

On the Bridge

WARNING – SUICIDE CONTENT!

Moonlight reflected from the dark water. The changes in its silvery pattern allowed Tannel to see that, despite its stationary appearance, the river beneath him was flowing fast and strong.

The little rabbit sat on the wall of the bridge, dangling his legs over the edge and staring down at the charcoal gray of his tuxedo and the dark river below. Four years ago he had come to this bridge, stood on the edge and looked down. Back then, his attention had been so fixed on the water and the long drop he had been completely oblivious to the predator creeping up behind him.

This time he wasn't so engrossed. Tannel's long ears twitched as they picked up the soft pad of bare paws on concrete. The vixen was light on her feet but it took more than that to get past a rabbit's sharp hearing, when they were paying attention at least.

He chose not to give any sign that he had heard her but simply sat and waited as she drew near. Eventually, the fox seemed to realize that he must have already noticed her presence and gave up her attempt to move quietly. Stepping forward, she rested her elbows on the wall he was sitting on and stared down alongside him.

"You don't need me to grab you again, do you?" she asked at last.

Tannel let out a dry laugh. "Nah, I still have the scars from last time." He touched the jagged mark on his right ear as he spoke. The vixen's claws had sliced clean through skin and cartilage as she lunged forward to catch him and, for just a moment, his entire weight had been hanging from that ear. Then she had grabbed his shirt with her free hand and roughly hauled him back over the wall.

"You know you could have called me?" she asked. "I'd have walked here with you. Kept the other preds away."

Tannel shrugged. "Anyone out hunting tonight will likely be skulking around the bars, looking for party-goers too drunk to realize that hunting hours has started. Besides, I knew you'd find me here."

Denji gave him an annoyed look. "It wasn't the first place I tried. I kind of assumed you'd be out celebrating if you weren't sensible enough to stay inside. I certainly wasn't expecting to find you here of all places. Seriously, Tannel, are you okay?"

He nodded. "Better than okay. I came out here because it's a good reminder of how far I have come."

She raised an eyebrow. "You sure? I know results day can be tough. I know that I haven't always gone easy on you but I promise I won't judge if you want someone to talk to."

A slight smile crossed the rabbit's face and he pulled an open envelope from his tuxedo's inner pocket and handed it over. The vixen frowned as she pulled out the letter inside and started to read, then her eyes went wide. "I take it back, I'm judging," she commented. "Tannel, do you know how few people get accepted into Bryeridge? And they almost never take prey."

The bunny grinned. "I guess they decided to make an exception," he smirked. "I did get near perfect marks and Oof!" Whatever else he had been planning to say was cut short as the vixen pulled him into a tight hug.

“Oh Tannel, I can't tell you how proud I am of you right now.” she mumbled as she squeezed the air out of him. “And you once told me that you were never going to achieve anything.”

Tannel winced slightly as he remembered saying those words, on this same bridge no less. Once Denji had dragged him back to safety she had been furious and demanded to know what he had been thinking. At the time, Tannel had assumed that the strange vixen had rescued him only to send him on a one way trip through her digestive tract. From what little he had seen of predators with their catches, he knew it would not be the quick death he had been hoping for but had also lacked the motivation to resist. Her snarling expression, however, had provoked a terror in him that he had not been able to ignore and he had answered her questions more out of fear than any desire for someone to talk to.

At the time it had seemed pointless. He had described to her his lack of purpose, the fact that, as a rabbit, he knew he was never likely to amount to anything in life, even told her that it was only on the best days that he could bring himself to feel bad about these things and that the rest of the time he felt very little of anything. Through it all, he had been utterly convinced that the conversation was a waste of time that would inevitably end with her licking traces of his fur from her lips. After all, that was how things were supposed to go when a worthless rabbit found himself in the clutches of a fox during hunting hours. He was just a meal to her.

To his surprise, the conversation had not ended with a short trip down her esophagus, although her expression had suggested that she would have liked nothing more than to bite a chunk out of him. Instead, she had grabbed him by the wrist and dragged him away, growling under her breath the whole way to her house.

