Chasing Perfection

by accordingly

Summary

Jimin wasn't addicted to practice, only perfection.

Notes

hi again. so this is my take on jimin and his body image. i did a hella amount of research on bts to try to keep it as canon as possible, but please remember that this is ultimately a fictional story. i do not condone or encourage jimin (or anyone for that matter) having an eating disorder of any kind.

this chapter is supposed to be a "back-story" of sorts and the actual ed will begin in chapter 2.

(and yes, this will be yoonmin endgame with some jikook!!)
May 2012

It hadn't really concerned him during his audition. The entire event had been a spur of the moment kind of thing. It was after a particularly draining practice session with his dance teacher. She had been handing him a water bottle when the suggestion had just casually left her lips.

“Hey Jimin, have you ever thought about auditioning for an entertainment company?”

At her words, he had felt a contrasting mixture of flattery and concern. Sure, he loved to dance, but was he really good enough to do it at such a competitive level? So he did what he always did when faced with tough situations: he relied on the opinions of others. Surprisingly, both of his parents and his younger brother supported his decision. Even his classmates supplied him with humorous comments reminding him to “buy them meat after he's famous” and to “leave them with his autograph now before it’s worth a fortune.”

So there he was, a face among hundreds in a rented studio located somewhere in Busan. There were participants of all ages and gender, all waiting for their opportunity, for their shot of fame. They all looked so talented.

Much more talented than he was.

When his number was finally called, he felt every single nerve of his skin shiver. His voice shook as he sang and he swore that it even cracked when he tried to hit a specific high note 28 seconds into the song (which really sucked because he spent a good hour practicing that note in front of his bathroom mirror).

But it was his dancing, his passion, that he had complete confidence in. His redemption. After he was done, he was met with indecipherable smiles and slow claps (four claps to be exact). He walked out of the room, goosebumps still littering his skin. His body shivered again when the wind from the door closing hit him. He clenched his fists. If he didn't pass, it would still be okay. He still had his family and his friends. He was still in a great high school, still doing what he loved, still dancing. It wasn't the end of his life.

(But damn, he really, really wanted to pass.)

He remembered waiting anxiously for the phone call. When it arrived, he had sleep in his eyes and
foamy toothpaste residue dripping down the side of his mouth. He had almost dropped the phone while picking it up, almost. The recruiters complimented his dancing abilities. Sure, his voice needed a bit of work, but they reassured him that was what training was for. He just kept nodding to himself in the empty kitchen as they told him that all of the formal information would arrive at his house in a few short days.

(When the envelope came, he stared at it for exactly 23 minutes and 15 seconds.)
(He also had to reread the front about eight times to make sure it was his name written there.)

_Congratulations, Park Jimin._

(He might've have squealed as well.)

The next day, he dragged his parents with him to sign contracts and shake hands. His heart sank a little when he saw that his training schedule began only thirty minutes after his regular classes ended. He even had to go in at five in the morning on weekends. Every single weekend. But he ignored the sinking feeling because at least he was becoming someone that everyone could be proud of.

(Maybe he could be proud of himself too.)

He didn't know when it became a concern. Perhaps it was during the first day of training. He was surrounded by big eyes and sharp jaw lines. His first lesson of the day was a group dance class. There were about five other boys in the room. The wooden planks of the floor were littered with endless scuff marks (and probably a layer of fading wax and sweat). Dozens of fluorescent lights hung over their heads, illuminating the entire room. But most notably was the encasing of mirrors that lined the four walls.

He was no stranger to dance studios and practice rooms. He knew how visually important mirrors were to dancing. How important it was to _see_. But the amount of mirrors surrounding him was endless, borderline suffocating. He tried to ignore the way his eyes looked down whenever the other boys removed their sweat-soaked tank tops. He tried to act like he wasn't internally praying for the last boy to keep his god damn shirt on. Instead, he tried to focus on himself and his movements, making sure his rhythm matched that of the music playing in the background. He tried not to count the number of his own reflections staring back at him and decided to concentrate on counting his footsteps as a substitute.

That day he found out that it was easier to look at his feet rather than his face.

_August 2012_
Three months had passed before he suddenly found himself being pulled out of dance practice by a man he didn’t recognize. The man smelled strongly of radish kimchi and Jimin wrinkled his nose behind him. Kimchi-man lead him down a maze of hallways, past crowded office cubicles and tired company employees. They stopped in front of a closed door. He immediately remembered the door from the day of his contract signing. It was the office of Bang Si Hyuk, the production director (and CEO) of the entire industry. Kimchi-man proceeded to tap the door with a few light knocks before it opened. Inside was Bang PD and six other boys. They were all staring at him.

And they were all really, really beautiful.

“Ah, Jimin-ah, come inside!” Bang PD motioned his hand to the free spot next to the tallest of the six. The boy had perfectly curved almond shaped eyes that were covered slightly by the tips of black bangs. Jimin cautiously walked over and squeezed himself in the tight corner, ignoring the way the other boy had to shift slightly to the left for him.

“Now that you are all here, let me get straight to business.” Bang PD rubbed his palms together before a small smile formed on his face.

“I’ve decided it’s time to form our first all-boy unit, and you seven, are going to be its members.” The room was silent. Jimin could feel the blood pulsing through his ears, his heart about to burst out of his chest. Was this really happening?

“I know it’s all very sudden, but I’ve been monitoring the progress of you all and I have to say, I’m very pleased. That is why I have chosen the seven of you for this unit. The group’s name and image are still undecided but it would be best to inform you all first. Of course, this means that from now on, you will also need to start practicing and living together if we want to establish a cohesive unit. In this coming week, we will further discuss scheduling and dorm arrangements but for now, I’d just like you seven to get to know one another.” Bang PD stops talking momentarily to gesture to the tall boy from earlier.

“This is Namjoon, he will be the group leader. He has been with the company for many years and I trust he will do a great job breaking the ice between you all. Any questions?” No one responded.

Jimin was trying his best just not to faint on the spot.

“Okay, I will keep you updated on the group details. In the meantime, go get some lunch, introduce yourselves to one another, and become the best of friends. I believe in you.” Bang PD gave a crinkled smile before each boy bowed and said thank you. Kimchi-man ushered the seven of them out of the office and into another practice room. Apparently, he was one of their new managers. He brought out some packaged lunch boxes and bottles of still water before handing each boy one of both. The room was quiet, only the sound of plastic covers and wooden chopsticks filling the air. Jimin felt his eyes flitter about, observing the other boys as they ate their food. They were all so handsome, even when eating. He tried not to look at the mirror in front of him, tried not to tear apart his own reflection. Instead, he subconsciously lifted his hand to his cheek, feeling it
move under his fingers as he chewed his rice. His fingers slowly curled in and dug his nails into the soft flesh when suddenly someone sat besides him. Jimin’s hand dropped to his side.

“Hi, there! I’m Kim Taehyung!” His eyes sparkled even in the dim light of the room, mouth curving in a way that showcased every single tooth. Jimin gave a small smile in return, the tiny crescent shaped imprints on his cheek quickly disappearing.

“I’m Park Jimin.”

**September 2012**

Jimin really fell in love with these boys. He attributed it partially to how they spent nearly every minute of every day with each other but really, he knew it was due to the fact that they were all just wonderful people. His first friend of the other six was Taehyung. After talking to the boy on that first day, Jimin had discovered that they were both born in the same year. Taehyung was witty and unique. The gears in his brain always seemed to be turning with a creativity beyond that of anyone else. Then there was the youngest, Jeon Jungkook. He kept to himself most of the time, opting to stay quiet during group discussions. But Jungkook picked up on everything incredibly fast, he could sing, dance, rap and even draw. He was so well-rounded and reliable. Jimin had remembered hearing rumors of a golden ace CEO Bang had managed to snatch up. This said person had even rejected offers from as many as seven other companies in favor of this one. Jimin now understood that this person was Jungkook, and he was truly amazing.

Lastly, there were the four hyungs. Kim Seokjin, the eldest, was an acting major with a face and voice that matched the role. Kim Namjoon, the group’s leader, was both a musical and intellectual genius. Jung Hoseok was a gifted dancer with a charming personality. And finally, there was Min Yoongi. He was straight forward, sarcastic and crude. He was often cooped up in the group’s tiny production studio. If not there, he was usually either talking to Namjoon or hiding away in a corner somewhere taking a nap. Jimin found him especially hard to approach.

But one night, as he was browsing through their shared computer’s media player, he saw a file titled ‘tomorrow.mp3.’ Curious, he tried to play it but to his disappointment, the file couldn’t be found. Stubbornly, he searched through the computer’s system for it and after half an hour of work, he finally located it: in the recycling bin. Regardless, he dragged the file out of the trash and revived it so that it showed on the desktop, and played it. For a few seconds, he could only hear static.

Then suddenly, Yoongi’s voice floated through his headphones.

“Same day, same moon. 24/7 every moment repeats…”

Each syllable was enunciated steadily and powerfully. Yoongi’s deep voice was attention-grabbing, tiny squeaks of rasp escaping, making Jimin’s heart skip a beat.
And just like that, it ended. Jimin let out a breath he didn’t realize he had been holding for the past forty seconds. He quickly pressed the repeat button and listened to the short verse again, and again, and again. Before he knew it, it was 2am and he had remembered he had a vocal lesson in four short hours. Hastily, he searched the desk for a post-it note and messily scribbled some words on it before sticking it on the screen of the computer.

The next week, he had approached Yoongi was some lyrics that he wrote by himself. He had been inspired by the older boy’s beautiful words, by Yoongi’s musical poetry. He had spent three nights, waiting until every other member had fallen asleep, writing and crossing out word after word. He just wanted to create something equally as captivating as Yoongi had.

“You call these lyrics?” Yoongi scoffed as he scanned through the paper Jimin had given him before walking away.

It was at that moment that Jimin realized that only certain individuals—talented individuals—had the musical ability to produce such beautiful pieces.

Jimin wasn’t one of those people.

**February 2013**

There were only a few months remaining before their official debut. Jimin found himself attending less and less classes at his regular high school. He had discussed his situation with the principal and teachers. The faculty had been extremely understanding of his situation, more than willing to be flexible if it meant gaining some recognition for the school’s name. Jimin had also told a few of his closer classmates, who did not hesitate to spread the news, and pretty soon he became the talk of the school. He felt a small bubble of delight and pride well up inside him every time random students would approach him.

Then one day, someone had asked him, “what’s it like being an idol?” And Jimin didn’t know what to say. He didn’t realize it until then but he actually was, or was on the road to becoming, an idol. That was when Jimin began doing proper research. He would watch endless youtube videos of idols and how they acted. He would read articles and browse through fan pages created specifically for idols. It was then that he noticed the trend: everyone loved idols. There was no limit to the amount of endearment that idols received, whether it be the praise, the gifts, the adoration. They were beloved.

The idea of being loved excited Jimin.

When Valentine’s Day came around, Jimin had entered the company building with high expectations. But as the hours passed, and he found himself still given no fan letters or even a
single sweet, his enthusiasm gradually deflated. He bit his lip as he saw the other members of the group receive various gifts of different sizes and shapes. He tried not to stare at Seokjin-hyung opening up yet another heart sticker covered envelope or Hoseok-hyung as he started on his second box of candy.

It was during lunch when the coordi-noonas entered the studio, their arms carrying a few cardboard boxes each. They began to distribute small bundles of chocolate to each member, complaining offhandedly about how long it took to make gifts for every single male in the company. One of the older noonas stopped in front of him with a ribbon-tied bag and a soft smile.

“Jimin-ah, have some chocolate, okay? Fighting!”

Jimin gave a small bow and squeaked out a thank you before accepting the bundle with shaky hands. He tried to ignore the way Namjoon-hyung nonchalantly placed it in his growing pile of gifts. Jimin tucked the small package in the large pocket of his hooded sweatshirt and then promptly attempted to hide himself in the corner of the room until he could leave.

He tried to believe that things would be different at school. People had been bombarding him so heavily with questions for the past few months, he was bound to receive some sort of attention there. But no, he was presented with no heartfelt confessions and no handmade parcels. Jimin felt embarrassed. How could he have believed that he was an idol? He was so far away from those celebrities on magazines and television. Those people who were coveted and admired.

No one loved him.

He came home to their tiny dorm and immediately locked himself in the bathroom. He stared into the mirror. Usually Jimin could distract himself with constant hours of dancing and singing. But in the small cramped bathroom, there was no space for Jimin to hide, no more ignoring his own disgusting reflection. Jimin maneuvered his arms to remove the sweatshirt, when the tiny bundle of store-bought chocolate fell to the tiled floor. He leaned over to pick it up before unwrapping one of the two confections. His fingers seemed to swell up, getting plumper and thicker as the chocolate slowly melted on his skin.

Jimin quickly dropped the chocolate into the toilet.

His gaze broke away from his hands and shifted back to the mirror. Fingers dragged against his face, leaving trails of sweet, brown substance on the delicate skin. He began to mouth soft words, slowly morphing them into quiet whispers.

“One… two… three…”

Jimin was counting his flaws.
Later that night, Jimin had recorded a video log with Jungkook.

"Because I’m a pig, because I’m a pig... because I’m fat and my face isn't cute," Jimin paused to give a microscopic smile to the camera, “I’ll work my hardest to become better for you all.”

March 2013

A couple of weeks had passed and Jimin was finally getting the hang of his new diet and exercise routine. He had approached Seokjin a few days after Valentine’s Day to ask for some tips on getting into shape. As per the older boy’s advice, Jimin tried his best adopt healthier eating habits. He would cut out excess fats and salts in favor of leaner meats and vegetables. He even began incorporating more protein into his meals and snacks to help build muscle.

Every morning, Jimin would go on a thirty-minute jog before thoroughly exercising every joint and limb of his body for an additional two hours. Every free moment he wasn’t in school or training, he spent doing an extra crutch or a set of push ups. He tried to imagine the fat sweating out of his body, out of his system for good. Sure, he still felt uncomfortable taking his shirt off during practice sessions and communal showers. He still struggled not to let his expression fall when the other boys demanded he join in on one of their many selcas.

He still had a hard time looking into the mirror for too long.

But he was getting better.

April 2013

Seokjin and Hoseok made a passing comment on how his cheeks looked slimmer.

For the first time in two months, Jimin managed to smile at his own reflection.

May 2013

Mr. Son, their choreographer, suggested that Jimin lift his shirt in the music video for their first single. Despite his protests, the decision was final.

Once they got to the dorm, he locked himself into the bathroom before running his fingers over the smooth curves of his abdominal muscles. When the tips of his hand grazed some softer flesh, he pinched the skin between his fingers.

That night, Jimin skipped dinner, opting to do two hundred sit ups instead.
June 2013

They had officially debuted.

He had just flashed his abs on national television.

People were cheering and screaming for him.

When Jimin looked at himself in the mirror, sweat on his face, bangs sticking together, the corners of his mouth lifted into a broad grin.

He was finally an idol.

September 2015

It was great.

The past two years had been absolutely phenomenal.

Jimin loved being in Bangtan, loved being part of a group, loved having a place where he just belonged. Sure, there were some tough moments. Since they were constantly following a tight schedule, jumping promptly from event to event, he was only able to visit home once a month (twice if he was lucky). His days would consist of warm ups, practices, and lessons. Sleep had become a luxury and he, along with the other members, struggled to squeeze in as many ten minute naps throughout the day as possible just to restore the tiniest amount of energy.

But most of the time, Jimin ran completely on adrenaline. The other boys would jokingly call him a practice addict. But when Jimin found himself staying an extra hour in the studio or re-singing a note eleven more times, it wasn’t because he loved practicing. No, it was because he loved perfection. Maybe that was why Jimin was so captivated by Jungkook. Jungkook was always the quickest to pick up on any new choreography. He was able to finish his recording sessions in one or two takes. Even his shyness from that first day as a unit had, for the most part, dissipated. He was smart, charming, athletic: the complete package.

Jungkook was golden. He was perfection itself.

And Jimin just couldn’t help but stare in awe.

He didn’t hesitate to spout out compliment after compliment about the other boy. The younger deserved to hear how talented and wonderful he was. He could recall that Valentine’s Day video log from two years ago, and how Jungkook had not paused to call himself a pig alongside with Jimin. Jungkook was anything but a pig. He was perfect.

Jimin didn’t know when his feelings for the other had morphed from love to in love. Yes, he had always been subconsciously chasing after the maknae. But instead of simply admiring the other’s
strong arms, he began to imagine how they would look wrapped around Jimin’s waist. Instead of thinking about how cute the younger’s tiny bunny smile was, Jimin found himself focusing on the curve of his lips and the slight pucker that would form when he spoke.

He would never admit that his lockscreen was a selca the two had taken together.

(Or that he had a secret folder on his phone overflowing with pictures of the boy.)

Jimin just kept it to himself, deciding to show his affection in small, subtle hints, masking the actions as fan service or camera acting. It stung a little when the younger pushed him away or ignored him in favor of Taehyung or Hoseok. But Jimin didn’t mind too much. He was content.

Then one night, Jimin was browsing through the internet, checking videos of their most recent performances. When suddenly, he stumbled across a newly posted blog entry. That’s when Jimin’s hands began to shake.

