu-Yasha, stop taunting Grandpa! Sota, exercise and exorcise are two different things! Now help me set the table!"

"Yes, Kagome. . ." they responded dully, shooting glares at one another as they followed the ebony haired girl into the dinning room.

*

"All right, Sota, you do the plates," Mrs. Higarashi smiled as she handed her son the dishes. "Inu-Yasha, dear, you hand out the glasses," she stated as she pointed them out, "and Kagome, you do the silverware- They're sort of hidden behind the cups. Grandpa will help me with the food."

"Yes," the younger ones chorused, collecting their respective dinner utensils.

'Wait-' Inu suddenly thought, his eyes widening. 'Silverware?!' "Kago-!"

"Ow!" the girl cried in pain, dropping the cutlery on the floor in shock.

"Kagome-chan? What's wrong?" Sota questioned as his sister fell sweating to the floor, next to the fallen forks and knives.

"Kagome, are you okay?" Inu-Yasha whispered, kneeling next to his mate and gingerly taking her hands, examining them.

Good.

Only a small burn.

She'd heal quickly.

"Y-yeah," she replied, her voice shaking. "Only. . ."

"Only-?"

"Kagome? Kagome, dear, are you okay?" her mother gasped as she re-entered the room, sitting next to her daughter as well. "Wait- I told you to take the silver, didn't I? We can't use the silver- Inu-Yasha, you have an allergy to it, don't you?"

"It looks like Kagome has one now, too," Sota stated.

". . . I didn't know you could catch allergies," Mrs. Higarashi blinked.

"You can from demons!" the old man cried, jabbing a finger at Inu.

Everyone ignored him.

"I'm fine," Kagome smiled at her mother, allowing Inu-Yasha to help her to her feet. "Let's eat."

*

After a lovely dinner- which had been consumed with the help of plastic forks and knives- Inu-Yasha and Kagome headed home, walking hand in hand.

"Are you okay?" the silver haired teen asked as they strolled through the night, the light of the moon and

Christmas decorations brightening their path.

"Yeah, my hands feel better now," she sighed in response, looking up at the half-moon.

"That's not what I meant," he replied softly.

Kag sighed again, deeper this time.

"I don't know, Inu-chan. . ." she whispered, her eyes slowly filling with tears. "Tonight. . .It- it just struck me how my relationship with my family will never be like it was. . . You know? With aging and silver and. . . and other stuff. . . I mean. . . It'll just never be the same again. . ."

The male gave his mate's hand a gentle squeeze of reassurance.

"Nothing ever stays the same, koi. But things can change for the better. . . Besides, they're your family. They'll always love you."

Kagome smiled weakly, her eyes sparking with tears as she rested her head on his shoulder. "Yeah. . . you're right."

"And I love you, too," he murmured, planting a soft kiss on her forehead as they made their way downtown.

She blushed and kissed him back, feeling better than she had.

*

A dark figure watched the pair from the shadows of the allies.

He had seen the action in the shrine.

He had heard the couple's conversation.

He knew things were changing.

His plans, for instance.

'Hm. It seems I was mistaken about dear, sweet Kagome-chan,' the male thought darkly as he walked through the shadows. 'Well, once foolish, twice a fool- and I don't plan on making another mistake.'

"Father," Kagura complained as Naraku reached her and Kanna, who were both hiding in the depths of the ally. "Can we go home yet?"

"Shut up, Kagura. Be more like your sister."

As the maroon-eyed girl snarled in anger, the werewolf hunter began to fiddle with his silver studded bracelet, more ideas, tricks, and schemes forming in his mind.

'Inu-Yasha was right. Some change is for the better. And my plans are just becoming more and more fool-proof. . .'

With a soft snicker, the three disappeared into the icy shadows of the ally, a cold wind blowing through the streets.

Ah, the ever shifting winds of change were back again. . .

~*~

10 - Mood swings

~*~

Inu-Yasha blinked groggily as Kagome bolted out of their bedroom, her bath-robbed figure outlined by gray, early morning light.

"Gome. . .?" he grunted sleepily. "You okay. . .?"

"Fine!" she called quickly back, her voice echoing slightly- proclaiming that she had run into the bathroom. "Go back to sleep!"

"You sur-?"

"I SAID GO BACK TO SLEEP!"

The half-wolf blinked curiously.

He was concerned, but not suicidal.

So Inu did as he was told- and in a moment was out like a light.

*

Kagome knelt, panting slightly, with her head over the toilet; her tummy churning uncomfortably as sweat dripped down her brow and her pjs hung loosely off her shoulders.

"Ulp," she gurgled inaudibly before expelling the contents of her stomach into the bowl. 'Ugh. . . disgusting. . .!'

Wiping her face on a near-by towel as she finished, the teen flushed the toilet and put down the lid, sitting on it and closing her eyes, willing her tummy to calm down.

After a few moments she realized with a jolt of annoyance that that wasn't happening.

Sighing and opening her eyes, Kag decided to take a shower and get ready for school.

Might as well, since she was already up.

*

"Kagome?" Sango's groggy voice grunted through the locked door. "Kagome, hurry up!"

"Why?" the ebony haired wolf called testily back, in the middle of drying herself and applying her

perfume.

"Because I gotta thr- umph!"

There was the slap of a hand clapping over a mouth which was quickly followed by the unmistakable sound of Sango racing to the kitchen.

Wincing slightly as she heard her friend retch into the sink, Kagome felt a stab of guilt for not moving.

"Sango-chan?" the 'girl' called softly, slowly walking out of the bathroom in her robe and making her way to the kitchen. "San-chan, are you all right?"

"Fine," the sick girl grunted before ducking her head back down and vomiting once more.

"No, you're not," Kag sighed softly, walking up to her friend and pulling her long, dark-brown hair out of her face. "You're throwing up."

"Nooooo!" Sango panted as she grabbed a towel and wiped her sweating face, her skin an abnormal shade of white. "I hadn't noticed!"

The younger wolf raised a hand and put it to her friend's hot forehead. "You've got a fever."

"I do not!"

"You do."

"I do not!" elder teen insisted before clamping her hand over her mouth and turning back to the sink again.

Kagome felt her own stomach turn as she watched her friend and tried her best to quell the urge to start throwing up herself.

"What's going on?" Miroku yawned, stepping into the kitchen with half-lidded eyes, in nothing but his boxers and an un-tied bathrobe.

His violet orbs widened as he saw his vomiting mate. "Sango-chan?! What's the matter?"

"I'M THROWING UP, YOU-!"

But the second half of her statement was (thankfully) silenced by more retching.

Miroku, unfazed, waited for his koi's stomach to calm before turning her around and feeling her forehead.

"You've got a fever."

"I do not!" she half-whined, her pale face looking rather clammy.

"You've got the flu. You're staying home," the male said sternly, leaving no room for compromise. "Get back into bed, and I'll bring you something for your stomach."

"I'll bring you a puke-bucket so you don't have to keep running to the sink," Kagome added.

Her two friends gave her an odd look.

"A. . . Puke bucket?" Miroku asked slowly.

"What?! It's what my mama called the tubs we threw up into when me and my brother were sick."

At the thought of her family, Kag's eyes filled with tears.

"I miss my mama. . ." she sniveled.

Sango glared at her mate through illness-glazed eyes. "Look what you did! You made Kagome-chan cry!"

"Wha-?!"

"I miss my mama!" Kagome cried again, breaking into sobs.

"I miss my mama, too!" Sango suddenly began sniffing, crying along with her friend.

As the two screaming females' sobs filled the house, a half-asleep Inu- Yasha came bursting into the now crowded kitchen, looking hurriedly for the source of the noise.

"What the hell?!" he snapped as he saw his crying friends. "What'd you do to them, Miroku?!"

"Don't yell at my Miroku!" Sango barked, her tears suddenly dry. "He didn't do anythi-"

But before she could finish, she threw up again- all over Inu-Yasha-

Before fainting.

"Sango-chan!" Kag gasped.

"She's fisty even when sick," Miroku sighed deeply. "It'll be the end of her. . ."

Gently picking up his koi bridal style, he carefully brought her back to his room and shut the door behind him, leaving his two other friends in a state of confused concern.

"That was. . . interesting. . ." Inu-Yasha muttered, blinking in curiosity. "Did I miss something. . .?"

"Poor Sango. . . No, you didn't miss any- hey! I told you to go back to sleep!" Kagome glared, her mood soaring from sad, to normal, to angry in less than one minute. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT OF

BED?!"

"Wha-?! I- I heard so much noise I came to investigat-" Inu began in bewilderment, but was interrupted by his mate, who was poking him painfully in the chest- still screaming.

"WHY DON'T YOU EVER LISTEN TO A THING I SAY?! Don't you trust me. . .?"

Kagome had now made a full emotional circle and had come back to sadness.

And Inu-Yasha had made it to morbidly confused.

"O-of course I trust you!" he stammered as the ebony haired girl buried her face into her hands, stifling a sob. "I love you!"

"Oh. . . Okay, then!" she smiled, sniffing happily and wiping her tears away before grabbing her knapsack off of the counter and shouldering it.

"Hurry up and get ready, Inu-chan," she beamed, back to her cheery old self. "School starts in a half-hour."

Still unsure of what had just happened, the silver-haired teen did as he was told, not wanting to chance another weird mood-swing.