Once inside, she had slammed a couple of forms down in front of him and demanded that he fill them out. Tannel had done so with barely any protest. Documents signed by captured prey were not legally enforceable so it didn't really matter what he agreed to. More to the point, the slightest rumble that came from Denji's throat each time he hesitated overrode any resistance he could have mustered. After weeks of barely feeling anything, not hunger, nor interest, nor amusement, it was strange to suddenly have an emotion again but even the slightest glare from the predator was enough to send a surge of adrenaline through his body. Of course, there were emotions he would have taken in preference to mind-freezing terror, but at least it was something.

Denji had not allowed him to leave her house that night. She hadn't actually imprisoned him, although Tannel had noticed the row of padlocked cages that lay empty in her kitchen, but she hadn't really needed to. Even the slightest glare from her was enough to put a stop to any escape plans he could have come up with.

The next morning she had walked him back to his house, muttered something about finding him if he tried to leave, then stormed off again. Once she was finally gone, the terror she had inspired in him had quickly dwindled and been replaced by a sudden surge of relief. He had survived an encounter with a predator during hunting hours. He didn't know how or why but somehow he was still alive. That sensation of relief had lasted for maybe an hour or so, and then he had fallen back into the endless numbness that had consumed his life in the previous weeks.

The next few days had passed at a crawl, each one feeling more like a week than the twenty four hours that it actually was. Despite this, there was not a single thing that Tannel could remember happening during that time. He had eaten and slept at the regular times and, between that, he had waited for the next to occur. No event in his life had been worth mentioning until the day that Denji had turned up on his doorstep.

This time he had no reason to fear her. It was the middle of the day and he was in his own home. Legally, there was absolutely nothing she could do to him under those circumstances, however, he had quickly discovered that Denji didn't care. Despite his protests, she had dragged him out of his house, down the street, and into a waiting taxi. For a moment, Tannel had assumed that this was going to turn into one of the very rare cases of illegal predation he had sometimes heard about. Instead, Denji had instructed the driver to take them to the local university, then had dragged Tannel into what had turned out to be her own office and given him more papers to sign. That was how, just a few weeks later, Tannel had found himself sitting in a lecture theater, enrolled on a course in Submolecular Physics and Engineering.

Of course, that had not been the end to the numbness. It came back repeatedly, sometimes dominating his life every day for weeks on end. It was, however, far harder for it to control him. If he started missing lectures, failed to turn in the assigned homework, or even allowed his grade to slip, then the next thing he knew there would be a snarling vixen at his door, demanding an explanation and more than willing to force him to complete whatever catchup she deemed appropriate. As a lecturer in his subject there was little he could keep from her and she was uniquely equipped to explain any aspects of the course he was struggling with. The numbness could blot out every other emotion he felt, but it could never protect him from the surge of terror each time Denji flashed her fangs at him.

The first year had been hell. The subject had been far beyond him, particularly given his lackluster grades in mathematics at high school. Some days it seemed that she was at his door almost every night and, despite the fact that she never actually hurt him, his fear that she might never dwindle. The second year went a little better. He found that there were days he could work without having to constantly think of Denji to keep himself motivated and, in turn, her visits had become less frequent. By the third year, he had actually started to enjoy himself. Once properly applied, he found he could focus on the work he was given and do so without once having to think of the snarling predator that would visit him if he did not. He had started to make friends within his class and, for the first time in far too long, he could genuinely feel emotions other than fear or apathy on a regular basis. One of those friends had even turned out to be Denji. Now that she no longer had to bully him into completing every assignment, he began to see a whole new side of her. At first he could only talk to her about the coursework but, as time went on, he found more and more topics opening up between them. By the last semester she had ceased to growl at him at all, and now only came round to talk and see how he was.

His fourth and final year had been a little different. He had cut back on the socializing that had begun in his third year and busied himself in his work instead. Before meeting Denji he would have been hard pressed to even define what Submolecular Physics was, but now he found himself becoming more and more engrossed. Denji came by less often, a new module that the university was having her teach was occupying a great deal of her attention, and Tannel himself struggled to find the time to visit her. Tonight was the first time they had both been free to talk in over a month.