‘Reasons why Park Jimin does not belong in BTS’

He knew that it was located on a popular Netizen website. He knew he shouldn’t take any criticism from these sites seriously, especially one known specifically for its anti-fan remarks. He really should’ve known better than to continue reading.

But it was hard to think logically when all he could remember from the day was how Jungkook had pushed him away when he had tried to hug the maknae during their backstage interview. He could only recall the memory of Jungkook shouting, “Hyung, stop being so annoying” before running to Taehyung’s side. That maybe the youngest wasn’t joking with his words. That maybe he was just being honest.

That’s why Jimin decided to scroll down.

There were a few lengthy paragraphs complaining about his recent (lack of) progress. It was followed by a bulleted list, breaking down each aspect of his incompetence in impeccable detail. Then finally, there was a video. There was no thumbnail, only a large looming play button.

Jimin had to swallow a few times before he clicked the mouse down.

The clip was short, a mere forty-two seconds. It was an excerpt from their 2015 Summer Package. It was a scene of Taehyung, Hoseok and himself dancing to the ‘I NEED U’ choreography in a swimming pool. But whereas the other two had t-shirts on, he was only wearing a bright yellow towel above his swim trunks.
Underneath the player was a single caption: *Look at his flabby belly, so gross!*

Jimin had to replay the clip, squinting his eyes. Even with the grainy footage, the deep folds of his stomach were clear to see. His hands suddenly felt clammy, palms sweating as he shakily hovered his cursor to play the video for a third time.

“Jiminie?”

He quickly slammed the laptop closed. At the door was Taehyung with a fluffy blue towel wrapped around his neck.

“Y-yeah?” Jimin internally scolded himself for how unsteady his voice sounded, praying to anything that Taehyung wouldn’t notice.

“It’s your turn to take a shower. Hurry before Jungkook does, I left the bathroom nice and steamy especially for you!”

“Ah-okay! I’ll be right there!” Jimin gave the other a smile before pausing, “Um-Taetae, would you mind guarding the door for me?” The younger stared at him before crinkling his eyes in a wide grin.

“Our course, Jiminie!! I’ll protect it from the likes of Jeon Jungkook!!” Immediately he rushed out of the bedroom, droplets of water falling to the ground from his damp hair. Jimin’s eyes darted a few times between the door and his laptop before he opened the device once more. The blog post re-appeared on his screen and the image of his grainy stomach folds stared right at him. He moved his cursor to bookmark the page before closing the browser and turning off the computer.

Climbing off his bed, he made his way in the direction of the bathroom. There Taehyung was, standing in front of the door with his arms crossed and a glare on his face. Jimin chuckled fondly at the sight of his eccentric friend. Taehyung was really such a great person. He walked over to the younger boy and greeted him with a hug, nuzzling his face into the other’s neck.

“Thanks, Taetae. You’re the best.”

“Hehe, anything for you, Jiminie!” Taehyung gave a wide grin before ushering the boy to the bathroom. “Now hurry and shower before all the steam escapes!!”

“Okay, I will.” Jimin gave a tiny wave before he closed the door. Instantly, he was enveloped with warm air, the familiar scent of Taehyung’s shampoo lingering about as well. He started to lift his t-shirt up but stopped when he saw the peach colored skin of his stomach peek through. Placing his hand on the flesh, he began to rub small circles, pressing his fingers into the soft surface. He looked up to find his reflection, only to be met with a foggy mirror image. Using his arm, he wiped the excess water away, immediately meeting his own gaze when it was all gone.

There was disappointment in his eyes.

Without breaking eye contact, he quickly removed his shirt, tossing it on the floor. He shifted his body closer to the mirror, running his fingers down every inch of skin. His abdominal muscles, his most redeeming feature from when they had debuted, had completely disappeared. His fingers
began to squeeze the flesh of his stomach, his arms, even his chin and only one word floated through his mind: *flabby*.

Hastily, he crouched down to scour through the cabinets, when finally he found it, the scale. He cautiously placed it on the floor before stepping on it. He closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths before looking down.

*61.3 kilograms.*

Biting his lip, he hurriedly removed his shorts followed by his boxers. He pulled off his rings and unclipped his earrings, haphazardly throwing all of the items on the floor.

But the number stayed the same.

Jimin lifted his head up haltingly, all of the steam previously filling the room gone. All that greeted him was his naked reflection.

*Look at his flabby belly, so gross!*

Jimin could feel tears gather up in the corners of his eyes. When had this happened? He thought he had fixed this. He thought he was better now.

But then his mind wandered to Jungkook. Perfect, perfect Jungkook. It was no wonder why Jungkook preferred the company of the other members over Jimin. It was no wonder why Jungkook pushed Jimin away, rejected all of his affection.

It was because Jimin was disgusting, he was ugly, he was *fat*.

He didn’t realize he had gained so much weight, that he had let himself go *so damn much*. The tears dripped down his cheeks, gathering at the edge of his chin.

No, he could change. He could redeem himself.

Then maybe, Jungkook would look his way.

He hastily sniffed up his tears and used his fingers to squeeze the flesh of his stomach, wrinkling his nose in distaste. But first he had to get rid of this.
(And maybe he could become perfect too.)

Chapter End Notes

let me know what you think!

my tumblr
Chapter Summary

Three was a safe number.
(Maybe he would feel emptier if he counted in threes)

Chapter Notes

hi, again. thank you so much for reading the first chapter!! i am usually really slow at updating, but i just ugh, couldn't control my jimin feels!! i also feel kind of weird about my writing (and the spacing) lately... but hopefully it's still okay?

originally, this story was supposed to be about jimin's obsession with counting (counting calories, minutes, bites) but then it kind of strayed when i wrote the first chapter and the idea of perfection seemed more fitting. but i'm still incorporating the idea (hence this chapter)!!

as a side note: i want to stress that how jimin perceives disordered eating in this story will be very subjective (on his part) and even borderline inaccurate at times. you do not have to be skinny to have an eating disorder.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was hard.

It was hard to get back to before, back into his old routine.

To be honest, Jimin had stopped obsessively going to the gym months ago. He had stopped exercising in his free time. He had stopped restricting himself from foods oversaturated in fat and salt.

It was the little things, really. Like when Hoseok offered him a bite of his ramyun or when Taehyung suggested they sneak out and do a midnight burger run. He found himself skipping his morning jog and his nightly reps in favor of sleeping in for an extra half an hour with Jungkook or watching a movie with everyone else.

He tried to justify himself. Between all of their constant schedules and practices, he really had no time to exercise. He didn't have the energy to watch what he ate. If wasn't his fault that he ended up like this.

Jimin knew that was a big fat lie.

(It was almost as big and fat as him.)
He was sitting on his bed, completely surrounded by darkness. Their manager had called ‘lights off’ over thirty-five minutes ago, but he still felt wide awake. Everytime he lay down to try and sleep, he could feel the heavy weight of his stomach crushing him. No matter what direction he faced or what position he attempted to shift his body into, it was still there. It was a constant reminder of how much of a complete failure he was.

“Taetae…? ...Hobi-hyung?” His voice came out in the quietest whisper in the otherwise silent room. When he received no response back, he slowly sat up and crawled to the edge of the bed, grabbing his laptop. His parents had given it to him as a gift for successfully passing his audition. He could remember how they had made him promise to webcam them every day.

He didn't.

A sharp stab of guilt hit Jimin at that thought. Well, at least his parents will be happy when they find out that the laptop will be put to good use. He lifted the screen up, allowing the light from the start-up animations to illuminate his face. Immediately, he pulled up the blog entry from earlier, silently going through each bullet point on the list of reasons of why he didn’t deserve to be a part of Bangtan.

_Ugly, annoying, untalented …_

It seemed never-ending and he could feel his eyes shake as he absorbed every bit of criticism. If he was going to achieve perfection, he had to know what exactly was wrong with him in the first place, right? His eyes drifted back to the laptop, mind wandering back to his parents. Jimin didn’t want to let their support go to waste, didn’t want to disappoint them any longer.

Jimin was tired of being a disappointment.

Then it struck him. Before he knew it, he had an blank word document open and began typing away, the soft clicking of his keyboard filling the quiet room.

Jimin got about two hours of sleep that night.

“Jiminnie, wake up!” Jimin opened his eyes to a bouncing Taehyung on top of him. The younger boy had his hands pinching the sides of Jimin’s cheeks. _Gripping his fat._ Embarrassment shot through Jimin as he quickly pushed Taehyung away. The other looked at him in confusion.

“Ah-you were hurting me, Taetae.” He lifted his bottom lip into a small pout. The uncertainty melted from Taehyung’s face as he broke into a smile.

“Aw, Jiminnie! I’m sorry, but I couldn’t help myself.” He brought his hands to Jimin’s cheeks once
more, squeezing tighter. “Your cheeks are just so cute and soft!!” Taehyung wriggled the skin between his fingertips, rubbing the base of his thumbs against the smooth surface.

“I looove touching them. They’re so much better than Jungkookie’s; his are no fun at all. His have waayy too much skin, nothing to squish.” He let out a tiny giggle before grinning widely. Jimin blinked a few times as he felt his heart beat faster. Was that really what Taehyung thought?

Was that what everyone thought?

“Jiminnie?” Taehyung’s eyes began to fill with a touch of concern. “Are you okay?” At the slight change in tone, Jimin focused his thoughts once more on the boy in front of him.

“Y-yeah! Sorry, I’m still a little sleepy.” He gave a nervous chuckle before smiling.

“Silly Jiminnie! C’mon, let’s go get some breakfast. Seokjin-hyung wasn’t feeling well so Namjoonie-hyung cooked. But it’s okay because I got-” Taehyung reached into his pocket and pulled out a couple of aluminum packets. “-magic Tae-dust!”

“Tae, isn’t that ramyun seasoning?” Taehyung responded with a couple of vigorous nods.

“Yeah! This will make anything taste good, no matter how much Namjoonie-hyung manages to burn it.” The younger winked before moving to pull at Jimin’s sleeves.

“Let’s go, Jiminnie!!”

“Okay, okay. Let me go get changed first and I’ll meet you in the kitchen.” Taehyung gave a little nod of approval before rolling off Jimin and hopping out of the room. Jimin shuffled his body so that he could sit on the edge of the bed, staring at the open door.

“One, two, three… one two three…” He counted to three thirteen times before getting up and shutting the door. He then grabbed his hair brush and ran it through his fading orange locks.

“One, two, three… one, two, three…” He would brush his hair three times, wait for three seconds and then repeat the motion three more times. It was all part of his plan to perfection. If he did everything in increments, in exact timing, in routine, then he was bound to get himself on an ideal track. He needed stability, balance, and most of all, absolute control. Since three had always been his favorite number, he figured it would be a good base to begin with. Three was safe.

Finally, he was done with his hair. He tried to ignore the urge to smooth out the stray strand near the nape of his neck but instead left the shared bedroom. When he arrived at the kitchen, he saw three of other members scattered around the room. Namjoon and Yoongi were sitting at one end of the table, eating while scrolling through their respective phones. He made his way to an empty chair next to Taehyung, who was sitting on the opposite side. The younger boy slyly wriggled his eyebrows before sliding a packet of his ‘magic dust’ toward Jimin. Namjoon looked up from his phone before nudging his bowl and spoon over to the other.

“Jimin, there’s some fried rice on the stove. Use my bowl and help yourself, okay?” Jimin gave a small nod of thanks, gripping the empty container in his fingers. Taehyung took the opportunity to rip open the packet and pour its contents into the bottom of the bowl before snatching it out of Jimin’s hands.
“I’ll get it for you, Jiminie!!” He jumped off of the stool and ran to the stove. Jimin watched nervously as he watched Taehyung scoop copious amounts of burnt rice, blackened eggs and soggy kimchi into his bowl.

One, two, three… four, five, fuck-six…

His bowl was overflowing with fried rice, his mind filling with increasing panic with each grain that fell off the side. He tried not to stare too hard at the bowl as Taehyung began walking back towards him. Instead, he averted his gaze to the frying pan behind the boy and silently appreciated how empty it looked. He was broken out of these thoughts when Taehyung placed the bowl in front of him and proceeded to mix it up with some chopsticks.

“Eat up, Jiminie!” Taehyung gave another wide grin.

“T-thanks, Taetae.” He swallowed (three times) before tightening the grip on the metal spoon in his hand. Slowly, he dug it into the bowl of rice and lifted it to his mouth. He could feel the grainy texture of ramyun seasoning coat his tongue. He could visualize every molecule of salt being absorbed into his body, retaining the water in his system, bloating him up. He got through two spoonfuls before he heard some footsteps near the kitchen entrance.

“Jungkookie!!” Jimin looked up from his bowl to see the maknae standing in the doorway. Jungkook waved in greeting, his hair still slightly tousled, eyes blinking slowly with sleep. The younger began to walk towards the table and Jimin could feel his heart speed up. But then, Jungkook passed right by him and sat next to Taehyung instead.

His heart slowed down.

Maybe one of the butterflies in his stomach just died.

Jungkook immediately rested his head on Taehyung’s shoulder, hiding his face into the other’s loose sweater.

Or maybe it was shot down.

“Morning, Hyungs.” Jungkook’s voice came out in a low mumble.

“Aw, is our little Jungkookie tired?” Taehyung ruffled his hand through the younger’s hair, messing it up even more.

“Yeah, I was up all night memorizing the script for the interview later today.” He let out a groan. “I’m sooo tired.” Jimin bit his lip, before pushing his bowl in the direction of the maknae.
“Jungkookie, here, eat some breakfast.” He tried his best to keep his voice light and affectionate.

Jungkook didn’t even lift his head.

“What is it?”

“It’s kimchi fried rice. Namjoon-hyung cooked it.” A sigh came from the younger when he finally raised his gaze. For the first time that morning, he was looking at Jimin.

And he didn’t look happy.

“Hyung, I’m on a diet. I can’t eat any carbohydrates.” His expression looked tired and annoyed. And it was directed right at Jimin.

“What if I pick out the kimchi for you, Jungkookie,” suggested Taehyung. He gave a little pout when the maknae was about to say something in protest. “You have to eat something, Jungkookie!!”

“Fine…” Taehyung smiled before picking some kimchi out of the bowl and bringing it to the younger’s mouth. Jimin observed the scene silently. He pursed his lips tightly together as his eyes watered slightly. It felt like the rice he had consumed was stuck in his throat. His stomach suddenly felt extremely heavy again, just like the night before. He brought his fingers to his stomach and lightly scratched against the fabric of his shirt. One, two three… Jungkook was always working so hard; skipping sleep to memorize the script beforehand, even watching what he ate (even though he really didn’t need to). And what did Jimin do? He ate, and ate. He allowed horrible, disgusting things to enter his body.

Why couldn’t he be more like Jungkook?

His fingers had stopped moving and were now simply digging themselves into the flesh of his stomach. In the corner of his eye, he could see Taehyung feed another spoonful of rice-less kimchi fried rice to Jungkook. His pushed his nails in harder. He wanted to claw everything out.

He just wanted his stomach to feel as empty as his heart was.

Maybe then Jungkook wouldn’t hate him so much.

“Jimin?” He blinked at the sound of his name. It was Yoongi, sitting across from him. His eyes
were hidden behind the dark frame of his glasses. Jimin couldn’t read his expression.

“You should hurry up and finish eating. We’re going to be leaving for the photoshoot soon.” Jimin had already eaten more than enough this morning. He didn’t need to consume any more food. His stomach felt so heavy and full from those few spoonfuls of rice.

“Ah, I-I’m already full, Hyung-nim.” He tried his best to smile, scared that Yoongi would say something. But instead, the elder simply nodded and returned his attention back to his phone. That was surprisingly easy.

He tried not to let the indifference in Yoongi’s response affect him. It made sense that the older didn’t care about what Jimin did. That he more than likely just didn’t care about Jimin at all. He probably thought the orange-haired boy had eaten a spoonful too many anyway. He just was being nice by not saying anything. Jimin counted to thirty before excusing himself from the table. The other members didn’t say anything when he left.

He didn’t expect them to.

Jimin made his way toward the bathroom. Mimicking his actions from last night, he reached under the cabinet to pull out the scale and step on it.

61.5 kilograms.

He had gained weight.

Jimin could feel the tears welling up. He shouldn’t have eaten so much. This was why he was so heavy. He had no discipline and gave into temptation. He knew he was already a pig, so why did he eat? Now the food was trapped inside of him and it was all his fault.

He just wanted to get rid of it.

Quickly, he dug his hand in the pocket of his jeans, and pulled out his cell phone. He grit his teeth when the image of Jungkook appeared on his screen and worked fast to open up the internet application in its place. Tapping on the search bar, he began to type as soon as the keyboard popped up.

*How do I empty my stomach?*
The browser slowly loaded, thousands of results filling the screen. Jimin instantly opened the first link. It was a website he didn’t recognize. The page was titled ‘Secrets to an Empty Stomach.’ Secrets? Intrigued, Jimin scrolled down with his thumb. There were a number of steps listed on the page.

1. Immediately after eating (or within thirty minutes at most), wash your hands or some sort of thin object.
2. Stick your fingers (or the object) into your mouth, and touch to your uvula.
3. Wait until you feel nauseous before removing your fingers.
4. Repeat as necessary.