*

Kagome walked happily to her locker that morning, cheerfully contemplating the future events of the day.

But wait. . .

She had three tests!

Damn it!

Sighing, the now depressed Kagome dumped the contents of her backpack into her locker.

Leaning against the metal door, she let out a small sigh.

frack these accursed mood-swings. . .

"A little irritated this morning, are we?" a soft voice asked from beside her ear, making Kag jump.

Spining around in shock, the female gasped in surprise to find herself staring face to face with Naraku, who had sidled up next to her without her noticing.

"Um. . . a little, I guess," she choked out, shutting her locker behind her as the man closed in, causing her to press herself flat back against the wall. "Can I do something for you. . .?"

"Why yes," he murmured sweetly, his voice barely above a whisper. "You can tell me WHAT THE frack YOU ARE!"

With that, he reached out with a snarl and grabbed Kagome's throat, tightening his silver-adorned hands around it and making her squeak in pain.

'No- silver- it hurts. . .' the wolf whimpered, her breaths coming in short gasps.

"Die, werewolf. . ." he hissed, ignoring the crowd that was gathering around them as Kag clawed at his hands. "Die the death you and the rest of your KIND deserve!"

As the ebony haired teen's vision grew foggy, she suddenly saw someone leaping towards Naraku from behind.

"Inu-Yasha. . ." she gasped before fainting.

*

Moaning softly, Sango slowly opened her heavy-lidded eyes.

Gods, she felt like shoot. . .

Damn the flu to hell.

"Ungh. . ." she groaned, trembling under three thick blankets.

"Shhh," Miroku's voice soothed from above her. "Rest."

"Miroku-chan? Why aren't you in school?" the dark brown haired wolf mumbled, unable to find her voice for very long.

"Because you're here. If I went to school, who would be here to take care of you?" he chuckled, smoothing her blankets and placing a cool washcloth on her forehead.

"Why do you want to take of me. . .?" the 'girl' grunted, looking away.

"Cause you're my mate and I love you," Miroku replied simply, grazing his lips gently against her cheek and causing her to flush. "Now sleep."

She smiled weakly at him and closed her eyes. "Thank you. . ."

"You're welcome," he grinned as she drifted off.

"And Miroku. . .?" Sango yawned.

"Yeah?"

"I love you, too. . ."

*

"Wha-?!" Naraku grunted before feeling himself being knocked to the floor.

Slamming into the near-by wall from the force of the blow, the wolf hunter looked up in shock to find Inu-Yasha standing protectively in front of his unconscious mate, poised and ready to fight.

"What the fracking hell do you think you were doing, you damn @\$ \$ hole?!" he snarled, his eyes livid and flashing murderously.

"I was simply getting rid of one useless wer-" he began smoothly, getting to his feet-

Only to be slammed against the wall by Inu once more.

"Don't you dare say it," he warned so softly that no one but Naraku could hear him.

The ebony haired man smirked. "Secrets, secrets, are no fun. Secrets, secrets, hurt someone. . ."

socking a fist into the half-wolf's jaw, the hunter slammed a silver-rimmed boot into Inu's stomach, causing him to loosen his grip in shock.

As the silver-haired teen skidded backwards from the force of the blow, he snarled at the evilly grinning man.

"You fracking bastard. . ."

"Vile half breed," he spat back, dodging Inu-Yasha as he lunged again.

Backtracking, the half-wolf whirled his foot around in a high kick, connecting with Naraku's jaw and making him crumple in momentary shock.

Both halted in their paths, however, as a small groan echoed off the linoleum floor.

"Kagome?! Are you okay?!" Inu gasped as he fell to his knees next to his mate, forgetting the hunter.

"I'm fine," she whispered, turning to look at him with a soft smile-

That very quickly turned to a horrified, wide-eyed gaze.

"Inu-Yasha! BEHIND YOU!"

Without a second thought, the half-wolf scooped his mate into his arms and leapt out of the way- just as a loud BAM sounded from behind them, causing the people gathered around them to scream.

As they whirled to face Naraku again, they saw with horror that he was holding a gun.

Pointed straight at them.

~*~

11 - I know so

~*~

Naraku smirked at the pair's horror-struck faces as he aimed the loaded weapon.

"Don't even try to run," he whispered, his voice so soft that only the werewolves could hear him. "Because I'll find you. I swear by the Moon Goddess that I'll hunt you down."

Kagome's eyes widened a fraction as a warning growl shook Inu-Yasha's body.

How did he. . .?!

"What kind of lies are you spouting out, Naraku?!" the silver haired boy snapped, his hold on his mate tightening.

"Keh," the hunter chuckled darkly, watching the couple intently.

But he was momentarily distracted by a boy that was pointing at him and whispering to a girl next to him.

As Naraku glared at the two, Inu-Yasha seized the moment.

"Kagome," Inu murmured so quietly that only his mate could hear him as he placed her slowly on the floor. "When I say run, go."

"But-!"

"I think it's time to say good-bye," Naraku grinned smugly, returning his gaze to the wolves; his eyes flashing dangerously as he cocked the gun again.

"Yes, it is!" bellowed a voice from down the hall.

All the students gathered around them scattered in all directions- - -

As the principal ran forward, her eyes blazing with cold fury.

"Run!" Inu-Yasha hissed, pushing his mate into the safety of the pandemonium, where she and her cries for her koi were carried off by the scampering crowd.

"You two!" the principal growled, as she neared the two teen males- now standing alone in the silent hallway. "Into my office. NOW!"

*

Sango lay in bed, her eyes half lidded in a dream-like state.

"Sango-chan," a soft voice called from the door. "I'm back with the new thermometer. Don't break this one, okay?"

"I'm not promising anything," she grunted as Miroku stepped softly up to her bedside. "Those fracking things are annoying."

"I'm sorry, love," he smiled sympathetically. "But how else are we gonna get your temperature?"

The girl said nothing, looking away and grumbling inaudibly to herself.

Miroku sighed and sat down on a fold-out chair near his mattress- they were still in his room, after all.

Oh well, he was always willing to share with his Sango.

Fishing a new thermometer out of a blue plastic shopping bag, he carefully took it out of its protective plastic covering.

"Now," he told his mate soothingly, taking a moist washcloth and sponging her clammy forehead, "take this one calmly, all right? No chucking it to the other side of the room when it tickles your tongue."

Sango grunted in response.

"Now open wide."

She grudgingly complied.

Grinning lovingly down at her, Miroku calmly placed the thermometer inside her mouth, moving his fingers before the girl bit them off- he just in time, too.

"Ow 'ong 'o I 'ave 'oo 'ait?" the brown-haired girl spat out through the plastic stick.

"Just a little longer," he replied gently, resting one leg on top of the another as he checked his watch.

Sango shot him a glare from the corner of her eye but attempted to say nothing else.

*

Kagome ran worriedly through the halls, fighting against the current of students who were trying to escape the 'crime scene'.

"Inu-Yasha!" she cried.

With a small cry, she was pushed to the ground by the last of the fleeing teens.

"Owww. . ." she mumbled, rubbing her leg.

But wait. . .

Her leg didn't feel bruised-

Damn it- it felt like it was burning!

Digging into the pocket of her skirt, she gasped as she felt her hands connect with a warm handle-
Of a gun.

Retreating her limb, she remembered vaguely that this skirt had a hole in the pocket.

But what could be making her leg- - -

Burn. . .?

'After the shot. . . the remaining flecks of a . . .'"Silver bullet. . ."' she whispered, her eyes widening before she quickly raced to her locker to get rid of the weapon.

*

"Inu-Yasha," the principal hissed quietly, glancing at the silver haired rebel who was purposely ignoring her, his eyes glued on the window. "Naraku," she continued, flicking her icy gaze to the other teen. "I cannot even begin to say how disappointed and disgusted I am in the pair of you."

"Then don't bother starting," Inu-Yasha snarled, his eyes flashing. "I have better things to do."

Naraku nodded once before locking the half-wolf with a murderous glare.

"DON'T YOU TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME!" she roared, slamming her fists on her mahogany desk in emphasis, her name tag- which read 'Miss Selene' and was adorned with a smily face sticker- and small vase of white roses rattling dangerously.

"Then what tone," the hunter retorted smoothly, "would you prefer?"

The woman's pale face flushed angrily, her midnight blue eyes narrowing as her lip curled into a sneer.

"I'd watch it if I were you, Naraku," she whispered, a strand of her pale hair falling from it's bun and curling in front of her face. "You don't want to mess with me. . ."

While she was distracted, Inu-Yasha glanced the principal up and down.

Was she new here?

He hadn't seen her here before and yet. . .there was something. . . oddly familiar. . .

"Inu-Yasha!" she barked, causing the silver haired boy to jump slightly.

"What?" he replied irritably.

"I asked you a question," she replied shortly, her temper obviously getting the better of her. "I asked: Which do you think is a better punishment? Suspension or expulsion?"

"For who?" he sneered. "Me or him?"

"Both of you," she hissed.

"What?!" Inu-Yasha glared. "At least I wasn't waving around a gun!"

"What gun?!" Naraku interrupted in annoyance. "I don't have a gun!"

"Yes, you do! Ask any of those kids in the hall! Don't deny it!"

"I don't have a gun!" he repeated. "You can search my frackin' pockets again!"