Tannel gave a soft chuckle, realizing that he had zoned out and not responded to her statement. "Yeah, it's hard to believe I once felt that way. The whole world seems so different now. I can achieve anything I want if I apply myself."

Denji smiled and tucked the letter back into its envelope. "You already have," she told him. "Not many rabbits make it to the end of their course and far fewer do so with such spectacular grades."

Tannel grinned bashfully, then asked something that had bothered him on and off for the last four years. "When we first met, how did you know I'd be any good at physics?"

"I didn't." the vixen answered. "I thought it might help you, but I only shoved you on a physics course so I could keep an eye on you. Truth be told, I thought you'd drop out within a month and certainly never imagined that someday I'd be congratulating you on an acceptance letter to Bryeridge."

Tannel frowned. He had always assumed that there was something she had seen in him that had driven her to help him. If it had truly been a random decision then couldn't he have ended up on a biology course instead, or as an art student? Would he have done half as well as he had in physics under those circumstances? If so, did that mean that he could have excelled in any course she had put him in, or was it merely luck that he had ended up studying something he was naturally talented at? He wasn't sure what to make of that. More to the point, if Denji really hadn't seen something special in him, then why had she chosen to save him at all? Why hadn't she simply devoured him the first night they had met, like any other fox surely would have after catching a helpless rabbit?

It certainly wasn't squeamishness or a reluctance to indulge in her carnivorous nature. While her stomach was currently flat and empty, Tannel had seen her with a full belly on plenty of occasions in the past. Once he had even sat in a lecture she was teaching and realized that her meal was still alive, still squirming beneath the predator's glossy fur as she explained the mathematics of waves to her audience, completely indifferent to the protests of her breakfast. He had also learned when visiting her that the cages in her kitchen were not always empty.

Careless prey, many of them fellow students who had only wanted a night out, had all ended up sitting in those wire cubes as they waited their turn in the vixen's digestive tract. After a few awkward encounters, Tannel had learned to avoid that room of her house. It was one thing to ignore a squirming bulge in a carnivore's belly, but it was quite another to turn away when a fellow rabbit got down on their knees and begged you to unlock the cage. So why had he been spared when so many others had not? After thinking it over for a minute, he decided not to ask. Whatever her reasons had been, he wasn't sure he wanted to know.

"So, we're probably not going to see much of each other after I leave." he stated. "At least for a couple of years."

Denji nodded. "That's life." she said. "There are busy times and less busy times. I will miss you though."

Tannel turned to look at her. The vixen's face was illuminated by the moon and her bright eyes seemed to sparkle in the silver light. His gaze dropped from her eyes to her muzzle. Just a few years ago she had terrified him and each time those lips had pulled back to reveal her deadly fangs he had been reduced to a trembling mess, convinced that they would be sinking into his throat at any moment. Now he was picturing something quite different. With a sudden burst of courage, he got down from the wall and stepped closer to her, one hand reaching up to brush her arm.

It was meant as a casual gesture, one that could be dismissed as entirely friendly if she chose. Instead, she knelt down to be closer to his height and reached out to stroke his cheek. "Oh Tannel, I really am going to miss you, you know?" she whispered.

It was not the reaction he had been expecting. He had been afraid that she might pull away from his touch and resigned to the fact that, at best, she was likely to view it only as a friendly one. "I ... I'm not leaving for a couple of months, you know?" he stated. "We still have time to mmph..."

His sentence was cut short as Denji's lips were suddenly pressed against his own. For a moment he

was too shocked to respond, this was far beyond even his best case assumptions for how this could go, then he relaxed and basked in the sensation of her mouth against his own. How long had he spent staring up at those lips in fear? Now he found that the silken touch of her muzzle against his was the best feeling in the world.

Denji's fingers brushed against his chest, then climbed higher, running over the satin material of his tuxedo. As she reached his throat, she wound her fingers through the loop of his bow tie, then gently eased the knot apart.

The feeling of her undressing him sent a pleased shiver through Tannel's fur and his long ears folded back in utter bliss. Eventually, she broke away from his muzzle and Tannel finally opened his eyes to gaze at the beautiful vixen as she playfully rolled the slither of fabric into a ball. Denji smiled back at him, then tossed the little scrap of silk over the wall.