Jimin had to re-read the words a few times before the realization hit him.

These were instructions for throwing up.

Jimin’s heart was beating impossibly fast. His hands were shaking as he took in each and every word.

He was scared.

Back before he had debuted with Bangtan, Jimin had heard stories of other trainees who had forced themselves to purge food to make themselves skinnier. One girl had even been sent to the hospital because she was just so tiny. But Jimin wasn’t tiny.

He was huge.

His eyes drifted back down to the scale. The numbers had disappeared. He quickly stepped off and on.

61.6 kilograms.

His breath caught in his throat. Did he just gain more weight? By just standing there? His body was probably absorbing every bit of salt and fat it could. The rice was inside him, weighing him down. He had to get rid of it.

And the method to do so was right at his fingertips.

Precariously, Jimin placed his phone on the surface of the sink. He turned on the water and scrubbed at his hands. He looked past his trembling fingers, and locked eyes with his reflection. His eyes were tiny and red. His cheeks were bloated and puffy. His chin was sagging down,
morphing slightly into his neck. Then Jimin's gaze fell back to the glowing green numbers on the scale.

There were just so many things wrong with him.

He wanted to prove that he belonged in Bangtan. He wanted to be fit and beautiful like the other members. He wanted, for once in his life, Jungkook to just look at him, not in irritation, but maybe, in admiration. He wasn’t like that girl trainee who purged herself sick. He was different, he was fat, he needed help. He just so desperately wanted to be perfect.

And if he wanted to reach perfection, he had to put in the dedication.

Therefore, Jimin closed his eyes and slowly edged his fingers into his mouth.

Chapter End Notes

as always, feedback is appreciated!
my tumblr
(yes, i changed my url for jimin, sobs)
hi, all! it's me again, hehe. this chapter was extremely difficult to write. i was aiming for 10k words but ugh!! it didn't happen, sob. also, i wrote this over the span of a month, so if things seem repetitious or long, i apologize :-(

**warning:** there is a lot of potentially triggering material in this so please read with caution

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Jumin?”

There was a knock on the door.

His fingers paused.

“Jimin-ah, are you in there?”

It was Seokjin. The smooth tone of the eldest’s voice floated through the thin crack of the door. Jimin's fingers were hovering in mid-air, a mere two centimeters away from his lips.

They suddenly felt extremely heavy.

“Y-yes, hyung?” Jimin tried to keep his voice steady, like he hadn’t been caught with his hand in his mouth, literally. But his mind was racing, thousands of different thoughts cycling through his head.

“You’ve been in there for awhile, is everything alright?”

*No, hyung. Everything’s not alright. I'm gaining weight by the second and I don’t know what to do.*

“Yeah! I just ate a little too fast earlier.” It wasn't a lie. Jimin did eat too much too fast. The grains of rice he had consumed for breakfast felt like stones resting at the bottom of his stomach. They hurt and he just wanted them to disappear.

“Oh, okay. I just wanted to let you know that we're leaving in 15 minutes so hurry up. We don't want to be late for the photoshoot.”

“Okay, I'll be right out!” Jimin leaned his ear a bit closer to the door and let out a soft sigh when he heard Seokjin’s footsteps fade away. His hand was still positioned in front of him, fingers flexing slowly as the realization of what he was doing, at what he was about to do, finally hit him.

He was about stick his fingers down his throat. He was about to force himself to throw up. He was
about to reverse the natural process of his body.

What was wrong with him?

Lowering his hand, he began to shake his head in disbelief. Sure, Jimin was fat and disgusting and more than likely resembled a whale but he wasn't crazy. He didn't have to resort to doing things like this. He just had to go back to his old routine: daily exercise and a proper diet. Jimin rested his right hand on his stomach, cringing when it succumbed under the pressure of his fingers.

Okay, maybe a few meals could be skipped as well.

His mind wandered back to that morning's breakfast and Yoongi’s indifference towards him. The older boy was probably fed up with Jimin and his grotesque eating habits. Or maybe he just didn't care enough to even pay attention.

Jimin wasn't sure which was worse.

That was when Jimin realized that this was his problem to fix. He couldn't bother the other members. He didn't deserve their help. He had to do this on his own. He was brought out of his thoughts when another knock sounded from the door.

“Jimin-ah? Are you still in there?” It was Seokjin again.

“Ah—sorry, hyung!! I'm coming out now.” Jimin scrambled to put the bathroom back in order, his lips tugging into a small frown when he placed the scale under the sink. He decided to flush the toilet and tinkle with the faucet a little for good measure before opening the door. Seokjin stood on the other side, nose red and neck wrapped in a fluffy pink scarf.

“Everyone's waiting for you, you know? What were you doing in there that took so long, huh?” At the question, Jimin immediately went to wrap his arms around the other boy.

“Awww, Hyung, did you miss me that much?” He could hear the elder scoff.

“Yeah, yeah.” Seokjin let out a snifflle and placed his hand on Jimin's head, ruffling through the orange strands. “C'mon, let's go to the van before we're late for the shoot. I think we are working with photographer Lee and you know how anal he gets about being punctual and what not.” Jimin nodded in understanding before walking alongside the other boy. As they descended down the hall, his hand remained clasped in the material of Seokjin’s thick sweater. When the elder felt a tug, he glanced down at the smaller boy as he began to speak.

“Jin-hyung, are you still sick?” Jimin's eyes were wide, brows furrowed slightly down. The corners of Seokjin’s mouth lifted into a soft smile as he poked the other's cheek.

“A little, but I feel better now.” Seokjin took the opportunity to draw a small circle on the side of Jimin's face. “Especially after being able to touch your chubby little cheeks so early in the morning. They're so cute!”

The breath Jimin was about to take got stuck in his throat. First Taehyung and now Seokjin? Did he really have that much fat in his cheeks? Probably. Yeah, he was definitely making the right decision to start dieting again.
The two of them arrived at the van and their manager quickly ushered them into the vehicle. The ride was quiet for the most part, a majority the members still in the process of waking up. Jimin didn't feel too offended when he saw Jungkook and Taehyung whispering amongst themselves, despite sitting right next to him. It still stung a little to not be included, again. But it happened a lot and Jimin was coming to terms with it. He was getting used to it.

Instead, Jimin brought his hands together, curling every finger in except his index and middle. Placing one hand in front of the other, he slowly moved the fingers up and down in a repetitive motion.

They almost looked like wings flapping in the air.

*One, two three... One, two, three...*

He silently mouthed out the numbers, eyes focused on his hands and its movements. They looked so light, so weightless, so *free*. Then suddenly, he didn't hear the whispered conversations surrounding him. He didn't mind being ignored. Because then, he didn't have to constantly compare himself to the others. He didn't have to nitpick at his flaws. He didn't have to hate himself so much.

Maybe it was better this way.

He continued to flap his makeshift finger wings with a small smile, mind filling with the blissful presence of numbers. Numbers wouldn't hurt him like his thoughts would. They were safe.

“Jiminie, wake up! We're here!”

His fingers froze.

Taehyung reached his hand up to pinch Jimin's cheek. The orange haired boy bit his bottom lip, peeling back a thin layer of skin with his teeth.

*I wasn't even sleeping.*

“Hellooo, Earth to Jimin?” Taehyung lifted his other hand to caress the elder’s face.

*And why can't everyone stop touching my goddamn cheeks.*

He opened his mouth to respond before another voice spoke up.

“Jimin-hyung, can you please move. Tae and I would like to get out of this van sometime this year.” Jimin's head turned to look at the maknae, just barely able to catch it as the younger rolled his eyes. His throat suddenly felt incredibly dry. He played with his tongue in an attempt to produce some saliva, some sort of liquid, anything to relieve this uncomfortable texture in his mouth. He desperately needed for things to feel normal. He just wanted to feel like himself again.
Jimin tried to swallow a few times before forcing his lips into a small pucker.

“Aw, but I just wanted to spend a little more time with you, Jungkookie!” His voice sounded cheerful and peppy. It sounded like Jimin.

Jungkook let out a frustrated sigh.

*But then again, nobody liked Jimin.*

“Why do you always do this, hyung? Why do you always act so fucking childish? I'm two years younger than you and I’m already so much more mature than you. Don't you feel embarrassed being like this?” Jungkook’s words felt like little sparks of fire, hitting every inch of Jimin’s body, burning off tiny patches of his skin.

Was that why he was sweating so much?


“This is exactly what I mean,” Jungkook sneered. “Why do you all fucking baby him so much?” He leaned forward to pull at a lever attached to the seat in front of him, causing it to fall down. The younger proceeded to open the car door before crawling out. Once Jungkook was outside of the car, he paused at the door, lifting his gaze to meet Jimin’s. The maknae’s eyes, damp and glassy in the artificial light of the parking lot, made contact with Jimin’s. Jungkook’s mouth was clenched shut, lips quivering with unspoken words. As Jimin opened his mouth say something, he slammed the car door shut and ran off. Jimin didn’t realize his own hands were shaking until he felt the thin fingers of Taehyung grasp his. The younger boy was talking to him but his voice came out muffled, almost as if Jimin’s ears were filled with cotton.

With only the lingering echoes of Jungkook’s words filtering through.

He raised his gaze to look at Taehyung but his eyesight was hazy and dark. He tried to focus on something, anything, just so his vision was filled with something other than a jigsaw puzzle of mismatched patches of black. A sigh of relief almost escaped him when he identified the outline of Taehyung’s lips, concentrating his attention on them. They were thin and peachy and curved slightly upward. But… wait, was Taehyung smiling? Was the other laughing at him?

Was Jimin that *big* of a joke?

Taehyung’s hands came up to grip the sides of Jimin's face. His mouth was moving but Jimin couldn't make out the words. Maybe he was telling Jimin how disgusting he was. That he didn't deserve to be a part of their group. That someone like him was lacking in just about *everything*. That he was stupid, incompetent, *fat* —

“Yah, Park Jimin, look at me.”

Jimin blinked and slowly shifted his eyes up to meet Taehyung’s. To his surprise, they weren't
filled with mocking laughter but instead glistened with concern. But, why? He was being a burden as usual. He had pissed Jungkook off with his stupid antics, again. Jungkook would never love Jimin. Because everybody hated Jimin.

And he deserved it.

But then, why? Why were Taehyung’s eyes telling him differently?

“Jiminie,” Taehyung pleaded. “Jungkook didn't mean what he said. He's just cranky because he's on that stupid diet.”

Jimin wanted to agree and laugh it off. He wanted to believe that Jungkook’s actions weren't intentional but merely driven by the lack of proper nutrition and three hours of measly sleep. That maybe, Jungkook didn't hate him as much he let off. But deep down, Jimin knew better than that. Because then why else would Jungkook constantly tell Jimin just how annoying he was for the past three years. Jimin suddenly felt his phone vibrate in the pocket of his jeans, reminding him of a certain blog entry he had bookmarked last night. It helped Jimin remember just how much of a waste of space he really was. And Jimin knew that blog wasn’t the only one out there. He had just been too afraid before to actually read such honest criticism. But not anymore. He was willing to confront it now.

Probably because being a failure frightened him so much more.

“Jiminie?” Oh, that's right. Taehyung was still in the van with him, desperately trying to convince Jimin he wasn't as disgusting as he really was. He was pitiful. How could he worry his best friend like this?

“I know, Taetae.” Jimin forced a small smile onto his face. “It was my fault anyway, for pushing him too far.” He let out a light laugh, internally praising himself when his voice didn't crack. 9/10, Jimin, 9/10.

Because if there was one thing Jimin was good at, it was pretending.

“No, he was totally out of line with his comments!” Taehyung frowned. “Don't worry, I'm going to give him a piece of my mind later.”

“It's okay, Tae! Really, I'm—” used to it. “I'm fine. Besides, I'm sure Jungkook has a lot to deal with already. It's really not that important.” Taehyung’s eyes narrowed.

“Yah, Jimin! Are you saying that your feelings are not important?”

“No!” Yes. “Besides, I have my Taetae, right?” Jimin let out a giggle and wrapped his arms around the younger. When Taehyung let out a tiny sound of disapproval, Jimin only tightened his grip on him.

“Really, Tae.” He pressed his face into the crook of Taehyung’s neck, letting out a soft whisper, “I'm fine.” He lifted his head and made eye contact with the other. A grin spread across Jimin’s face and Taehyung could feel his anger slowly subside. He brought his hand to rest on the other's head, fingers lacing with the soft orange strands.

“I miss your black hair,” Taehyung mumbled lowly.
“Excuse you, it was *dark brown*.” Taehyung couldn't stop the chuckle that escaped his lips.

“Okay, okay. I miss your *dark brown* hair.” Jimin giggled into the other’s skin.

“It misses you too.”

“Gosh, you are so lame.” Taehyung leaned forward and buried his face into Jimin's hair, pausing. “...You would tell me if something is bothering you, right?”

Jimin hesitated at the words. *Tae, I'm in love with Jungkook but he'll never return my feelings because I'm a disgusting fat slob and he hates me. Everybody hates me. I hate me.*

“Jiminnie...?” Quickly, he nodded against the other's neck.

“Of course I would, Tae.” Taehyung hastily pushed Jimin off of him, untangling their limbs from one another. He promptly positioned his pinky in front of the older boy.

“Promise?” When Jimin didn't immediately respond, Taehyung’s expression softened, borderline pleadingly. He almost sighed in relief when a small pinky wrapped around his own.

“Promise.” The gesture only lasted for a moment before Jimin quickly unhooked their fingers. “We should probably get going. The photoshoot—”

“Hey, we're already late anyway. What difference would a few more minutes make?” Taehyung pulled Jimin back into another hug. “Besides, I miss you.”

“Tae, we see each other everyday,” Jimin said with a breathy laugh, leaning into the younger’s embrace. Taehyung puffed out his cheeks, lower lip raising in a pout.

“Jiminnie, we’re best friends. That means that if even a minute passes without seeing you, I will already be missing you.” Jimin didn’t say anything in response, instead letting out only a small giggle until it faded into the silence. The air was still, the only sound being the simple rise and fall of their chests. Jimin always found himself most comfortable around Taehyung. The younger boy was a safe haven for Jimin to hide in, away from all of the hatred and criticism.

When he was with Taehyung, Jimin felt loved.

Maybe, just maybe, he could tell Taehyung the truth. He could finally confide with someone about Jungkook and that blog entry he found. Maybe keeping all of these worries trapped inside was the reason behind why he felt so goddamn heavy lately. Jimin shakily made eye contact with the other as he began to speak.

“Actually, Tae—”

Then there was a knock. Taehyung’s eyes shifted their attention to the tinted car window. It was Namjoon. Taehyung rushed to unlock and open the door for the leader.

“Yah! Why are you two still in there? You both do realize that we were supposed to start the photoshoot ten minutes ago, right?” Namjoon’s questions came out bluntly, tone slightly irritated. Jimin opened his mouth to reply, but Taehyung spoke before he could get any words out.

“Sorry, hyung! I was showing Jiminnie a video on my phone and we kind of lost track of time.” Taehyung sheepishly grinned. “But we’re coming now!!” The younger grabbed Jimin’s wrist, pulling the other out of the van with him. Namjoon crossed his arms and let out an exasperated sigh.
“Let’s just hurry before Photographer Lee gets really irritated.” Taehyung nodded hastily, hand still wrapped around Jimin.

“Anything for you, Joonie-hyung!” Namjoon rolled his eyes as he turned around, a small smile playing at his lips. Taehyung moved his fingers down Jimin’s wrist to entwine their fingers together. He gave the other a quick wink before dragging him along to skip after Namjoon.

The rented studio for their photoshoot was located on the second floor of a quiet commercial building in the Jongno district. Being a Saturday morning, there were few people wandering around the premises, allowing the journey to their designated room to be smooth and fast. When they arrived on the second floor, Namjoon was the first to enter. Jimin could still feel the heat of Taehyung’s hand laced with his own as they followed after the group’s leader. The room was spacious and open, with only a small number of lighting and film equipment filling the area. Yoongi was off to one side, sitting in a chair silently, eyes closed, as one of their stylist noonas buried his face under a layer of powder foundation. Jungkook was in a corner, ears covered by large headphones as he watched something on his phone. Hoseok and Seokjin were located in a different corner currently engaged in conversation. Seokjin paused in the middle of his sentence when he saw the three enter.

“Oh my gosh, finally, you’re both here,” Seokjin spoke in a rough whisper, eyes flitting to the door and back before continuing. “Photographer Lee was getting extremely pissy. He stepped out a moment ago to get some water.”

“Yeah, he definitely needed it after yelling at us for ten minutes straight,” Hoseok supplied with a dry laugh. “Where were you two anyway?”

“Tae was showing Jimin some video on his phone and they lost track of time.” Namjoon sat down in an unoccupied chair, hand running through his platinum locks.

“Yah, Kim Taehyung! Assess the situation better next time, you brat.” Taehyung untangled his hand from Jimin’s before circling his arms around the rapper.

“Forgive me, Hobi-hyung.” Taehyung tightened the embrace.

“O-Okay, just don’t do it again.” Hoseok’s voice came out an octave higher than before, face slightly flushed.