"Language!" the principal bellowed. "Both of you- shut your mouths!"

The two grudgingly complied.

"There is no doubt," the woman began softly as the two fell silent, "that there was a gun. However, as you lost yourself in day dreams, Inu-Yasha, I examined Naraku's pockets- and he held no weapon. And neither, I take it," she continued, glancing briefly down the amber eyed teen's skin tight black outfit, "neither do you. I have authorities searching the halls for any trace of the revolver, and should they find it, it shall be instantly disposed of."

She took a moment's pause here, to take a long breath.

"Now. Let's get right to the point- no more dawdling."

Taking a seat behind her desk, she steepled her fingers and glared at the boys.

"Both of you shall be suspended until the end of Winter Break. After which you shall be put on yearly probation- meaning you shall be constantly followed by at least one teacher during the day. No loitering in the halls, no going off on your own- and after a daily two hour detention, you will go straight home. Do I make myself clear?!"

"Transparently so," Naraku hissed, fiddling with one of his studded bracelets but not once losing eye contact with the woman.

"If anything else like this happens again," the principal murmured softly, rising to her feet with a quiet clatter, "I shall be forced to expel you and send you to the police. You're lucky I'm not doing that now. But as I have a pretty good idea of what is going on. . ." she trailed off, momentarily looking out the window at the softly falling snow. "I'm not going to do any more then this for now. Both of you- leave."

And I don't mean for your class. I mean go home."

"Yes, ma'am," the hunter replied curtly, standing up in a leisurely manner before striding out of the room.

However, as Inu-Yasha stood, he felt the woman tap his shoulder gently.

"What do you want?" he snarled, spinning to face her.

But to his surprise, she wasn't glaring any more.

She was smiling.

Leaning forward, she uncapped his head and whispered into his ear: "I'll keep in touch, Inu-Yasha. Say hello to Kagome for me."

The half wolf stood in shock, staring blankly at the grinning woman as she backed away, laughed melodically as another lock of her hair broke free of its bun, showing off jet black roots.

But then Inu blinked-

And she was gone; leaving nothing but the sweet scent of roses in the spot she had been standing.

*

"So what is it?" Sango grunted as her mate took the thermometer out of her mouth.

He clucked his tongue softly. "101, sweetie. You're very sick."

"Gee, had you not said anything, I might not have noticed," she replied dryly. But the effect of her sarcasm was lost as she suddenly began fumbling for the 'puke bucket' Kagome had left near her bedside table.

Shaking his head and waiting for her stomach wrenching gags to subside, Miroku casually reached into his shopping bag and pulled out a bottle of liquid medicine and a spoon.

"I thought we'd be needing this," he told his koi calmly, unscrewing the top.

"I won't drink it," Sango stated, her voice cracking.

"Yes, you will."

"No, I won't," she responded again, slightly firmer this time. "You can't make me."

"No, I suppose I can't," he sighed cheerfully. "But I can sure try."

Slowly pouring a spoonful of the syrup, he beamed at his mate as she watched him suspiciously.

"What are you planni- PERVE-!" she began to scream, moving so as to slap his hand as he groped her @\$\$.

But as soon as she opened up to yell, Miroku poured the medicine inside and closed her mouth, giving her no alternative way to get rid of the disgusting substance other than swallow it.

"I hate you," she told him weakly as she flopped back in the bed.

"I know," he smiled, mopping her sweating brow with a clean cloth before kissing her forehead. "Now rest."

*

Inu-Yasha trekked home slowly that night, dragging his feet through the piles of fresh snow blanketing the city.

As soon as he left school he searched the whole city for the hunter-

Yet there was no sign of Naraku anywhere.

And that made him more nervous than anything.

'I almost wish he'd just show his face so I could get this battle over with,' he thought dryly as he reached the apartment, his numb hand grasping the door handle.

But before he entered the house completely, he looked up at the velvety, overcast sky.

Through the dark gray clouds, a single ray of moonlight shone.

Though one couldn't see it, it was the night before the full moon.

Never had he dreaded it so much.

With Naraku around. . .

Suppressing a shiver from the cold wind, Inu-Yasha slowly turned around and headed inside.

*

"Inu-Yasha!" Kagome gasped in relief as soon as he walked though the door. The male couldn't help but gasp in surprise as his mate launching herself at his chest and refused to let go of his shirt. "Oh gods, are you okay?!"

"I'm fine," he replied tiredly.

"What happened?!" his koi gasped, rubbing her nose against his rosy red one before nuzzling his neck in a concerned fashion.

"I was suspended," he grunted, quelling a blush. "And then put on probation when I return- but who the hell cares? It's only school. . ."

He pushed past his worried mate and dumped his jacket on the floor, flopping down on the couch facing the window; watching the snow fall.

Kagome stood silently at the door for a moment, her hand clenched above her heart.

Then she slowly walked over and sat next to Inu, picking up a ribbon from the table as she went.

"Hey," she whispered playfully, trying to distract the half-wolf as she tied the bright colored string into his hair. "Wanna help me wrap presents?"

"You can't be serious," he replied blankly, his eyes still locked on the window.

"I am."

"Don't you get what's going on, Kagome?!" he barked, spinning around to glare at his mate. "We're all in danger here! We could all die!"

A long, echoing silence enveloped the house.

"I know that," the girl finally whispered, her eyes filling with tears. "And it scares me to death. But. . . for the moment. . ."

She graced her mate with a watery smile. "We can't do anything, can we. . .?"

"Kagome. . ."

"I'm sorry, Inu-Yasha, I'm just trying to make you feel better. . .!"

Inu-Yasha sighed in defeat before slowly wrapping his arms around his now crying koi.

"Oh, love, my Kag-chan. . ." he whispered, nuzzling her cheek and kissing her neck. "I know. . . I'm sorry. . . I'm just so afraid I'll lose you. . ."

He sighed again and rested his head on top of her's. "I just love you so much, it hurts sometimes. . ."

Kagome buried her face into Inu's chest, holding him as close as she could. "I love you too," she murmured, sparkling tears still spilling down her cheeks. "Don't worry, Inu-chan. We'll be together forever. . ."

"I hope so," he replied, tightening his arms around her as she kissed him.

"I know so."

~*~

12 - Half wolf

~*~

"Inu-chan? Inu-chan, wake up," someone whispered in the half-wolf's ear.

"Gmmnmnnn!" he grumbled back, his face pushed flat against his pillow.

"Inu-chan!" the voice reprimanded, sounding slightly annoyed. "Come on, get up!"

"Whaaaat?!" he snapped, rolling over to glare groggily Kagome, who was dressed and ready to go.

She sighed deeply before kneeling next to him on his mattress.

"I'm going to school now."

"Whoopie."

"Sango's still ill."

"I heard her throw up over Miroku last night."

"But Miroku has to go to school too, so you need to watch her."

"Whatever."

"And I want you to stay out of trouble."

"Please. How much more trouble do you think I could get in?" he scoffed, sitting up and crossing his arms and legs in a classic pout.

His mate shook her head with the smallest of smiles on her face.

But then-

"Oh!" she gasped, swinging her yellow knapsack off her back and throwing it open. "I forgot to show you--!"

"Show me. . .?"

"Show you this," she murmured, carefully pulling a gun out of her bag, grasping it between her thumb and index finger.

The silver haired teen's eyes widened a fraction as he held out his hand for the weapon. Kagome

gingerly placed the revolver in his grasp, a worried look on her face.

Hissing as the barrel of the gun touched his palm, Inu-Yasha dropped the weapon and rubbed his hands together.

"Silver dust. . ." he growled. "This was Naraku's. . ."

"I know," Kag whispered, resting her chin on her knees as she pulled her legs to her chest. "He must have slipped it into my pocket as I escaped."

"That would explain why the frackin' bastard didn't have a weapon with the principal searched for on- -"

But the half wolf cut himself off, his amber orbs widening a little more as he began chewing bottom lip in thought.

"Inu-Yasha? Inu-Yasha, what is it?"

"Does she really know what's going on. . .?" he whispered to himself, his eyes falling on the window and locking on the gray, cloudy sky.

"What? Who are you talking about-?"

"The Moon Goddess says 'hi'," he interrupted. "Now hurry, or you'll be late for school."

*

"I'M TIRED OF REST! I WANNA GET UP AND KICK SOME WEREWOLF HUNTING @\$!"

"Sango, dear, you're still sic-"

"I DON'T GIVE A frackin' DAMN IF I'M SI- - - oh shoot. HAND ME THAT BUCKET, NOW!"

Inu-Yasha cast Miroku's room a dry look as the now-familiar sound of vomiting echoed through the halls.

"Miroku!" the silver haired teen called over the violent retching. "You're already an hour late for school!"

"But I need-!"

"I'm gonna watch her, now go get your God forsaken education, damn it!"

"But-!"

"I SAID NOW!"

Inu smirked to himself as the perverted wolf scampered out of his room and through the halls, slamming the door shut behind him as he called a hurried good-bye to his mate.

"Much better," the remaining man muttered darkly under his breath. "You okay in there, Sango?!"

"BETTER NOW THAT HE'S GIVING ME-"

Puking sound.

"-ROOM TO BREATHE!"

"Aww," Inu-Yasha mockingly cooed. "Don't you like being babied?"