"H ... hey?" Tannel protested. "I ... this suit's only rented. I need to return it tomorrow."

Denji gave a shrug that suggested she really didn't care about such trivial matters. "You gave them a deposit, right? The company won't lose much if they don't get it back."

"But I won't get my deposit back." Tannel protested. It had been a particularly large amount too. Most companies were very reluctant to rent anything to a member of the prey species, particularly on a night when they knew that many of them would be out celebrating during hunting hours.

"That's okay. You won't need it." Denji assured him. Leaning in for another kiss, she started helping him out of the tuxedo.

Tannel squirmed beneath her grip. Her tone had been comforting but the words were anything but. To make matters worse, he was having a hard time resisting anything she did to him. Her tongue on his lips felt incredible, and the gentle way she helped him out of the jacket made him desperately want to be free of it.

As Denji succeeded in slipping the jacket off his shoulders, she finally broke the kiss and Tannel was able to speak again. "What ... What do you ... why won't I need it?" he stammered, still too flustered to speak properly.

Denji's long tongue ran once over her lips, gathering up leftover traces of his flavor. "Isn't it obvious, little bunny?" she asked. "I'm going to eat you."

Tannel's world crumbled. Too shocked to reply, he simply watched as Denji tossed the top half of his tuxedo over the bridge, then started unbuckling the fly of his pants. "But ... but, I ..." he protested but couldn't find any way of finishing that sentence. Denji was his oldest friend. She was the one who had saved him when he had been at his lowest and had been the one constant by his side during the slow and painful climb to where he was now. He had a few other friends on his course but none that had saved his life. None that he trusted half as much as Denji.

The vixen pulled his pants down around his ankles. "Left leg up." she instructed, forcing him to lift it so she could pull the fabric over his shoe. "Theres a good bunny. Now your right."

"Denji ... why?" the miserable rabbit protested.

"So I can get your pants off, obviously." she smirked.

He glared at her. "Please, you at least owe me an answer. Why are you doing this?"

She lifted his right leg and pulled the smart black pants free, then balled them up and threw them into the river. "Hmm, tell you what, if you're a good little bunny and you take your shirt off for me then maybe I'll tell you." she offered.

Tannel weighed his options for a second. Unfortunately, it was painfully obvious that she could easily remove his clothes by force. She was far stronger than him. Refusing might buy him a little more time, but it wouldn't save him from her stomach, any more than it had saved any of the other rabbits she had caught. Their friendship was the only defense he had and, up until this night, he had been confident that it would be enough.

With a reluctant whimper, the rabbit struggled out of his shirt, then handed it to his captor. "Okay, now tell me why." he demanded.

Denji took the offered garment and sent it the same way as all the others. Leaning closer, she ran her muzzle through the fur of Tannel's bare chest, breathing in his scent and feeling her saliva glands kick into overdrive. "Mmm, yes. You do smell good. Honestly, where did you think this was going, you silly morsel? You see, I'm a large hungry carnivore and when someone like that starts undressing a tasty little bunny, its usually because they want the bunny right here." she patted her midsection to demonstrate where Tannel would soon end up.

"That's not an answer." Tannel growled through gritted teeth. Wasn't it bad enough that she was planning to eat him without the teasing comments? "I want to know why you saved me if you were just going to kill me later? What was the point in helping me, in all the time and effort you've given to me, if it was all leading to this? Why didn't you just eat me that night we first met?"

"Now you do have a lot of questions, don't you my delectable snack?" the vixen laughed. "Unfortunately, good food should be tasted and not heard. Don't worry though, I'm sure a warm fox tummy will be just ..."

"Denji!" Tannel snapped. For a moment his annoyance at her belittling tone outweighed his fear of being eaten. "Stop treating me like this. I'm your friend, not some stranger you've grabbed on your way home from work. If that friendship ever meant anything to you, then you could at least use my name. Or have I been fooling myself to think I was ever anything but another meal to you?"

The fox looked momentarily shocked then, for the first time, a trace of guilt showed in her face. "I ... of course not." she relented. "I ... I'm sorry about that, Tannel. I do tend to get a little carried away when hunting but I'll try not to treat you that way again. You are my friend and I really do appreciate it."

