we'll always have paris

by spookyfoot

Summary

“Yuuri!” Phichit's discovered a new frequency.

“Phichit,” Yuuri hisses, “be quiet.” As though Victor can somehow hear them from the table, thirty meters away.

“I am deeply offended that you failed to text me the very minute you ran into Victor Nikiforov, subject of your teenage and not-so-teenaged fantasies, bane of my existence, and the reason the wall between our rooms has an indent shaped like a fist.” Phichit actually gets louder.

“How—”

“There’s like 50 new photos of you on Victor’s Instagram.”

“Just...shut up for a second!” Yuuri pulls the phone away from his ear. He can still hear Phichit screeching, “don’t ignore me! I raised you!”

Yuuri ignores him. Phichit’s avalanche of laughter echoes against the tile. He pulls up Victor’s Instagram. Yuuri doesn’t even remember Victor taking seventy five percent of these.

“Yuuri! Stop masturbating, we have to go!” Victor is officially the worst.

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Or: the canon divergent au where Yuuri doesn't screw up Japanese Nationals, runs into Victor in the Paris airport on the way to Worlds in Sweden, and somehow embarrasses himself into a relationship on the 18 hour train ride between Paris and Malmö.
me @me: hey you know what would be cool? finishing something
also me @me: but what about a canon divergent au?? in paris?? with TRAINS!
me @ me @ me: why are you like this.
me @ me @ me @ me: already started writing it

written for YOI Fic Fridays

i know worlds was in boston i just wanted them to be in paris and also take a road trip. it's a...viknik roadtrip fic.

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(¬■_■)

*runs*

QUICK EDIT BEFORE I RUN OFF TO WORK: i have fan art?? this is amazing and the best birthday gift ever oh my gosh the inimitable, wonderful, hilarious doodlesonice

See the end of the work for more notes
i know i should go, but i want to stay here with you

Chapter Summary

We'll always have Paris.

(Or at least Paris' airport.)

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Isabella of Castille" by STRFKR

this is the second work i've written to Nine Inch Nails' "Closer" on a loop. i don't make the rules.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Victor's been staring at the Arrivals and Departures board for ten minutes and the information hasn't changed. No matter how much Yakov keeps yelling about it.

“What do you mean your flight was delayed?” Victor can practically see spittle flying through the phone.

(This is the reason he always carries a handkerchief.)

“Well, when there’s—I believe the phrase is inclement weather—planes get grounded and can’t leave on time. Of course, time in general keeps moving forward so—” Victor’s bubbling with glee. This is the most he’s felt anything in months.

He’s cut off by the sound of a dial tone on the other end. That’s one way to finish a conversation. Victor wonders if Yakov’s shedding hair like a snake does its’ old skin. His bald spot’s been looking extra lustrous lately. Victor makes a note to buy some baby oil, Yakov should really emphasize his assets.

Sliding his phone back in his pocket, Victor glances up at the electronic Arrivals and Departures board. His eyes, dry from hours of recycled airplane oxygen and overly air-conditioned terminals, sting at the sight of the the blinking royal blue electronic eyesores of Charles de Gaulle's Flight Information Tables. The flight from New York was the worst; too short for a good sleep, and longer than he wanted to stay awake. Prada's Fall Collection was urgent business, no matter what Yakov said. He always decreased his training just before competitions anyways. He'll be fine.

Worlds is in—he can’t even do the mental math at this point. It’s soon. And he’s stuck in Charles de Gaulle, waiting for a flight that might not leave in time, and checking his phone every few minutes—the way he has for the past four months—waiting for Yuuri Katsuki to text him.

(Why hasn’t he texted? Victor’s sent some variation of that question to every person in his contacts list—at least three times. Half of them have blocked him at this point.)
(He’s already created four Pinterest boards for their inevitable wedding. The fifth is a work in progress, he’s thinking lilac and silver for their colors, but he’ll need Yuuri’s opinion first. The silence is just rude at this point. But Victor will forgive him, like the magnanimous human being he is.)

**baldspotwatch2k16**: [3:34] Vitya if you spend the next four hours shopping I will downgrade your suite in Malmö.

**little ball of rage**: [3:46]: you’re not even here and you’re making my life hell. forget skating, this is your true calling.

Victor can’t help himself. He takes a selfie and posts it to Instagram.

[photo: picture of Victor with an exaggerated frown lounging on a pile of Louis Vuitton luggage.]

**v-nikiforov**: #stranded #we’llalwayshaveparis #yakovsbaldspotwatch #savevictor

149,326 likes, 5,021 comments

comments:

**y-plisetsky**: if your sell your luggage you could probably afford another flight

**y-plisetsky**: maybe if you miss worlds @christophe-ge will finally get a gold medal

**christophe-ge**: @y-plisetsky then victor could finally come second

**v-nikiforov**: @christophe-ge rude. at least i’ve never soaked the ice

view more comments

His phone vibrates in his palm, two incoming texts from Yakov (in addition to the five he hasn’t opened), two from Yuri, three from Mila, and one from Georgi. Thirteen texts and none of them from the person he wants to hear from. Victor sighs, and starts to walk back to the gate.

( What would it be like to miss Worlds? He can’t fully deny the nagging sense of relief at the idea of sitting this year out—of having that choice taken away from him and separating himself from four-soon-to-be-five-time World Champion Victor Nikiforov so he can just be Victor. But missing Worlds means he won’t see Yuuri. Unacceptable.)

A slight form—a man?—swaddled in a sweater and a scarf, plows into him, sending his boarding pass soaring through the air. The flurry of paper, fluttering to the ground like a storm of snowflakes, all but ignored as Victor lays eyes on his would-be assailant—improbably, Yuuri Katsuki. Victor imagines a bottle of champagne, just to make sure he hasn’t suddenly developed summoning powers. No, this is real. And the best thing to happen all year.

“Yuuri!”

_____________________

Yuuri knew there had to be some sort of cosmic retribution for the insane fact he’d somehow managed to make it to Worlds after self-immolating at the Grand Prix Final.
And there it is. He glances at his boarding pass—flight 1225 to Malmö. After wearing glasses his whole life, he’s always questioned his eyes, so he flees to the nearest flight information board to double check.

Unfortunately, he overshoots his target and skids into a tall man—is that silver hair? is he hallucinating now?—staring at the departures screen.

They collide in a burst of paper, Yuuri drops to his knees and scrambles for all bureaucratic confetti laying at his feet. He manages to re-arrange them into a barely presentable pile and thrust them towards the stranger just as an all too familiar voice—ingrained into his very soul from hours of interviews and press conferences—bubbles out a delighted, “Yuuri!”

Just like that Yuuri’s face to face with Victor Nikiforov. He pinches himself. It hurts. A few of the papers he’s carefully collected flutter back to the ground, matte against the shiny, slightly scuffed linoleum beneath their feet. Victor’s far too close—Yuuri can make out a ring of dark gold around the edge of his irises. That never showed up in publicity photos or any of his seventeen posters.

“I have a poster where you’re wearing that jacket.” Why does he let his mouth make words?

Victor-Nikiforov-in-the-flesh presses a finger to his lips and tilts his head, eyes drifting to the side in thought, “I think that was an ad, not a poster. Burberry Fall 2012.”

“….right. Not a poster. Definitely not a poster. Absolutely not something I would have made into a poster.” Who needs a shovel to dig your own grave? Not Yuuri.

Then he remembers the pile of papers on the floor. “Oh god. I’m so sorry, let me just—” he crouches down again to gather the papers. If he just gives them back to Victor, hides in the bathroom, and avoids Victor at Worlds it’ll be fine. He doesn’t expect Victor to follow him down onto the floor.

“Just the person I was hoping to see!” Victor says, at the exact same time. Yuuri has to stop himself from accidentally tearing Victor’s boarding pass.

“I—what?”

“I’ve been waiting for you to text me for months Yuuri, how could you be so cruel?” Victor’s pouting. Oh, now he’s winking. Everything’s moving in slow motion.

“What?” it comes out as more of a shriek than a question. Yuuri’s pretty sure he’s close to breaking the sound barrier. Victor snatches up the last of the papers, hooks his arm through Yuuri’s and pulls him upright.

“I thought I’d have to wait until Worlds! This is the best day!” Victor looks over at Yuuri, smile blinding, “are you on the Scandinavian Airlines flight as well?” Victor’s leading them…somewhere.

They’ve never even talked outside of the “commemorative photo?” embarrassment that somehow managed to make the list of Yuuri’s top three most mortifying moments of the Sochi Grand Prix Final—right below Yuuri’s actual skating (“commemorative photo” juuuuuust missed gold by fraction of a point, the only time Victor’s missed gold in five years) and immediately above Yuri Plisetsky’s bathroom ambush. There was a lot more competition to make the podium on Yuuri’s list than there
had been for the actual medals at the Grand Prix Final.

Yuuri struggles to match his stride with Victor’s, stumbling over his feet a couple of times—which only causes Victor to move the arm intertwined with his so that it’s draped around his waist. Oh god, Victor’s still talking. Yuuri desperately hopes he hasn’t missed any questions tossed in his direction but with his luck it’s basically a pre-determined “yes.”

“—at Nationals. Your Salchow still needs some work but your step sequences and spins were much closer to how they were at Skate Canada and—”

“You watched me?”

“Of course I did! Like I would miss watching my favorite competitor!” Victor looks deeply offended. Yuuri has no idea why. There’s no reason for Victor to watch Japanese Nationals, it’s not like Yuuri’s going to offer hard competition at Worlds—at this point he’s hoping to make the cut for the Free Skate.

“Favorite competitor,” Yuuri mouths the words, unwilling to put sounds to syllables as though it would destroy a rare delicacy.

“Yuuri if we’re going to do this, I need to know everything about you,” he pauses, smile all teeth—white and even—the blinding flash of fresh ice before a skate, “and I do mean everything.”

Yuuri’s mind’s screaming “do what?” while Victor’s hand draws gentle circles on the small of his back. Yuuri cannot be held responsible for whatever comes out of his mouth.

“I had my first wet dream about you.” They must sell ninja swords somewhere in Charles de Gaulle. If they have four hundred euro scarves they’re practically required to sell ninja swords. Yuuri’s absolutely sure that’s how luxury shopping works.

“Yuuri!” Victor squeals, bouncing on the balls of his feet,” that’s the sweetest, most romantic thing anyone’s ever said to me!”

What.

Just who the hell has Victor been spending time with for the past twenty seven years?

(Then Yuuri remembers Victor spends at least seventy to eighty percent of his time with Yakov Feltsman and Yuri Plisetsky.)

“Second and third too,” because apparently Yuuri’s mouth is going for broke while his brain is still too paralyzed to intervene.

Victor’s nuzzling against his neck, wrapped around his back and manhandling him towards the booking agent.

Once they’re at the ticket counter Victor unwraps himself from his perch on Yuuri’s back. He shoots Yuuri a look like it’s absolutely killing him to let go. Yuuri’s seen the same look in history books, on the faces of soldiers on their way to the front lines in Alsace and Lorraine. Victor leans against the counter and if he’d still had long hair he’d be twirling it around his index finger.

“Sabrina,” Victor places their tickets—when did he get Yuuri’s?—on the counter and pouts, “please tell me you have two front row seats left in first class. Mine are in the second row, the second row, Sabrina. And my Yuuri is in Coach! It’s a tragedy.”
Sabrina is unmoved, “let me check,” she says in flat, accented English. “No more seats in available in First Class on that flight Mr….,” she looks at Victor’s ticket and that’s the final insult because now Victor is pouting, “Nikiforov. If you want to sit with your boyfriend it’ll have to be in Coach.”

Yuuri is silently mouthing the word boyfriend to himself, bewildered.

“Sabrina,” Victor’s face is drawn tight, any trace of his previous pout washed clean, “do you see these legs. These legs have won five consecutive Grand Prix Finals, and four consecutive World Championships. These legs need leg room. First Class leg room. And Yuuri is the Japanese National Champion! Isn’t there a special rule for athletes?”

“Victor it’s fine I’ll just—“

“Athletes, Sabrina! We have to arrive in peak condition—which means First Class.”

Sabrina, unimpressed by Victor’s impassioned monologue, hits a few keys and replies, “we’ve got two seats together in Coach.”

“Fine,” Victor sighs, “move us to those seats. I will make this terrible sacrifice for Yuuri, and only for Yuuri.”

“I fly Coach all the time.”

Victor ignores him, “it’s a cruel fate, but at least I’ll have my Yuuri by my side.”

“What a noble sacrifice,” Yuuri can't take anything Victor's saying seriously.