“Oh!” Taehyung chirped. Jimin watched the scene in silence. His arm was hanging off one side of his body, the previous warmth from Taehyung’s hand dissipating into the air, the tips of his fingers becoming increasingly cold.

“You’re finally here.” Jimin’s head quickly turned toward the voice. Yoongi was standing behind him, skin perfectly pale, a few faux freckles adorning the bridge of his nose.

“Who—me?” Jimin asked, unsure. His focus was still distracted by the loving exchange between Taehyung and Hoseok.

“Who else would I be talking to, huh?” Yoongi bit the inside of his cheek when Jimin’s eyes still didn’t look directly at him. “Listen, Jimin—”
“Taehyung-ah! Jimin-ah! There you two are! Come over here so we can do your make up.”

“Coming!” Taehyung spun to face Jimin, eyes crinkling into a smile. “Let’s go, Jiminie.”

“Okay.” He hurried to race after the younger as they made their way to the other side of the room. The stylist-noona immediately began spotting his skin with small amounts of liquid concealer.

“Oh, so they’re finally all here.” Walking through the door, was their photographer for the day, Lee Sungho. His wire-framed glasses were hanging off the collar of his shirt. “But it’s okay. I mean, we’re only starting about 25 minutes late. It’s not like I don’t have other commitments to attend to.” The remark was crude, his tone dry.

“We are so sorry, Photographer Lee,” Namjoon responded with a bow. “It was my fault for not having everyone gathered together beforehand.” Jimin felt his heart clench in guilt as he watched Namjoon take the blame for his mistake. It was all because he had annoyed Jungkook earlier. That should be him apologizing, not Namjoon.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever. Let’s just get started already before we waste even more time.” He unhooked his glasses from his shirt and rested them on his face. He began to walk toward the camera equipment but paused briefly to make a passing comment, “Oh, and we’re going to be doing this shoot in pairs of two, so hurry and partner up.”

“Okay, sir.” Namjoon said with another small bow of his head. When the photographer had left, the three eldest members made their way toward the makeup station where Taehyung and Jimin were.

“Jungkook-ah! Come here,” Seokjin called out. The maknae looked up and dropped the headphones to his neck. His eyes were still on his phone as he got up and walked over to the rest of the group.

“Okay, guys. How should we pair up?” Namjoon asked.

“Can I be with Tae?” Hoseok responded immediately. Taehyung nodded enthusiastically in agreement despite his eyes still closed as the stylist outlined them in black.

“I’ll partner with Jungkook then, for a ‘generation gap’ reunion,” Seokjin chuckled as he wrapped an arm to rest on the maknae’s shoulder.

“Then I guess that leaves me and you, Yoongi,” Namjoon clapped his hands in finality. “Good, that was easy.” The leader began to walk away.

“W-wait—” Jimin’s voice came out in a tiny squeak. He forgot about me. They all forgot about me. He could feel the blood pulse through his ears, face growing hot in embarrassment. The other members shifted their gazes to stare at him. Even Jungkook had finally unglued his eyes from his phone screen to look at the orange-haired boy.

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Jimin was so pathetic.

“What about me, hyung?” He brought his hands together, the fingernails of one digging into the palm of the other. His eyes were blinking nervously from all of the sudden attention. He attempted to swallow down the growing lump in his throat before speaking softly, “Who do I pair up with?”
Namjoon’s eyes widened a bit at the realization.

“Oh my gosh—Jimin, I’m sorry,” An awkward laugh escaped his lips as he scratched the back of his head with his hand. “It slipped my mind.”

“You can be with me and Jungkook, Jimin-ah.” Seokjin interjected with a soft smile.

“Or you can join our team, right Hobi-hyung?” Taehyung exclaimed, turning to the rapper. Jimin couldn’t help but notice the way Hoseok’s brow furrowed slightly in disappointment.

His heart was sinking further and further down.

“No, it’s okay.” Jimin beamed. “I’ll team up with Jin-hyung and Jungkookie.” A frown began to form on Taehyung’s face, mouth opening to protest when Hoseok suddenly grabbed his wrists and pulled the younger onto his feet.

“C’mon, Tae! Let’s go first.” The two of them ran off toward the photoshoot set, leaving the other four sitting in silence.

“I’m— going to go and watch them,” Namjoon spoke, words coming out in a hesitated mumble. He quickly padded away and Jimin's eyes followed after his retreating figure before returning to the others around him. He dug the nails of his fingers deeper into his skin when he noticed how both Jungkook and Yoongi had already shifted their attention back to their respective phones. Actually, it reminded Jimin of last year during their “Just One Day” promotions on Show Champion. Each member had received an individual mission and whereas the others were asked to be a pretty boy or a guest writer, he was given the task of being invisible. Therefore, he spent the entire day being ignored. It had upset him, but he knew that they were just joking around for the sake of entertainment.

But, what about now then?

Was Namjoon just kidding when he had just bluntly forgotten about Jimin? Even now, the other members didn’t seem to care very much about what had just happened. It was almost as if Jimin being left out was a common occurrence. The pressure on his palm was building as his nails pushed harder into the skin. The feeling was painful, but it was easier for him to concentrate on the physical throbbing of skin threatening to break rather than on the heartbreaking realization of how insignificant he really was.

“Jimin-ah?”

Jimin squeezed his arms tighter against each other. He winced as he felt his forearms press against the soft surface of his stomach. It made sense that nobody wanted to see him. His body was unflattering and misshapened. Maybe, he should just ask to not be in the pictures at all. It wasn’t as if he would be contributing anything substantial to them. He should just save himself from the embarrassment now and then maybe when he wasn’t such a disconfigured cow, he could possibly be in them again. Maybe, maybe, maybe—

“Hey, Jimin?” Jimin’s head suddenly shot up at the voice. Seokjin was standing in front of him, brown hair now styled in a perfectly layered coif.

“It’s our turn to go.”
“O-oh—okay, Jin-hyung.” Jimin separated his hands from one another, red crescent shaped imprints appearing on the skin of his palm. He motioned to stand up when Seokjin placed his hand on the younger’s shoulder.

“Jimin, are you okay?” Seokjin’s lips parted as the question lingered in the air. Jimin could recognize the pity in the elder’s eyes and he could feel another stab of guilt hit him. Why did he have to constantly make the others feel so bad? It was his fault, his problem, his battle.

They could never know.

His mouth twitched as it slowly contorted into a smile. It was the same smile he used whenever he had to webcam his parents. The same smile he used during concerts and fan-meets. The same smile that always appeared every time Jungkook repeatedly expressed just how much he hated him. He had a lot of practice with it.

Jimin had always been good at smiling.

Even if most of the time, all he wanted to do was cry.

“Yeeees,” He widened his mouth into a grin. “I’m so happy we’re on the same team, Jin-hyung!” He quickly got up from his seat to capture the elder into a hug, nuzzling his forehead against the other’s chest.

“Me too, Jiminie,” Seokjin hummed in return, silently hugging the smaller male back. The two of them walked over the set where Jungkook was fiddling with the hem of his shirt. As he approached the maknae, Jimin sucked in his breath, quickly averting his gaze from the sight of Jungkook. He looked like an angel—if angels wore tight leather pants.

“Jimin-ah, come and change into this outfit.” He nodded and rushed over to the rack of clothes, grateful for the distraction. The stylist noona handed him a plaid sleeveless shirt and a pair of leather pants nearly identical to Jungkook’s. She then ushered him in the direction of a small makeshift changing room. It was a cramped little box with barely any room for him to even lift his arms. He had to practically fold himself in half just to slip the shirt on. He somehow managed to squeeze himself into the pants without looking in the mirror once.

When Jimin had finally freed himself from the confines of the changing box, he rushed to join Seokjin and Jungkook on the set.

“Okay, so we're going to start with the group shoot and then do individuals shots,” Photographer Lee spoke as he fiddled with the camera lens.

The group photos consisted of the three of them posing together. Jimin tried his best to ignore how Jungkook seemed to constantly use Seokjin as a barrier between the two of them. Jimin understood how uncomfortable he made the younger feel, especially after the incident in the van earlier.

When it came to do the individual shoots, Seokjin went first. His poses were crisp and clean. The elder always extruded a natural and effortless beauty that rivalled even that of professional models.
Jungkook went next, tight outfit complimenting every dip and curve of his body, leather material of his pants clinging to the younger’s thighs like a second layer of skin. Jimin could feel his heart speed up when Jungkook smiled directly at the camera. *Calm down, dumbass. It’s not like it’s you he’s looking at.* His palms were clammy with sweat and he ran his hands along the length of his legs to alleviate some of the excess moisture. His fingers brushed against the stitches trailing on the sides, silently praying that they would not burst at the seams.

How was it that they were wearing the exact same thing but yet looked completely different?

“Okay, next!” Jimin jumped up when the booming voice of Photographer Lee rang through the room. He stiffly made his way up to the set, keeping his head firmly down as he passed Jungkook. Once he reached the center, he squinted his eyes against the dozens of blinding fluorescent lights aimed at him. He subconsciously rubbed his palms against the front of his legs, imaging all of the pressure building in the leather from his enormous thighs. Almost like filling balloons with helium, expanding until the point of exploding—except he wasn't filled with air. Just fat. Jimin chewed on the insides of his cheeks, gnawing at the gums in small repetitive motions.

*One, two, three... One, two, three...*

“Yah, can someone wake him up?” Jimin's eyes snapped up and made contact with the photographer.

“Oh, I'm sorry, did I interrupt your nap?” His voice was dripping with sarcasm. “Why don't you go ahead and finish your nap while we all wait for you.”

Jimin flushed with embarrassment. “I— I'm sorry.”

Photographer Lee was unfazed, eyebrows raising, lip lifting into a cynical sneer. “Your useless apology isn't going to give me back the five minutes of my time you just so blatantly wasted. So how about instead of stupidly telling me sorry again, you do what you were supposed to do in the first place?”

Jimin just nodded in response, desperately avoiding any eye contact. For the rest of the shoot, he did his best just to focus on the task at hand, smiling and posing for the camera. When it was over, Photographer Lee simply turned away to start packing up his equipment, not even sparing Jimin so much as a glance.

Jimin hastily slipped on a loose hoodie as he felt wave after wave of disappointment crash over him. He wanted nothing more than to strip himself of the suffocating clothes and hide himself away. In the corner of his eye, he saw one of the managers pull out some prepared lunch boxes out of a cooler. He suppressed a thick gulp.

Somehow, the clothes felt even tighter.

“Jimin-ah, come here and eat some lunch,” Seokjin called out.

His heart was racing. How could it already be lunch time? Didn’t they just have breakfast like an
hour ago? He could still feel the heavy weight of the morning's rice sitting at the bottom of his stomach. He didn't even finish digesting this food yet, how could he dare to think about consuming more already?

“Jimin-ah, hurry up!”

“Okay,” he called back. Jimin slowly made his way to where the rest of the members were sitting on the floor, each with a respective lunch box opened in front of him. He scanned the contents of the meal: white rice and bulgogi with some small sides of pickled vegetables and kimchi. Seokjin handed Jimin a container and a pair of chopsticks. As he separated the chopsticks, his eyes wandered to Jungkook. The younger’s lunch was two hard boiled eggs and what seemed like a handful of lettuce. His stomach clenched in envy at just how light the food looked in comparison to his. Pig, pig, pig. The echoes of the word ran through his mind in a mantra, background noise to the endless stream of numbers floating around. Values that he had gathered from his late night on the internet. Calculations of calories from each individual grain of rice, each tiny slice of vegetable, each bit of food. A shiver of disgust ran down his spine as he realized the math was slowly morphing into a mocking repetition of add, add, add.

The others remained were oblivious to his self-scolding. Too busy eating their own meals. Too busy talking amongst themselves. Too busy to notice Jimin.

His hands fiddled with the chopsticks, his chubby, short fingers resembling tiny sausages. They looked so big in comparison to the thin wooden utensil in their hold. He clamped down on his bottom lip in an attempt to even out his breathing as his thoughts circled around a single question: how do I avoid eating?

Cautiously, he slowly brought his free hand to hover over the section of white rice. Eyes darting between his meal and the others as he quickly dug his fingers into the rice, soft grains crushed in his grasp. Without a moment of hesitation, he stuffed his fist into the right pocket of his hoodie, hand attempting to ball up the rice so it was more compact. His gaze focused solely on the lunch box before him.

Suddenly, a third of the rice was already gone.

His heart was beating fast. The excitement from the action overcame any lingering guilt bubbling in his stomach. His eyes drifted around the room, only to find no one paying the slightest bit of attention to him. It hurt but only served to strengthen his resolve. That what he was doing was the right thing. That no one really cared if he didn’t eat a meal or two. Everything was okay.

Within a matter of seconds, the rice had disappeared.

Jimin decided to nibble on a piece of kimchi as to not seem so suspicious, hand subconsciously hovering over his pockets. They looked bulky and full. But better them than him, right?

“Jiminnie?” He turned his head in the direction of Taehyung. “You didn’t finish eating yet?”

Jimin swallowed, suppressing a biting comment on the tip of his tongue of how he’s eaten enough for two lifetimes already. “Ah, actually, I’m full already.” Sheepishly, he pushed his lunch box away from him. “Do you guys want the rest of mine?”

“Really?” Taehyung asked. However, Jimin didn’t even finish nodding his head before Hoseok snatched the food up, placing it between him and Taehyung. He picked up a piece of the marinated beef and lifted it up to Taehyung’s mouth. Another wave of hurt washed over Jimin but he ignored it.
At least he didn’t have to worry about cleaning sauce-stained pockets now.

x

With the photoshoot over, the group was allotted a few hours of free time before they had to head over to the interview venue. The seven of them were lounging around the living room when their manager entered the through the door.

“Hey, guys. I have the rough copies of your photos here.” He handed a manila envelope to Namjoon, who accepted it was a small nod. “So take a look, okay?”

The others immediately began to gather around Namjoon, eager to see the results of the shoot. The leader broke the seal on the package and began to shuffle through the pictures, the first being Jungkook’s.

“Wow, look at our cute maknae,” Namjoon beamed. The rest of the group were quick to follow in the approval, offering compliment after compliment to the youngest. Jimin strained his neck to see, no space in the small crowd for him to squeeze into. He caught a glimpse of the picture, heart fluttering at how absolutely divine Jungkook looked. A playful glint shining in his eyes, light hitting all of the right angles of his body. Namjoon progressed with flipping through the photos, giving small comments here and there about each member.

Jimin waited patiently for his name to come up. Because even if Namjoon didn’t mean it, he couldn’t avoid looking at Jimin’s picture. Even if it was out of obligation, he was definitely going to say something. Jimin never realized before how hungry he was for the praise. He just wanted some affirmation that what he was doing—what he has been doing—was right. Five, ten minutes went by and he continued to wait. The others were now each holding and studying their own respective photos and yet he still waited. Even when they began to shuffle out of the room, he waited. It was when he left alone in the area, that he made his way to the abandoned manila folder on the table, with his photographs resting face-down on top.

He was quick to snatch up the pictures, rushing to his shared room with Taehyung and Hoseok. The other two weren’t there and Jimin could vaguely recall hearing Hoseok offering to treat Taehyung to some ice cream at the small shop down the street.

He clammered onto the bed, spreading the photographs across the surface of the sheets. The first two were of him individually. His clothes looked painfully tight, body bulging out in a disgusting manner. The light hitting his face creating unflattering shadows that made his cheeks seem larger than usual. Even his eyes, often considered his best feature, appeared dull. He was ugly.

Jimin hastily ripped each photograph in half. He reached for the third when he saw it wasn’t only him, but his group shot with Seokjin and Jungkook. His fingers trembled as he dragged them along the photo’s surface, outlining each of them separately. He paused at Jungkook, heart swelling with shame. Jimin leaned over the edge of the bed, reaching under it to retrieve a tatty old shoebox. Inside were dozens of photographs of him with the younger, saved from each of their schedules. He used to love seeing himself next to Jungkook. It was something he continued to dream about ever since he acknowledged his own feelings toward the maknae.
But right now, nothing felt more wrong.

He didn't deserve to be next to Jungkook. His hand searched through the box, fingers colliding with a black permanent marker, the one Jungkook had used and jokingly kissed during their last fanmeet. (Jimin might’ve secretly taken it.) Uncapping it, Jimin got to work immediately. Thick, dark strokes being made, line after line. Large black X’s covered his image. *Ugly, so ugly.*

Soon the X’s morphed into scribblings of messy hangul. *Pig! Pig! Pig!*

When he had finished, his image had been almost completely drawn over. The black ink stained the tips of his fingers as he gripped the photo in his hands, before dropping it into the box.

The ripped remains of the other two landed into the trashcan.

His stomach let out a few groans. He was hungry. He didn't want to eat anything but he knew it was impractical to believe that he could go the entire day without consuming anything (aside from the breakfast rice). Making his way to the kitchen, it was then that he noticed how quiet the dorm was.

He was all alone.

Another sting of betrayal passed through him at being left out, *again*. He never realized before just how invisible he really was. But now, it was so painfully obvious. He could feel his throat tighten, eyes moistening with unshed tears. But he refused to allow them to fall, refused to screw up even more. Instead, he just took a deep breath and continued to the kitchen.