"I guess someti-"

Throwing up.

"-mes. But I dunno. . . he sure is sweet, though, isn't he?"

"Whatever you say, Sango," the werewolf replied quietly, so as not to be heard by the girl as she finished her gut wrenching heaves. "Whatever you say. . ."

*

"Hey, Inu-Yaaaaaasha?" Sango's slurred voice called from the other room.

The half wolf glanced incredulously down at the medicine she had just taken, which was now placed next to him on the table top.

She sounded drunk.

That shouldn't be a side effect, should it?

"What?"

"I is sleeeeeeeepy. . ."

"Uh huh."

"I is goooooonnnna taaaaake a sap. No. Wait. . . A map. Um. . . A lap. A cap. A tap. A gap. . ."

"A nap?"

"Aaaaaa! Yeeeeah, one a' those. . ."

"You do that," he replied dryly, giving the innocent syrup bottle a hard look.

"Yeaaaaaaah. . . I think I wiiiiiiiiiiii. . . . zzzz. . ."

Rolling his eyes, Inu-Yasha averted his amber gaze out the window.

Sighing and standing up, he slowly trudged over to the window and pressed his hand against the icy glass, looking down at the busy city.

Somewhere. . .

Naraku was hiding.

Watching.

Waiting. . .

He had to be stopped.

'Maybe I should go out and look for him, while Sango sleeps. . .' he thought, his hand clenching to a fist.

But he was snapped out of his thoughts as the phone rang.

Curious, he walked cautiously to the phone, the hair on the back of his neck prickly.

He could sense something powerful on the other end of the line. . .

Reaching out carefully for the receiver, he gingerly pulled it out of it's cradle.

"Hello?" he asked, his brow furrowed.

"Don't."

Inu-Yasha's eyebrows shot to his hairline.

"Excuse me?"

But his only reply was the dial tone.

*

Inu-Yasha stood in the middle of the kitchen for a few moments, blankly clutching the phone in his hands.

Then. . .

He slowly put the receiver back in it's cradle.

What. . .

Was that all about. . .?

His eyes narrowing in deep thought, he cautiously moved to grab his jacket, as if afraid something or someone would strike him down if he made any sudden movement.

Glancing over his shoulder, he carefully padded to the door.

Gingerly placing the tips of his fingers against the knob, he waited- daring the invisible force to stop him.

Nothing happened.

So he opened the door with the most silent of 'creak's before disappearing into the shadows of the hallway.

*

Silence enveloped the large city of Tokyo; the brown slush on the ground accompanied by the dull gray sky dampening everyone's spirits.

Inu-Yasha walked quietly through the streets, acting as drawn back and burly as ever.

But his mind was no where near the cold roads.

'That gun. . . if we've got it, will he still- keh, of course. He's not stupid enough just to have one weapon.'

The half wolf grumbled in frustration, releasing a misty breath of air.

Sighing, he finally looked into the sky.

Still cloudy and gray.

No surprise there.

Yet it was a darker shade of gray then it had been a few hours ago.

The sun was slowly setting.

Had it been so long already. . . ?

'Time flies when you're having fun, I suppose,' he thought darkly, stifling another sigh.

He had found nothing; not even a clue to who that voice on the phone was.

Though he had an educated guess, judging by the feminine quality of it. . .

'Still, it doesn't matter now.' He glanced momentarily up at the heavens before turning the corner into the ally, planning on taking a short cut. 'Best get back to the apartment. It's the full moon, can't dawdl- - -'

But his thoughts were cut as he saw what lay ahead of him.

*

"Where the hell IS HE?!" Kagome snarled, worry causing her mouth to run astray, so to speak.

"I don't know! Wasn't he with you, Sango?" Miroku asked, turning to face the girl resting in the back of the car.

Kagome fidgeted in her seat, glancing out at the stationary scenery of the garage as the other wolves piled into their trucks.

"Noooooo," the dark brown haired girl slurred, her eyes half lidded as she smiled stupidly.

"God damn, that's some powerful medicine," the other female grumbled, twisting her hands in her lap.

"Calm down, Kagome. I'm sure he's fine," the perverted one consoled, patting his friend on the back.

The ebony haired teen shot him a deadly look before that hand traveled any further down.

"What?! Don't look at me like that! I wasn't going to do anything!"

"Suuuure you weren't."

"I wasn't!" he insisted, looking very hurt.

But then again, he was a very good actor.

Kagome sighed and bit her bottom lip.

Where was Inu-Yasha?

Was he okay?

What was going on. . .?

*

"You. . ." the silver haired werewolf snarled, his hands clenching into fists. "Naraku. . ."

The werewolf hunter smirked and rewarded Inu-Yasha with a long, slow, incredulous clap. "Oh, very good. I didn't realize you had enough smarts to remember my name. . ."

"Shut your damn mouth!"

"Language, language," Naraku retorted lightly, one eyebrow raised. "Really. Such dirty lips will help you none."

"Well, better than bloody lips- like yours are going to be soon!"

"Ooo. Touché."

The werewolf hunter's evil smile widened as he began to slowly circle Inu- Yasha. "Just where do you think you're going, anyway?"

"Home."

"Why? So you can transform there?" Naraku questioned softly. "Don't you want to show me your true form? I'm sure it wouldn't be an inconvenience. After all. . ."

He raised his face to the sky, where it was considerably darker now.

"The moon is going to rise very soon."

Inu-Yasha mentally cursed. 'shoot! He's right. . .'

Glancing towards the distracted hunter, who's eyes seemed locked on the clouds, the werewolf decided to take a long shot- and try to sneak out of the narrow ally.

"Don't even attempt to escape," the ebony haired male murmured, his eyes still to the sky as a hand reached into his pockets and pulled out a gun. Cocking it, he pointed it straight at Inu.

'Double shoot.'

The silver haired boy slowly stepped to the left.

The gun followed.

He stepped to the right.

Naraku moved the barrel to point at him again, though his eyes never left the dark clouds.

"It's almost time, you know, Inu-Yasha. . ."

Oh, *did* he know.

As the sky blackened and a few lonely rays of moonlight soaked through the clouds, the werewolf could feel his body begin to change. And no matter how he fought it, he knew he could do nothing.

"D-damn it," Inu grunted, panting as he fell to his knees, his limbs buckling.

"Just a little longer for me to wait, hmm?"

"You bastard. . ." the werewolf growled, but soon he could no longer speak. His face was lengthening,

his body shifting, his limbs reforming.

Moments later, he was in his wolf form in front of the hunter; his silver hair glossy in the glowing moonlight.

Finally, Naraku's eyes left the heavens and flickered down to lock on Inu- Yasha's canine-like golden ones.

"Ahhh. . . So this is your beast form, is it not, Inu-Yasha?" he murmured, a small smirk on his face. "Yes. . . I'd recognize you anywhere, you know. So much like your father. . ."

The silver wolf snarled and prepared to pounce, but stopped as the hunter's hand gently squeezed the gun's trigger. Not enough for it to go off, but enough to remind Inu what was in the barrel.

Undoubtedly a silver bullet. . .

"You really thought you could actually find and kill me, didn't you?" Naraku snickered, circling around the beast, his revolver's barrel never leaving range of Inu-Yasha's body. "You actually believed you could save your pack. Save Kagome, huh?"

The wolf's snarls became deeper as he exposed his long, sharp teeth to the hunter.

"Oh, I'm very frightened, Inu-Yasha. I'm shaking in my shoes."

The hunter began laughing-

And the werewolf had enough.

With a great roar, he leapt into the air, pouncing forcefully on Naraku, sending them both to the ground; skidding into the brick ally wall.

His eyes widening in surprised shock, the hunter was only just able to block Inu-Yasha as he attempted to rip him apart with his teeth.

Grabbing the wolf's ears and tugging hard, Inu momentarily halted his assault do to pain.

Whimpering softly at the biting headache he was soon going to receive, Inu- Yasha slammed his paws into the hunter, his claws easily tearing through the man's black leather and into his skin.

Hissing softly, Naraku kicked the wolf off his body with all his might, sending Inu a few feet away as the man regained his footing and picked up his gun, which had fallen into a snow drift.

"Don't you DARE try that again!" the hunter growled, pointing the revolver at the wolf, his eyes narrowed as Inu-Yasha balanced himself, the silver fur on his back rising in anger.

The wolf snarled and snapped, preparing to leap again- - -

When a sickening 'BANG!' echoed through the ally.

*

Inu-Yasha crumpled on the ground, moaning and whimpering in pain.

"Keh," Naraku chuckled, lowering his gun slightly as he took a step towards the injured wolf.

Dark maroon blood gushed from a searing hole in his side- staining Inu- Yasha's silver fur and the ground near him. The skin around his wound was slowly turning disgusting shades of black and violet, his body reacting in terrible ways to the bullet.

"Ah, so the infection begins," the hunter smirked, standing only a foot away from Inu, who was now working very hard just to breathe. "Don't worry, Inu-Yasha. The pain will soon be gone- - when you die."

Raising the gun tip again so it pointed straight at the werewolf's head, Naraku glared.

"I'll forever hate your kind, Inu-Yasha," he whispered. "For I'll never get to be one. . ."

Inu slowly raised his half-lidded, glassy eyes to look at the hunter.