"Then why are you doing this?" the poor bunny protested. "And why wait all this time when you could have eaten me four years ago?"

Denji thought for a moment, then sighed, her expression becoming more serious. "Look, I'll do my best to answer that but, while I do, would you mind taking off your shoes?"

Again, Tannel hesitated but eventually complied. What was the point of resisting anyway? Much as he hated to admit it, Denji was the only reason he was alive today. If she really wanted him dead then perhaps he was better off that way. He started undoing the laces of his right shoe.

"Okay, I guess the best way to explain this would be to start with a question for you." Denji began.

“How have the last four years been, Tannel?”

The rabbit paused in removing his shoe as he considered that. How could he possibly sum up four years, particularly in what had turned out to be the most turbulent and inspiring period of his life? “Turbulent” he stated at last, “and inspiring. Before meeting you I would never have believed I could have achieved half of what I have done in that time. What would once have been impossible, became challenging, then trivial. If you could bring my past self forwards to this night, I doubt they would even recognize me.”

Denji nodded. “So you've enjoyed them?” she asked.

Tannel frowned. “Enjoyable ... isn't the way I would describe them at all. It's been hard work and not just the subject matter. Changing who I am and the way I think was not an easy process, and you should know as you've been with me through the majority of it. There have certainly been moments that were enjoyable ...” Like five minutes ago when your lips were against mine and I didn't have to worry about imminent death, his brain added. “... but most of it has been an uphill struggle.”

“Okay but, given the choice, you wouldn't take them back, would you? If you could have chosen whether to die that night or this one, would you really pick the former?”

“Of course not!” Tannel insisted. “I've come so far from where I was then. I can barely even consider myself the same person.”

“Then say thank you.” Denji insisted.

Tannel blinked. Was she expecting him to thank her for her intention to eat him? “You mean for saving me, right? I have thanked you for that. I get that I could never say it enough but I ...”

“No, not for saving you.” Denji interrupted. “Well, not exactly. More for the four years of life I gave you. While you might not say that you enjoyed them, it's pretty clear that you at least feel they were fulfilling and that you are better off for having lived them.”

“I am, but that doesn't mean...”

“Say thank you.” Denji insisted.

“But I ...” The slightest hint of a growl came from the vixen's throat and Tannel cut himself short. “Th ... thank you.” he mumbled.

Apparently it was still not enough. “For?” she prompted.

“I ...” He hung his head. “Thank you for the last four years. They have been difficult but they have also been the best of my life.”

“And when someone gives you something precious, is it fair to demand they give you more?”

“But ... but I've just been accepted into Bryeridge.” Tannel protested. Of all the times she could have sprung this on him, could she possibly have chosen a worse one?

“Yes, and you told me that night that you could never achieve anything of any note, so this was also my gift to you. You achieved something, something that most rabbits could never have managed. I had my hopes, but I never expected you would come so far. You proved yourself wrong and showed

both me and the rest of the world just what you can manage when you set your mind to it. Now, how about those shoes?"

Tannel realized that he had completely forgotten about his half of their arrangement and reluctantly removed both his shoes and socks, rolling the socks into balls and placing them inside the shoes before handing them over to the fox.

Like everything else, Denji casually tossed them over the wall. A moment later, Tannel heard a soft splosh as they landed in the river below. He was now standing in front of the vixen in nothing but his boxers.

Tannel whimpered in embarrassment and fear. With every article of clothing lost he felt less and less like a person. Less like a physics student, less like Denji's friend, and more like a worthless piece of meat. That was the problem with being a rabbit, no matter what else he might accomplish or how he tried to define himself, at the end of the day his real purpose would always be to provide sustenance to those larger than him.

Denji inspected him then eagerly licked her lips. "Just one thing left to go and then you can slip down into my stomach." she teased.

"Is that really all I am to you?" the bunny protested. "I'm just a meal now, like any other rabbit?"