Their kitchen was, as expected of one shared by seven guys, a complete wreck. Dirty pots and pans were stacked in a different corners. Even the dining table was littered with empty cans and containers. Jimin maneuvered his way around the mess before opening the refrigerator. He scanned through the contents for something filling but low in calories. He finally settled for one of the apples located in the far back. *35 calories. I can jog it off later.*

Satisfied with his choice, Jimin sat himself in one of the high chairs to work on the apple. He tried his best to pace himself, take small bites and chewing in increments of three before each swallow, as if to savor the feeling of *food* for just a moment before the restricting started again. However, one bite quickly turned into two and before he knew it the entire apple had disappeared. He found himself licking the excess juice dripping down his fingers. The sweet lingering taste of the fruit teasing his tongue, his stomach letting out another groan.

It had just tasted so good.

His fingers hooked themselves over his teeth as his eyes rapidly moved up and down. His head was a hazy mess, mind circling around one thought: *food, food, food.* The hand resting on the table suddenly shot forward, grabbing for the nearest opened bag. It was a half-finished package of crisps. Before Jimin could stop himself, he was shoving chip after chip into his mouth. Crumbs were gathering at the edge of his lips, not even having the chance to flake off when he switched to the box of biscuits sitting on the table. Next came the snack-cakes. Cans of tuna. Slices of plain white bread. Even the burnt rice stuck to the bottom of the frying pan from this morning. It didn’t matter.
He was just *so* hungry.

Nothing was processing in his brain. Not the hundreds of calories he was consuming, not the sugar and fat and salt entering his body. He wasn’t even chewing the food anymore, simply pushing it in, forcing it down his throat. The action was animalistic and primal, but he just needed to fill this void in his stomach. He needed to escape this emptiness from being ignored and forgotten by his so-called friends.

It was momentary bliss.

But that was all it was. A moment.

And once it had passed, the realization sunk in.

He was surrounded by half-eaten choco pies and ripped plastic bags. The biscuit in his hand suddenly fell to the floor. His throat felt congested, all of the food trapped in there. He couldn’t even remember swallowing a single thing. Scrambling, he picked himself up and ran to the bathroom. The light flickered on immediately, illuminating the space and leaving him face to face with his reflection.

There were traces of chocolate smeared on his face. Crumbs clinging to his lips. Bits of tuna and rice stuck on his chin. All of the evidence of how much of a *pig* he was staring right at him.

And just like that, a dam inside of Jimin broke.

His shoulders began to shake, big fat tears welling up in his eyes. He was crying, body wracking with ugly, loud sobs. He squeezed his eyes shut in an attempt to suppress the liquid gathering behind his eyelids. He was such a failure. All he did was eat and eat, like a fucking animal. It was a mistake to believe that all of that food would fill the emptiness inside. No, all he did was prove everyone right. Everything that the blog had written about him. Everything that the other members secretly thought about him. Everything Jungkook had said to him earlier.

‘*Why do you always do this, hyung? Why do you always act so fucking childish?*’

Jimin could feel his heart threatening to beat out of his chest. Blood pulsing in his ears in a heated mess. His mind was filled with fog, a cloudy clutter of thoughts. Words repeated over and over in a numbing echo.

‘*Don’t you feel embarrassed being like this?*’

“I do.” He reached his hand forward, stroking his reflection on the mirror. “I feel so embarrassed with myself, Jungkook.” He stared directly at himself and took everything in. His face was puffy from crying. The tears mingling with the tiny bits of food clinging to his face. It was repulsive. *He* was repulsive.

“I’m s-so sorry, Jungkook. I-I’m s-sorry, Ba-angtan,” Jimin whispered to the empty bathroom. “I’m sorry for being like this, for being this ugly, f-fat pig. No wonder you all d-don’t want to take
pictures w-with me or even be around me.” Tiny hiccups escaped from his lips in between the words, speech coming out in a jumble of broken syllables. “I w-want to fit in with the r-rest of you. I w-want to be perfect t-too.”

His mind drifted back to that morning. To the image of himself in this very same bathroom with his fingers poised in front of his lips. Maybe that was the only solution. Because if he was going to feel so goddamn empty of the time, then why shouldn’t his stomach be the same.

Immediately his hand flew up to his mouth, index and middle fingers stuck together reaching past his tongue. He gagged as the tips of his nails brushed against his uvula, stray tears trailing down the sides of his face. He pulled his hand out, pausing them at the base of his lips.

He couldn’t do it.

_Coward, you fucking coward! This is why you can’t do anything right. This is why you are such an utter disappointment!_

He closed his eyes tightly, teeth clenched in frustration.

_Do you like being this way? Do you enjoy it?_

“No, no, I don’t.” He wanted to change. He wanted to prove himself. He wanted to rid himself of all of the burdening weight.

The fingers at his lips went back into his mouth, pushing into his uvula with new found vigor. He could feel the insides of his throat constricting as it attempted to contain all of the food trapped within. He added pressure, praying for some release, some liberation.

It took a few seconds before it happened.

Soggy pieces of half-chewed biscuits and tuna chunks flowed out of Jimin’s mouth. The regurgitated food was coated with a slimy film, tiny bubbles of saliva dribbling down his chin. The sink was filling rapidly with his vomit. Minutes seemed to stretch into hours, just purging and purging everything out.

It was difficult to even breath.

Jimin continued to push against the back of his throat until only dry gags came out. There was a trickle of residual vomit trailing from the corner of his lip. He pulled his fingers out of his mouth to stare at them in wonder. They glistened under the bright lights of the bathroom. His senses were numbed, only the slight tingling of his throat resonating throughout his being.

He felt so pleasantly hollow.
Dragging his thumb across his lips, Jimin wiped away the excess vomit before washing it (along with the rest of the contents) down the sink. His limbs were sluggish and loose, almost as if he was dissociated from his body. His mind didn’t register him reaching under the sink and taking out the scale. It was as if he was on autopilot as he stepped on the balance. Jimin’s heart beat anxiously.

60.5 kilograms.

A smile spread across his face.

“It worked,” he spoke in a quiet whisper. “I did something right.” His eyes drifted from the glowing numbers back up to his reflection, smile falling away. The boy staring back at him was chubby, with eyes too tiny and a nose too large. He was all thick skin and layers upon layers of fat. It was then that he noticed the small bulge in the pocket of his hoodie. He reached inside and pulled out the three slightly crushed balls of rice from the post-photoshoot lunch. His lip sneered up in disgust at the sight before he quickly dropped them into the toilet. As he flushed them down, he felt a tinge of accomplishment pass through him, the image of lower numbers burned into his mind.

He had just won a battle, had just taken a step of progress toward the perfection he was so desperately seeking.

And food was the enemy.

Chapter End Notes

as always, feedback is appreciated :-)
my tumblr

(and to everyone struggling with finals (like me), good luck!!!)
Religiously

Chapter Notes

thank you so much for reading!! it means a lot. this chapter is a bit heavy on dialogue and i played around with the formatting, so please tell me if it's confusing. as promised, yoongi plays a larger role in this one! (next chapter will focus more on jungkook).

warning: there is a lot of potentially triggering material (and some mentions of brief psychosis), so please read with caution.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jimin stood there in a daze, with only the image of glowing green digits on his mind. He absentmindedly went through the rest of the day. Head unfocused as he straightened out the bathroom and kitchen, discreetly tossing the evidence of his pitiful food-binge into the trash bin. He didn't realize when the other members came back to the dorm and immediately dragged him to the interview location. He stayed silent for most of the event, opting to simply smile when prompted and laugh when others were.

If anyone noticed, they certainly didn't show it.

But it was okay. Maybe because all Jimin could experience at the moment was the fleeting high of his purge. A smile nearly escaped his lips when he brushed his tongue over the back of his teeth, savoring the lingering taste of vomit (badly masked with some cheap mouthwash).

But as he laid in bed that night, covers up to his chin, the seemingly small numbers slowly grew in size, morphing into ugly criticism. It's not enough. You need to lose more.

Jimin responded with a quiet nod in the darkness. The voice was encouraging and honest, giving Jimin the perfect motivation to keep going. He briefly wondered if this was normal. To hear these anonymous voices in his head. To treat his body this way. Maybe he should tell someone.

But who was going to listen to him?

His mind immediately went to Taehyung. They had been interrupted earlier in the van but maybe he could try again tomorrow. Taehyung was his best friend.

He would understand.
Jimin closed his eyes in agreement, ready for a good night’s sleep after such an exhausting day. But as soon as his eyes fluttered shut, he could hear the faint opening and closing of the door. There was the soft rustling of sheets before a warm body pressed against him.

“Jiminie?” Jimin could recognize the deep tone of Taehyung’s voice, even whispering, right away. “Are you awake?”

Jimin shuffled in the blankets so that he was facing the younger boy, but didn’t say anything. Taehyung took the silence as a sign to continue.

“Hoseok-hyung kissed me.”

The breathe Jimin was about to take got caught in his throat.

“Just now, as I was coming out of the shower. He was waiting by the door and one second, we were talking like normal and the next, his lips were on mine.” Taehyung buried his face into Jimin's chest, voice muffling slightly. “What should I do, Jiminie?”

Jimin combed his fingers through Taehyung’s hair. He had a hunch about Hoseok’s feelings for the younger. Hell, he was pretty sure all of the members had noticed. Hoseok wasn't exactly the king of subtly.

“Well, what do you want to do?”

“I-I don’t know,” Taehyung squeaked out. Jimin wrapped his free arm around the other, hugging him a bit closer.

“Do you like Hoseok-hyung?”

Taehyung whined lowly into Jimin’s shirt, “...I don't know!”

“What do you mean, Tae?”

“I just- I don’t know. I’ve always liked spending time with Hobi-hyung the most but I’ve never really thought of him as, you know…”

Jimin’s throat clogged up slightly at the words but he immediately chastised himself for thinking so selfishly in his friend’s time of need. Right now, this was about helping Taehyung.

“What do you feel when you’re with him?” Jimin could feel Taehyung’s heart pick up in pace at the question. *How cute.*

“Uh…” Taehyung hesitated, fingers fiddling with the creases of Jimin’s shirt. “I guess I feel really happy with him? But— I feel happy when I’m with all of you guys!”

“Is it a different kind of happiness?”

“M-maybe? I really like it when he buys me snacks in secret and when he smiles that thousand-watt smile of his—” Jimin smiled softly as Taehyung went on with his innocent rambling. His feelings were just so pure.
“You’re so cute, Tae,” Jimin gave Taehyung a small squeeze. He twirled one of Taehyung’s brown locks around his index finger. “But I think, you should probably tell Hoseok-hyung all of that.”

“Do you think so?” Jimin let out a small hum of approval. “W-will you come with me?”

“What! of course not. This is something that needs to be sorted out between you two, dummy.” He untangled his fingers from Taehyung’s hair to give him a tiny flick on the back of the head.

“Ow! Okay-okay.” He paused for a second before continuing. “...It’ll be okay, right?”

“Everything will be alright, Tae.” Jimin pinched the bridge of Taehyung’s nose. “When have I ever lied to you, huh?” Right as the words left his lips, they lingered in his mind. But Jimin wasn’t a liar, right? He might hide and run a hell of a lot, but he certainly didn’t lie.

Taehyung giggled out another “okay” and squeezed Jimin once more. “Thanks, Jiminie.” The blankets rustled again as Taehyung untangled himself from the grasps of both Jimin and his bed. He exited the room with a smile leaving Jimin alone once more in the darkness.

Silence was quick to fall over the small area as the smile on Jimin’s face slowly faded away, washed out in pitch black. Hearing about Taehyung’s feelings toward Hoseok reminded him of his own regarding Jungkook.

The only difference being that no one loved Jimin back.

He curled himself deeper into the mess of blankets, wincing when he felt the folds of his stomach press against themselves.

“I’m horrible,” Jimin whispered to the emptiness. “I’m a horrible, horrible person.” How could he have even thought to bother Taehyung with his pathetic problems? The younger had his own troubles to worry about. Why would he care about Jimin’s? Taehyung had even said himself that Hoseok was more important than Jimin.

Jimin was so painfully insignificant.

Especially about something as stupid as his weight. This should be something that Jimin deals with on his own, instead of crying to the other members like a baby.

Jungkook was right. He was childish.

The air was suffocatingly thick. His entire body suddenly seemed so heavy. He felt like a lead brick sinking deeper into the mattress, all of gravity pushing down on his mass. He closed his eyes again in an attempt to sleep, ignoring the twitching of his fingers that desperately wanted to reach for his laptop or his phone. To expose himself to more criticizing comments that would shred any remaining pieces of self-esteem he had left. He wanted them to claw away at him, and all of his fat, until he was just a mess of blood and bones. He envisioned all of the disappointment physically dripping away from him in the form of liquid red. It was eerily beautiful and it was all his.
Jimin didn’t plan to tell anyone anything anymore.

*

Three days later, Hoseok and Taehyung announced to the group of their new relationship status as “official boyfriends.”

Amidst the congratulatory and joking comments from the other members, Jimin just smiled, happy for his friends.

*

The next few days happened in a blur. Jimin could feel himself slowly fade away into the background. Most of the members were too focused on Taehyung and Hoseok and making sure they were comfortable to really pay him any attention.

Not that anyone really paid Jimin any attention in the first place.

But it was significantly easier this way. And before he knew it, a week had passed and September was over.

One entire week since the first time Jimin had stuck his fingers down his throat. He had performed the action a few more times following it, usually only after especially large meals and the occasional 3am-binge session. It was euphoric, really. The joy of emptying his stomach. The slight excitement that came with reversing one of the natural processes of his body.

Sometimes it even felt like he was playing god.

Of course, restricting came first. He limited himself to 1000 kilocalories a day and tried his best to consume most of it in light vegetables and fruits.

But in general, if he didn’t have to eat, he just, didn’t.

To be honest, it wasn’t all that hard. Jimin had developed a series of routines to make group meals seem as natural as possible. First, it helped to cut his food into miniscule pieces and rearrange them on his plate to appear half-eaten. He would count between slices and chews to pace the speed of his eating (or rather, lack-of-eating). He also grew into the habit of taking frequent sips of water throughout the meal, just so his mouth was constantly occupied with something.

Most of the time, however, he was left alone. Especially with Taehyung spending a majority of the day with Hoseok now, there was no one who really chose to be with Jimin outside of their schedules.

He tended to avoid his own room, feeling like an outsider when he could see Taehyung hanging out in Hoseok’s bed rather than Jimin’s like he did before. Instead, Jimin would go on long runs or hide out in their practice room until the sun set. At first, Jimin had been afraid of the loneliness, the
solitude. But now, it was almost comforting. Alone, Jimin felt no pressure to put up any fronts. To eat. Pride filled his entire being every time he ignored the small groans from his stomach. He was slowly becoming addicted to the rush of satisfaction that came with skipping a meal, with denying himself food.

And before he knew it, he just didn’t feel hungry anymore.

***

It was 5am when Jimin’s eyes opened. There were a few stray rays of sunlight filtering through the blinds of his shared room. He made his way across the room, expression softening at the sight of his two roommates cuddling in Hoseok’s bed. He swallowed down the pang of jealousy and exited the room without another look.

His feet were automatic as he walked through the dimly lit hallway and entered the bathroom. He instinctively flicked on the light switch as the door closed behind him. As light cascaded over the room, Jimin let out a low breath, hands shaking as he pulled out the familiar metal scale. He let his fingertips run along its thin frame, admiring its slender body before silently setting it down and standing on it.

The bathroom had become his shrine.

It was his own private sanctuary. His place to be truly alone with his thoughts. Away from the judgement of others. Away from the neglect. Away from the love that didn’t exist for him.

His eyes stared unblinkingly as the numbers on the scale fluctuated up and down. As he willed them to just go lower and lower.

56.2 kilograms.

A smile played at his lips. Something about the scale was so enticing. After every meal, every practice, every schedule, he would weigh himself. It was borderline religious.

And the scale was his god.

The next half hour was spent analyzing his own reflection. He would remove his clothes, one piece at a time, and just pick himself apart. Hands sliding along the curves of his body, pinching at the fat.

The scale didn't lie.

The numbers were decreasing everyday.

But then why did the boy in the mirror only seem to get larger?
Jimin's eyes darkened. Obviously he wasn't making enough progress. The shedded weight was probably all water, not fat. If he were to turn back now, he would gain it all back in a heartbeat.

He still had a long way to go.

Hastily, Jimin splashed his face with some water before redressing. He made his way back to his bedroom to throw on an old t-shirt and track pants. Once changed, he rushed for the front door when a voice stopped him.

“Jimin, where are you going?”

“Ah, morning Yoongi-hyung,” Jimin said in greeting, fingers already curling around the doorknob. “I'm just going on a short run.”

“So early?”

“Yep,” Jimin struggled to stretch his smile into a grin. “Want to come with me?”

“Ew, no thank you.” Yoongi’s face scrunched up. “I have better things to do than to sweat with you first thing in the morning.” Jimin's smile faltered at the words but he kept it steady.

“Heh heh, okay.” Jimin gave a little wave before turning around. “I'll see you later than, hyung!”