“It is, Yuuri! The most noble sacrifice a man can make. Truly, it’s tragic. We get 23 inches of space and we have to share it with a tray table. A tray table!”

It’s official. Victor Nikiforov is the most ridiculous man on the planet.

Victor resumes his quest to cuddle Yuuri for the entirety of their delay, “I’ll buy us drinks so we can down our sorrows.”

They arrive at the restaurant, an unwieldy mass of two people welded together because one of them refuses to be separated from the other, Victor. Victor lets go with a sigh and turns his attention to the hostess to ask for a table.

Freed from Victor’s iron grip, Yuuri almost feels like things have returned to normal from whatever alternate reality he’d visited over the past thirty minutes. That is, until Victor guides him to their table—hand still hot against the dip in his spine and inching lower, lower, lower—and pulls out a chair for him. Yuuri just stares at it. The alternate reality theory looks more and more likely.

“Yuuuuuri,” Victor purrs, “are you going to stand me up? Usually that happens before you show up for a date, not after.”

Yuuri plunks down on the chair with a heavy thud, so hard it shifts against the tiles with an audible screech—Yuuri’s positive the noise actually came from him. He feels one with the chair. The chair is a kindred spirit. He'd die for this chair.

(With the way things are going, he'll actually die on this chair.)

“Date?” he asks. And yet, somehow, this isn’t the strangest thing that’s happened today. The
waitress deposits a glass of water on the table as Victor orders something in impeccable French before turning to Yuuri expectantly, “is champagne good?” Victor smiles like they’re sharing a private joke.

Yuuri nods, even though he really shouldn’t be drinking before a competition. He also shouldn’t be stuck in Charles de Gaulle or on a date with Victor Nikiforov so he might as well go with it.

Victor turns back to the waitress, voice curling around the French syllables like a lover's caress. He reaches across the table to take Yuuri’s hand in his own, stroking his thumb across Yuuri’s palm. How is he supposed to handle this?

Yuuri starts to wonder if the waitress is extra-sensorily attuned to his distress—like some sort of high-pitched wail that serves as an anxiety Bat Signal—when she arrives with more champagne, faster than a human should be capable of moving, at that precise moment. He gulps down half a glass to prevent himself from talking.

Later, Yuuri will blame everything that follows in the next four eight hours on the rush of carbonation, the adrenaline rollercoaster of the past fourty minutes, and the undeniable fact that for the next however many hours—until they board their flight and return to the status quo—he has Victor’s attention. It’s an intoxicating combination.

(He’s lying to himself. It started the moment he ran into Victor.)

Still sipping his champagne, Yuuri slides his hand across the table, palm up, invitation open, “it’s great.” He has Victor Nikiforov’s undivided attention for the next…however long the delay lasts. Time’s grown fuzzy at the edges.

(Sober Yuuri panics underneath a layer of alcohol. Drunk Yuuri, intoxicated with expensive champagne and Victor Nikiforov bats him away.)

He chokes down another mouthful of champagne. The waitress sidles over to refill his glass and shoot Victor a smile. Victor doesn’t even acknowledge her, except to order a few dishes that Yuuri can’t quite catch as they roll of his tongue. His eyes fixed on Yuuri’s face as he grasps his hand once more, pink lips curled into the shape of a heart and his smile so bright Yuuri could use it to power all of the lights in Hasetsu.

(The thought of home sends a sharp pang through his chest and he washes it away with more champagne.)

“Yuuuuuuuri,” Victor’s pulled out his phone, “why didn’t you like my photo from earlier?”

Victor shoves the phone under his nose. Yuuri stared at that photo for ten minutes, running into at least five people before he ran into Victor himself.

“I followed you on Instagram but you never followed me back. I’m wounded,” he presses his other hand to his chest, “I don’t know if I’ll ever recover.”

“I do follow you!” Yuuri’s scrambling.

“Really?” Victor arches an eyebrow and types a “k” into his search bar. Yuuri’s Instagram is the first suggestion. He hasn’t updated it in two years.

“Not that one,” Yuuri blurs. Oh god it’s happening again, his tongue is eloping with the champagne during the wake for his sense of self preservation, “I have another one, a secret one. Just for following you.”
The waitress arrives with their appetizers, just in time to hear the end of Yuuri’s confession.

(Someone please end him.)

Victor flushes, pleased, “Yuuri!” he reaches across the table and feed Yuuri a bite of...something smeared on a piece of toast the size of post-it. Then he shifts his chair closer—so close they’re on the same side of the table, thighs pressed against one another—and wraps his arm around Yuuri’s shoulder.

“Say ‘wet dream!'”

“Victor!”

The flash goes off. Victor keeps his arm around Yuuri’s shoulder as he fiddles with filters—he goes with Valencia—and uploads it to Instagram.

“Oh look, Chris already liked it!”

“Oh god.” Chris has at least forty photos of Yuuri that are far more incriminating. Now he’ll probably send them to Victor.

“How do you know Chris, Yuuri?”

Some distant—sober—part of Yuuri’s brain wonders how Victor knows he and Chris are friendly. Drunk Yuuri, accidentally seductive and entirely unencumbered after a healthy dose of champagne, blurts out, “he got me drunk in juniors.”

“Really?” Victor’s expression is caught between—envy? that can’t be right—and amusement.

Buoyed on bubbles and stolen bravery, Yuuri babbles, “I woke up covered in Sharpie, glitter, and some things I’d really rather not identify. I don’t remember much after the third drink.” Yuuri doesn’t even notice the waitress has re-filled his glass—twice.

Victor’s face is positively euphoric. “Well now I have to ask Chris for details. And photos,” Victor’s other hand picks up his phone and starts typing.

“Oh god, not right now!” Yuuri flushes. Who knows what terrible things Chris has witnessed—and that’s just including the ones where Yuuri’s been an active participant.

“And sent!”

“Victor, why?”

“Yuuuuri,” Victor whines, “you can’t just dangle that in front of me and not expect me to follow up!”

“That’s exactly what I expect,” Yuuri reaches both hands across Victor’s lap to grab at his phone.

“At least we got a commemorative photo this time!” Yuuri’s face flushes a shade of red he didn’t even know existed outside of Pantone swatches. His attempted robbery is a disaster; there’s champagne everywhere, Yuuri’s threadbare jeans and soft grey sweater are drenched—both already clinging to his skin with a sticky squelch.

Well, that’s it. Yuuri’s ruined his one and only chance to go on a date with Victor Nikiforov. He should be buried in these clothes. “Oh no—’
“Oh this is perfect!” Victor is beaming and if Yuuri thought his last smile was bright, this one is irrefutably nuclear.

“I’m sorry—what?” Victor pulls the neat trick of summoning and then paying for the check while Yuuri’s brain comes back online.

(Though online is relative when viewed through six glasses of champagne.)

“We’re going shopping!” Victor’s hand is laced with his once more and Yuuri has less than a second to grab his carry-on before he’s hurtling through Terminal One of Charles de Gaulle, Victor Nikiforov cutting through the crowds like his skates against the ice.

_____________________

When it comes to shopping, Victor could take another three Olympic golds. He scans the terminal and considers his options: Burberry, Gucci, Hermes, Hugo Boss… the first and last would probably be their best bets. It’s like a dream, and Victor’s finally got a shot at the other goal he’s been harbouring close to his heart for the past four months—getting rid of Yuuri’s awful tie.

(It’s a shame the sweater and jeans had to take the fall—the Yuuri sitting across from him at dinner had looked so sweet and soft; an entirely separate master of seduction from the siren swinging around a pole in Sochi.)

“Hugo Boss or Burberry?” Victor says, not waiting for a response before pulling Yuuri in to Burberry. His own face, all eight Photoshopped meters of it, smolders out at them from an advertisement as they enter.

“Victor I can’t—"

“So don’t! Let me take care of it,” he turns and presses a kiss against Yuuri’s knuckles. There’s just enough time to catch Yuuri’s answering flush—the most delectable shade of red (it’s his new favorite color)—before an clerk bustles over.

“Mr. Nikiforov! How can we assist you today?” She asks. He glances at her name tag—Elodie—before meeting her eyes with his best press smile.

“Yuuri,” he tugs Yuuri forward, “needs new clothes. I was thinking at least two suits, some casual jeans, shirts, and sweaters. Oh, and a coat. To start with.” She looks Yuuri up and down while he shrinks under her gaze.

“To start with?” Yuuri pales.

“I’ll put it on the complimentary account,” she says, dragging Yuuri off for measurements.

Yuuri shoots Victor a pleading look that wouldn’t look out of place on Makkachin. Victor merely smiles—one that actually reaches his eyes—and watches Yuuri go. What a view.

He can’t wait to see Yuuri in a proper suit. Delicious.

_____________________

The last time Yuuri endured this much poking and prodding was at his last costume fitting. This is absolutely worse.

His champagne buzz is wearing thin under the buzz of the florescent lights—even Burberry bows to
airport regulations.

The next forty five minutes is a flurry of silk, wool, tweed, cashmere, denim, cotton, and Victor’s increasingly rapturous expressions. Every. Single. One. of the outfits is whisked away from him as soon as it has Victor’s approval.

(Yuuri shudders just thinking about the bill.)

They leave Burberry with a stuffed leather carry-on and repeat the routine at Hugo Boss. Victor pretends he doesn’t speak English every time Yuuri protests—which is ridiculous because they were just speaking English two minutes ago, Victor.

The longer Yuuri spends with Victor, the more he realizes that he’s petty and ridiculous and blunt and more wonderful than any flat image could capture. Victor drags him into Laduree, orders him an inappropriately expensive—but absolutely delicious—salmon dinner, and then insists on hand feeding him macarons in increasingly ridiculous flavors, each one melting on his tongue, lighter than air.

Then he makes Yuuri feed him macarons in return, finishing each one by suggestively pulling three of Yuuri’s fingers into his mouth.

Yuuri excuses himself to the bathroom. Tailored pants—(“not fitted enough,” Victor had pouted in Hugo Boss)—do absolutely nothing to hide his erection.

_____________________

Porn Star!!! on Ice [6:32]: victor i’mma get you a can of fresca bc you so thirsty

 parched like a desert in a heat wave [6:34]: JUST LOOK AT HIM CHRIS I’M DYING

Porn Star!!! on Ice [6:35]: dehydration is dangerous, trust me i’m a doctor

 parched like a desert in a heat wave [6:36]: role play isn’t the same as a phd. even i know that

Porn Star!!! on Ice [6:46]: won’t stop you from trying it with yuuri though

 parched like a desert in a heat wave [6:47]: i will not dignify that with a response

Porn Star!!! on Ice [6:47]: so,,, yes

_____________________

“Yuuri!” Phichit’s voice hits an entirely new, completely undiscovered frequency. Yuuri must be part dog to be able to hear it.

“Phichit,” Yuuri hisses, “be quiet.” As though Victor can somehow hear them from the table, over thirty meters away.

“I am deeply offended that you failed to text me the very minute you ran into Victor Nikiforov, subject of your teenage and not-so-teenaged fantasies, bane of my existence, and the reason the wall between our rooms has an indent shaped like a fist.” Phichit actually gets louder.

“How—” Yuuri get to finish the sentence.

“There’s like 50 new photos of you on Victor’s Instagram.”
“Just...shut up for a second!” Yuuri pulls the phone away from his ear. He can still hear Phichit screeching, “don’t ignore me! I raised you!”

Yuuri ignores him. Phichit’s avalanche of laughter echoes against the dingy tile.

He pulls up Victor’s Instagram, his own face staring back at him. He scrolls down, through at least twenty photos. Yuuri doesn’t even remember Victor taking seventy five percent of these.

“Yuuri! Stop masturbating, we have to go!” Victor is officially the worst.

“Yeah, Yuuri!” Of course Phichit heard that, “Why masturbate when the object of your fantasies is right there and apparently also won an Olympic gold in thirst.”

“I’m hanging up on you.”

“Yuuuuuuuri,” Victor whines, just outside the stall, “I need a new set of luggage, our flight’s been cancelled. Apparently there a strike?”

What fresh hell.

_____________________

They’re running through the terminal, hand in hand, a cart full of Victor’s ridiculous luggage jostling behind them. Apparently the strike had started hours ago and Victor had never bothered to tell him.

(“We were having so much fun! And the restaurant workers belong to a different union anyways so I thought, why ruin it?”

“There won’t be anymore fun when you’re dead. Because Yakov killed you. And you’re dead.”

“Yakov can’t kill me, I’m a national treasure.”)

Yakov’s yelling at them through Victor’s phone. The tinny speaker does nothing to muffle his rage.

