

Beyond the surface

A story of two racing-drivers and their unusual relationship

Von Konnichi

One-shot

Tyler walked along the dimly lit hallway in which was his hotel room. For some reason he always got the room at the end of these long corridors. When he was only two doors away from his teammate Leonardo's room, he heard a somewhat worrying noise. A suppressed scream, as if one woke suddenly from a nightmare in the dead of night, which it was precisely in that moment. Anxiously he stepped up to the door that was slightly ajar. "How very careless of you, dude", he thought astonished as he silently entered the room. This was so unlike his overly careful, not to say even paranoid teammate. It was worrying. And what he saw then was even more worrying.

Since when did Leo sleep in clothes? In *those* clothes. Had he not known him for so long Tyler would have thought himself hallucinating. There lay his teammate in ripped jeans, a black t-shirt with a bright red print, his dark hair messy and even some smudgy black make-up around his closed eyes. A pair of black ankle boots and a studded belt were strewn carelessly on the floor next to the bed. This was a paradox. This whole man was a paradox. In public Leo always acted like a very together young man with a thing for tidy clothes and tidiness in itself. Well, he had to have his neat image, being a Formula 1-driver, otherwise he might lose his job. That was all his manager's fault, having pegged him that way at the start of his career already. In reality he was downright chaotic, leaving behind a trail of destruction wherever he went and unable to keep a room tidy for more than ten minutes. Only those whom he thought he could trust, which were not many, knew this other side of him, his true self, his punky edge, his passion and his sometimes unrestrained outbursts of emotion and temper that made him all the more adorable and, well, attractive. All who knew him that way loved him... all except himself. Leo just lacked the capacity of doing such a thing.

The man on the bed stirred, pulling his visitor back to reality. This visitor suddenly became much more aware of the other man, his best friend, his teammate. Had he always been so frail, so thin in an unhealthy way, as if the wind could blow him away? And had he always looked so good at the same time, so angelic yet delightfully dangerous? Yes, he had, stated the blonde man with a blush. Leo moved again, mumbling in his sleep and embracing the comforter even more as if it were a human being. How insolent of him to look so incredibly innocent while being sprawled out on the bed in this superhumanly sexy pose. Like a still picture of a male stripper on the one hand and of a vulnerable child hugging his oversized teddy-bear on the other

hand. Tyler tried to eliminate those ridiculous thoughts. But he could not fail to notice how those tight jeans highlighted the perfectly curved butt and the slender legs of the guy on the bed.

From one second to the other Leo became uneasy, moaning as if in pain and clutching the sheets tightly. He tossed around, giving out little screams and wails of terror. Worried, his friend tried to soothe him, preferably without waking him. The younger man suddenly noticed the smell of alcohol in the cool air. He had been drinking; what an obvious explanation for the state he was in. No wonder after the misery he experienced in the race today, being shot off the track in the first corner – again. Was he dreaming about that? Really, he shouldn't be. Or maybe it was something else, some great horror from his past that was never to be revealed to anyone. Or it was just a bad dream like everyone has them now and then. Whispering his name and telling him everything would be all right, Tyler stroked his black hair in a pacifying way. Indeed, Leo calmed down again and a little smile curved his lips. Was he awake? Did he know his teammate was sitting at the edge of his bed? The blonde man was just about to get up and leave when his friend finally opened his eyes wearily. "Tyler...", he whispered, his Italian accent and his drunkenness almost making the word incomprehensible. He slowly reached out and took the other one's hand before drifting off to sleep again. Tyler was bewildered, not to say shocked, by this little gesture and even more by the look in Leo's almost black eyes. This scared, vulnerable look, crying out for someone to help, someone to give him the love and affection that he so desperately needed. What the hell was wrong with him? He dressed up like crazy in his Punk-clothes, went out to a bar on the evening after the race, when there were still plenty people there who might recognize him, got drunk and finally, leaving the door open, crashed onto his bed where he was tortured by those nightmares. But now he lay soundly asleep as if the mere knowledge about Tyler's presence was enough to block out the dreams and the sorrow they were a result of. The latter finally decided to give him what he obviously needed. He freed his hand from the cold grasp, got up carefully and went to close the door and hang the 'Do not disturb' sign on its handle. He returned to the bed, took off his shoes and jacket and lay down next to his friend whom he embraced shyly. Leo immediately wrapped his arms around him and rested his head against his shoulder. In that moment Tyler felt a sort of sensation, as if he had just gone through the 'Eau Rouge' corner in Spa at full speed. What the fuck was that all about?