"Hmph. You want to know what I'm talking about? Fine. You'll be dead soon, anyway. I won't even need to use my last four shots."

Naraku gingerly squeezed the gun's trigger in anticipation.

"I know you are a half-wolf, Inu-Yasha," he murmured, his eyes narrowing once more. "As. . . am I."

A silence enveloped the ally, the only sound the now gusty wind.

Inu-Yasha waited.

Naraku took his time to continue.

"But what I didn't know," the hunter finally hissed, "was that there is more than one type of half-breed. That you could have different results when combining mortal and wolf. I figured that out when I saw you with Kagome. Had you been like me, you would have been an outcast of wolf kind. A longer. Forsaken. As you are. . . you're not as big of a freak as I am. . ."

The man took a deep breath.

"Where you, you can transform. . . you can't touch silver. . . you have a pack to belong. . . my only wolf-like power is to survive as long as were- being. I've been around many more years than you. . ."

Inu's breathing stilled slightly, but he was still alive and listening; his blood continually gushing as the black-violet shade around his wound spread.

"So when I was younger, I decided that. . . if I can't be a wolf. . . then no one can. Ergo, I am a hunter. And after a while I realized that it wasn't me that was the freak- - - it was all of you. All of the wolf kind. . . And so I plan to purge the world of your disgusting breed. One. . . By. . . One. . ."

He smirking, he slowly pulled the trigger back- - -

But before the shot could even ring out, something slammed into Naraku, knocking him painfully to the ground.

~*~

13 - I Can't But You Can

~*~

"What the frack?!" Naraku grunted as the ringing shot of his gun died away, absorbing into the darkness of the night.

Looking hurriedly around, he quickly bolted up as he saw what hit him.

No-

Not WHAT-

Who.

Another wolf. . .

Ebony coat glistening in stray rays of moonlight, the creature's stormy blue eyes looked murderous.

"Ah. . . Kagome," the hunter snarled, his dark orbs glittering menacingly. "Come to defend your mate, have we. . .?"

The female wolf's grown was cut out by a giggling from the heavens.

"Yes, she has!"

Naraku looked up hurriedly, his eyes sweeping over the scene; looking for the owner of the sweet, melodic voice.

Wait-

Above him. . .

On the edge of a fire escape. . .

Sat a beautiful woman with long, sweeping blonde hair that faded slowly to the darkest shades of black, blending in with the color of the night. As pure white roses twisted around the bars of the escape, she smiled sweetly and waved a hand, causing the clouds in the sky to part.

And reveal that the moon-

The round, full moon-

Was gone.

"Wha-?!" the hunter hissed.

The goddess just laughed and beamed.

"Better forget about me for the moment, Naraku," she chuckled. "I'd be paying more attention to Kagome, if I were you. . ."

Naraku spun his face back to look for the female wolf that was in front of him-

But she was gone.

At least, the wolf was.

And in the canine's place stood a pissed off, naked, ebony haired teen.

"Keep the hell away from Inu-Yasha!" the girl snarled, baring her teeth.

Though caught in a state of momentary shock, a smile slowly over took the hunter's face.

"Ah. . . so as if this were a new moon, you are now all stuck in your human bodies. . ."

He laughed darkly as Kag's eyes narrowed. "Yeah, so?!"

"Forgive me, Kagome-chan, but I don't see how this plan of yours will work. When you were in your wolf form, you had the advantage. Now you are a weak human like myself- and I am the only one with a weapon. Also. . ." he added as an afterthought, his eyes traveling over Inu-Yasha, who's body was slowly transforming into that of a mortal's, "it really doesn't help your mate much. Human's are much more susceptible to bullets."

"True," Kagome whispered, "but they're much LESS susceptible to silver, wouldn't you agree?"

The hunter's eyes widened slightly as he took a better look at Inu.

The disgusting purple and violet color that had been taking over his body had stopped traveling.

shoot!

But still. . .

"Fat lot of good that will do," he snickered. "It doesn't change the parts of his body that have already been infected."

"He'll- he'll heal," the girl replied, her bold confidence wavering slightly as she cast a worried glance at her still bleeding mate.

"Keh! Ignorant dog. He's as good as dead- especially in that form!"

"Shut up! I'm not going to stand around and let you insult Inu-Yasha!" Kagome screamed, her fists clenching in anger as she growled at the hunter.

"Oh? And what are you going to do about it, sexy little miss?" the man murmured mockingly, slowly circling Kagome- much as he had done Inu-Yasha.

However, unlike Inu-Yasha, Naraku took a good look up and down the female; his eyes lingering on her abdomen and every one her luscious curves; causing her anger to grow.

"My, my, my. . . you are built healthy, aren't you?"

"Don't you dare look at my body, pervert!" she growled, wrapping her arms around herself the best she could.

He ignored her as he continued to ogle her bare figure. "Aren't you a little cold, though? It is rather chilly. . ."

The hunter smirked and trailed a finger lazily down Kag's body, but stopped as Kagome suddenly slapped him hard across the face- tearing her nails into his skin as she did so-, causing him to stagger backwards.

"I'd rather die of pneumonia than be touched by you!" she spat.

Naraku snarled angrily, his eyes flashing as a trickle of blood ran down his cheek.

"You'll regret that," he hissed, grasping the handle of his gun.

"You're the one that's going to regret everything, filthy bastard!" the girl snapped. "How dare you!"

"How dare I what?" he barked, growing impatient and annoyed. "How dare I try and kill your family and friends? How dare I try and get rid of your repulsive kind?"

"How dare you try and get rid of your OWN kind!" she yelled, her hair flying angrily around her in the wind.

She'd struck a nerve.

"I am NOT a werewolf, nor will I ever be one!" he bellowed, cocking his gun and pointing it straight at Kagome.

Her eyes widened in slight surprise, but she did nothing else.

A maniacal smirk slowly plastered itself on Naraku's face.

"Looks like you're in luck, Kagome-chan. . ." he hissed at the calm werewolf before him. "I've got three bullets left. One for each disgusting wolf here, eh?"

The girl remained silent, her eyes locked on the weapon, though she made no move to escape.

"I'm impressed that you figured out I'm a half-wolf like your little koi, Kagome-chan," he murmured, "And it's too bad you've already mated for life. We could have made beautiful music together, you and I. . ."

He graced her a short, longing, lustful look, causing disgust to well up inside the ebony haired female.

"But no matter to either. You figured out my secrets, but who cares? You're going to die here anyway. . ."

"That's where you're wrong, Naraku," Kag whispered, her eyes full of confidence as they slowly left the gun and locked themselves with the man's own cold orbs. "By playing your little games, you challenged the whole pack- not just me. And so. . . in order to kill me. . ."

She smirked.

"You'll have to defeat the whole pack!"

A look of momentary confusion crossed the hunter's face, but it was quickly wiped away as every member of Inu-Yasha's clan walked out of the shadows; a few of the younger children hopping off the fire escapes and landing before Naraku on the ground.

Every werewolf was naked, angry, circling the hunter- - -

And smirking.

Up in the fire escape, the Moon Goddess laughed again and disappeared in a rush of rose-scented air-

As the full moon reappeared in the sky.

Naraku's eyes widened as he tried to back away, but only tripped over the slowly transforming 'mortals' and fell against the wall. Wincing in pain at his head connected with hard brick, he gasped as the werewolves changed before him- their bodies and faces lengthening, glossy fur sprouting quickly as they lunged for the man- their razor sharp teeth glittering in the moonlight as they sunk into Naraku's flesh.

Hissing in pain, the hunter tried to raise his gun- which was now shaking along with his bloody hand- but instead felt a searing, ripping sensation as a wolf tore the limb off his body. Moments later, the rest of his being was blanketed in blood-thirst canines.

Screams of terror and pain echoed through the night.

Everyone ignored them.

*

However, Kagome didn't participate in the digestment of the hunter.

She didn't even turn back into her wolf form.

She was thankful to find that the goddess had allowed her to go straight to caring for her injured mate.

Without even taking a moment to thank her mother, Kag fell to her knees next to her koi.

He looked awful-

His bare body was slowly turning ice blue from the cold; his torso dyed dark red from the maroon substance gushing from his being. A gaping hole penetrated his side, revealing ripped pink muscle where excessive amount of silver had eaten away at his skin and internal organs. The remaining flesh around the wound was black and purple, painful even to look at. The boy's eyes were half lidded- his usually lively amber orbs glassy as his ebony human hair- crusty with blood- clung to his body.

"Inu-Yasha!" she whispered breathlessly, gently shaking the boy, ignoring the sticky red liquid that clung to her hands. "Wake up! Wake up! We all did it! We all defeated Naraku together!"

Inu-Yasha made no reply, his head lolling dully from side to side as his blood continued to stain the icy ground.

"Inu-Yasha. . .?"

Still nothing.

"I-Inu-Yasha. . ." she choked, tears filling her eyes as she raised her now bloody hands to her mouth. "N-no. . . W-wake up. . . INU-YASHA!"

*

The pack stood silently by a hospital bed, clothed and somber as the early pinks of morning took over the sky.

Sango, slowly getting over the after affects of her flu medicine, looked cautiously around the room. It was pure white.

Everything was pure white.

The tiles, the walls, the ceiling, the comforters, the equipment- - -

It was scary.

Not to mention it smelled awful!