“The only ways to get to Malmö now are car or train—”

“Perfect! We’ll take a road trip through Germany! I wonder if the rental company has a Porsche—”

“Victor. I’m not letting you kill Katsuki. If he gets in a car with you, he won’t make it to Worlds.”

“I would never sabotage a fellow competitor like that, how dare you, Yakov. It’s like you don’t know me at all!” Victor’s pouting. Yuuri’s amazed Yakov has any hair left at all now that he’s experienced Hurricane Nikiforov first hand.

“You’re taking the 7:55 am train tomorrow. The earlier ones were booked. Pick up your tickets at Gare du Nord, or print them out tonight in the hotel business center.”

Victor visibly perks up at the word “hotel”.

“Yuuuuuri,” he’s attached himself to Yuuri’s back again, “sleep with me tonight?”

“I did not hear this,” Yakov says, then he hangs up.

Victor’s hands are already flying over his phone screen, “oh good, Hôtel de NELL has a King available—is that alright?” For the first time all day—no since he was 12—Yuuri sees a flash of
uncertainty pass across Victor’s face.

Hurricane Nikiforov has been upgraded to Category Five. Yuuri’s powerless to resist.

“Okay,” he says. Victor beams. Yuuri wonders if he’s actually a piece of art someone’s liberated from the Louvre.

They make their way to the taxi stand. Victor’s arm’s wrapped around Yuuri’s waist and he’s babbling a constant stream of places they “just have to visit next time, when we come back together. You’ll love it Yuuri.”

In the cab Victor laces their hands together and keeps them like that all the way to the hotel. Yuuri leans his head against Victor’s shoulder, a magnet powerless against the opposing polar pull.

No matter what happens in the next forty eight hours, they’ll always have Paris.

(Or at least Paris’ airport.)

Chapter End Notes

well that happened. chapter 2 starts the train journey....and also bed sharing. because yes.

thank you to:

+meg <3
+z aka cuttlemefish
it's you and i who will hold out till the morning light

Chapter Summary

A night out on the town, and a heist.

Chapter Notes

hey so the chapter count was a lie WHO WOULD HAVE GUESSED.

remember how they were supposed to get on the train in this chapter.....oops. this monster did NOT exist in my original outline and was incredibly difficult to write for a lot of reasons. but here it is.

title from Craft Spells "After the Moment" which is basically my inspiration for this chapter along with a lot of yelling and giggling in discord.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yuuri wakes up as the taxi jolts to a stop in front of Hotel de NELL. His head is still on Victor’s shoulder and Victor’s arm is wrapped around Yuuri’s waist, a tentative half embrace.

“Yuuri,” Victor’s breath is hot against his ear, “we’re here.”

(Yuuri’s not sure he’s awake. He’s absolutely had this dream before.)

They drag their luggage into the lobby (well, Victor pays the taxi driver an inordinate amount of money to help them and Yuuri ends up carrying far more of Victor’s bags than his own) and Victor bounces on the balls of his feet, entirely too peppy. Hotel de NELL is all gunmetal and sleek lines, clean, a little impersonal, but doubtlessly impeccably run.

There’s a line at the concierge—Victor pouts, and tries to cut in front. A grandmother, likely on vacation with her family, trips him with her cane as he strides towards the desk. Yuuri’s tempted to laugh until he realizes that Victor might need his legs to skate. Then horror wins in a landslide.

Half the people in line are on their smartphones, taking pictures of Victor’s inglorious spill across the floor. The other half are glaring in his direction.

The concierge slides a “no vacancy” sign across the front of the desk. Fingers fly across phone screens and most of the line streams past Yuuri back through the double doors, lugging suitcases and duffles, spilling out onto the Paris streets.

Yuuri rushes over to Victor, who’s just righted himself from his fall. He glances between the man, the myth, the living legend, and his utterly absurd pile of luggage and sighs gratefully that Victor’s apparently uninjured, “good thing you already booked a room.”

(They’re sharing a room. Shit. Mark him down as terrified and turned on.)
Victor beams, “actually I didn’t!”

Yuuri gapes, “what?”

(Oh god they’re going to end up sleeping on the streets on top of Victor’s absurdly expensive luggage. Which probably cost more than a hotel room.)

“Well they still had vacancies on their site, I just figured we’d take care of it when we got here.”

“I can’t believe you!” Yuuri lies. He can absolutely believe it. In the past three hours he’s lived it.

“Yuuuuuuuri,” Victor pouts, “I didn’t want to spend time on my phone when I could be spending time with you .”

It’s simultaneously the most romantic and most idiotic thing Yuuri’s ever heard.

(How does Victor do it?)

(If he says something, Victor will take it as a challenge. Victor will probably take it as a challenge anyways. Yuuri’s still not sure how any of this happened. Victor probably collects spontaneous romantic flings like gold medals.)

“You had no problem checking your phone to look at Instagram in the airport,” Yuuri’s not sure if he should give up on controlling his mouth, or just give up speech all together.

(He’s leaning towards the second option.)

“Because they were pictures of you .” Victor’s decided it’s time to revive his barnacle impression. It’s so accurate it sets another world record.

“When did you even take those?” Yuuri’s amazed Victor managed to snap so many photos without him noticing because the man clearly has never met a subterfuge he couldn’t shout through a megaphone.

“A magician never reveals his secrets.”

“A magician would have booked us a hotel room.” What is he saying ? Yuuri wishes he’d checked Burberry for a muzzle.

(He’s pretty sure it had been part of the Spring 2016 menswear line. Victor’s ad had been on the opposite page.)

“Well, I thought we’d try this hotel because it was closer to the train station and look what happened! That’s the last time I try to be practical.”

“This was you trying to be practical?”

(The word must not translate well to Russian.)

Victor’s solution is to book them the Penthouse Suite at the The Four Seasons Hotel George V.

Yuuri’s shepherded into the marble foyer and is immediately struck with the scent of freshly picked flowers—they perfume the air and lend the hotel an undeniable aura of elegance. God even the floor here is stunning, Yuuri thinks, eyes tracing the patterned marble designs just under his feet.
(He pushes down the guilt at letting Victor spend even more money on him. Every one of Yuuri’s protests has been met with a pout. It’s utterly unfair.)

Victor secures them a room, and their bags are whisked away to the Penthouse after Victor slides the concierge his black card.

The suite itself is a study in calculated opulence—leather, brocade, and silk. Yuuri perches on the end of the bed as Victor peers out onto their private terrace.

(One of two private terraces. Who needs two private terraces in a hotel room for two people?)

“The Royal Suite was already booked,” Victor pouts, before turning away from the floor to ceiling windows, “but the Penthouse is more private,” Victor’s smile is all teeth and Yuuri wants, “no shared walls.”

They have a three hundred and sixty degree view of the city. Yuuri wants Victor more than he’s ever wanted anyone—(he shudders at the nights in college he doesn’t remember and the fight-or-flight-oh-god-definitely-flight response the morning after)—but what he really needs is a bath and a nap. He gets both.

Yuuri absconds to the bathroom to soak in the white marble tub while Victor makes phone calls in rapid fire French and Russian.

(Sometime during Yuuri’s bath Victor gets an accidental delivery of fifteen different types of lube and an assortment of condoms in absurd colors and flavors during Yuuri’s bath.

“Look, Yuuri! It’s matcha flavored! Oh and there’s creme brûlée lube!”)

After his bath, Yuuri flops onto the cloud-soft comforter of the king sized bed, wrapped in a fleecy hotel robe. The suite is empty, but there’s a note on the mirrored nightstand:

Making arrangements for tonight, be back soon!

♥ V

Yuuri doesn’t remember falling asleep, but he wakes up in Victor’s arms, and hates how much it feels like he’s home. Waking up to Victor’s face feels terribly familiar.

(It’s probably all the posters.)

Their legs are tangled together in the absurdly comfortable bed, and the Eiffel Tower looms just beyond the terrace, a sharp incandescent sword piercing the obsidian evening sky.

Victor’s eyes open, sleepy and slow and sleep-warm, a smile stretching across his lips, the soft lines at the corners of his eyes more than Yuuri can stand. But he doesn’t move.

“The spa should still be open, do you want to go get facials,” Victor’s grin is far too sly for an après-nap expression, “or we could stay here and try a different sort.”

“We need to print our train tickets,” Yuuri mutters through his flush. If he raises his voice, the illusion will shatter. He’ll be back in the departures lounge at Charles de Gaulle.

(He has Victor’s time, if only for now. And he’ll take it and run all the way to Worlds.)

(Victor’s been shattering his illusions the entire day—flesh and blood and bone rather than paper and plastic.)
Victor pouts, but gets up anyways, dropping a soft flutter of a kiss on the nape of Yuuri’s neck before traipsing off to the bathroom.

(The bathroom with mostly glass walls that reveal most of its interior to the master bedroom. )

(Victor is shameless.)

Victor changes out of his old clothing—gestures stark, utilitarian. Then he dresses Yuuri in one of his newly acquired outfits. Then he smooths the fabric over Yuuri’s skin, all long languid lines, each movement like an individual act of devotion. The spotlight focus is heady—the focused, unwavering cheers of the crowd before a skate—and Yuuri can feel himself flush under the soft cotton and cashmere.

They take the elevator straight from their room down to the lobby, hands laced together, Victor partially pressed against Yuuri’s back.

(This seems to be Victor’s favorite position.)

(Yuuri resolutely tries not to think of what other sorts of positions might be Victor’s favorite.)

(Too late, he’s flipping through all eight glorious black and white images from Victor’s ESPN Body Issue.)

(He bought five copies. Three had to be thrown away. That was the week Phichit punched the wall between their rooms.)

The business center is six computers, two printers, and an empty help desk. Victor frog-marches them over to a computer where he’s forced to let go of Yuuri—the same “when will my husband return from the war” expression from the airport ticket agent’s counter splashed across his face. He opens his email and doesn’t bother to shield Yuuri from the password.

Yuuri stands behind Victor’s chair, staring at the crown of his head. It looks so, so soft, like strands of captured starlight.

(Phichit once caught him stroking his posters as though he could actually card his fingers through Victor’s hair. No one is ever interviewing Phichit if someone ever finds a reason to write a book about Yuuri’s life.)

(Oh my god, Victor follows Phichit on Instagram.)

Before he can stop himself (and isn’t that the theme of the last five hours) he reaches down and prods at the center of the part in Victor’s hair. Victor flinches. “Is it getting that thin?”

Yuuri feels his lips start to part, mouth transforming into the black hole of embarrassment that currently happens anytime his brain tries to make words.

He’s saved from answering by a nudge of pressure against the back of his left leg and he whirls around to see the most adorable Shiba Inu.

(An uncontrollable twinge flutters through Yuuri’s chest.)

(Dogs are lesson three in How To Avoid Your Problems 101 and Yuuri’s a model student of emotional evasion.)
(Someone get him some junk food, he’s got a patented five step program. That’s lesson two. There has to be a McDonalds around here somewhere. The golden arches are more of a universal language than English is.)

The dog moves back across the room and Yuuri follows. He crouches down automatically, ruffling the dog’s fur before a pair shiny black loafers enter his line of sight. Oh. Right. He should ask the dog’s owner first. When Yuuri looks up, he’s met by a pair of grey eyes peering down at him.

“Sorry.” Yuuri leans away from the dog, as its owner steps closer.

“Absolutely nothing to apologize for. In fact, I’ll have to thank my dog.” The owner reaches out a hand with a wink and as he scans Yuuri from head to toe. “I’m Oliver, and this is Tintin.”

“Yuuri,” he says, eyes flicking back down towards Tintin, “is it alright…?”

“More than alright, it’d be my absolute pleasure,” Oliver says, flashing Yuuri a broad smile, teeth a veritable toothpaste ad.

(Yuuri’s mind flashes to Victor’s actual toothpaste ad he’d cut out of On Ice. He’d had that one framed. Phichit had laughed at him but still helped him mount it on the wall of their dorm. It’s in his suitcase. In the room. That he’s sharing with the entirely-three-dimensional-Victor Nikiforov.)

(Please don’t let Victor open his suitcase.)

As though he’s been summoned by thought alone, Victor emerges from behind the computer, proceeded by the sound of a collision and a string of Russian that must be expletives.

Yuuri presses his face into the dog’s fur, then looks back up. “I haven’t seen a Shiba in so long. They’re considered a national treasure in Japan.” He switches to Japanese to croon, “Who’s a good boy, who’s a beautiful baby boy,” utterly transfixed by Tintin’s silky coat.

(Victor mutters something about showing Yuuri national treasures as he marches over.)