Jimin took off before Yoongi could respond. His eyes stung as his raced down the stairs and into the chilly autumn air. Of course Yoongi didn't want to be with a pig like himself. Didn't want to see such a nasty sight such as Jimin sweating. But it was okay.

Being alone was better anyway.

***

Yoongi sat at the kitchen table, a mug of black coffee in front of him. His eyes stared blankly at the steam rising from the ceramic cup. The wisps of steam were dancing gracefully with one another. They looked a bit like Jimin when he performed on stage, so flexible and free.

He let out a sigh at the thought of the younger boy.

Something was wrong.

He couldn't quite place his finger on what it was, but there was definitely something off. It was there since that photo shoot they had last week.

Jimin was distant.

Aside from their schedules and practice sessions, the orange haired boy was just never around anymore. He was always staying behind after they finished. He was even eating most of his meals
at the company instead of at the dorm, with the rest of the group.

Yoongi wasn't blind. He could see how Jimin never seemed to finish any of his meals. But he knew how sensitive Jimin was about his body image, so he didn't say anything.

And as long as the boy was eating at all, Yoongi was happy.

But then, why did it feel like more than that? Like there was a deeper, darker problem lurking under the surface.

A reason behind why every single one of Jimin’s smiles felt a bit too forced.

Yoongi’s eyes fluttered close as his hands cupped around the mug, warmth spreading through his fingertips.

Maybe he was overthinking things. If something was bothering Jimin, the younger would certainly tell them, right? Because Jimin told them everything. He wore his heart on his sleeve, and that was exactly why they all adored him so much.

Yoongi slammed his phone back on the counter after checking the time for the hundredth time since waking up. He grit his teeth in frustration, fingers impatiently drumming against the table.

It was almost 7am and Jimin still had yet to return from his “short run.”

Yoongi was already on his third cup of coffee and the effects of the caffeine were starting to show. His ears were picking up every little stray sound, from the low humming of the refrigerator to the stray drops of water descending from the sink.

It was driving him insane.

“Yoongi-hyung, you're already up?” Yoongi’s head snapped at the voice but let out a disappointed sigh when he saw it was only Namjoon.

“Ah, yeah. I slept some at the studio.” Namjoon frowned, gaze narrowing.

“You told me you'd stop sleeping there.”

“It was just this once! I really try not to…” Yoongi let out a weak chuckle, fingers fiddling with the mug handle. Namjoon gave a skeptical little hum as he made his way across the kitchen, only to frown when he found the coffee pot near empty.

“Oh, here drink this, Joon-ah” Yoongi pushed his cup in the direction of the younger to which Namjoon accepted with a small nod. He took a few sips before sitting down next to Yoongi.

“Is there something wrong, hyung?”
“Hm?” Yoongi’s gaze was on his hands, inspecting and picking at his nails for imaginary dirt. “No.”

“Really? Then why do you keep looking at the door every ten seconds?”

Yoongi raised his eyes to stare directly at Namjoon. “Where would you like me to look at then? You?”

“Hyung,” Namjoon deadpanned. Yoongi let out a disgruntled sigh, fingers tangling in his blond hair, anything to calm their insistent twitching.

Damn caffeine.

“What’s wrong?”

“I— I don’t know.” Yoongi chewed on his lower lip. “I just have a bad feeling.”

“About what?”

“Don’t you think Jimin’s been acting weird lately?”

Namjoon’s eyebrows rose in surprise. “Jimin?”

Yoongi just nodded.

“What about Jimin?”

“He’s never around anymore. He’s always at the studio or in the practice room.”

“Well,” Namjoon started as he swirled the contents in the mug around, “Jimin has always been a practice addict.”

“I know but this… this is different.”

“How so?” Yoongi bit his lip harder at the underlying tone of disinterest in Namjoon’s question. Yoongi’s mind mulled over the events of the past week and how Jimin seemed to have become a ghost of their dorm. Only speaking when spoken to. Only smiling when noticed. How even at their group dinner last night, he sat in the corner with his shoulders hunched and eyes low. The way his fingers were continuously drumming on the bottom of his chair, lips moving but no words coming out.

Almost rhythmically.

Namjoon downed the last of the cold coffee as he waited for Yoongi to answer. When the older still hadn’t spoken for a few minutes, he started to get up.

“Hyung, I’m going to make some more—”

“He counts,” Yoongi suddenly interrupted. Namjoon remained in his half standing-half sitting position, right brow slowly arching higher in confusion.

“He counts?”
“Yeah,” Yoongi mumbled lowly, silently wishing he had the mug in his hands again, anything to preoccupy them from their endless fidgeting.

Namjoon surveyed Yoongi’s expression for a few moments before letting out a sigh and sitting back down. He slid the empty mug toward Yoongi who immediately went to grasp it. The elder began to clench and unclench his fingers around its ceramic frame, knuckles becoming even paler than usual.

“Can you elaborate for me, hyung?”

“Just, I don't know. He's always mouthing things to himself, in the dorm, at the studio, during meals. A-and he taps, like his fingers and his feet. They're always moving and… and I don't know why.” The words spilled out from Yoongi’s lips in a jumbled mess.

“Hm, that is a little strange. Maybe he's just practicing the songs? You and I both know how Jimin gets before every comeback.”

Yoongi gripped the mug tighter, teeth gritting together with a similar strength.

_It's not the same._

_It's not just practice this time._

_Something is wrong._

Yoongi breathed in and out a few times before glancing at the door again. Jimin had still yet to return.

Two hours.

But Namjoon did have a point. Jimin did tend to become obsessed with getting everything right. For everything to be completely flawless. No matter how much they tried to reassure him that it was fine, that he was fine, he would always keep going. Jimin was a perfectionist.

It was normal.

“Okay, you're right. Maybe I'm overthinking things.” Yoongi’s gaze drifted to the door once more, only moving away when Namjoon suddenly placed his hand over his.

“You know, you can always just ask him yourself—” Namjoon stopped himself when Yoongi glared at him, lip lifting into a slight sneer. “—oor I could ask him for you, Hyung.”

“Well, since you're offering, thanks Namjoon.” Namjoon let out a low laugh and got up to work on that second pot of coffee again. The two didn't exchange any more words, only the sounds of the coffee machine filling the air. In the background, they could hear the other four members waking up one by one.

“It’ll be alright, hyung.”
Yoongi only nodded in response.

***

“One, two, three…”

“Hey Jimin, can I talk to you for a second?”

“One, two, three…”

“I never apologized to you about what happened at the photoshoot last week.”

“One, two, ugh!” Jimin was in the middle of his third consecutive run through their new choreography when his feet tripped over themselves. As he collapsed onto the floor, knees bending towards his chest, a small shout of frustration left his lips.

“And I was just wondering if everything is alright.”

Sweat drenched his t-shirt, small droplets of perspiration hanging off the tips of his hair. They had spent the day learning the new routine for their next comeback single. The rest of the members had left hours ago, leaving him in the practice studio alone.

“You know that you are just as important as anyone else in the group, right?”

“Liar,” Jimin whispered to himself, hands gripping at his knees, nails digging into the skin. “I’m not important.”

The conversation with Namjoon was echoing through his mind.

“Of course I know that Namjoon-hyung! And it’s okay! It was early in the morning and we were all tired. I had already forgotten about it, hehe.”

His stomach churned as a low growl escaped it. Jimin bit his lip as he gave a few light punches to his gut.

“Shut up,” Jimin grit out. When the sounds refused to cease, Jimin reluctantly reached for his duffle bag and pulled out a packaged cylindrical rice cracker. He had eaten one in the morning (after deliberately returning from his run just in time to miss breakfast) and grabbed an extra just in case. He held the slightly crushed snack in his hand and turned it around, smoothing out the crinkled plastic of the wrapper to read the nutritional facts. 65 kilocalories.

“Is anything else bothering you? Everything is okay, right?”

Jimin squeezed his eyes shut and quickly ripped open the wrapper to take a bite. A few of the small puffed grains flaked off and fell to the floor. Actually, these used to be Jimin’s favorite snack as a child. He loved the texture of the rice coated in corn syrup and honey. He could remember hiding them in his pockets. He would look at his mother with wide eyes begging to have just one before dinner… and after dinner, and before bed… Jimin grinded his teeth together as the realization hit him. His poor eating habits have existed since he was even a child!

The weight of remaining rice cracker in his hand suddenly felt so heavy.
“Yes, hyunngg. Everything is fine! Don't worry about me!”

It was all because of his disgusting obsession with food and his inability to stop consuming it.

Before he could stop himself, Jimin threw the snack across the room, watching with satisfaction as it hit the wall with a low crumble. He pulled out his phone, grimacing as a generic image of multicolored circles greeted him.

He had removed the wallpaper of him and Jungkook last week.

There were no new notifications for him. Not a single message from any of the other members. He opened up his kakaotalk and clicked on the first chat room.

[18:45] Jimin: Taetae, do you want to practice with me? I'm lonely :’( 

His heart sunk when he saw no tiny yellow ‘1’ next to the message.

Taehyung had read it.

Taehyung had ignored him.

His fingers shook as he closed the application and opened up to a familiar bookmarked page. Just like he did every night for the past week. His eyes scanned over the contents, words burning themselves into his mind.

It was scalding hot.

The criticism crept under his skin, soaking into his bones, finding a place of permanent stay.

The room was completely still and seemingly silent. But in his head, Jimin was hit by a barrage of different voices. Jimin placed his phone on the floor and stood up. His body felt restless and impatient. He got into position as his gaze flitted around the room until it fell on his reflection. Meeting his own eyes, Jimin began to go through the routine once more, limbs flying about in a jumble of choreographed moves.

“Jimin is ugly,” The comment passed through his lips steadily as he continued to dance. “He has small eyes, fat lips, and disgustingly chubby cheeks.”

“He can’t sing well. His voice always cracks in every song and during live performances he sounds like a dying whale.” The tears were bubbling up again, sliding down his face in thin rivulets, mingling with the sweat coating his skin.

“He can’t dance either. He’s clumsy, always tripping over his own feet. He can’t even keep up with the other members. He’s falling behind and it’s frustrating to watch him bring their quality as a
group down.” His body was aching, throbbing in pain from the endless exertion, from dancing for the past ten hours. It was screaming at him to stop.

“And he clearly makes the rest of them uncomfortable, with his constant touches and contact. He’s like a leech that can’t let go, clinging to the others so insensitively, not even minding their personal space.” His speech was coming out in tiny hiccups now. Jimin was gasping between words, forcing them out of his lips as he let them spill over his tongue.

They tasted bitter.

“Okay. But Jimin, if anything is bothering you, you know you can always talk to me, right?”

Namjoon’s voice rang through Jimin’s head as his knees buckled and his legs collapsed within themselves. Calves tingling with exhaustion. His mind was spinning as the voices merged together, as they morphed into one.

“Okay. But Jimin, you are bothering me right now. Do you ever stop talking?”

Jimin’s breath caught in his throat. Was that what Namjoon really said?

“No, no, of course not.” Jimin shook his head fervently, eyes wide in denial. “Namjoon-hyung would never say that to me. He cares about me.”

“What is wrong with you? You know you’re not important, right?”

Namjoon’s voice rang through his ears once more as Jimin dug his hands into his scalp. He attempted to stand up on wobbling legs, joints creaking from overuse.

“You’re ugly. You can’t sing, you can’t dance. Stop bringing us down.”

Jimin had been conversing with these inner voices for the past week. But until now, they had always been anonymous. Identity-less. But now…

Now they sounded just like his friends.

The gravel of Namjoon, the slight lisp from Yoongi, even the low tone of Taehyung. Jimin could hear every single one of them, shouting at him. Telling him how much of a disappointment he was to the group.

It was deafening.

At first, Jimin was content with the voices and the acidulous comments that came with them. But now, hearing them from his bandmates, his friends, it tore the remains of Jimin’s heart to shreds. He attempted to balance himself upright, desperate to escape from the confines of the practice
room and the barrage of familiar voices. He hobbled out of the door, making his way through the barren hallways, passing closed doors. He just needed somewhere to go to, somewhere to feel welcomed.

Or maybe he just needed somewhere to run away to.

At the sight of the first open room (the shower room), he immediately rushed to enter. The soles of his sneakers squeaked against the white tiles of the floor as he collapsed in the first stall. The voices were growing louder in volume, echoing and reflecting against every porcelain surface. He was breathing in broken increments, taking large gasps to control his sobbing.

“Pl-please stop,” Jimin begged, fingers digging into his ears.

“Why did you whine during the photoshoot, Jimin? You should’ve just sat down and shut up.”

The image of Namjoon materialized before him. The leader’s normally bright eyes were dark and shadowed.

“But, hyung, you forgot about me. I just wanted to be in-included—”

“To be honest, It wasn’t that I forgot about you. I just didn’t want you ruining our pictures.”

“Yeah, Jimin-hyung. Why can’t you take a fucking hint? Do you realize how embarrassing it is to be seen with you?”

Jungkook was standing next to Namjoon now. His lip was curled up in a sneer as he peered upon Jimin as if the other was a lowly speck of dust.

“J-jungkook-ah…” Jimin stuttered out as he slid in the opposite direction of the projected images of his friends. His back hit the wall, heart speeding up when the figures of Taehyung and Hoseok appeared next.

“T-taetae!!” He pleaded, eyes locking with Taehyung’s. “Y-you don't hate me, right? You want me around, r-right?”

Taehyung gave him a short glance before wrapping his arms around Hoseok.

“Jiminnie, don’t you see how easy it was to replace you? Now that I have Hobi-hyung, it doesn’t even matter if you are here or not. Stay or leave, it makes no difference anymore.”

Jimin could feel his heart cracking at the edges. The air in the small shower stall was becoming suffocatingly thick.

It was so difficult to breathe.

Jimin just needed for it to stop. He didn't want to hear anymore. He ran his right hand up the wall, fingers desperately reaching for the knob. There was a pitched screech of rusty pipes before a steady stream of liquid released from the shower head. Jimin urgently twisted the knob to its
farthest position so that both the temperature and pressure were at their highest. Scalding water pelted his skin, soaking his hair so that heavy, damp strands clung to his face.

Jimin tried his best to focus on the sound of water.
Anything to drown out their bitter words and caustic comments.

It was a bit funny to think about it. That the people he had spent all of this time with, the people that he suffered and smiled with, the people he had grown to love so much… It was all a lie.
Maybe the past three years had been nothing more than a cruel joke.
And Jimin was the ugly punchline.

Another sob managed to rip itself out of his throat. It was so guttural and raw that Jimin couldn't help but laugh. He began to chuckle darkly between gasps as the hilarity of the situation dawned upon him.

“I'm so stupid, I'm so fu-cking stupid. How co-uld I have believed that this was real, that this w-ould last? I hav-e always been a loser. I will always be a loser.”

His vision was blurry with tears and it was becoming increasingly difficult to make out the figures that were his friends. They had stopped speaking to him, preferring instead to just stare in his direction. Jimin shrunk into himself, hugging his knees, as he felt the gaze of six pairs of eyes bore into him. Whispered apologies flitted from his lips, disappearing in the cloud of steam.

“My sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry…”

***

The dorm was abnormally quiet for a Friday night. Yoongi figured it was due to their full day of practice. It was always draining to learn a new choreography and although his body was still functional at the moment, he knew the pain would hit him fully in the morning. Most of the members were tucked away in their own rooms and he frowned a bit at the solitude. Usually at this time he would be dragged by one of the maknaes to join them in the living room for a group movie or activity of some sort. *Maybe I should just go and work on some songs again? Or maybe...* Yoongi bit his lip in frustration and let out a small huff when he found himself walking in the direction of a certain bedroom. He rapped on the door with a few light taps before opening it. A sound of disgust escaped his lips at the sight before him.

Taehyung was sitting across from Hoseok in his bed. The elder had his arms wrapped around the other and was in the middle of placing a chaste kiss on the tip of the younger’s nose.

“You two are nauseating,” Yoongi gagged. Taehyung, face flushing, quickly pushed Hoseok away in embarrassment.
“Can we help you, hyung?”

Yoongi’s gaze drifted from the two of them to the Jimin’s bed. He could feel his chest tighten when he saw it empty.

“Nope,” Yoongi turned around to exit. “Just, please don’t suck each other’s face too much.” And with that he left the room. Yoongi pulled out his phone and opened up a new message. He was about to begin typing when he suddenly bumped into someone.

“Whoa there, hyung,” Namjoon exclaimed as he steadied Yoongi from falling down. “Where are you going in such a hurry?”

“I’m going to the studio,” Yoongi simply stated as he tried to maneuver around Namjoon.

“What? No, you need to take a rest today, hyung. Whatever you need to work on, it can wait until tomorrow.”

“No, it’s not that, it’s Jimin. I think he’s still there practicing like an idiot.”

“Hey, hey. Don’t worry, hyung. I talked to him today after rehearsal.” Yoongi stopped in the middle of typing his kakao message to look at Namjoon.

“And?”

“He said he was fine. That he was just tired and if anything happens, he’ll talk to one of us about it. Besides, you know how Jimin is. He’s probably so engrossed in practice, it’d be impossible to get him to leave.” Yoongi’s heartbeat slowed in pace as he took in the new information.