"How is he. . .?" she whispered to Miroku, who she was weakly clinging to. Her stomach still felt rather queasy.

Her mate said nothing, instead tightening his arms around her.

She lapsed into silence.

In fact, Kagome was the only one who made a sound; her body shaking with loud sobs as she kneeled next to her koi, wincing in agony every time of the machines attached to Inu-Yasha made a sound.

And he was attached to a lot of machines.

Cords and tubes were sticking out from every inch of his skin; and his mouth was covered in a breathing mask. Water, blood, and oxygen supplies hung all around him as his heart monitor remained in weak existence.

The sight was more then many could bare. . .

"Kagome. . ." Kouga finally murmured soothingly, squatting next to the girl and placing a hand on her shoulder. "Just think of it this way. . . He's going to go to a better place. . ."

If he had been trying to help, he failed miserably.

Kagome instantly stiffened. "NO!" she screamed, hitting the leader's hand away as she clung to her love's arm. "NO! He won't leave me! He can't leave me! I can't survive alone. . .!"

'What if Naraku was right?' the girl couldn't help but think as tears poured silently down her face. 'What if by getting rid of the moon for those few minutes, the Moon Goddess and I sealed Inu-Yasha's fate. . .? What if we made it worse. . .? No! I can't think like that! I won't listen to that dead bastard! Inu-Yasha will be okay, he has to be. . .!'

"Kagome-chan. . ." Sango whispered, gingerly touching her best friend's shoulder and startling the crying teen out of her thoughts. "Please, you know Inu-Yasha wouldn't want-"

"I don't want to talk to you all right now," Kag hissed coldly, her face buried in her hands as crystalline tears slid down her raw, red face. "Go away. . ."

"But-" a few of the wolves protested as Sango slowly retreated her hand, but Kouga shook his head to silence them.

"We'll give you a few moments alone with him," the pack leader murmured, ushering everyone out of the room.

The wolves grumbled and whispered as they left, a few crying, a few silent, and a few emotionless.

Though that was their way of showing emotion.

Soon, the only sound in the room was the slow, dull, occasional 'beep'ings from the heart monitor.

And those occasional beeps were quickly growing fewer. . .

"No, Inu-Yasha. . ." Kagome whispered breathlessly, burrowing her face in her arms. "Don't leave. . . You can't. . ."

'He can't leave me all alone. . .

He won't!

He mustn't!

He CAN'T!

"Don't do this to me, Inu-Ya-" she began to say, but was cut off as she felt someone lay a cool hand on her shoulder.

Gasping, the girl looked up to see a nurse smiling sadly down at her.

But the disguise didn't fool the werewolf.

"You. . ." Kagome choked. "Moon Goddess. . ."

"Yes, it's me, Selene," the deity replied softly, sitting next to the still, pale half-wolf and sighing, all traces of a smile wiped off her lips.

"Oh, Inu-Yasha," she murmured, brushing the boy's ebony bangs out of his face. "Why don't you ever listen to me? Why didn't you acknowledge my call? I told you I'd keep in touch. . ."

Kag watched the goddess carefully, her grip on her mate's hand never loosening.

"Goddess. . .?" the girl finally asked, her voice as soft as a breath.

"Yes?" the elder female responded; sounding rather tired as a white rose blossomed in her hand. The goddess gently set the flower on the table, allowing its sweet scent to rid the air of pungent smell of medicine.

"Ca-can you save him. . .?"

The deity didn't reply, though her features darkened.

That was all Kagome needed to see.

"Bu-But you saved us both before!"

"That was different, child! That was the trial-!" the Moon Goddess retorted, but was cut off by Kag.

"I don't care! You did it once, you can do it again!"

"It doesn't work that way-!"

"Then can't you do it for me, your daughter?!"

"I already told you- I don't do favors-!"

"DON'T YOU CARE?!" Kagome sobbed, flinging her arms around her koi's neck as the heart monitor gave one or two weak 'bleep's.

The goddess was silent for a moment, allowing the girl a minute to cry before continuing.

"Of course I care about him. . ." she finally whispered, her voice full of pain. "I love all my children, Kagome. I don't want to see him die-"

"Then prevent it!" the ebony haired teen begged, raising her red, puffy, tear-filled eyes to meet Selene's.

The Moon Goddess gave her daughter a small, sad smile.

"I can't."

~*~

14 - Together Forever

~*~

A long, loud, silenced pressed against the two women's ears.

"C-Can't. . .?" Kagome repeated softly, totally bewildered. "What do you mean, you CAN'T?!"

"Kagome, dear," the goddess whispered, her eyes slowly filling with tears. "I understand how hard this must be for you to understand, especially with- "

"No! He'll get better, I know he will!" the ebony haired girl cried frantically.

Selene slowly shook her head as she rose to her feet, silently walking out the door. "I'm sorry, Kagome. I can't do anything."

*

"It won't end this way. . ." Kag choked, clutching Inu-Yasha's icy hand tightly in hers. "I won't let it end this way. . ."

She squeezed her eyes tightly shut, trying to block a fresh round of tears as the heart monitor- - -

That gods forsaken heart monitor- - -

Let loose a final-

Long-

Low-

'Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeep'.

The girl's eyes snapped open. "No. . ." she whispered. "No. . ."

Yes.

Inu-Yasha was gone.

"No!" Kagome sobbed, "Inu-Yasha, don't you dare leave me! You can't!"

But he had.

He. . .

Was gone. . .

Getting shakily to her feet, the wolf looked down at her icy white mate.

He had really left her. . .

He had left her all alone. . .

Her and. . .

And. . .

. . .He was really gone. . .

Burying her face in her hands and letting out a heart wrenching sob, Kag locked a suddenly angry glare on the white rose that still lay on the bedside table.

That- that stupid goddess!

Why didn't she help?!

She could have saved him!

She could have!

'I HATE YOU, SELENE!' Kagome mentally screamed, unable to get the words to come out of her mouth.

Her voice was stuck.

So instead, she reached over to grab the innocent flower, preparing to tear it to shreds-

When her eyes fell on a carefully hidden scrap of paper, blocked from view by the milky blossom.

Kag's tear filled orbs widened slightly. 'A. . . note?'

As if the Moon Goddess had known she was going to reduce that stupid rose to silky strips of petal-

She had concealed a letter for her.

Reaching out with trembling fingers, the ebony haired teen carefully picked up the delicate piece of pearly white parchment.

~It has saved you times before

It can save you once again

Ears are open; eyes are closed

Hearts torn apart will mend

Until the bright moon rises

Hearts torn apart can mend~

Kagome blinked, causing a single tear to fall on the thin piece of paper, smearing the midnight-blue ink.

'A. . . A riddle. . . Just. . . Like the Trial. . .' she thought, clutching the note to her chest, her heart pounding wildly. 'Do I still have a chance to save him. . .?'

"But. . . what could it mean?" Kag whispered to herself as her knees crumpled beneath her.

"Stupid girl," a female's voice scoffed from behind her. "Isn't it obvious?"

*

Kagome whipped around in surprise to see two woman standing underneath the doorframe.

One was a little girl the werewolf had never scene before. The child had pale white hair, adorned in identical flowers. Her brown eyes half-lidded and glazed over, she look as if she was watching someone or something else while looking at Kagome.

The second woman she readily recognized.

It was her boss from the Neko Coffee Club.

"Ms. Kagura?" she gasped in shock. "What are you doing here. . .?! How do you- What's going on?"

Kagura sighed deeply, pushing a strand of her short, dark brown hair behind her ear. "I'll make a long story short. Basically, hon, we were working for Naraku all along."

Kag's eyes widened to the size of dinner plates as she quickly scrambled off the floor, blocking Inu-Yasha from their view. "I- I won't let you touch him, you scum! GO AWAY!"

"Sweetie, please," the older woman glared, her maroon eyes flashing in annoyance. "What the frack could we do to him to make his situation worse? If you haven't realized it, he's already dead."

"Wow, you're the fountain of all subtlety, aren't you?" the werewolf snarled, her voice icy. "I did realize that, THANK YOU."

"Chill," Kagura sighed. "Look, we really came to thank you for killing our father."

Kagome started, her murderous expression changing into one of curiosity. "Father. . .?"

"Naraku. shooty bastard. Never liked him."

The little girl next to her nodded once.

"Anyway," the maroon-eyed female continued, "since you helped us, we're helping you."

"Helping. . . me?"

"Well, YEAH, hon. We didn't just drop by for the hell of it."

Kagome cocked her head in curiosity as she squeezed her dead mate's hand for comfort.

Not that it really helped much. . .

"So," Kagura added, cracking a piece of gum, "you gonna be smart and piece together that clue yet? 'Cause from what Selene told me, you're pretty good at riddles."

"You. . . know the Moon Goddess. . .?"

"We're one fourth werewolf," the little girl whispered, her voice as quiet as a gentle breeze. "We've met her once or twice. . ."

"She told us about the trial right before we came in here," the older female put in. "You figured out the hint then. Figure it out now."

"Aren't you supposed to be helping me?" Kagome retorted dryly, wiping her sore eyes.

"We all know you can do it on your own," the white haired female murmured.

"Kanna's right," Kagura added, nodding in emphasis as she took out a fan and cooled herself off.

Kag flopped to the floor, resting her head on her chin in deep thought.