“Is that where you’re from?” Oliver crouches down beside Yuuri, burying his hands in Tintin’s fur so their fingers just brush.

“Yes. I haven’t been back in years, though.”

“Have you been in Paris long?”

Yuuri shakes his head. With the way the day is going, he can’t trust himself to English right now.

(Phichit always says that Yuuri loses his filter when he’s drunk. And since their collision in Charles de Gaulle, Yuuri’s been drunk on champagne and Victor Nikiforov. An absolutely lethal combination.)

“Business or pleasure?” Oliver purrs, inching his hand closer to Yuuri’s.

“Pleasure,” Victor announces, coming up behind Yuuri to press a hand on his left trapezius, thumb moving in small circles at the join of his neck and shoulder, “hours and hours of pleasure. So much pleasure we missed our plane, and we’ll probably miss our train too—”

The whirr of the printer interrupts Victor’s monologue. He turns to Yuuri, mouth pulled down in a frown. The expression looks unnatural. Yuuri doesn’t know if he’s ever seen Victor frown.

It’s gone just as soon as it arrived. Victor plasters himself to Yuuri’s back once more, arm wrapped
around his waist and says, just loud enough for Oliver to hear, “Yuuri, we’re going to miss our reservation, and we’ve got so many plans tonight,” he says before placing a kiss on the soft patch of skin just underneath Yuuri’s left ear. Yuuri shivers in Victor’s arms.

(Yuuri misses Victor’s triumphant smirk.)

“Oh,” Oliver looks between Yuuri and Victor, brows drawn, “well,” he slides a card out of his pocket, handing it to Yuuri, “let me know if you’re in town a little longer. I’d love to see more of you. A lot more of you.” He turns to leave, but not until he’s done another full body scan and then meets Yuuri’s eyes with an expression that can’t be called anything other than a smoulder. He takes long, deliberate strides out of the room before disappearing behind the corner. Yuuri looks after Tintin with longing and sighs.

____________________

Victor is burning.

(Is this how the Romans felt, when they saw their city aflame?)

He’s had less than thirty seconds to recover from Yuuri poking his head—(oh god he’ll have to order that special shampoo Yura’s always leaving advertisements for in his locker)—before someone is talking to Yuuri.

Someone is talking to Yuuri. Someone with a dog is talking to Yuuri.

He was going to woo Yuuri with his dog. You don’t steal another man’s seduction plans. It’s just rude.

(Victor conveniently employs his world class selective memory to forget all the times he’d done the same. It’s a gift.)

Oh god, now Yuuri’s cooing to the dog in Japanese. Victor is going to die. Victor absolutely cannot die now. He hasn’t married Yuuri yet. It’s until death do us part and he’s not ready for either aspect of that equation.

(He’ll be damned if he lets all those hours spent on Pinterest go to waste.)

He abandons the printer and darts over to Yuuri’s side, wrapping his arms around his waist and nuzzling his face into the side of Yuuri’s neck.

(A voice in his head that sounds an awful lot like Yura points out that he’s basically marking his territory and peeing all over Yuuri. Victor ignores it. He’s not into watersports. Besides, kink negotiation is something he usually saves for the second date.)

“Yuuri, we’re going to miss our reservation. I’ve got so many plans for you tonight.” Starting with the matcha flavored condoms if everything goes right. But dinner before dessert.

The he’s-not-even-French asshole eyes Yuuri with a lascivious grin. Victor can actually see him salivating. Rude. The not-even-French-asshole says something—Victor’s not sure of the specifics, but the answer is absolutely not before handing Yuuri a card and exiting the room like someone’s switched him into slow motion.

Victor plucks whateverhisface’s card out of Yuuri’s hand and tosses it in the trashcan. He feels better already.
“Yuuri have you seen Makkachin, my dog?” He keeps his arm around Yuuri’s waist but shifts to his side, leading him towards the courtyard.

“She’s all over your Instagram.”

Ah yes. Good point. “I’ll show you some private pictures at dinner.”

If his thumb “accidentally” slips onto the folder containing the uncensored outtakes from his ESPN Body Issue photo shoot, well, then, fate is kind.

Dinner is an outrageously expensive, dismally portioned nine course affair at Le Cinq.

It has three Michelin stars, gold backed chairs, marble columns, and portions the size of a postage stamp.

(“We ate at the airport?”

“Yuuri, this is Le Cinq. We’re staying at the Four Seasons. Denying them our patronage would just be rude.”)

(This is what passes for logic in Victor's world.)

Victor basically ignores his food, choosing to spend most of the his energy on achieving a new high score in overly casual but deliberately placed body contact.

(All Yuuri wanted was a BLT dripping mayonnaise and a side of fries. Instead he got veal sweetbreads and truffled green asparagus.)

(He’s got his phone at the ready to google map for the nearest McDonalds. Another stop on the McDonalds world tour. He’ll fill Phichit in at Worlds. If he makes it there without spontaneously combusting. Given the way the day has gone, it’s a lot more probable than it was a week ago.)

The waiter hovers close to their table, funneling an absurd amount of wine into Yuuri’s glass, changing varietals with every course.

Then he re-fills Victor’s glass, splashing a third of the wine onto the (formerly) white table cloth.

“The service is really great here,” Yuuri mumbles, poking at his…he’s actually not sure what it is, and at this point the menu swims in front of his glasses.

Victor’s shooting an indecipherable look over Yuuri’s shoulder where a host of staff members stands at the ready.

“Yes, great service. That’s absolutely it. One hundred percent. Nothing else going on here.” He aims the same at the waitstaff before fumbling for his phone, “besides, I promised you pictures of Makkachin.”

He scoots his chair even closer, holding the phone out as he thumbs through the photos, flicking past rink shots, the promised shots of Makkachin, some streets in what Yuuri assumes is St. Petersburg, and then—
Holy shit.

(Does it count as a dick pic if the rest of the person’s body is in the picture? Yuuri’s asking for a friend.)

“Oops, I forgot those were in this album,” Victor definitely lies.

(He’d moved them to his camera roll on the walk over to the restaurant. And he’d do it a million times, he thinks, as his eyes chase the blooming flush smeared across the tops of Yuuri’s cheekbones, following the way it surfs over the crest of his ears, where it ultimately spills down the sides of his neck and disappears under the collar of his new shirt. Victor’s hoping that tonight he’ll find out how far down it goes.)

(He has plans for tonight. A whole lifetime’s worth of plans.)

“ESPN sent me the less publishable images,” he continues.

(Victor had them printed and framed for his apartment.)

(He’d much prefer pictures of Yuuri to decorate his walls, but he keeps losing the eBay auctions to that asshole katsukifan1.)

“I bought five copies of that issue.” Yuuri flushes. He looks like he wishes the floor were a sentient being just so it could eat him.

(Yuuri has very expressive eyes. It’s one of the things Victor likes best about him. Along with his… everything.)

Victor beams. Yuuri actually tries to crawl under the table. that’s unacceptable. Victor pulls him up by the elbow, “well then I should thank you for helping make it their best selling issue of all time.”

He settles Yuuri on the chair next to him, “I’d be happy to sign your copy.” Then he pulls Yuuri flush against his side, “say ‘Body Issue.’”

"Victor."

(Victor uploads the photo to Instagram immediately.)

photo: Victor with his arm around Yuuri, the edges of two gold chairs visible just in the background. Victor is radiant, Yuuri is blushing.

v-nikiforov : reminiscing over the ESPN Body Issue ;) #victorissaved #wellalwayshaveparis #katsukiyuuri #isawamansobeautifulistartedcrying

102,847 likes, 9,326 comments

phichit-chu : @v-nikiforov yuuri’s very familiar with that issue (๑ ๋ ๑)

katsuki-yuuri : @phichit-chu yuuri is also very familiar with death
After dinner, Victor whines and pleads with Yuuri for a midnight walk along the Seine, the glow of Paris’ uncountable city lights reflected off the ripples in the ink-dark water.

Victor clearly knows how weak Yuuri is for dogs (and for Victor Nikiforov), because he puts on his best forlorn puppy expression before begging Yuuri to walk with him. Yuuri’s strolling beside the river before he even realizes it.

Time moves differently around Victor.

(Yuuri’s also starving.)

Wind whips through the winding Paris streets this time of year. Avenue Georges V is all pre-war buildings, tall, windowed facades bracketing either side of the street, like hundreds of un-opened eyes staring down at them.

Yuuri leans against Victor’s side and tells himself he doesn’t mind the extra warmth.

(Even his anxiety knows he’s lying.)

(Yuuri’s anxiety is like a leash, given enough slack his brain will run with bursts of bravery off the cliff of That is Really Inadvisable—until the leash tenses once again, pulling him back and choking him. It’s as regular as the tides. Victor’s adorable absurdity is giving him nothing but slack. For now.)

A flash of red and yellow jerks him back to the present. Spotted: McDonalds. Yuuri is so hungry he could cry in relief.

(Oh no, he’s actually crying in relief.)

“Yuuri?” Victor’s frowning. He lifts the hand on Yuuri’s waist up towards his face and thumbs tears from the corner of Yuuri’s left eye.

Yuuri just points, “I uh….Phichit and I have a pact to complete every country on the McDonald’s world tour.” His stomach Kool Aid Mans into the conversation, the ungrateful bastard.

Victor leans in closer (Yuuri didn’t that was even possible but here it is), and chuckles, his breath ghosting over the shell of Yuuri’s ear, “Still hungry? We’ll have to find something else to satisfy
Yuuri’s mind flashes back to the “accidental” care package waiting in the penthouse, but his mouth says, “like McDonalds?”

(They just had a nine course dinner. Why is he like this?)

**luda-chris 10:51**: i see you’re getting close with victor.


They don’t make it to McDonalds.

Victor insists on dragging him to a bar called Le Cavern near Pont Neuf with a subterranean cave and dancing. But he promises Yuuri mozzarella sticks once they get there.

(How does Victor already know Yuuri’s weakness for mozzarella sticks?)

They walk there, since, as Victor says, “you’ve never been to Paris, Yuuri! And we’ll walk by some of the major landmarks.” Their arms are hooked together and their hands are already intertwined.

“We’ll see more of them the next time we’re here.” This time Victor’s smile is more a quirk of the mouth than the glossy grin Yuuri’s used to. He points out his favorite cafes, asks Yuuri about college, and babbles endlessly about Makkachin.

(He wonders how many people Victor’s made these promises to.)

When Yuuri asks Victor about his life in Saint Petersburg, Victor recounts stories about his rinkmates with an expression of wry amusement and hand gestures that have to be rehearsed. He talks about Mila Babicheva fighting with Yakov over her choice to skate to No Doubt’s “Just a Girl” for her exhibition program, about Georgi’s plans to become a YouTube make-up guru after he retires, and how Victor had caught Yakov reading a actual book on cat ownership.

(“When I asked him, he just said it was to help him deal with Yuri Plisetsky and told me to skate twenty suicides.”

“Did you?”

“Of course not!”)

(But he can’t help noticing that the people in Victor’s life outside of skating are few and far between,
shades that pass in and out of his stories, disembodied limbs and actions—never adding up to a full relationship.)

Yuuri wonders if Victor’s life is as limited as his—admittedly engaging—stories imply, or if he’s just saving Yuuri the sordid details of his other affairs.)

Their moonlight stroll takes them past several of Paris’ most iconic monuments. Victor sketches the history of each.

The Grand Palais, built for the Universal Exhibition of 1900 to rival London’s Crystal Palace, the long arched glass roof lit up against the evening sky, uncountable artworks nestled just beneath; the Place de La Concorde—almost unimaginably the site of gory guillotine executions during the French Revolution—with its’ two sparkling fountains and illuminated Egyptian Obelisk jousting towards the sky; the Jardin des Tuileries—public gardens at the center of Paris and it’s history (“they imprisoned King Louis the XVI in the Tuileries Palace during the French Revolution,” Victor says, pointing to an empty space at the far edge of the park, “but the Paris Commune burned it down in 1871.”)—a starkly empty space in the dark of the night; the Louvre—where Victor pulls Yuuri (impossibly) closer and takes a selfie in front of the glass Pyramid (“Say McDonalds!”); and finally Pont Neuf.

“How do you know all of this?” Yuuri’s read every interview Victor’s ever given—most of them more than once; he’d never mentioned an interest in history.

Victor refuses to meet his eyes, gazing out at the water, “inspiration for programs is everywhere.” Then, so softly, Yuuri’s not sure Victor meant for him to hear it, “or it used to be.”

“Victor?”

“Almost there!” Victor’s face is all forced cheer, the bow of his mouth stretched into a rictus grin—mask rather than mirror.