Denji's smug expression vanished instantly. "Ah, I'm sorry Tannel, I'm doing it again, aren't I? It's just so hard not to tease you a little." She shuffled closer, positioning herself so that she was kneeling with one leg on either side of him. Tannel tried to back away but the wall of the bridge was right behind him. Very gently, Denji wrapped her arms around him and pulled him closer. "Of course you aren't just food to me, you silly bunny." she assured him. "I know you. I've helped you when you struggled with your course, pushed you to carry on when your insecurities tried to take over. You're honestly the closest friend I have. Do you really think I'd feel the same about you as I do about some anonymous meal I caught in the street?"

Tannel could only shake his head. "I guess not." he mumbled. Being held in Denji's arms was doing strange things to his brain. Some deep instinctive part of him recognized the carnivore and was screaming at him to escape. A higher function, however, knew that her touch was a compassionate one and that comfort was what he needed above all else right now. He wanted to bury his face in her fur and cry until the nightmare was over, but he also wanted to struggle free of her hold and run towards whatever safety he could find. Caught between the two desires, he simply trembled in her grip.

"And ... well ... I know you have every reason to fear me right now, but I'd like to think the same applies both ways. You're far more than just a meal to me and I'm not merely some scary predator to you, right?" She leaned closer, her cold nose brushing against the fur of his neck. "We both know that, as a bunny, you'll probably end up in someone's stomach eventually, but do you really consider mine to be as scary as some random predator's?"

"I ... ah ... Denji, please ..." Tannel gasped. His long ears flattened back as he felt her lips open and those deadly canines brush against his throat. How was he supposed to answer anything like this? The sensation of a fox's teeth on his neck made his whole body tingle. He stood stiffly in her grip, completely paralyzed by her touch.

"Hmm?" Denji pressed, still waiting for an answer. Very slowly, her jaws parted and she pushed her muzzle further, the two rows of life ending points sliding over each side of his throat. "Tannel? Is

this really so bad?" The words came out a little muffled but her prey had no difficulty in understanding them.

"... Denji ... please?" Tannel whimpered. His breath came in ragged gasps and he struggled not to pass out. He had been so terrified of Denji's fangs for so long, even after he had learned to trust her that fear had still lingered, and now they were at his throat, capable of ending his life with a single bite.

Her jaws tightened and Tannel squeaked in alarm, convinced that he had taken his last breath, but Denji stopped just short of breaking his skin. Her teeth pressed against his throat, and Tannel could feel each sharp point digging in, but she didn't actually draw blood. To his surprise, the pressure on his neck had a calming effect on him. Of the two contrary reactions to Denji's touch, the one screaming at him to run seemed to have given up, leaving only the desire to take comfort from her presence.

Gradually, his breathing returned to its normal rate. Her teeth were at his throat. With the slightest twitch she could end his life and there was nothing he could do except hope that she would not. Realizing that he was helpless had brought a strange sense of peace to the rabbit. Slowly, Tannel raised one hand and brushed the fur on her cheek, just as he could feel her fingers moving over his own body. The vixen's tongue lapped at his throat and he noticed a damp patch spreading down to his chest as she drooled over him.

"Well?" Denji mumbled, her teeth digging just a fraction deeper as she spoke.

Tannel blinked a couple of times before realizing that she was still waiting for an answer. "I ... I would rather be eaten by you than anyone else." he managed, only realizing how true those words were as he said them. "I ... I owe you everything, Denji."

The fox smiled then gently withdrew her jaws, parting from Tannel's throat with a soft kiss. "Mmh, I can't tell you how good it is to hear that." Denji chuckled. "Say it again."

Tannel hesitated, trembling slightly as the surge of adrenaline left him. "I don't want to die." he gasped as soon as he trusted himself to speak again. "But, if I had to, I'd rather die in your stomach than anyone else's."

Denji shivered, visibly delighting in her prey's confession. "Oh yes, and I promise that you will." she told him, then held up her hand to show him his boxers.

A little blush shone through the fur on Tannel's cheeks as he realized he was completely naked and he quickly covered his groin with both hands. He had been so fixated on her jaws around his throat he hadn't even noticed her undressing him.