"You have until the moon rises tonight," Kanna whispered, her voice echoing through the silence of the room.

"I caught that part," Kagome retorted, hiding her face as her hands clenched into fists of determination.

'I'll figure this out, Inu-Yasha! I'd do anything for you. Just like. . . you'd do anything for me. . . I can do this!'

*

'It has saved you once before. . .'

The ebony haired girl strained her brain, nearly ripping her hair out as she bit her lip in thought- the words continually repeating through her mind.

'What the hell could she mean. . .?!' Kagome growled in frustration. 'It saved us once before. . .'

"Hon, it's really not hard at all," Kagura sighed, sitting next to her employee.

"Well, if you have any words of wisdom, I'd be happy to hear them!" Kag snapped irritably, her stormy orbs never leaving Inu's closed ones.

Though it was rather distracting. . .

Knowing that if she didn't figure this out. . .

He'd never open those eyes again.

. . .

But. . .

But if she moved her tear-filled orbs. . .

They might fall on the window.

And she was terrified to see how much longer she had 'til dark.

She was slowly running out of time. . .

"Down, girl," the elder woman rolled her eyes. "Look, I'm sorry, but we're not allowed to straight out tell you."

"We can't save him. . ." Kanna murmured.

"Stop saying that!" Kagome screamed, claspng her hands over her ears; squeezing her eyes tightly shut as more tears threatened to fall.

'He *can* be saved!

He has to be!

We're supposed to be together forever!

We promised. . .

I promised. . .'

~"Oh, love, my Kag-chan. . ." he whispered, nuzzling her cheek and kissing her neck. "I know. . . I'm sorry. . . I'm just so afraid I'll lose you. . ."

He sighed again and rested his head on top of her's. "I just love you so much, it hurts sometimes. . ."

Kagome buried her face into Inu's chest, holding him as close as she could. "I love you too," she murmured, sparkling tears still spilling down her cheeks. "Don't worry, Inu-chan. We'll be together forever. . ."

"I hope so," he replied, tightening his arms around her as she kissed him.

"I know so."~

Bangs covering her eyes, Kagome hugged herself tightly, shaking in silent tears.

'You were afraid you'd lose me. . .

But now it's the other way around, Inu-chan. . .

I'm about to lose you. . .

Forever. . .!

She clasped her hands to her chest, clenching the fabric of her clothes so tightly that she could feel her nails pierce her palms through the cloth.

'My heart. . .

It hurts so much. . .'

~ He sighed again and rested his head on top of her's. "I just love you so much, it hurts sometimes. . ."

Kagome buried her face into Inu's chest, holding him as close as she could. "I love you too," she murmured, sparkling tears still spilling down her cheeks.~

'What is the answer, Inu-Yasha?

What can I do?

How can I save you?

Someone, please tell me how!

"Kagome. . .?" Kagura's voice broke through her thoughts.

She sounded slightly. . .

Nervous. . .

"What?" the ebony haired teen whispered, her voice catching in her throat. "What is it. . .?"

"Look out the window. . ."

No. . .

She didn't want to. . .

But. . .

Trembling slightly, she turned to see that the sky was pitch black- - -

And a round-

Bright-

Silver-blue moon was slowly rising.

"Oh my God. . ." she whispered, her eyes widening in fear.

'No! I'm about to lose my only chance- - -!'

"No!" she sobbed as she collapsed on Inu's chest.

As she cried, she forgot about Kagura and Kanna, who were still watching her.

She forgot about the hospital, and the machines, and the disgusting smell, too.

She forgot about her pack.

Her family.

Her friends.

She forgot about everything-

Everything except herself and her icy white mate.

"You can't leave me, Inu-Yasha. . ." she whispered into his cold chest as the moon- "I-"

Slowly-

"-love-"

Crossed-

you. . .!"

The horizon line.

"I love you, Inu-Yasha!" she screamed, her hot tears soaking his hospital gown. "I can't figure out the fracking clue, but I love you! I love you so much. . . Don't leave me. . . I love you!"

Her face pressed tightly to her love's chest as her sobs reduced to hiccups-

Kag's eyes suddenly widened.

Wait-

Oh my god.

Was that-

Was that a-

A heart beat?!

"FINALLY!" Kagura's voice cried from somewhere far away. "You got it!"

But Kagome didn't hear her.

Her attention was now completely on her koi- - -

Completely locked on him. . .

As his heart monitor. . .

Slowly. . .

Ever so slowly. . .

Began beeping again.

Stronger than ever before.

The wolf's breath caught in the throat.

He. . .

He was. . .

Alive. . .

Inu-Yasha was alive!

Gasping, Kagome slowly loosened her grip on his chest.

'Oh my God. . .'

~"I just love you so much, it hurts sometimes. . ."

"I love you too. . ."

'Inu-Yasha. . .'

~"Inu-Yasha," Kagome panted softly, laying on top of the teen.

"I lied. I don't like you. I. . I love you. . ."

He looked up into her wide, innocent azure eyes.

Time seemed to stop as the two lay together in each other's arms, eyes locked, and the words of an all-too-familiar poem echoing simultaneously through their minds.

*The first time I saw you, I was afraid to touch you.

The first time I touched you, I was afraid to kiss you.

The first time I kissed you, I was afraid to love you. *

"I love you, too," Inu-Yasha whispered, kissing her again as the two gave into temptation.

But now I love you and am afraid to lose you. ~

'You. . .'

~"He is NOT! I LOVE HIM!"

This pushed Kikyo over the edge- her patience disintegrating on the spot.

"You fool," she hissed, leaning so close to Kagome that the shorter girl fell backward. "YOU IDIOT!"

Raising her claw like nails to Kag's throat, the taller girl almost pounced on Kagome, snarling like a wolf.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK HE IS?!" she screamed, causing Kagome to quiver in fear. "SOME SWEET, KIND HUMAN?! YOU'RE WRONG, dog! YOU'VE NEVER BEEN MORE WRONG! HE'LL NEVER LOVE YOU! EVER!"

"You're a liar," Kagome hissed back, her courage wavering but her heart pushing her on. "You're a liar! He loves me and I love him and I want you out of my house this INSTANT!"~

'You're alive. . .'

~He looked at her, a single tear falling down his face. "Do I scare you?"

Kagome's eyes softened as she hugged Inu gently to her. "No. I love you."

"I love you, too," he whispered, nuzzling into her shoulder and breathing in her sweet scent. . . the scent of tiger lilies on a full moon night. . .~

'Could it be. . .!'

~"And that," the werewolf whispered, "is why you shouldn't take the Trial. You'd die."

"No I wouldn't. What are the chances of survival?"

"One out of one billion."

"Are you exaggerating?"

"No."

The look in Inu-Yasha's serious eyes told her this was the truth.

"Well then, I'll be the first in a billion," she shrugged.

"Kagome, listen to yourself!" the werewolf cried. "You're talking like this is a game! It's not! I don't want to lose you!"

"And I don't want to lose you!" Kagome replied, tears beginning to fall down her cheeks again as she slammed her fist to the ground to emphasize her words. "I love you too much! I WILL take the Trial, and you can't stop me!"

Inu-Yasha gazed into her determined eyes.

There was nothing he could do to stop her.

He bit his lip as a single tear ran down his cheek.

"I love you too. . ."

Kagome smiled a watery smile before pressing her lips to his, ignoring the blood that stained her clothes as they kissed.

She wouldn't fail.

She would become a werewolf.

She loved him.~

'Be because. . .'

~Kagome nodded slowly. "How are his injuries. . .?"

Sango's grim look darkened. "Not good. He got beaten up pretty badly in a fight against the pack officials. . . But he's alive. He'll heal. Don't worry."

"How can I not worry?!" Kag cried. "He's hurt! He could be dying!"

"Come the full moon, so could you!" Sango replied fear in her eyes. "Kagome- chan, are you sure you-"

"I am sure, Sango," Kagome cut off swiftly. "I love him, and for him I'll fight the odds."

The werewolf took a deep breath and nodded, slowly getting up. "If that's what you want. . . then I wish you the best of luck. You know I'll be rooting for you."

The girls smiled at each other before Sango briskly took her leave.

Kagome listened intently until she heard the downstairs door close quietly.

Flopping back on her bed, the teen carefully picked up her picture of Inu- Yasha and hugged it close to her heart.

'I love you, Inu-Yasha. . .!~

'Our love. . .?'

~"Do. . . do you trust me?"

Inu was slightly surprised by this question, but shook it off. "Of course I trust you. I trust you completely."

The girl looked down at the knife still in her hands.

"Then please. . . trust my actions," she whispered, tears falling from her eyes and landing with soft splashes on the knife.

With a trembling hand, Kagome raised the knife and made a small, shallow cut on Inu-Yasha's bottom lip before doing the same thing to herself.

"Kagome. . .?"

"Trust me," she murmured softly before pressing her lips to his in a gentle kiss- sweet with the metallic taste of their blood.

As their trembling lips left each other, Kag stepped closer and wrapped her arms around him as he wrapped his arms around her.~

'Our trust. . .?'

~"I'm so sorry, Inu-Yasha," the girl whispered softly, pulling away from him.

"It's all right," he whispered back, kissing her tears away.

Staring deep into his eyes, Kag raised the knife and brought it down again-

Right into Inu-Yasha's heart.~

'Our bond. . .?'