(All Yuuri can think of is that he’s seen the same expression on his posters. And it’s the first time he’s seen it all night.)

“What about that?” Yuuri points to the bridge just in front of them.

Victor smiles and squeezes his hand, still staring ahead, “Pont Neuf, the oldest bridge in Paris—ironic since the name translates to 'new bridge.' But it was the first bridge in Paris built without houses on it. Now it’s mostly knowns as a site for lovelocks—padlocks a couple attaches to the grille work with their initials inscribed.”

“Why?” They step onto the bridge, the lights built into the sides—just above the seven arches—illuminate them from below.

“To represent commitment—and lasting love.”

They lapse into a not-quite-uncomfortable silence.

As they walk over the Seine, Yuuri brushes his fingertips over the locks fastened to the bridge, the metal jangling beneath his palm, air charged between them. Victor looks between the cascade of metal and Yuuri, an unreadable expression on his face.

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photo: Victor and Yuuri in front of the Louvre, arms wrapped around one another. Victor is looking at Yuuri instead of the camera.
“Yuuri!” Victor cries, his voice ricocheting off the walls of the cave. (After their walk, the deafening noise of Le Cavern was a relief.)

They’d walked in to exposed beams and well worn stools lined up against the concrete bar. Once they’d gotten drinks—and Victor had sent an entire manuscript’s worth of glares at the bartender for the way he’s looking at Yuuri—Victor had led Yuuri downstairs, flush against one another under the rocky natural arches of the cave—hand hot on the small of Yuuri’s back.

Yuuri’d leaned against him as he sipped his whiskey sour, unconsciously nodding along to the live music at the other end of the room. Victor wasn’t wasn’t willing to split his focus and look at anything besides Yuuri.

Thirty minutes later, and Victor’s finally caught up with Yuuri in terms of blood alcohol content, but Yuuri had excused himself to the bathroom, and Victor still hasn’t caught sight of Yuuri’s soft tousled mop of hair.

(Victor darts a glance at the stairs even though he can’t see the coatcheck from here. He still feels the phantom pain from the thud of metal of the padlock he’d bought that afternoon against his hip, and the hollow carved space where he’s gotten so used to having Yuuri against his side.)

(He wants to run his hands through it, and comb it, and pull it while Yuuri goes down on him—and then let Yuuri pull his hair while he returns the favor.)

Yuuri feels soft and warm and everyone is so, so nice and they’re buying him drinks and he feels absolutely amazing. Except something, something’s missing. Victor. Oh god, where’s Victor? Victor needs to be here.
(Nothing makes sense without Victor.)

Victor needs to watch him. Victor needs to dance with him.

(Victor’s watching the band.)

Unacceptable.

(It’s too hot in here. Clearly the answer is less clothing. He peels off his sweater and his shirt.)

He slides over, just in front of Victor’s line of sight.

“You’re not looking enough,” Yuuri breathes, as pulls Victor closer by his tie. Victor’s eyes are all pupil “don’t take your eyes off me.” He presses a ghost of a kiss to the corner of Victor’s mouth before slithering off into the crowd, turning around twice to make sure Victor is watching.

He bursts into motion. Limbs sluicing through space like liquid lighting. An absolutely explosion of emotions—elation, morning, embarrassment, confusion, the emotional rollercoaster of the past three months finding purchase in his limbs and guiding him into splits and spins.

The crowd cleaves as Yuuri slides through space, a magnetic opposition of such exquisite spontaneity that it looks choreographed.

For once in his life, Yuuri doesn’t think. He just moves.

Victor is dying. Possibly he’s already dead. It’s very hard to tell. Is this what an out of body experience feels like?

There’s a ridiculous (but absolutely justified disparity between the amount of blood in the upper and lower halves of his body.)

(He absolutely does not want to stop watching Yuuri dance, but god, a man can only get so erect.)

(Yuuri is unfairly flexible.)

He’s been re-living those liminal hours from Sochi, in the late hours at home with too cool sheets mocking him on the other side of the bed. Tonight he’ll find out what side of the bed Yuuri prefers. He’s giddy at the thought.

(Too bad this bar doesn’t have a pole. He’ll have to text Chris and see if he brought one. Scratch that, Victor will get one himself. No need to involve Chris in what should be a private show.)

Yuuri moves across the stage; fluid, sensual, spontaneous.

Victor could commission entire museums worth of art dedicated to Yuuri.

(He’s already worked his merchandising connections to fabricate Katsuki Yuuri merchandise; he keeps losing eBay auctions. Why can’t everything just have a buy it now button?)

(How soon it too soon to ask Yuuri for his ring size? It’s been three months since Sochi.)

Yuuri’s captured the attention of the entire bar, and Victor can’t help but inch closer to his rightful place at Yuuri’s side—until Yuuri spies him out of the corner of his eye. A huge grin, more dazzling than all the lights of Paris stretches across his face as he reaches out an arm to lace his fingers with
Victors.

“Dance with me!” Yuuri demands, as he pulls Victor onto the floor.

(And he does.)

__________

victor nochillforov 1:34: how soon is too soon to ask someone for town ring widen.

none of your jizz-ness 1:36: it’s too soon

victor nochillforov 1:37 how’d buoyys know?

none of your jizz-ness 1:38: 3+ months of text messages

victor nochillforov 1:39 : rude

none of your jizz-ness 1:41 : I have receipts

none of your jizz-ness 1:45 : attachment: victorhasnochill.jpg

__________

They stumble out of the bar giggling, hands intertwined, pressed as close against one another as they can manage while still tripping their way toward Isle de la Cite.

Victor pulls Yuuri to a stop on the bridge flush with the quilt of locks decorating the chain-link. He pulls his own out of his pocket, names already inscribed.

They hook it to the fence, together, each holding one side of the lock as the mechanism snaps into place.

Yuuri leans in first, pressing his lips against Victor’s, chaste and a little chapped from the Paris winds.

“I’ve wanted to do that since I was fourteen.”

Victor kisses him again, syrupy sweet and slow, the drip of honey from the hive. It’s the only answer he ever wants to give.

“We should get back to the hotel.” They’ve somehow managed to push away the fact that they have to catch a train in the morning. But neither is eager to let this twilight, transitional stretch of time end.

(Victor has never felt happier.)

“Victor can you do something for me?” Yuuri asks, cheeks flushed as he peers at Victor from underneath his eyelashes, swinging their joined hands in time with their steps.

“Anything.”

(And for once, he means it.)

“Help me break into Le Cinq’s kitchen.”

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Even at two am, the Four Seasons isn’t quite empty. Stealth is absolutely essential.

Graceful as he is on the ice, stealth is a concept that continues to elude Victor.

“Victor, be quiet!” Yuuri hisses as a very audible crash sounds behind him.

“I am!” Victor says, not quietly at all.

“I’m sure the people who could hear that collision all the way in Malmo would agree with you,” Yuuri mutters, as they make their way towards the kitchen doors at the back of Le Cinq.

“I’m sure they would,” Victor practically whistles.

“Are you trying to get us caught?,” Yuuri’s halfway across the restaurant, sliding his way between the hoards of chairs stacked on top of the naked tables—stripped of their table cloths they almost look like the ones in the restaurant at Yu-Topia.

“Of course not,” Victor actually pauses in the middle of breaking and entering in order to pose—hand on his chest, chin raised toward the sky as though asking for divine aid in repairing the devastating wound Yuuri’s managed to inflict on him.

“Could have fooled me,” Yuuri makes sure he says this loud enough for Victor to hear.

Victor lurches forward, almost knocking over three different sets of chairs as he makes his approach. Flush in front of Yuuri, Victor reaches out to tap the tip of Yuuri’s nose, before shifting his fingers lower to caress Yuuri’s lower lip with his thumb, “if I’ve fooled you than I’m definitely on the right track.”

The tip of Victor’s finger just slips inside of Yuuri’s mouth, and Yuuri has to pull back before he’s tempted to violate a health code.

(Well, before he moves from temptation to actual violation.)

“Show me your moves,” Yuuri raises an eyebrow and sweeps an arm towards the locked kitchen doors.

(He feels a little braver in the dark, in the liminal space between Victor-and-Yuuri as they were, Victor-and-Yuuri as they are now, and Victor-and-Yuuri as they will be when they get to Worlds—when the conjunction between their names inevitably loses its hyphen.)

Victor plucks his wallet from his pocket, dipping a finger into the soft leather to pull out a credit card sized lock-picking kit.

“Really?” Yuuri knows Victor loves to surprise his audience, but this is something else.

“I used it to break into Yubileyny before Yakov finally just gave up and made me a key,” Victor slides one of the picks out of its case, examining it in the dim light, “plus I lose my apartment keys often enough that it was worth the investment.”

“Prove it,” Yuuri’s still not sure where his mouth is pulling these words from, but maybe he shouldn’t argue with something that’s working.

“With pleasure,” Victor purrs. He slides the pick into the lock and Yuuri hears the mechanism click into place mere seconds later. “Impressed?” Victor looks so smug Yuuri can’t decide if he wants to kiss him or roll his eyes. He settles for a shrug before slipping past Victor and into the den of
stainless steel that is Le Cinq’s kitchen.

Yuuri’s first thought is “my mom would kill for a kitchen like this,” and his second is “it would be a terrible idea if we got arrested for breaking and entering before Worlds,” but it doesn’t stop him from hurrying over to gather the necessary ingredients, Victor less than half a step behind.

Yuuri loses himself in the soothing rhythm of food preparation. Victor is surprisingly adept at chopping vegetables.

“I do have to feed myself, Yuuri,” he says, dicing green onion.

“Those need to be smaller pieces,” Yuuri says, sidestepping. He glances at the door and plucks the knife from Victor’s hand.

“As good as you are at following orders, someone needs to stand watch.”

Victor is delighted, “good at following orders? Oh I’ll have to tell Yakov, he’ll never believe it!” Victor doesn’t move any closer to the doors.

“I’m starting to side with him,” Yuuri mutters, dipping the pork cutlet into the eggs and then the panko.

“I can follow orders!” Victor smiles, feral, ripe with promise, “I’ll show you—after we eat.”

Yuuri flushes but continues working, “you won’t be able to show me anything if we get arrested.”

“Yuuuuuri,” Victor whines, but he moves closer to the doors and glances out at the dark restaurant.

It lasts until Yuuri starts frying and has to take off his sweater. He turns to look at Victor, only to find that Victor’s staring at him.

“You’re supposed to be standing watch!”

“I am, I’m standing here, watching you,” Victor beams, inordinately pleased with himself.

“Victor.”

“Yuuri.”

“Are you going to pretend you don’t speak English again?” The rice is done, Yuuri sets it aside into two bowls that are probably as expensive as his cancelled plane ticket.

“If it means I get to keep doing what I’m doing, then absolutely,” Victor says, shameless.

When the food is done, they sit together, thighs touching, on the floor of the kitchen, Victor looking between the finished bowl of katsudon and Yuuri—who is staring at Victor, waiting with bated breath for his opinion.

“Vkusno!” Victor all but yells, far too loud for the present circumstances.

(Yuuri, flushed with pleasure, doesn’t have the heart to chastise him.)

Victor doesn’t stop stealing katsudon flavored kisses on the all too fast elevator ride up to their room.
He wraps himself around Yuuri’s back, solid warmth pressed against warmth.

They walk like that to the bathroom—Victor’s inordinately pleased at the lack of a token protest from Yuuri. They brush their teeth next to one another and it’s every domestic fantasy Victor’s had in the last three months realized.

Yuuri changes into his pajamas, digging them out of his suitcase turning his back towards Victor even though he literally took his shirt off at the bar a couple of hours ago.

When he turns around, Victor flushes, smile stretching across his face.

“What?” Yuuri asks, before looking down, “oh my god, I’m going to kill Phichit.”

Yuuri’s shirt says, “number one Victor Nikiforov Trash,” in glittery pink letters. (Phichit gave it to him as a birthday gift last year.)

“I’m a little jealous,” Victor pouts, completely skirting the horrified reaction Yuuri’d expected.

“You want a shirt claiming you’re your own number one fan?” Yuuri all but flees towards the bed.

“No, I want a shirt claiming I’m yours.”

“Oh,” Yuuri doesn’t know what to say to that, so he slips under the covers, biting his lip as he holds the other side up as an invitation for Victor to join him.

Victor slides in beside him, nestling up against Yuuri’s back and wrapping an arm around Yuuri’s waist.

“Okay?” The question is so quiet Yuuri might have thought he’d imagined it, except that Victor’s hand hovers just above his body, waiting for permission.

“Okay.”