It wasn't unpleasant, no, not at all but it was... scary. Why should this physical contact between friends unleash that sort of feeling? Was it the closeness of the embrace that enabled Tyler to feel every detail of the body next to him? And if he said every detail, he meant it. Or was it the fact that the Italian was a damn hot little thing, probably the hottest man he knew? Well, he wasn't into men at all... but if he had been, he would have dragged his teammate to the bedroom or wherever already when he first laid eyes on him. Or was it just because it was Leo? There was, in fact, a very special sort of friendship between them. Maybe it was something beyond that and he hadn't realized yet. It could be that way, really. His sister once mentioned that there was like a gleaming in the atmosphere around them when they were talking to each other and that their eyes sparkled when they met. She said it looked as if they were flirting and would start kissing each other wildly in the next second. She obviously liked that thought. Secretly, Tyler himself also liked it, fantasized about it

sometimes and had even done it once. He hadn't been able to resist those lips and this very special wicked grin that only few people had the chance to see on Leo's gorgeous face. They had been on their way home from a party, slightly drunk and talking complete sexy nonsense. At some point Tyler had shoved his friend into a deserted little side road, pinned him to the wall and kissed him. Just like this, out of the blue, as if it were the most natural thing on earth. But suddenly, realizing what he was doing he had let go of him. Leo had looked at him with those big, scared black eyes, his expression showing nothing but absolute shock. "I'm sorry", Tyler had said and meant it. "'Bout what? Only a kiss, wasn't it?", Leo had replied, having retrieved his coolness. "Yeah... only a kiss", Tyler had mumbled with huge relief. A kiss that still made him blush now and that he had thought about quite often since then. Thought about it and then brushed the thought away, telling himself vigorously that he had been drunk and that this was the kind of thing drunk people and their best friends did from time to time. But the subject still hadn't been put to rest, not in his mind.

Anyway, in this moment his worries shouldn't be about the science of sexual gravity but about his best friend's psyche. What was wrong with him? Hmm, lovesick, maybe? Frustrated about his bad luck that seemed to stalk him recently? Or finally sick of being the average, tidy boy next door? Or possibly, and very likely, he had just kinda gone off-the-wall from one second to the next. That was the sort of thing Leo would do. His brain didn't work like other people's. Tyler remembered Leo's cousin once telling him to "beware of his wacky five minutes". There was a sort of switch that suddenly made him shift from the first to the seventh gear, to speak in car-terms. His eyes grew even darker and began to sparkle and he whirled around like a lunatic, sometimes boozing until he passed out, other times in a desperate need for sex and often both. Tyler was the only person who managed to capture him when he was in that state. All he actually had to do was grab him and look straight into his black eyes, telling him to calm down and he usually did. Then he would become all tired and exhausted and finally go to bed. Strangely, this only worked when Tyler did it. Had to be another aspect of their not-so-usual friendship. Smiling about this the American finally relaxed and made himself comfortable, pulling Leo even closer. The beating of his heart and his steady breathing eventually put the younger man to sleep as well.

Tyler woke in the morning when the sun had barely passed the rooftops. He sensed the small, warm body still in his arms which sent a rush of happiness through him and made him open his eyes to not only enjoy the feeling but also the sight of the beauty still sleeping next to him. Leo looked incredibly messy this morning which only made him more beautiful. He had what you would call 'bed hair' and the remainder of his black make-up was spread all around his eyes. Parts of it were located also on the front of Tyler's t-shirt in quite decorative stains. But the most distinctive feature was his peaceful expression and this little smile that Tyler felt was reserved for him and for him only, at least in this moment. But then Leo's face darkened, the smile faded and he woke up slowly. "Tyler... you're still here", he whispered, his voice cracking. There it was again, that look in his eyes. But there also was something else. Something like gratefulness and relief. "Yeah, I'm here. D' you mind?", Tyler asked quietly. "That's so very nice of you", the Italian sighed in response and wearily rested his head against his friend's shoulder again. They lay like this for a while and Tyler realized that the feeling from last night hadn't yet ceased. It was still there and it grew stronger as he stroked Leo's hair and ran his fingers down the man's spine. He

felt him shiver slightly and continued the caressing, curious about when he would be asked to stop it.