“Okay, but I’m going to just check on him—”

“Hyung, stop. Jimin is fine.” Namjoon slung his arm around Yoongi’s shoulder and gave it a few reassuring pats. “He’ll be okay.”

Yoongi clenched his teeth together but gave a small nod, too exhausted from the entire day to argue.

“C’mon,” Namjoon spoke with a smile, dragging Yoongi back toward the bedroom he had just left. “Let’s go make fun of Hoseok and Taehyung instead.”

Chapter End Notes

feedback is always appreciated! :-)  
if you want to fangirl about bts or even send me a prompt (i have no friends)...  
hinthint, my tumblr
this took much longer than it should have and im not very happy with this chapter at all... but thank you for all of the support. you all give me the motivation to keep writing.

**trigger warning**: depressive/self-deprecating thoughts. please read with caution.

“*I’m sorry, Jungkook.*”

Jungkook let out a small groan, eyes clenched shut as he struggled under the confines of the blankets.

“*Take care of your mother, okay?*”

Jungkook’s eyes suddenly snapped open, heavy breaths escaping his lips as his chest moved up and down. His thoughts were hazy and distorted, remnants of the recent dream still lingering in his mind. He squeezed his eyes shut and began to count to ten.

“...eight, nine, ten.” As the last number left his mouth, he quieted both himself and his head until the only sound he could hear was the grainy snoring from Namjoon across the room. Finally he opened his eyes and downcast them so that his gaze landed on his hands. They were clutching his blankets in tight fists and Jungkook let out another breath before releasing them from his grasp.

He reached over to the nightstand and grabbed his phone to check the time.

04:45.

Groaning once more, Jungkook shuffled off the bed, being cautious to not to make too much noise in fear of waking up his fairly sensitive roommate. As he left the room, he checked his phone once more, eyes widening in surprise at the notification on the screen.

*One missed call from Dad.*

Jungkook grit his teeth together, as he felt anger bubble up in the pit of his stomach. He quickly cleared the notification, attempting to push the thought to the back of his mind before making his way to the kitchen.

Jungkook tried his best to avoid the kitchen ever since he started his new diet. Anything to avoid the temptation of eating more than he should, about becoming something he shouldn't.
“Jungkook-ah, I love you.”

Jungkook suppressed a thick gulp, mouth uncomfortable and dry. He went to pour himself some water, focusing on how the chilly liquid slid down his throat. Once he had finished, he placed the empty glass in the sink, fingers twitching when he saw it full of dirty dishes.

It took Jungkook nine minutes to wash everything.

His fingers were still itching, the fresh smell of dish soap wafting from the tips. Before he could stop himself, Jungkook was tidying up the kitchen, reorganizing the cabinets and picking up various pieces of trash to toss in the bin. He cringed at the discarded choco pie wrappers and biscuit boxes, stomach growling in protest.

“Disgusting! Get away from me!”


“You're just like him. You're going to leave me just like he did!”

“Diet. Diet. Diet. Diet.” He was cleaning as fast as possible, hands shaking when they could find nothing else to put away.


“Die! Die! Die!”

Quickly, Jungkook fled from the room, unsteady hands grazing along the walls, reaching for anything to distract himself. His body were moving by itself, racing down the stairs, longing for a destination. The sun had still yet to rise completely, the cool October morning still hidden by a thin veil of darkness. The rough terrain of the concrete dug into the soles of his bare feet with each step.

If someone saw him, they'd call him crazy in the least.

He found himself in front of the company building, entering with a curt bow to the security guard at the front desk. The older man barely spared him a glance, too focused on whatever video he was watching on his phone. Jungkook just sprinted past him, trying his best to stay on the tips of his feet, anything to avoid leaving a trail of bloody prints behind him.

Jungkook made his way to their dance studio, eager to just lose himself in practicing, to perfect their new choreography.
Because he was the golden maknae, and that was his job.

He was about to put in his earphones when he froze. It sounded like running water and it was coming from the shower room. Was someone already here? One of the other members? He checked his phone again.

05:31.

No, they were definitely all still asleep. Jungkook attempted to swallow down the lump in his throat before cautiously walking toward the showers. His heart was beating twice as fast as he slowly approached the one stall with a puddle of water pooling under the door.

“...Hello?”

There was no response, no other sound besides that of falling water from the shower head. Jungkook inched closer to the stall, hand stretched out in front of him. It took him a second to throw the door open.

It took another second for his heart to start beating again.

Jimin was sitting on the tiled floor, knees up to his chest, head hidden in the knobby joints. He was completely drenched, hair soaked from root to end. His feet were resting right above the drain, tips of his sneakers curling inward.

He just looked so tiny.

“Jimin-hyung...?” Jungkook tried, voice wavering slightly as he stepped closer to the older boy. The blood from Jungkook’s injured feet were tinting the clear liquid a light red. He watched as the tainted water swirled around Jimin's feet before being expelled down the drain.

Almost as if Jimin was the one bleeding.

Jungkook waited for the water to run clear again before turning the shower off. He crouched down so that his face was directly in front of Jimin's. Shaking fingers reached out to brush sopping wet strands of orange hair up before caressing the crown of the other's head slowly. Jungkook bit his lip as he observed Jimin, taking in the way the elder’s wet shirt transparently clung to his skin. The prominent blades of Jimin's small shoulders. The slight curve of his eyelashes as they dipped up at the end.

How could a boy be so fucking pretty?

Jungkook’s heart was beating much too fast. The urge to just pick the other boy up and completely envelope himself around his tiny body. To just wrap Jimin in his arms, protecting the elder from all of the nightmares of the world.

Nightmares like Jeon Jungkook.
He forced himself to swallow a few times. To swallow down all of the emotions, the feelings threatening to bubble out of his lips. The saliva felt like pebbles rolling down his throat.

“Diet.” Jungkook let the tips of his fingers trickle down the back of Jimin's neck.

“Diet.” He paused once he hit the first knob of Jimin's spine.

“Die…” One more second passed before Jungkook’s nails were digging themselves into Jimin's skin. Pushing deeper and deeper.

“Die! Die! Die!”

“Die. Die. Die,” Jungkook recited. His eyes glassy, unblinking as he retained his gaze on the pure, white skin bending under his fingertips.

A quiet whimper escaped from Jimin.

Jungkook’s fingers recoiled back and he stared in fascination at the shallow crescent shaped marks that took their place. They were bright red and almost glowing on the otherwise blank canvas of skin. Just like a freshly inked tattoo. Or maybe a freshly burnt branding.

Jungkook wasn't sure which image sounded more appealing.

“You're just like your disgusting father. It's unnatural, it's sick!”

Jungkook stood up, stance concrete as he hovered over the drenched boy in front of him. His eyes grew darker with every passing moment. That's right. Jimin was disgusting. He represented everything Jungkook wasn't, everything Jungkook couldn't be.

His heart was still going a mile a minute. He watched as Jimin’s entire body shivered as a tremor passed through him. Jungkook was tempted to turn the water back on.

He wanted Jimin to drown.

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Seokjin was a man of consistency. He believed that everything was better with a set time and place. That things should stick to a certain routine. Especially with the hectic lifestyle that came with being a Korean idol, the existence of regularly performed tasks allowed Seokjin to obtain some stability, some normalcy. This was the main thing that motivated Seokjin to wake up at the crack
of dawn every morning just to take a shower for exactly fifteen minutes. It provided him with the energy needed to work on making breakfast for the rest of the group. Besides, Seokjin enjoyed cooking. Cooking involved following recipes. Especially with baking, where using exact measurements and increments were the key to delivering a perfect product. It was calming and most of all, it was safe.

The morning, so far, was going according to plan. Breakfast was already on the table, chopsticks and plates in place. He gave his apron a few pats before untying it from his waist. It was now time for his morning rounds. He was about to go to his own room to wake up Yoongi when Namjoon suddenly entered the kitchen.

“Good morning, Joon-ah,” Seokjin greeted with a practiced smile.

“Morning, Jin-hyung,” Namjoon yawned back.

“Is Jungkookie still sleeping?”

“Oh, actually he sent me a message earlier that he was going to get a head start on practice.” Namjoon casually said as he slid into a chair. “Wow, hyung. This looks great.”

Seokjin barely registered the latter of Namjoon’s words as an unnerving feeling passed through him. It was odd for Jungkook to ever practice, or even wake up, so early.

Something was out of place.

“Y-yeah. Go ahead and dig in. I'm going to wake up the others.” Seokjin quickly left the kitchen, a small cloud of worry festering in the back of his mind. He first stopped by his room, giving a small knock before entering. Yoongi was sitting on the edge of his bed, eyes staring intently at his phone.

“Yoongi-ah, come and eat some breakfast.” Seokjin was satisfied enough with the low mumble in reply, just content that Yoongi responded at all. He left the room and stopped in front of the last remaining bedroom. He was about to knock when it suddenly opened, Taehyung and Hoseok, fingers entwined, appearing in the doorway.

“Oh! Morning, Jin-hyung,” Taehyung chirped out.

“Morning, Jin-hyung,” Followed Hoseok.

“Good morning you two, or should i start calling you both ‘tae-seok’?” Jin said with a weak chuckle.

“Noo, hyung. That's so lame! Besides, we already decided on v-hope anyway,” Taehyung grinned.

“Cute.” Seokjin stretched his neck to peer into the room. “Is Jimin still asleep?”

“No, isn't he already in the kitchen?”

Seokjin paused to look at the duo before him. “No…”

“I'm sure he's around somewhere,” Hoseok said with a lingering tone of nonchalance. “C’mon, Tae. Let's get breakfast.” The couple skipped past the eldest, oblivious as Seokjin’s cloud of worry grew in size.
Seokjin entered the room, letting out a sigh when he found Jimin’s bed to indeed be empty. Jimin's bed was neatly set, a contrasting difference from those of his two roommates.

Almost as if no one had even slept there at all.

Seokjin furrowed his brow slightly, attempting to recall the events from last night. Mr. Son had shown them their new choreography. The pulsing ache of his muscles was a firm reminder of that. But Jimin…? Right. Jimin had told them that he was staying late for extra practice.

But did he ever return to the dorm after that?

Seokjin frowned, uneasiness bubbling in the pit of his stomach. He quickly withdrew his phone from his pocket, fingers fumbling as he attempted to compose a message using the tiny buttons of his keypad. Days like this had Seokjin regretting stubbornly owning a flip phone (regardless of how cute and pink his was).

[07:56, To Jimin]: Jimin-ah, where are you?

He sent the message before returning to the kitchen. He tried his best to not let the worry show on his face. Instead, he joined Namjoon in teasing the “v-hope” couple before proceeding to pose for a breakfast selca with said couple as well. Throughout it all, Jimin had still yet to reply.

The younger still hadn't replied when the five of them were in the van on their way to the company building. Not even when Seokjin was entering the studio behind Namjoon or when they spotted their hard-working maknae dancing himself into a sweaty, exhausted mess. His phone remained still and silent in the pocket of his jeans.

It was when Seokjin had excused himself for a short bathroom break that he finally understood why Jimin had never responded to his earlier text message.

“Oh my go—Jimin!!” Seokjin rushed over the to stall Jimin had huddled himself into. The younger vocalist’s face was slightly flushed, strands of partially drying orange hair sticking to his skin. His clothes were still damp, patches of wet fabric adhesing themselves to Jimin’s skin. Seokjin quickly pressed his palm against Jimin’s forehead. His other hand rested on the other’s shoulder, giving it a light shake.

“Jimin? Jimin-ah, please wake up.” Seokjin’s hands were trembling with worry, mind swirling in different directions. What if he didn’t wake up? What if Jimin never woke up—

“...H-hyung?”

Seokjin immediately stopped in his thoughts when he heard the quiet whisper. He hastily engulfed the younger in a tight embrace, water from Jimin’s wet clothes acting as a glue between them. Seokjin buried his chin into the crook of Jimin’s neck, a shiver passing through him as he felt just how icy the other’s skin was. He could feel Jimin’s body, tense and stiff, in his arms.
“Jimin, I was so worried.” Seokjin mumbled into Jimin’s ear. “Are you okay? Why were you sleeping here? Were you here all night?”

Seokjin couldn’t suppress the endless questions falling from his lips, words coming out too fast for Jimin to even have an opportunity to answer.

Maybe because Seokjin didn’t want to hear.

“Wait,” Seokjin said as he separated himself from the younger, eyes not meeting Jimin’s. “Let me get the others.” He gingerly stood up, gaze flitting around the room.

Jemin had still yet to say anything when Seokjin left the stall. The younger sat there, knees still up to his chin. His eyes were glassy as they followed the retreating back of his hyung exiting the room. He continued to sit there, sneakers squeaking against the tiled floor.

Jemin's ears perked up when he heard the sound of clattering footsteps come closer. To be honest, he hadn't been expecting them to come. He attempted to unravel himself to come. He attempted to unravel himself, limbs tight and foreign from being in the same position for so long. He stared at his feet as they curled and uncurled, the corners of his lips also flexing in a similar manner. He practiced his best smile as he heard the footsteps slow down only to be replaced by a flurry of hushed voices. Jemin took the moment to release a raspy giggle, preparing himself for another round of pretend. But his throat felt congested. Heavy. Full.

Jemin was so **tired**.

“Jiminie!!” Taehyung rushed into the stall, body landing on top of Jimin's. His arms circled around Jimin as he drew the elder into a gripping hug. The rest of the group were standing behind him. “Why were you sleeping here?”

Jemin bit back a sarcastic comment about how the younger had failed to notice that one of his roommates was absent from their *shared* room. Instead he swallowed down the bitterness and plastered on a smile.

“I must've fell asleep after practice,” Jimin said with a weak chuckle. “Stupid, right?”

“Yeah, definitely stupid.”

“Jungkook!” Seokjin hissed out.

“What? I'm just stating a fact here. I was practicing early too and you don't see me falling asleep in random places.”

Jemin's toes curled in tighter, body deflating slightly in Taehyung’s embrace. He always managed to find a new way to fuck up, didn’t he?

“Hey, how about we give Jimin some room to breathe?” Jimin looked up to see Yoongi speaking. His expression stoic and blank as usual. “Taehyung, get off of him.”

He couldn't keep worrying them like this.

Jimin carded his fingers through Taehyung’s brown locks, the scent of Taehyung’s favorite strawberry shampoo surrounding him in a small cloud of warmth. Senses transporting him to what felt like the second day of spring. It was comfortable. Taehyung always was.

“Taetae, I'm fine,” He whispered as he continued to pet the younger.

“It's kind of funny actually,” Giggles bubbled out of Jimin’s throat, grin spreading across his face like butter on warm bread. “I went to take a shower after dancing but I guess I was sooo sleepy, I just knocked out there. How dumb, huh?”

“How long were you practicing for Jimin?” Yoongi cut in, voice tense and hard. Jimin was a bit off-taken by the tone of the elder’s voice, but he figured that it was just Yoongi’s aggravation with his stupidity.

“Ah, only for about an hour or so after you guys left. I guess I was more tired than I thought? Ha ha.” Jimin's answers were airy and light, fluttering with half-truths and half-lies. He could feel Taehyung’s grip loosening with each word.

“Tae, let go of him already,” Hoseok grit out, hand resting on Taehyung’s shoulder.

“Jiminnie, don't you see how easy it was to replace you?”

Jimin could heard Taehyung’s voice in his mind. Familiar sentences swarming into his ears, rushing to fill the growing space forming between him and Taehyung’s arms.

“Now that I have Hobi-hyung, it doesn’t even matter if you are here or not.”

Of course it didn't. It never did. He was just a placeholder. Temporary.

“Stay or leave, it makes no difference anymore.”

Absolutely and completely expendable.

Jimin wriggled his body quietly, doing his best to subtly worm out of Taehyung’s weakening hold, all of the comfort from earlier quickly dissolving.

It only took another three seconds for Taehyung to let go.

“Okay…” Taehyung spoke slowly as he stood back up, gaze shifting to his boyfriend. Hoseok smiled and grasped the younger’s hand in his own. Strangely though, this time, Jimin’s heart didn't pick up in pace at the action. His stomach didn't clench in jealousy, didn’t claw itself from the inside out. He simply sat and stared.
It was funny how familiar loneliness becomes.

“Jimin-ah, are you sure you’re alright? Can you stand?” Seokjin asked, traces of concern weaving itself in the pauses of his questions. He leaned over, grabbing ahold of Jimin’s upper arms to help him up. Jimin wobbled a bit in place as he attempted to steady himself in a standing position.

“Thanks, Jin-hyung,” Jimin looked up at the elder, mouth lifting into another smile. Seokjin stared at him for a few seconds before using his hand to brush back Jimin's disheveled bangs. As soon as his fingers made contact with the other's skin, Seokjin immediately covered Jimin's forehead with the base of his palm.

“Jimin-ah, you're burning up.” Seokjin gestured his free hand in the air, in which Namjoon placed a clean towel. He proceeded to wipe away the excess drops of water from Jimin's body. “Aish, you idiot, how could you fall asleep in the shower of all places? I think you might have caught a cold. How do you feel?”

“I feel fine, Jin-hyung!”

Seokjin only responded with another wordless stare. There was something filtering through the elder’s eyes that Jimin just couldn't decipher. But it disappeared before Jimin could give it much thought.