And that’s all the permission Victor needs to press himself even closer.

Yuuri stares off into the corner of the bedroom, where a pile of glow in the dark condoms lightings up the room like the plastic stars Phichit had stuck on the ceiling of their room in Detroit.

He’s been pushing it down all day, tempering his expectations, reminding himself that he’s just one in a long line of who-knows-how-many.

But still.

Here, in an absurdly expensive hotel room on umpteen-million thread count sheets, room softly lit by a stash of unused glow in the dark condoms, Yuuri can’t help but think that Victor’s arms feel more like home than Detroit ever did.

Chapter End Notes

thank you to:

+meg <3
Also credit to one of my favorite fics of all time, counterheist's edit sober which has the dialogue tag "Victor definitely lies" and I needed it for this dinner scene.

Things I researched for this chapter:
+ Victor and Yuuri's room
+ Le Cinq's menu
+ The path they would take from the four seasons to Le Cavern
+ Paris's Grand Palais
+ Place de la Concorde
+ Jardin des Tuileries
+ The Louvre
+ Where all the McDonalds in Paris are
+ Is there a Postmates in France
+ Pont Neuf
+ So so many pictures of Pont Neuf
+ Le Cavern the cave bar they go to

This chapter required SO MUCH research. Fun fact: the one paragraph where they walk along the Seine took an hour. I did this to myself.

Other things:
+ Yuuri's dance is a reference to this scene in Funny Face because I love that movie and am self indulgent trash
+ Catch the Archer reference! (I'm so sorry I made you Krieger, Victor)
+ They don't actually allow you to add locks at Pont Neuf anymore but romantic! Artistic license! Victor not giving a fuck and doing it anyways!
+ Why doesn't anyone stop them when they break into Le Cinq? Who cares it's fiction!

See you next level when they FINALLY get on the train. I promise.

I'm gonna go get some vodka now.
what comes after this, momentary bliss

Chapter Summary

Paris to Essen. The bubble bursts.

Chapter Notes

title from Beach House's "Myth." eight drafts of this later and here we are. lianne to me about this this chapter: GET IN THE FUCKING TRAIN YUURI. #relate

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Dawn is one of Victor’s favorite times of the day once he emerges from that strange liminal space between sleep and the toll of his alarm. Today, Victor’s already awake. He’s watching the flutter of Yuuri’s eyelashes against his cheek, the steady rise and fall of his chest, the slight shift in his shoulders as he snuggles deeper into the pillows.

At exactly six thirty am, his and Yuuri's alarms both erupt in a shrill chorus of conflicting ringtones. Yuuri begins to stir and the stillness shatters. Victor desperately wants to see Yuuri skate but he needs to stay in this hotel room. Stranded in the early morning Paris light he can pretend he’s utterly certain he’ll be part of Yuuri’s life forever.

“Yuuri?”

"Burn it," Yuuri mutters, turning over, out of Victor's embrace, and onto his stomach. Victor scoots closer, caging Yuuri in his arms. Yuuri smells like the leftover traces of Victor’s cologne.

Adorable. “Burn the sun?”

Yuuri’s response is garbled since his face is still pressed into the pillow. “Not hard.”

"Five more minutes then?” Victor whispers against the back of Yuuri's neck. He snatches his phone from the nearest nightstand, presses the snooze button and snaps a quick photo. It’s habit for Victor to immediately open his Instagram after taking a picture. This time he locks his phone immediately. He doesn’t want to share this moment with anyone.

"Train. McDonald’s. Coffee.” Victor's inordinately proud that he manages to string those syllables into a barebones map of Yuuri's thought process.

"We can do all of those things." Victor only wants to do one of those—coffee. Preferably in a cute Parisian cafe where they can play footsie under the table.

Yuuri huffs and starts to stir, staggering out of bed. “What idiot invented mornings?” Victor’s acutely aware of the empty space in his arms as Yuuri stumbles towards the bathroom. He reaches over to turn off the alarm on his phone all together; the screen is filled with a barrage of notifications Victor plans on ignoring.
Yuuri grumbles out something that sounds like "shower" before disappearing into the bathroom—for the given value of "disappear" when one of the main walls of the bathroom is more transparent than Victor's intentions. He darts a hopeful look at the bathroom—maybe next time. If Yuuri wanted Victor to join him in the shower, he would have asked. Victor wishes he’d asked.

Victor ignores all of the text messages and opens his email. There are the usual seven from Yakov, asking why he's put his phone on Do Not Disturb. Victor will blatantly lie and tell Yakov it's to save data.

Yuri's been even more persistent, but Victor's seen the posters of Yuuri that Yuri tries to hide inside his locker at Yubileyny so there's no question about his true motives. He expects at least ninety percent of Yuri's texts are insult Mad Libs. Victor admires his creativity, but he only wants to think about one Yuuri right now.

It's hard—in multiple senses of the word—to distract himself from the fact that the absolute love of his life is showering naked without him. He skims through his emails. Someone's responded to his post on the Katsuki Yuuri fan forums. Oh and there are new comments on from ao3.

He only reads the first sentence before his phone vibrates in his palm. Yakov's angry scowl and gleaming forehead greet him, pressed far too close the screen.

"Yakov!" Victor pitches his voice in his "dealing with the press" register. He knows that Yakov won't fall for it. Still, he pretends for a moment that using it will convince Yakov that Victor’s serious about this year’s Worlds at all.

Hint: he’s not.

"Vitya, you had better not have just woken up."

Yakov's never felt the need to start a conversation with a greeting. Usually, Victor respects that; right now he just wishes he had more time to stall. He considers juggling for a moment. But there's no way he could do that while keeping the front facing camera of his phone glued to his face. And he has no idea how to juggle anything but press questions.

To one side of the room, there’s the sheet of glass separating the bathroom from the bedroom, slightly fogged with steam, but still at least ninety percent transparent; to the other, their haphazardly flung bags and clothing confettiied all over the floor, including Yuuri’s team Japan jacket. Victor wants to steal it and wear it every day.

"Yakov, I’m offended. I didn’t just wake up—I’ve been awake for three whole minutes!" Yakov had heard their conversation in the airport about bed sharing, but Victor prefers letting Yakov use his imagination. Victor shoves the screen unbearably close to his own forehead—the things he sacrifices for love—hoping it’s enough to block Yakov’s view of the the hotel room.

"Vitya, what are you even doing?"

Victor’s distracted. The sheets still smell like Yuuri. He wonders if the Four Seasons would just charge his account for stolen sheets. It would be worth it. Victor sneaks a look offscreen at the shower. Can he stuff the sheets in his suitcase before Yuuri gets out of the shower without Yuuri noticing?

"Vitya!"

"Just getting ready to go on the train, ha!" It’s more of an exhalation than an actual laugh. Victor can hear the faint echo of surprisingly melodic singing pinging through the glass divider to the bathroom.
“Vitya, is Katsuki there with you?” Victor opens his mouth to reply—he’s not entirely sure what his mouth intends on saying, since his brain certainly hasn’t figured it out yet—but Yakov’s face is shoved sideways by a flurry of bright blonde hair.

“Are you coming or not?” Yuri asks, spitting the words like they’re the last round of ammunition in a paintball match.

“Yuri, I’m offended you even think you need to ask!” Victor places a hand across his chest in a well practiced pose of mock-offense; he feels like a model hired for a life drawing class.

“And I’m offended that you seriously think any of us is blind to your bullshit anymore. Or your forehead glare. Cover that shit or one of us will actually go blind.” Yuri’s self satisfaction means he just looks less constipated with anger than usual.

Victor shields his forehead with the palm of his hand as he eyes the terrace on the other side of the room. If he can make it over there in time, no one needs to know with absolute certainty that he’s sharing a room with Yuuri. He wants to keep this to himself. As soon as he lets reality intrude it might be the long months after Sochi all over again.

“Why didn’t you just call me?”

“Because you pay me to make sure you don’t show up to a competition with your arm in a sling, and one of us still takes their job seriously.”

Victor’s eyes flick towards the bathroom. The water’s stopped running. “Yakov, I’m disturbed by your lack of faith! I could easily still get silver with a broken arm.”

“And there wouldn’t be a need for either of us to think about you with a broken arm if you’d just rescheduled your meeting with Prada.”

“I’m the face of their brand. I’d just make an ass of myself if I tried to change at the last minute.”

“And you will make a bigger ass of yourself if you don’t show up at Worlds while talking a competitor into doing the same. This might be your last year.” It hits Victor that if he retires, and Yuuri slips away again, he has no guarantee of another reunion.

Victor opens his mouth to respond but of course, Yuuri chooses that exact moment to emerge from the shower. He’s steamed pink, the Birth of Venus with only a towel slung around his waist.

“Victor?”

“Vitya, is Katsuki there?” Victor hurriedly angles the camera away from Yuuri. And directly facing a mirror.

“Nope! All alone!”

“Vitya, I can see him.”

“See who?”

Yakov ignores him and switches to English. “Katsuki, make sure Victor gets on the train.” Yakov’s snarl almost startles Yuuri into dropping his towel. Pity. That certainly would have improved Victor’s morning—and life in general.

Yuuri just grunts and nods before turning around and digging through his luggage. Yakov eyes
Yuuri as he tries to decide if Yuuri’s mocking him.

“Alright Yakov, we have to go get ready, otherwise we’ll miss the train!”

Yuuri looks at him, brows draw together, but he doesn’t say anything. Victor’s not sure if he wishes that he would. He pastes on his best press smile—it’s okay for now, he’ll just wash it off in the shower anyways.

"Are you going to wear that shirt on the train?" Victor pulls back and casts an amused glance at Yuuri's "Number One Victor Trash," t-shirt. So cute. "Because if you are, I need to get a matching one." He's already looked at rush shipping costs for custom shirt orders.

"Just go shower," Yuuri grumbles, placing a hand in the center of his chest and pushing him in the direction of the bathroom.

Victor heads to the shower, loathe to wash Yuuri’s touch from his skin. Under the scalding hot water, Victor can’t shake the sense that something’s dissolving just as it’d begun. If they leave Paris, there might not be a “them” at all.

Title: making the most of the night

Author: katsukiyuuristrophyhusband

Category: Figure Skating RPF

Paring: Katsuki Yuuri/ Victor Nikiforov

Rating: Mature

Tags: Rare Pair On Ice Exchange 2016, Alternate Universe- Canon Divergence, Sochi Grand Prix Finals, Pole Dancing, you’ve never seen moves like this before, Smitten Victor Nikiforov, Eros Katsuki Yuuri

Summary: Yuuri Katsuki takes sixth place in the Grand Prix Final, but First Place in Victor Nikiforov's heart. Or: the day after the Sochi Grand Prix Final’s Banquet goes a little differently.

Chapters: 3/?

comments:

vile-bodies: this is rly OOC, have u ever even *watched* an interview with katsuki, he'd never pole dance. also victophe 5ever fite me.

atruthuniversallyacknowledged: this is what happens when u ship a rare pair dude, you get lots of bad characterization, it's like this writer has never watch either of their interviews. try some victophe fic and then maybe do a re-write

katsukiyuuristrophyhusband: EXCUSE ME. I SAID NO CONCRIT.

katsukifan1: worst 20 minutes of my life
 ain’t no party like a chuchu party: omg this was GENIUS. I have it on good authority that pole dancing is yuuri’s specialty ;)

Title: what about us?

Author: 2bootylicious

Category: Figure Skating RPF

Pairing: Victor Nikiforov/ Christophe Giacometti

Rating: Explicit

Additional Tags: Secret relationship, Alternate Universe- Coffee Shops and Cafes, Alternate Universe- College/University, Aged Down Character(s), Victor with a K, give me long haired vitya or give me death, Explicit Sexual Content

Chapters: 20/20

Summary : Victor and Chris are in rival frats and in Love (yes with a capital "L" you dorks). But no one can know.

comments :

gia-come-etti: HOT HOT HOT. loving the characterization, and u just get the victophe dynamic like no one else. bless u

victophe5ever: you did it again and i am dead. my skin is watered, my crops are clear, my family was abducted by aliens so i can throw wild house parties without their dumb complaints.

Yuuri’s bad at this. He's bad at staying, and his college experience is littered with an entire encyclopedia of examples.

A few months after Phichit started training with Celestino, he'd gone to get coffee with Yuuri. Yuuri had ended up cornered by an overeager photography student who'd used his last class assignment to approach Yuuri in the center of the campus quad.

"Yuuri," Phichit asked, "Why did he think you were on the equestrian team?"