~"Kagome. . ." the silver haired werewolf murmured hoarsely, looking up at the sobbing girl though half lidded eyes. "I. . . understand. . ."

The girl bit her lip as tear continued to fall down her face.

"I. . .trust you. . . I love you. . ."

"I love you too, Inu-Yasha. . ." Kagome choked out, ignoring the blood that was soaking her clothes.

Inu-Yasha smiled slightly through his pain.~

'Was that the answer to the riddle. . .?'

~She had killed him, but he still trusted her- loved her.

Gods, she loved him!

Sobbing so hard that the ground around her was slowly becoming mud, Kagome raised the knife once more.

Time to complete this stupid Trial!

With one swift movement, Kag pierced the blood stained knife through her own heart.

She was dead in an instant.~

' 'It has saved you once before. . .!'

~"Why would I want to escape?"

"Because I was going to kill you!"

"But I trusted you. I still trust you," he replied gently, brushing a strand of her hair from her face.

"You trusted me enough to murder you?" she whispered, a tear running down her face.

"Yes."

She smiled softly. "I love you."

He grinned back. "I love you too. More than life itself."

"Bad pun," Kag glared playfully, laughing.

"But true," he growled huskily in her ear as he nuzzled her.

And the two became mates in the field of summer flowers, under the soft glow of the early morning autumn sun.~

'Yes. . .'

~"Everything will be okay. . ."

"How can you be so sure?" he asked softly as she looked into his eyes.

"Because we've got you to protect us," she smiled filling his worried heart with love as she tapped him on the nose and captured his lips in a gentle embrace.~

'Our love has gotten us through so much. . .'

~"I love you so much, koishii. . ." Inu whispered huskily as he reached her ear and nibbled gently on it, sending chills of pleasure down Kag's spine.

"I love you too," she replied, wrapping her arms around him and locking their lips in a heated kiss, allowing their tongues to resume their dance as she pushed him against the bed, their legs becoming tangled in sheets.~

'And it will continue to. . .'

~"So do you feel better?" Kagome softly asked her mate, cuddling closer to his body and scent for warmth.

Inu-Yasha sighed quietly, a small smile on his face. "Yeah. . . but. . ."

"Don't worry so much," she whispered, her eyes lightly closed as she pulled the quilt to her chin. "Everything will be okay in the end. . . Don't fret each little thing and face the day when it comes. . ."

"I'll try. . ."

"Then we'll make it though."~

'Because. . . My Inu-Yasha. . .'

~"And I love you, too," he murmured, planting a soft kiss on her forehead as they made their way downtown.

She blushed and kissed him back, feeling better than she had.~

'You're alive again!'

Beaming through her crystalline tears, Kagome began to laugh in thrilled disbelief as Inu-Yasha's eyes- momentarily lavender but quickly fading to gold- slowly fluttered open.

"Inu-Yasha. . ." she whispered breathlessly, joy coursing through her body. "You've really come back to me!"

"Keh," he coughed weakly, smiling softly through his oxygen mask. "Did you really think I'd let a bastard like Naraku take me down?"

"You're an idiot!" Kag laughed, pressing her body as close to his as she could. "God- I love you, you moron!"

"I love you too, Kag-chan," he grinned tiredly, gingerly running a hand through his mate's hair as she- for the umpteenth time that night- began to cry.

But this time it was due to happiness.

*

Kagura and Kanna watched silently from the hall way with the Moon Goddess; having snuck out of the room when the couple wasn't looking.

"Oh, Kagome, Inu-Yasha," Selene smiled, her eyes twinkling happily as she silently closed the door to the room. "I told you before, I'll tell you once more. Love is never easy- but again you've passed the test. I couldn't be prouder of you. . ."

"You know, you're a terrible liar," Kagura commented, eyeing the goddess incredulously. "You said that there wasn't a way to save him."

"I never said that," she frowned.

"Yes, you did!"

"I said," the deity retorted firmly, "'I can't'. And that was true. There was no way for me to revive him. Only Kagome could. Love is stronger than most people give it credit for. . ."

A small, half-smile flickered across Kanna's face as a moment of silence passed through the group.

"Now," the Moon Goddess suddenly announced, clapping her hands in a business like fashion. "Only one more thing for me to do."

She smiled kindly at the sisters before her.

"I thought I'd allow you each a wish, since you changed your ways and decided- rather wisely- not to follow in your father's footsteps."

Kagura and Kanna glanced at one another in surprise.

This was unexpected. . .

"Well?" Selene beamed.

"I. . . I. . . Well, I want my coffee shop to be successful," Kagura admitted with a shrug. "To hell with gold and gems and all that shoot. Damn- I wouldn't even care if I was run over by a car as soon as I left this hospital. But. . . I kinda like the Neko Coffee Club. I'd like to see it prosper."

"And you, Kanna?"

The younger girl blinked slowly up at the goddess.

". . . Mirror shop. . . I want to own a mirror shop."

The deity laughed quietly, clasping the two females on the shoulder.

"You are both surprising people."

Shaking her head, Selene gently kissed both on the cheek.

"Very well. Both your wishes will be granted."

The sisters smiled at one another before slowly walking for the elevators, leaving the beaming woman behind them.

But then, just before the elevator door shut, one spoke up.

"Oh- Selene?" Kagura called.

The goddess nodded her acknowledgment.

"Um. . . About that being hit by a car thing. . . I was just kidding. . ."

The Moon Goddess chuckled.

"Don't worry."

With a final, relieved smile, the maroon-eyed woman pressed the 'close door' button and the siblings disappeared from sight.

"May the moon light lead your way

Through each passing year," Selene whispered as her rose scented wind began to swirl, causing her to fade from view.

"And if we should meet again, I pray

May your eyes be free of tears."

Her bodiless giggle echoed through the halls of the hospital.

"Good luck, all of you . . ."

*

~Christmas Eve~

Sango and Miroku lay together in the dark, legs tangled in sheets and other limbs.

"Glad you're feeling better," Miroku grinned as he planted a kiss on his mate's nose.

Sango smiled back, brushing a strand of the male's hair out of his face. "I'm glad too. Glad I'm feeling better, glad Inu-Yasha's okay, glad everything worked out in the end. . ."

"Of course everything worked out in the end," Miroku chuckled, tightening his grip around his koi. "The good guys always win."

The female laughed and gently whacked her mate over the head. "Idiot. This isn't a fairy tale."

"No," he agreed, nuzzling her neck. "But sometimes things feel so perfect you think this could be. . ."

"Like now?" Sango beamed, tenderly kissing Miroku's cheek.

"Like now," he agreed, capturing the girl's lips with his own.

*

Kagome watched her mate's peaceful sleeping face, her heart feeling as if it would burst with love.

She still couldn't believe how close she'd come to losing him. . .

Sighing, she shook off her morbid feelings and instead twirled a piece of his silver hair around her finger, gently blowing on his face.

She giggled as his nose twitched.

"Gmnpmm. . ." the half wolf grumbled as she blew on him again. "Stooooop iiiit. . ."

"No," she whispered, a wide smile blossoming on her lips. "Not until you wake up."

"Mmph. . ." he groaned, one amber eye opening half way. "Can't it wait until morning. . .?"

"No. I'm impatient."

Sighing, he completely opened his golden orbs and twisted until he faced Kagome, resting his chin on a hand.

"All right, what is it?"

She giggled and suddenly pounded on the boy, surprising him as she began nuzzling his neck and rubbing his nose in an affectionate fashion. "I love you. . ."

"I love you, too," he smiled, linking hands with his mate and kissing her cheek. "But couldn't you have waited to say that until morning?"

"No. I told you, I'm impatient. And," she added, her eyes twinkling in the moon light pouring through the window. "I have a surprise. . ."

His eyebrows raising in curiosity, Kagome giggled as his ears twitched.

"A surprise. . .?"

"A Christmas present."

"Again, can't it wait until morning?"

"No. For the third time- I'm impatient. So come on."

Hopping out of bed, the ebony haired girl tugged her mate to his feet; their hands locked as she led him into the living room.

Gently pushing Inu-Yasha onto the couch, Kag flicked on the Christmas tree, softly lighting the room with the glowing of iridescent colors.

Then she sat next to Inu on the couch, snuggling into his side.

"Well?" he smirked playfully. "Where's my present?"

Kagome grinned back as pushed herself to her knees.

He couldn't have phrased his question any better.

Gently taking Inu-Yasha's hand, she pressed it to her abdomen.

"Here."

His eyes widened as he looked from his hand to his mate's beaming face.

Kag giggled as he stuttered incoherently.

"You- You're-?"

She nodded happily, squealing in delighted surprise as Inu swept her up in his arms and kissed her continuously, a huge smile on his face.

"I take it you like your gift. . .?" the girl giggled as she wrapped her arms around her mate, snuggling into his chest.

"I love it," he murmured, nuzzling her neck lovingly, gently placing his hand over her abdomen again. "And gods, I love you, Kag-chan."

"I love you, too," she whispered through happy tears. "I love you so much. . . I can't stand to think. . . what might have happened. . ."

"But it doesn't matter now, does it?" he smiled, kissing her gently. "Because we'll be together forever."

Kagome beamed back as she covered his hands with her own. "Yes. We'll all be together forever. . ."

~*~