"Tyler? Can I, like... talk to you about... something?", Leo asked hesitantly. "Of course. Anything", the American replied, a bit surprised. Since when did Leo talk about his problems voluntarily? Usually, it was Tyler who came to him to get everything off his chest and not the other way round. But he would be there for him now, no matter what the problem was. He would help him solve it, even if it required tremendous strain or blood or both. Having thought this he noticed in astonishment that it had been no exaggeration. He would bleed for him or do anything else to protect him. He would die for him. "Well, y' know, it's kinda... strange", Leo began, waking him from those thoughts. "Tell me. I don't care how strange it is", Tyler said reassuringly. "It's... something's wrong... I mean, with me" The Italian sat up and put his head in his hands. "What? Are you ill?", his friend asked, alarmed and sitting up next to him instantly. A terrifying thought suddenly crossed his mind: Drugs. What if Leo had sought a way to compensate his soul for all this bad luck – and found one. But his answer erased those fears and created new ones in turn. "I dunno... It might be what you call depression. I feel... cold, like from the inside... and my mind keeps going on about these dark things, y' know... loneliness, hurting myself and... death", Leo explained, obviously overcoming his inhibitions to talk about such things. "Depression? But why? I mean... because of those accidents and stuff you had recently?", Tyler asked cautiously. He knew how serious depressions were. He had witnessed it firsthand with his sister when she was younger. "No, although these didn't really make it any better. It's something... well, personal. A problem I've been having for a long time already and I just can't take it no more", the Italian answered thoughtfully. "What sort of problem?" Tyler hoped that he would get an answer to this question. Maybe he could solve it when he knew it. "I'm afraid I can't tell you... In fact, I shall never tell anyone about it", Leo said and his expression became willful. "But if you told me, maybe I could help. It's the first step, y' know, talking about it", Tyler explained, trying to sound as reasonable as he could. But reason never helped when Leo was concerned. "No, I can't tell anyone, you least of all" It was as if the world stopped turning. "What? I thought we were best friends", Tyler asked in shock. Leo was the best friend he had ever had but now it seemed that feeling was not returned. "I can't tell you *because* you're my best friend", the dark-haired man said desperately. "That is not in the least logical", the dumbfounded American replied. They looked at each other; sad black eyes meeting concerned blue ones. "Please, Leo. I just want to help you", Tyler said softly. He could see desperation and panic suddenly taking hold of his friend.

"No, I... I've made up my mind. I don't wanna talk about it no more. Get out, please. Leave me alone", he said, his Italian accent growing more distinctive as he spoke. Tyler took his hands and looked at him closely. "Leonardo. You asked me for help. You need help. And I will help you and if I can't, I will take you to someone who can", he said insistently. His friend looked at him in terror, like a deer caught in the headlights. "I am so stupid", he said then quietly, "I've made it all worse. I'm such an idiot" He tried to remove his hands from Tyler's grasp but he wouldn't let them go. "You're no idiot, dude, you really aren't. It was very courageous of you to ask for help, you know that? It takes a whole lot to admit such a thing. And you know what? I'm fuckin' proud of you and of having you as a friend. Now, c'mon. How can I help you?" Tyler had meant all this from his heart and he really hoped that the other man understood. Indeed, a

change took place in his black eyes. "There is one way, actually", he said but then stopped again. "What?", Tyler asked anxiously, suddenly strung to the breaking point. He wanted to know. He had to know. "Kiss me", Leo whispered desperately. He finally freed his hands, grabbed Tyler's t-shirt and pulled him closer to kiss him hungrily. The younger man's brain stopped working properly when he felt their lips touch. His feelings performed a sort of somersault and he found himself responding to the kiss with all force. This was it. This was the thing he had wanted all the time without realizing it. The feeling he had missed without even knowing it existed. It was Love.