Yuuri had muttered something about having a common face before sacrificing one sort of dignity for another and distracting Phichit with a selfie. Yuuri’d sighed, relieved he’d managed to dodge Phichit’s question. That was supposed to be the end of it.

It wasn’t.

Two weeks later Yuuri was trapped in Spill the Beans by a tall blonde physics major who wanted to know how his first fencing match of the season went. A week after that was the Literary Theory TA asking him about the date of the curling team’s next match. And only two days after that an Economics major attempted to put already washed, dried, and folded clothes back into the washing machine when he saw Yuuri was doing his laundry—just so he could inquire whether the skeet shooting team would let people sit in on their practices.
It took fifteen minutes of intensely focused sock-folding for Yuuri to realize that he didn’t even know if Wayne State had a skeet shooting team.

(They don’t.)

"Yuuri, do you just pick sports at random or do you have a list in the notes on your phone?" Phichit asked the morning after Yuuri literally stole an entire drawer of clothes tied together a makeshift rope and rappelled out of a third story window after he told a member of the school's Diving team that he was on the Diving team.

"Um, I hooked up with someone on the competitive improv team and he just said to say 'yes and...’ so I kind of...ran with it?" Yuuri stared at the unholy combination of coffee, Rockstar, chocolate covered expresso beans, and five hour energy he’d mad scientist'ed into existence in honor of midterms with the look of a man who’s Seen Things, and then has immediately chosen to repress them for the rest of his life.

“Someone guessed you were a competitive skeet shooter and you just said 'yes and...?'"

"No, that was the time I pretended I was too drunk to remember English."

"Yuuri, you did that last week, too."

They had been walking through the main campus quad, Yuuri taking huge gulps of his drink as they made their way to the rink for afternoon practice.

“I have other strategies.”

“Such as?”

Yuuri scanned his surroundings, keeping an eye out for past hook-ups. They’re like fedoras at this point—annoying and everywhere. "You'd be surprised how effective leveraging American’s racism and puritanical heritage against them is for escaping awkward sexual encounters."

"That's incredibly specific."

"It's also incredibly awkward so I thought it would be fitting." Stephan, last weekend’s dalliance, waves. Yuuri pointedly stares at Phichit’s face, refusing to make eye contact. He needs to focus on rehearsing for Skate Canada. Yuuri keeps walking.

"Why don't you just tell them you're a skater?"

"Then they'd know where to find me and that'd just be awkward."

"You'd rather fake your way through a twenty minute conversation about croquet?"

So Yuuri's never done this before. He's never lingered for the mess of the morning after hooking up with someone—he’s never wanted to.

But now, Yuuri's navigating the oh-no-it's-the-morning-after swamp with Victor Fucking Nikiforov. I don’t want to be anywhere else, Yuuri thinks. He doesn’t bother averting his eyes as Victor strides across the room, completely naked, to pull out a clean set of clothes out of his suitcase. Yuuri’s imagined Victor naked—out of strategically posed Body Issue photographs—for years. Though after dinner last night he’s seen the less strategically posed outtakes.

They’re nothing compared to the flesh and blood reality.
Victor’s hips and legs are spotted with bruises. His, feet, cut and callused, are slathered in what must be antiseptic. And there’s a smatter of freckles constellationed across his chest. Yuuri’s never seen them before; they’d always been airbrushed out.

Or the way Victor had looked when Yuuri’d just stepped out of the shower—the dreadful disarray of his hair, all the fine silver strands swathed in static and sleep, smiling like Yuuri was the only person he wanted to see.

This is and isn’t the same Victor Nikiforov who’d beamed out at him from the walls of his childhood and college bedrooms. Or the toothpaste ad in his suitcase Yuuri had accidentally unearthed while riffling through his clothes. This is the Victor Nikiforov—no, Victor—who looks at said toothpaste ad, mouths a silent "so cute" to himself and ushers Yuuri into the bathroom. He’s still shirtless, and his arm is wrapped around Yuuri’s waist.

On his way to the sink, Yuuri notices there's still an entire stack of plush, neatly folded towels under the sink and next to the marble tub.

They stand side by side at the dual vanities. Yuuri brushes his teeth while Victor pulls out Sephora's entire skincare department. His tooth brush hangs limp in his mouth, toothpaste pooling at the corner, as he watches Victor pat—not rub—various serums and creams into his skin. Yuuri doesn't get an exact count but it's definitely more than twelve steps. It reminds him of applying his own make-up before a competition. Yuuri’s distantly reminded of his life size Victor Nikiforov cardboard cutout.

Victor probably does this every day. This slice of time makes Yuuri wish he were always here, another interlocking step of Victor’s routine. But this whole day and a half is outside of Victor’s normal reality. When things snap back into place, they’ll do so without making room for Yuuri. He’s just a momentary distraction.

Victor switches to brushing his teeth. He opens a tube of some strange, organic brand of toothpaste. Yuuri stares, his own toothpaste trailing down his chin while Victor pulls out a cordless water pick and starts flossing. The toothpaste starts drying on Yuuri's face.

He rinses it away with water and by the time he's resurfaced, Victor's applying mascara. Because apparently Victor Nikiforov wears mascara. Victor's mouth falls open as he wriggles the applicator through his fine blonde lashes. Yuuri's transfixed, frozen, until Victor finishes and leans over, and places a peppermint kiss at the corner of Yuuri's mouth. He turns his head at the last moment so that their lips meet.

As much as Yuuri tries, he can’t remain in the moment. Part of him catalogues, categorizes, captures as much of the sensation of Victor’s lips against his. The rest calculates how much of Victor’s time he has left.

"Almost ready?" No.

"I'm not the one with a twelve step skin care routine."

Victor taps his lips. "I seem to recall that we finished getting ready at the same time. Besides, I've got a surprise for you!"

_________________________

He refuses to tell Yuuri what that surprise is as they pack up the rest of their things and take the elevator down to the lobby.

“Where are we going?”
“It’s a surprise!” Victor looks entirely too awake for someone running on the same four hours of sleep as Yuuri.

Yuuri mutters something even he’s not sure are words. He’s not awake right now and he resents the universe for trying to make him pretend he is. He needs caffeine. And sleep. But mostly caffeine.

“Yuuuuuuuri,” Victor darts a look at Yuuri from underneath his eyelashes, he looks—nervous? “If we don’t leave the hotel now, we won’t have time!”

“We could have order room service and stayed in bed.”

“Are you saying you want to get me back into bed?” Yuuri tries to catch Victor’s expression but Victor turns away, avoiding meeting Yuuri’s eyes. The bellhop tows their bags out onto the street.

“I already had you in bed. And you ruined it.”

“I can easily arrange an encore,” Victor smiles as a cab pulls up to the curb. Yuuri desperately tries not to read too much into it.

They duck into the cab and Victor arranges them so that their thighs are pressed together.

When they arrive at Gare du Nord, Yuuri stares at the green awning, grey slate walls and familiar golden arches in disbelief.

"Seriously?"

"I promised you we'd get McDonald’s." Victor’s far more enthusiastic about securing Yuuri McDonald’s than he is about actually getting to Worlds.

“You did?” Yuuri’s remembers more about the press of Victor’s lips against his than any promises about food. Victor should be flattered. It takes a lot to tear Yuuri’s mind away from carbs.

“I did. I'm hurt you didn't think I'd keep my promise.” Victor slaps their driver god knows how many euros, bribing him into double parking his car and lugging all eight of Victor's suitcases behind him into the stainless steel, oil splattered kitchen of the Gare du Nord McDonald’s.

"I've never eaten here," Victor admits, scanning the menu. Yuuri doesn't bother to look. He'll get the macarons and then his usual. “Any recommendations?"

"You're asking for me to order for you at McDonald’s.” Yuuri raises an eyebrow.

"Well," Victor flutters his eyelashes but it looks more like he's got a piece of lint stuck in his eye.

(Victor Nikiforov wears mascara. This is something Yuuri knows now. Yuuri saw him put it on this morning. It’s burned into his brain for the rest of time. He imagines it’s the sort of tidbit some interviewer will find fascinating years in the future, when his and Victor’s lives have diverged for good.

And Yuuri is as alone as he’s always been.)

"I'm more than happy to let you order me around later, but since I ordered food for us last night, it's only fair we make this an equal exchange." Victor looks as excited about this idea as a mid twenty something who's finally mastered a new piece of internet-speak and keeps overusing it in their desire to prove that they get it.

“Have you ever gone for the four ‘f’?”
"Yuuri, I'm offended," Victor clasps a hand to his chest, "I thought you were a fan." Yuuri sneaks a look at his face. Victor actually looks upset.

"I didn't mean a quad flip. McDonald's is my signature move. You'll see." Yuuri pointedly doesn’t mention that he’s been practicing the flip since he won Nationals, hoping he’d finally get Victor to notice him.

(Maybe if he lands it at Worlds…)

Victor looks absolutely delighted as they head through the front doors. Yuuri zeros in on a display case of muffins, pastries, macarons, and cakes. They definitely don’t have those in the US. Yuuri’s never ordered from behind the counter before, but he's also never eaten McDonald’s with Victor Nikiforov.

He turns to Victor, relaying their order "a box of macarons, two filets of fish, two orders of fries, two s’mores frappes, and two flurries."

"The four 'f'," Victor breathes.

They’re camped out in the kitchen, amongst the grease-splattered steel. Only Victor Nikiforov would insist they eat in the kitchen of a French McDonald’s while sitting on a pile of $100,000 Louis Vuitton luggage to “remain inconspicuous,” while hand feeding Yuuri bites of Le Filet-o-Fish.

The four "f"s disappear in a flurry of wrappers and grease linked off of fingers. Victor pointedly ignores the way that the employees send them a constant barrage of curious looks but insists on yet another selfie. Yuuri’s extremely aware of the way all of their eyes linger on Victor. It figures. The universe is already bending back into its natural shape.

“You owe me a lot of commemorative photos, Yuuri." And Yuuri, exhausted, and unwilling to argue about whatever unflagging picture of him is sure to show up on Victor's Instagram, just lets him take the photo. When this is over, at least have the pictures.

Victor’s not looking where they’re going when they make their way out of the restaurant’s service entrance. Instead, he’s watching Yuuri combine his frappe with his McFlurry and half a bottle of hot sauce like he's painstakingly custom mixing a new shade of paint.

"Is that..good?" Victor asks, the McDonald's employee he bribed dragging their luggage behind them as they shuffle down Rue Dunkerque to the Boulevard de Denain and into Gare du Nord proper. Victor pauses at the entrance before shuffling inside.

Yuuri shrugs. "It's an acquired taste." He pauses, then turns to face Victor among the white pilasters with jewel toned letters indicating where each track is. "Sort of like caviar." Yuuri shudders, "except caviar is disgusting."

A tinny, slightly distorted female voice erupts from the hidden speakers all over the train terminal. Victor frowns. It looks unnatural to Yuuri, after years of staring at Victor’s celluloid smiles.

"What's wrong?"

"Oh. Our train is here."

“Which platform?”
Victor ignores the question. “We don’t have to go, you know,” he says, fiddling with one of the matching hot pink tags on his luggage.

“Excuse me?”

“To Malmö,” Victor glances up, but doesn’t meet Yuuri’s eyes. “We don’t have to go to Malmö.”

"You don't want to defend your title?"

Yuuri doesn't mention that he wants a chance to redeem himself. To skate against Victor as an equal rather than the grieving mess who'd imploded so spectacularly in Sochi. Yuuri's still wonders how he didn't leave a physical crater on the ice.

Victor lets out an incredibly unconvincing chuckle. It sounds more like he’s been kicked in the diaphragm than an actual indication of amusement.

"I guess you're right." He pulls his phone out of his pocket and frowns at the screen.

“Victor?” Yuuri’s never seen someone look so unhappy about the prospect of a guaranteed gold medal. He’s never seen that expression on Victor’s face at all.

"We should get going."

The walk over to the platform is devoid of conversation, the chatter of strangers streaming through the station papers over the silence. For now. Victor finds someone to stow their bags and they settle into the plush red seats next to one another. The train hasn't even pulled away from the platform when Victor lets out a yawn that wouldn't fool a cat.

"I'm going to take a nap, wake me before we get to Germany?"

Yuuri frowns; he recognizes an avoidance tactic when he sees one. After all, he wrote the handbook, then edited the first through seventh editions. "Of course."

He decides to follow Victor’s example, set his phone to airplane mode, and get some sleep.