"Oh, stop that." Denji laughed. "You know you don't have anything to hide from me. You're mine, Tannel, and I'm going to enjoy every bite of your scrumptious body." Her words were swiftly backed up by a soft rumble from her waist.

Tannel winced at the sound but couldn't deny a sliver of morbid fascination. Instead of trying to get away from the hungry fox he stepped closer, resting his head against her belly and listening to the soft gurgles from within. "Are ... are you really going to do this?" he asked weakly. Now that her teeth were no longer at his throat the fear was starting to come back. A moment ago, death had seemed inevitable and all he could hope for was to choose the means. Now that he was out of the vixen's jaws, if still very much under her control, the desperate need to survive was returning.

“fraid so.” the fox answered. “You can hear my stomach calling for you. When I first made you enroll, I was sure you wouldn't stick at it. I was going to gulp you down the moment you gave up on yourself and dropped out, but you never did. I really didn't expect you to make it this far, and am absolutely delighted that you did, but my tummy has been waiting for you for four years now. Let's not make it wait any longer, huh?” Her hands brushed through his bare fur, coming to rest beneath his arms, then she gently lifted him towards her smiling lips.

“Denji, please?” Tannel whimpered as his feet left the bridge. “We're friends. Can't you find someone else if you're hungry? I ... I'll always be yours, but you don't have to do this so soon.”

“Now, I already told you, it's not nice to ask for more when I've already let you live so much longer than you would have.” she chided. “Just be grateful for what I gave you and try to accept that it is over now.” She lifted him higher, licking her lips then opening them to reveal the dark tunnel of her throat.

Tannel squirmed helplessly in her grip. The sight of her waiting esophagus terrified him and he blurted out the first thing he could think of that might help him escape. “Why should I be grateful? Back then I was trying to die and you saved me but now I just want to live. Why should I be grateful to you for taking away everything I've worked so hard for?” Tears were starting to dribbled down his muzzle as he spoke.

Denji closed her mouth and gave him a hard look. “Is that really the way you feel, or are you just trying to postpone things?” she demanded.

Tannel avoided her gaze. He knew from experience how hard it was to lie to the fox. No matter what he tried, she always seemed able to guess his inner thoughts. “I ... I guess not.” he admitted.

The vixen's face softened. “That's what I thought.” she confirmed. “But even if that was how you felt, it wouldn't change things. If it really was so cruel of me to have let you live back then, then the last thing I should do is make the same mistake again.” A trace of a smile crept over her muzzle. “I know you, Tannel. In the short time we have been friends you've already accomplished more than anyone could have expected. If I let you go, I know you would just go on to achieve even more. Letting you live a few more years wouldn't make this any easier for you. If anything, you would be on the cusp of even greater things, and even more desperate for just a little more time to finish them. I picked tonight because you have just tied up everything you were working on here, but haven't yet had time to get started on anything new. You even got an evening to celebrate your accomplishments so this really does seem like the kindest time to do this.”

Very weakly, Tannel managed a nod. He was grateful for everything she had done but he still couldn't bring himself to accept the fate she had planned for him. Even though her jaws were currently closed, the image of her gaping throat still danced in front of his vision, wide, dark, and ready for him. Was that really what he deserved? After all the work he had put into his studies, was being digested really the best outcome he could hope for? Well ... being digested by Denji, he reminded himself. Perhaps that outcome wasn't quite so terrible after all.

Denji stared down at the trembling rabbit in her arms. He had looked so smart, dressed up in his tuxedo. Now that he was naked, he just looked appetizing to her. His smell wafted into her nose, reminding her that she had deliberately skipped her last few hunts in preparation for this night. “Well, if you've quite finished stalling, I'd like to enjoy the meal I earned four years ago.” she told him, then raised the delectable bunny to her jaws.

Tannel squealed in alarm as, once again, his vision was filled with drooling fox maw and the terrifying darkness that lay beyond. "Wait! Please Denji, just another minute! Please?"

The vixen sighed. "Look, I know you are scared but I'm hungry and another minute isn't going to make this any easier for you. Trust me, I've eaten enough people to know that drawing things out is never better for the prey."