He didn't have much time to anyway since Mr. Son arrived shortly after. He immediately demanded an explanation for why they weren't all warming up already. (To which Namjoon described in as vague of terms as possible as an “emergency group meeting.”) And although Mr. Son didn't seem too convinced, he let it go in favor of getting a start on practice. Unfortunately for him, practice didn’t go as smoothly as hoped.

“Jimin, you're offbeat again!” Mr. Son yelled as he shut off the music. He brought his hand up to massage the base of his forehead irritably.

“It's one two three jump, not one two jump. Why can't you get this right today? You usually pick up on these moves quickly.” Jimin kept his gaze down as a small apology left his lips. He spoke lowly, trying his best to keep his voice stable. It was difficult to suppress the shiver in his voice when the rest of his body wouldn’t stop goddamn shaking. The rest of the members were scattered across the scuffed wooden floor, observing the scene in silence.

“You do realize that your comeback is in two weeks, do you not?” Jimin nodded again, mouth pursed shut. “So why aren’t you taking this more seriously?”

“I-I’m sorry, hyung.”

Mr. Son let out another sigh in exasperation, turning away from Jimin as he clapped his hands together. “From the top, guys.”

The other six males got back on their feet, shuffling about until they were in their starting positions. Mr. Son played the track from the beginning, eyes never leaving the group and the movement of their bodies. Jimin breathed deeply, attempting to keep his limbs in check. He kept his gaze on the mirror and could see Namjoon in the reflection lip syncing to the opening rap.
Jimin focused his attention on the rhythm of the song, counting each beat as they passed. His body was moving mechanically, hoping that the hours of practice had drilled some of the choreography in his brain. Drilled it in until it was almost second nature. He could see a space between Hoseok and Jungkook opening up and readied himself to slip into the center position.

“Move faster, fat ass!”

The whisper came out in a sharp hiss. Jimin's eyes widened as one foot tripped over the other, body toppling to the ground. His skin slid uncomfortably against the wooden surface, friction of the fading wax burning against his forearms. The others had froze in their spots, all watching the disastrous avalanche occurring as Jimin crumpled to the floor.

He lifted his head up, finding himself face to face with an outstretched hand. Hoseok was crouched in front of him, mouth moving.

“Need a hand, fatty?”

Without thinking, Jimin quickly swatted the offered hand away, eyes shaking as he looked at Hoseok. The older boy stared at him with shadowed eyes, lip curled up in a sneer.

He was mocking Jimin.

Jimin used his arms to wrap around himself defensively. He knew he was fat. He knew the others knew as well. But none of them had ever outright commented on it to him.

Was it really becoming that obvious?

Jimin's head was pulsing, blood rushing through his ears. Suddenly there was a hand on his shoulder, roughly turning his body around.

“Yah, Jimin! What's your problem?” Taehyung was yelling at him, a hint of fire fuming in his eyes. “How can you be so rude?”

Jimin's vision was spinning, his body felt incredibly hot. He glanced back to Hoseok, confusion and concern replacing the mockery from before. He made eye contact with Taehyung, a shiver running down his spine at the anger coursing through the younger's gaze. Taehyung was supposed to be his best friend.

He was supposed to be on Jimin’s side.

“D-didn’t you hear what he said to me, Taetae?” The last word died a little on Jimin's tongue, nickname suddenly tasting so foreign and out of place. “He called me—”
“Called you what?”

Jimin was about to scream it out loud. He wanted it to echo against the walls. *He called me fat, Tae. He called me fat and— and… it hurt. I'm hurt.*

He wanted Taehyung to wrap his arms around him and bury him in reassurances. He wanted Taehyung’s voice to wash out all of the hatred, the bitterness. Taehyung had always been his boat, his life raft.

“What did he call you, Jimin?”

Jimin looked straight into Taehyung’s eyes, everything around him slowing down. There was no friendliness in Taehyung’s question, no sympathy in his eyes, no patience in his voice. Almost as if he was okay with watching Jimin float away, swept with the rough currents. The criticism acting as a heavy anchor, dragging Jimin into the bottomless depths of solitude.

He was okay with watching Jimin drown.

“N— nothing…” Jimin stuttered out as he felt wave after wave of despair crash over him. It was a mistake to even say anything at all. No one was listening to him.

Jimin was sinking further and further down.

“Nothing? Jiminie?” Taehyung’s expression softened as he placed his other hand on Jimin's free shoulder. The older boy was shaking, body hot but t-shirt damp with cold sweat. Something was wrong. Something was wrong.

“Okay, break it up you two.” Taehyung broke out of his thoughts, hands falling from Jimin's shoulders. Mr. Son, arms crossed, was now standing behind them. “Jimin, I think it's best for everyone if you just sat out for today.”

Taehyung felt his heart clench when he saw the way Jimin nodded in compliance. The Jimin he knew wouldn't step aside so easily, wouldn't just give in. The tips of his fingers pulsed with the need to just grab Jimin back. To pull the shorter boy into his arms, safe and warm. Instead, he remained in his spot on the floor, observing silently as Jimin dragged himself to the wall. He just looked so fragile, so tiny, so small.

“Finally, maybe we can actually get something done now.”

The sentence came out in a harsh scoff and Taehyung had to restrain himself from gaping incredulously at said commenter. Taehyung’s hands were suddenly clenching together in two tight fists, frustration bubbling up inside up as his fingers twitched with a new found need.

It took all of Taehyung’s self control to not punch Jeon Jungkook right then and there.
During the drive home, Jimin immediately hid himself in the back corner of the van. He kept his lips sealed shut as the rest of the members engaged themselves in feeble conversation. Jungkook was sitting to his left, back turned to Jimin as he focused solely on his phone.

Jimin was suddenly filled with the desire to check his phone as well, fingers eager to open up the same familiar page. It was then that he realized he had two unread messages. The first was from Seokjin and Jimin felt his heart pang with hurt when he saw that the older boy hadn't noticed Jimin's absence for nearly twelve whole hours. The second one however took Jimin a bit off guard.

[01:14, Yoongi-hyung]: Jimin, get your ass home already. Practicing yourself into exhaustion isn’t going to help anyone.

Jimin felt his back stiffen slightly as he took in the two sentences. Craning his neck, he tried to find Yoongi. He spotted a familiar mop of thinning blond hair sitting in the passenger seat next to their manager. The red dye from their last comeback had been washed out a few days ago and left the elder with a clean slate for whatever color was to next come.

Jimin bit his lip. Yoongi rarely texted him. The older boy must’ve been extremely frustrated with Jimin to actually send him a message, and so late at night as well. But why wouldn’t he be? Despite all of the extra practice, Jimin still managed to ruin everything. He was just wasting time, and Yoongi knew it. Jimin reread the message a second and a third time before he forced his fingers to move again, tips lingering over the electronic keyboard as he typed.

[17:23, Jimin]: Okay, hyung <3

Jimin sent the message before tucking his phone back in his pocket, earlier intentions now forgotten. He curled up against the arm-rest of the van door, gaze falling down to his hands as he inspected every detail of his skin.

Had Jimin kept his head up for just a minute more, he would’ve seen the way Yoongi looked over his shoulder, a mixture of concern and contemplation etched into his features.

A low murmur escaped under his breath, “Took you long enough to reply, brat.”

Jimin burrowed himself into his bed, blankets surrounding him like a mountain. He wrapped his arms around his stomach, surges of sharp pain shooting through his gut.

“You’re not hungry, you’re not hungry, you’re not hungry…” Jimin repeated to himself in a
whispered mantra, words disappearing into the depths of the covers like a passing wind.

“Jimin?” Jimin paused when he heard the silky voice of Seokjin float through the room. Footsteps grew closer until the blankets were wrestled away from him. Seokjin hovered over Jimin, a faint smile on his face. “It’s time for dinner.”

Jimin stared at the elder, arms loosing from their tight hold around his stomach as he sat himself upright. He averted his gaze as he looked past Seokjin’s eyes, focusing instead on the open door behind him.

“Um, actually Jin-hyung, I’m not that hungry.”

Seokjin’s brows knit together, eyes narrowing, mouth opening to argue when a sneeze suddenly worked its way out of Jimin. Closing his mouth, Seokjin immediately lifted his hand to rest on the younger’s forehead.

“I think you might have a fever, Jimin-ah.” Seokjin hesitated for a brief second. “...Is that why you have no appetite?”

Jimin’s eyes quickly lit up, heart racing at the presented opportunity. He nodded softly before forcing a few short coughs out of his throat. “I-I think so.”

“Gosh, it must be because you were sleeping in those wet clothes.” Seokjin let out a little sigh, bringing his thumb to rub tiny circles into Jimin’s wrist. “Let me get you some cold medicine and then you’re going straight to bed, okay?”

Jimin nodded once more, relief flooding through his body at the thought of being able to avoid consuming more food. Seokjin left the room only to return five minutes later, a labelled bottle in one hand and a glass of water in the other. He handed the water to Jimin before twisting the child-proof cap off.

“Here, take one for now. If your fever doesn’t let up in a few hours, I’ll give you another one, alright?” Seokjin held out a dual colored tablet to Jimin who immediately popped it into his mouth. Medicine had zero calories anyway, right? “I’m going to make some porridge for you to eat later.”

Jimin’s heart skipped a beat at the mention of food.

“Oh, no, that’s okay, Jin-hyung! Just the thought of eating right now is making me feel a little nauseous…” Jimin chuckled nervously at the end. Besides, it wasn’t a lie.

Food made him want to throw up. Literally.

“Park Jimin,” Seokjin started, scolding tone in his voice. “I don’t care if you are not hungry. You need to eat something.”

I really don’t. Jimin thought bitterly but nodded nonetheless, trying his best to plaster on his most...
grateful smile. “Okay, hyung.”

Seokjin ruffled Jimin’s hair before guiding the smaller boy to lay back down. “Now get some rest. I’ll check up on you in a few hours, okay?” He waited for Jimin to reply affirmatively before walking out of the room, closing the door behind him. Once the door shut, Jimin reached to his right to pick up his phone, bringing it to his face. He decided to search up the words “BTS Jimin” and “Fat” in Naver, hundreds upon thousands of results pulling up. He scrolled through the findings, gaze skimming over the endless page titles and preview blurbs. He then moved on to the image results, breath catching in his throat when he saw an old picture of him as a child in a cow costume. It was placed side by side with a photoshopped image of his head on the body of said animal with the caption: *I guess some things never change, ke ke ke.*

Without thinking, he saved the picture to his phone.

Jimin could feel his eyes sting at the corners as he continued to browse through the pictures. Many of them were photographs of him lifting his shirt up, his soft, fleshy stomach on full display. Some had malicious sentences attached to them, deploring both him and his body.

*Disgusting! How can someone let himself go so much?*

*Why can’t he do us all a favor, and just keep his shirt on?*

Jimin’s fingers were shaking as he opened up the blog entry once again, lips mouthing wordlessly along to read text long memorized in his mind. Another low rumble came from his stomach. Jimin sucked some air in before he grabbed for the half-filled glass of water on his desk. Taking long, desperate gulps, Jimin downed the rest of the water, phone slipping out of his hand as he brought his fingers to rest on his stomach. He dug his nails into the skin, relentless and deep.

He placed the glass back on the table, bringing the base of his palm up, hitting just above his cheekbone. Jimin squeezed his eyes shut, anything to stop the tears from falling. Instead, hoarse cries clawed their way up his throat as his fingers pushed harder into his gut.

“I’m not hungry, I’m not hungry, I’m not hungry…”

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Taehyung was huddled in the corner of the couch, absentmindedly scrolling through his phone. It was when he found himself in his KakaoTalk chat room with Jimin that his mind focused a bit. There was an half-written message still sitting in the response box.

*Okay, Jiminie! I’ll be there in fifteen minutes.*
Right. He had been in the middle of replying to Jimin’s message when Hoseok had distracted him with another impromptu make-out session. He quickly deleted the draft before locking the phone screen, eyes glazing over as he mulled over the earlier events in the practice room.

“What’s on your mind, sunshine?” Taehyung blinked out of his thoughts when he saw Hoseok crouched in front of him, amused smile on the elder’s face.

“Hi, hyung,” Taehyung greeted shyly. It still felt a bit strange referring to the other as his boyfriend . “Just thinking about some stuff.”

Hoseok placed his hands on Taehyung’s knees, fingers affectionately stroking the skin through the holes of his ripped jeans. “Can I think with you?”

Taehyung felt a blush spread across his face before nodding sweetly. Hoseok carefully unbent Taehyung’s legs before standing up and taking the younger’s hands in his. The two of them made their way down the hallway to their bedroom. The door was closed and Hoseok opened it with a soft creek. He was about to flick on the lights when Taehyung stopped him.

“Wait, hyung. Jimin’s sleeping. Maybe we shouldn’t turn on the lights.”

Hoseok gave a small hum in agreement as he dropped his hand back down to his side.

“Should we go back to the living room?” Taehyung asked in a concerned whisper, eyes darting between Hoseok and Jimin’s bed. Hoseok pressed his finger to the younger’s mouth before giving a small shush.

“We’ll just be quiet, okay?” Taehyung’s heart sped up as he locked gazes with Hoseok. The elder led him to his bed, both of them climbing on top. They were laying on their sides, facing each other. Hoseok twisted his body slightly so he could pull the duvet over Taehyung as well.

“Comfy?” Hoseok asked in a low whisper. Taehyung only nodded back, eyes never breaking contact with the other. Hoseok lifted his right hand to push Taehyung’s bangs up before leaning forward to place a kiss on his forehead. It was featherly, lips staying for only a quarter of a second. Time seemed to still as they lay there in silence. Hoseok could feel his eyelids growing heavier, the steady breathing of Taehyung lulling him to sleep.

“Hyung, what did you say to Jimin?”

The question came out in a mumble so quiet, Hoseok wasn’t sure if he had just dreamt it in his drowsy state of mind.

“Hm?”

“Earlier, in the practice room, Jimin said you called him something. What was it?” There was a shiver in Taehyung’s voice, but Hoseok felt so tired, he played it off as part of his pre-sleep imagination.

“Oh,” Hoseok muttered, pausing to suppress a thick yawn. “I didn’t say anything at all, Tae.”

Taehyung didn’t respond after that.

Five more minutes of silence passed and Hoseok had fallen asleep.
feedback is always appreciated! i love reading your comments and thoughts :-)  
my tumblr (lets be friends!!)  
(p.s. i will probably write jungkook's backstory next so look out for that!!)
Hi, everyone!

I can hardly believe it has been almost two years since I started this work. I am not sure how many of you are still reading, but I felt that I should provide some sort of formal explanation as to why the next chapter is taking so long.

When I had first started this story, I was only a few months into the fandom and this was a platform for me to not only express my growing affection for the boys but delve back into my love for creative writing in general. I had started it during a stressful period of my life and would often use writing it as a good outlet for relief and relaxation from school (which was why I was able to pump out chapter after chapter in a few months time— something that is honestly rare for me.)

However, as I entered 2017, life became much more complicated and I found myself struggling to balance between writing, work and studies. I had graduation fast approaching and found myself overwhelmed to graduate not only on time but with all of my credentials in check. I found myself unmotivated to write and it started to feel more like a chore than anything, almost like another bulletpoint on my invisible to-do list of life. Writing this story had originally been an outlet for coming to terms with my own past experiences. But as stress tends to trigger my own unhealthy behaviors, the story itself was also in turn affecting me. As a result, I decided to work on other stories as a distraction (many of which are also incomplete because I'm garbage). After graduation, I found myself very lost and in a horrible post-college transition phase. To make up for it, I drowned myself in work, bouncing between three jobs and MCAT prepwork. It was awful, every day I would be running on 2-3 hours of sleep and nothing was making me happy anymore. I kept making promises on tumblr that the next chapter would be posted soon but even when I sat myself down to write, there was no inspiration. The progress was slow and painful and my writing disappointed me more than anything. I continued this unhealthy cycle all the way until the end of the year.

It was with the support of two close friends and my sister that really brought me back to reality. They helped remind me about my goals and dreams when I really felt at my lowest and I can never thank them enough.

Aside from all of this, there were also two other reasons why writing the next chapter seemed so hard for me:

- It is Jungkook centered and although I love our maknae, I started this story because of my relatability to Jimin so i admit it is more difficult for me TT..
- I intended for this work to be Yoonmin endgame but over the past year, I had somehow became a very passionate kookmin shipper?? Therefore, a lot of my original ideas/plotline for the story were hard to follow (and many times I wanted to change it) but I am adamant on finishing what I started.

Lastly, I just wanted to thank all of you for sticking with me through this journey. By no means did I expect this story to gain any traffic and it still amazes me how many of you have read (or attempted to read) this, I do read all of your comments and appreciate every single one. I apologize for not replying as I feel too shameful to respond and make more promises I might not keep. But please know that they mean the world to me and I am truly grateful! I will delete this note when I have the next chapter ready and up, so I hope you will accept it as a feeble replacement until then. And yes, I do promise to finish this story!!!
I apologize for such a long and draining author's note. It just feels really good to be able to share that somewhere so please forgive me for droning on ;;

Thank you all again for reading and waiting for me. I hope you all stay happy and healthy. x

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!