It had nothing to do with sexual desire, at least not in that moment. It was purely the wish to be with Leo forever, to hold him, kiss him and to see him smile this special smile and make his wonderful black eyes sparkle even more. Before he'd had enough of it, Leo stopped kissing him. "Tyler, please sleep with me", he begged in that desperate voice, his sexy Italian accent making him even more irresistible, "You can use me as you wish; I'll do anything you ask for. I'll be your slave for the rest of my life but please, please take me. I need you so bad" With one swift movement he had laid Tyler out flat on the bed before the man had realized it and started kissing him again. The taste of black despair on his lips brought the younger man back to reality and switched his brain back on. What had he just said? He wanted to be 'used'? Tyler pushed his friend away. "Wait! Leo, stop it", he exclaimed but the Italian did no such thing. "Stop it! You'll regret it forever. Listen to me! You're getting this wrong. Just listen to me for a minute!", he shouted, trying to get a hold of the struggling man. Leo finally gave in and looked at him. In those big, innocent eyes Tyler could literally see his best friend go to pieces. He could see the razor-sharp fragments of his very soul make his insides bleed as tears filled his eyes. His face showing nothing but pure agony, Leo turned away, curled up like a cat at the edge of the bed and started sobbing heartbreakingly. "G-get... out of h-here, please", he managed to say. "I won't. Not until I have understood what the fuck is going on in your head. And I won't leave you alone in this state of mind", Tyler replied calmly. He could imagine, no, he knew exactly why Leo had done this but he wanted to hear it from himself. "Who cares about... if I... if I kill myself now? You don't... anymore... You... you hate me now! I made you... hate me... I'm such an idiot" Now it was official: Leo had gone insane.

Violently, he slammed his own fingernails into his left arm until he drew blood. "No! Leo, please stop that!", Tyler screamed and pulled his hand away. "Let go of me! It's none of your business what I do to myself!" Using the strength his madness provided the Italian managed to break away from his friend and got up. He looked infernally dangerous as he stood there and glared at him angrily. It was the first time ever Tyler felt something like fear in Leo's presence. But then the lunacy subsided, the hellfire in his eyes died out and he did something unexpected: He took his shirt off. And what it revealed shocked Tyler so much that he almost fell off the bed. There were scars on Leo's body. Lots and lots of red scars blemishing his once flawless white skin. "See what I did for you? To remind myself that I must never tell you my secret. For it would hurt you ten-thousand times more than this hurt me. And to show myself how much you would hate me if you ever found out. And now you have... and you will hate me. Like my parents do... and my grandparents... and my brothers... I deserve no better. I am a twisted little pervert and soon you will all get rid of me" For a second Tyler was speechless, too shocked to think or move. Then he slowly got up and walked over to his insane friend, placing his hands on the thin shoulders and looking into his eyes.

"Leo, please just stop it. Stop hating yourself for loving me", he said, trying to reach the aching heart with his simple words. "Why?", the Italian asked bluntly. "For I cannot bear to see you hurt so much, not because of me and not because of a problem that can so easily be solved", he answered. "Easily?!", Leo began with a slightly shrieking voice, "How on earth can this be easily solved? I, a hopelessly gay Italian racing-driver, desperately craving for the love of my completely straight best friend, I shall never see this problem solved while I'm still alive" Instead of answering, Tyler just smiled at him warmly and leaned forward to kiss his shaking lips. Leo stood staring at him absolutely gobsmacked. "What was that for?", he asked when he had retrieved the power of speech. "For showing you how easy it is... It's plain and simple and yet it will change both our lives: I love you, Leonardo... Do you understand? I long for you with all my heart and I will never ever let you go... And I could fuckin' kick myself for not realizing this long ago", Tyler said, feeling slightly guilty. "That was the most wonderful thing anyone has ever said to me", Leo whispered, struggling not to burst into tears again. "Then keep it in mind. For it is the most true I have ever been" The smaller man nodded smilingly, forgotten was all the pain and the fear. "There's something else... Don't ever tell me to `use' you again. I won't do that kinda thing... I'll make love to you and nothing else, okay?", Tyler asked. It had pierced his heart when he had heard Leo say that, as if he were no human being and didn't deserve to be treated as such. The Italian nodded again. Then suddenly a sparkling was set alight in his black eyes. "Maybe we should make up for those five years we lost", he said with that wicked grin and guided Tyler to the bed which he sent them both falling onto. "Say it. Only once, please", the American said longingly. "As often as you like... Ti amo. I love you", Leo replied with a smile.

tbc? Probably, yeah.
Comments welcome.