"But ... I ... I ..." Tannel stammered, his mind racing as he tried to put together exactly what it was he wanted to say. Unfortunately, he wasn't sure that he could have found the right words in ten years and he could feel Denji's patience running out with every passing second. "I ... Denji, I ... Thank you." he managed. "I ... I know I said it before but that was because you growled at me. I just wanted to say it and really mean it. Thank you for the time you gave me, and for helping with my studies, and for being my friend. I ... I'm sorry that that time is over now but I really am grateful for what you gave me."

The vixen closed her mouth and smiled. "I'm grateful for your friendship as well, Tannel. It's been a true pleasure knowing you." she told him. "Also ... well ... I've done my best to be gentle so far but, I'm sorry to say that my stomach is going to be a little rough with you once you're inside me. It's just part of being digested, I'm afraid. Still, you're tough. I know you'll be able to handle it."

Tannel looked nervous but managed a nod. They were so close their muzzles were practically touching. Each time she breathed out, the warm air would ruffle through his fur and make his nose twitch. Then she would inhale again and drink up his scent.

"Ready?" Denji whispered.

It was the hardest thing Tannel had ever had to do. "Ready." he answered and the vixen's muzzle split into a gaping mass of pink.

Despite his claim, Tannel couldn't help but squeak in terror as Denji's jaws engulfed him. For one brief moment he could feel her tongue beneath his chin and see flecks of moonlight reflecting off her drool, then she pushed him forwards and everything went dark.

Tannel kicked and struggled as he felt his head slide over the back of Denji's tongue and down into her tight esophagus. It was an entirely unconscious reaction, ingrained by millennia of generations at the bottom of the food chain. Still, even if he had been in control of himself right then, the little rabbit may well have struggled just as hard. Being eaten was a lot scarier than he had thought.

Of course, just as Tannel's instincts told him to struggle, Denji's told her exactly how to handle a reluctant meal. She quickly adjusted her grip, pinning his arms to his sides and positioning him so that his flailing paws could not reach her. The vixen's tongue left damp streaks in his fur as it explored his chest and he could hear her making appreciative mumbles at his flavor. Then the wet muscles around his head contracted, dragging him down with the first peristaltic wave.

A quick jerk from Denji's head and he found himself sinking even deeper. His cotton tail flicked in blind panic as it passed her lips, then only his flailing legs remained unswallowed. Within the vixen's throat, Tannel could hear the sounds of her body, the steady thump of her heart, the wet slurp as his drool soaked fur was squeezed deeper and, worst of all, the eager gurgles of her stomach getting ready for his arrival.

Denji tossed back her head and gulped down the bunny's thrashing legs. A sudden yelp came from her midsection as Tannel's head emerged from her esophagus into the wider space below but she

ignored his protests. Her stomach walls muffled his words to the point of incomprehensibility anyway.

All too soon her delightful meal came to an end. Tannel's twitching paws passed between her lips and she closed her jaws around him. After taking one final taste, she swallowed and felt the last of him slide down her throat and curl up in her tummy.

With the rabbit finally in his proper place, Denji stood up and stretched. She could feel Tannel's hands against her inner walls as he explored the limits of his new home. Then the surface of her belly rippled as he started to kick. Denji licked her lips, her long tongue removing the last few traces of rabbit fur from her muzzle. Tannel's struggles caused her no discomfort at all. Her stomach walls were elastic and easily able to handle thrashing prey. In fact, the little rabbit's movements only served to stimulate her digestive system and hasten his impending conversion into nutrients.

Denji let out a contented sigh as she felt her stomach starting to secrete its enzyme rich juices over the naked bunny. "Well Tannel, you were truly delicious, and if you keep squirming like that you'll be broken down in no time." she commented, giving her belly an affectionate pat, then rolling her shirt back over the bulge he made. Muffled sounds came from within, but they were still too distorted for her to understand. "I really am so proud of how far you've come, you know." she told him. "I'll definitely be keeping your acceptance letter, maybe even get it framed. It will make a nice memento of you, as both a keen student and a good friend."

Bending down, she picked up the envelope from where it had fallen and stuffed it into one pocket. "And, of course, as a very tasty meal." she gloated, then turned and headed home to get a good night's sleep and digest her favorite student.