_________________________

just peachy [6: 32 am]: YUURI!!!!!!!!!!!! HAVE!!!!!!!!!! YOU!!!!!!! SEEN !!!!!!!THIS. YOU'RE NEWS

just peachy [6: 32 am]: YUURI I AM NOT GIVING UP UNTIL YOU'VE ANSWERED ME


just peachy [7:19 am]: you are on your way to worlds right?

just peachy [7:21 am]: yuuri pls my family is starving.

just peachy [7:22 am] i mean that's a lie since there are only about a million photos (underestimate) of you and victor on the internet so there's plenty to quench my thirst but tbh the real question of the day is,.....did victor quench *your* thirst ( kaldırılmış)

just peachy [10: 41]: yuuri i know you're ignoring me
just peachy [10:49]: or was the sex so good you died

just peachy [11:32]: that's pretty much the only excuse i would accept

just peachy [12:51] don’t play coy with me yuuri. i know all. you should see this btw.
iceskatersrus.tumblr.com/post/19034814/does-victor-nikiforov-is-gay

_________________________

ice-skaters r us:

spotted: victor nikiforov romancing katsuki yuuri on a night out paris.

u guys will not believe this but whatever cause pics or it didn’t happen. i’m telling u there’s a new ship in the rpf sphere and you know that all those rare pair shippers are cackling at their office computers as they use whatever proxies they need to to get around their bosses’ firewalls while they try to pick the fatty bits out of their barbacoa burritos from chipotle. don’t pretend like u don’t. i see u.

ANYWAYS, on to the pics because that’s why ur all here.

LOOK

AT

THESE

[photo of Victor staring at Yuuri’s ass as Yuuri lugs two Louis Vuitton suitcases into the Four Seasons]

[photo of Victor and Yuuri eating at Le Cinq, Victor’s fork is in Yuuri’s mouth]

[a very dark and blurry photo of Victor and Yuuri tangoing in a the cave of Le Cavern, lights reflecting off of Victor’s hair, Yuuri’s face stretched into a broad smile]

tell me these two r not in love. I dare u. fite me. i think we got a new monolith pair in the rpf sphere. katsukiforov? nikisuki? Yuutor?

replies :

ice tigre of prussia: NOTP

katsukiforov: GETTING IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THIS PAIRING

applepiefatale: ugh, hard pass. katsuki is too good for nikiforov

chiggity-check-urself : @applepiefatale EXCUSE YOU, why would vitya even date someone who can’t do a quad salchow?

imgonnabarthes : @chiggity-check-urself maybe you should listen 2 the wisdom of your own username. katsuki is LITERAL #boyfriendgoals. and i’m a lesbian.
Yuuri wakes up a couple hours later. Victor's still asleep, head pillowed on Yuuri's shoulder. He's left a bit of drool on Yuuri's sweater. Yuuri sighs and switches on his phone to a frantic series of alerts.

He's been ignoring it all morning. The screen was a dizzying array of text boxes when he unplugged it from the charger and Yuuri thanked his terrible vision before sticking it in his pocket. The classic ostrich maneuver. He'd rather deal with that than obsess over Victor's abrupt change in mood.

But now there's no way for him to ignore the fifty texts that Phichit's sent because he wouldn't put it past Phichit to somehow get Victor's number. Knowing Phichit, at least twenty percent of the messages are just memes of Yuuri's own face. After two minutes of looking at the angry red notifications on at least six of the apps on Yuuri's phone—some of which have been there for months—Yuuri flees to his browser.

He scrolls through the Figure Skating RPF category on his phone. He's not sure what he's looking for. While he's got his rarepair, Yuuri embraced life as a multishipper a long time ago—otherwise he would have starved for content for years. Yuuri's only slightly ashamed to say he's read multiple Popoforov fics. In his defense, he's been following that author since they wrote for the Ouran Host Club fandom. Compelling writing was compelling writing.

That was the only way he could also justify reading (and re-reading) the 300k Stephane Lambiel/Christophe Giacometti epic that was a fandom rite of passage. Every so often he even wondered who DoubleAchorny was. These days, he mostly cringed when katsukifan1 posted a new porn with plot oneshot with references to "scissoring open his asshole."

(Yuuri knows, from very intimate experience with his own (and other's) assholes, that's not how it works.)

He ends up bypassing the general RPF category for the fic he got for the rarepair on ice exchange. He’s been saving it in case Worlds goes the same way as the GPF, but he needs the distraction right now. Though he’d admit it was a little unnerving to read a story by someone with a username claiming to be his trophy husband.

**Title:** at full mast

**Author:** katsukiyuuristrophyhusband

**Rating:** Explicit

**Fandoms:** Figure Skating RPF

**Pairing:** Katsuki Yuuri/ Victor Nikiforov

**Additional Tags:** Rare Pair On Ice Exhange 2016, Alternate Universe-Pirate, Alternate Universe-Historial, Alternate Universe-Navy, Drama And Romance, Porn With Plot, Bodice Ripping, Sort of, waistcoat ripping, Mutual Pining, Enemies to Lovers, but they're not really enemies, you'll see!!!!, they're in love, soulmates
Chapters: 5/?

Word Count: 31,421

Summary: Captain Katsuki is a playboy who toys with the hearts of men!!! And yet Russian Navy Lieutenant Nikiforov cannot help but be drawn in by his considerable charms.

A/N: Check out the art I had commissioned for this fic!

[Image of a heavily stylized Victor and Yuuri, Victor is mid-swoon in Yuuri's arms with his Naval uniform ripped open down to his navel, Yuuri's hair is pushed back away from his face, a devilish smirk stretched across his lips]

Yuuri’s honestly impressed by the art. He’ll reserve judgement on the story for now. In his pocket, his phone buzzes again. He’s regretting taking it off of airplane mode but he needs data to read the fic.

"Captain Katsuki, I am a captain in the Russian Navy. Someone will come looking for me, and when they do," Victor lowered his tone as he strode towards the ravenette, eyes glinting in the moonlight, "it'll be quite the mess."

Victor quivered in anticipation. This was a game they had played together many times, trading heavy glances as they traded blows. Katsuki's mouth watering thighs were accentuated by the precisely tailored fit of his trousers, the firm swell of his buttocks sweetly caressed by the fabric.

Captain Katsuki swept his hungry gaze over the lithe lines of Victor's body, striking a burst of heat in the center of Victor's as Katsuki stalked towards his prey. "Someone will be coming alright, and I promise you it will be quite messy. But that's most of the fun."

"You scoundrel!" Victor turned his cheek sideways, Katsuki's own cheek pressed against the side of Victor's neck, breath hot against his skin.

"Really?" Katsuki sneered as he pulled his head back and tilted his hips forward in a sensual grind. He looked down at Victor's manhood, "Well then if I am a scoundrel it appears I am not the only one."

Well, it definitely wasn’t the best fic he’d ever read, but also definitely not the worst. He’d read a chair AU at one point. The bar was pretty low. And he’s thirsty for this pairing. He glances over at Victor. Still asleep. He sighs and keeps reading.

"Your footwork is sloppy," Victor said, tossing his cascade of silver hair to the side where it had fallen across one of his eyes.

"I thought you liked my style," Katsuki smirked, sword glinting in the sun as he twirled it like a baton.

"Well, Captain Katsuki, clearly you're a man who really knows how to handle a long sword." Victor
winked at his captor—though would a captor hand feed you imported chocolates and let you massage his feet? Those seemed more like the actions of a lover, the silverette pondered.

Suddenly the raven-head was upon him. "I'll show you just how talented my hands are," the raven crowed, laying his palm against the slope of the silverette's throat.

Yuuri’s interrupted by a new alert on his phone. Another text from Phichit. He doesn’t want to deal with this right now, so he escapes back to the decks of the Pleasure’s Treasure.

Victor lay stretched across the dark red silk sheets of Captain Katsuki's bedchamber hair still perfect, a single drop of sweat glistened as it made its way down the side of his cheek.

A thumb, belonging to the ravenette in bed beside him, reached up to thumb it away from his cheek. Yuuri rolled over to face him,

"Of all my many lovers, you are the only one to have stolen my greatest treasure.... my heart!"

Phichit's face pops up on his screen, the FaceTime tone echoing through the mostly quiet car. Yuuri declines the call, but sighs and finally opens his texts. As expected, he has to scroll past at least fifteen photos of his own face contorted into various pictures of surprise (Gold at Japanese Nationals a year ago) and arousal (watching Victor's program at the Grand Prix Finals a year ago, Dunkin Donuts’ Free Donut Day). At least ninety percent of these definitely originated from Phichit's Instagram.

The actual blocks of text contain an illegal amount of exclamation points and emojis. And then there were the ones from this morning. The link to the tumblr post. Oh god, he and Victor are all over the internet.

“Yuuri?” Oh great Victor’s awake, interrupting Yuuri just as he’s started to panic. At least Victor didn’t catch him reading RPF about the two of them. Though, based on Victor's reactions to the Victor-only Instagram account last night and the “Number One Victor Trash” shirt this morning, Yuuri doesn’t think Victor would mind.

“Hey.” Yuuri says. Victor looks soft, sleep mussed, and more vulnerable that Yuuri’s ever seen him. “Good sleep?”

Victor smiles, syrup sweet but a little sad. “Yeah. I had a great pillow.”

Yuuri can hear Victor’s phone vibrating in his pocket. Phichit’s still trying to FaceTime him. The tumblr post asking “why would Vitya even date someone who can’t do a quad Salchow,” is looping in his head.

A distorted voice announces in French, German and English that the train will arrive at the station in Essen, Germany in five minutes. As they disembark, Yuuri does his best to push away the creeping sense that the liminal space between Paris and Malmö, this whole surreal eighteen hours, is a bubble that’s already burst.

Chapter End Notes
NOTE: I started my last year of university in September and all my courses are writing intensive, so fic writing time is hard to come by. This fic is still very much a WIP.

EDIT: idk who'll see this but i'm updating this on Sunday! SURPRISE. Happy birthday to me.

Thank you to:

+ lianne aka doodlesonice for all the encouragement and also ANOTHER gorgeous piece of art which you can see here if, somehow, you haven't already seen it. And also the mirror bit with yakov.
+ seventhstar for beta-ing
+ meg for beta-ing
+ sixpences for brainstorming the insanity that is all the figure skaters writing RPF about themselves.
+ counterheist for the idea of "the 4f", tumblr asks that helped me summon enthusiasm to keep writing this, and for something that will appear in a later chapter ;)
+ dadvans for his amazing rants about how mlm smut is written
+ renaissance, reginar, and nagoyadelay for the cween Carly club and all the pep talks
+ my cats just because they're great

Other things:
+ filet of fish is actually called Le Filet of Fish in France which I find HILARIOUS
+ how much time did I spend looking at McDonalds? So much
+ bad rpf is purposefully terrible. It's fun.
+ they finally got on the train!
+ I'm spookyfoot on tumblr.
The train doors snap shut behind them and Yuuri tightens his grip on Victor’s hand as their first train pulls away from the station. Just over six hours, and three more trains to Malmo.

They linger on the platform for a moment, and when Yuuri glances at Victor he’s frowning down at his phone screen.

Is he looking at the post Phichit sent me? Yuuri wonders. All Yuuri can think about is some anonymous internet commenter with a raccoon icon begging Yuuri to step on them, while someone else with an icon of Makkachin wearing a photoshopped in crown spends far too long reciting a lengthy list about the virtues of Yuuri’s ankles.

“We’ve got an hour before our next train. Hungry?” Victor asks. His smile looks different in the daylight, like an advertisement photocopied one too many times.

The station is all cool greys and clean lines, like the architect watched 2001: A Space Odyssey too many times. Victor keeps holding his hand while they stand in line for sandwiches and coffee. He’s shifted closer amidst the press of people streaming past them, scrambling to get to their own trains.

“I don’t remember the last time that I took the train to a competition,” Victor says.

“Nationals in 2009,” Yuuri replies without hesitation.

“Yes, that’s—how did you know?”

Yuuri pretends not to hear that. Anything he’d say would be a mistake because brains are the Pinterest of organs: they seem like a great idea in theory, but in reality they’re a terrible mess and never help you with anything useful. So, instead, he stares at the display case, as though focusing on the glare of the station lights hitting the glaze on donuts will erase that moment from their current timeline. But it’s hard a little hard to focus. The people behind them are whispering—well, barely whispering—a low, steady hiss of what Yuuri thinks is German.

“Yuuri.”

“You mentioned it. In an interview.”
An interview that Yuuri’d paid to have translated, and then, dissatisfied with the sloppy translation he’d gotten from quadflipped87, had painstakingly re-translated himself word by word. He’d used the Japanese to Russian dictionary he’d checked out of the larger library in Fukuoka when he’d tagged along on one of Mari’s trips to the city.

(He’d pretended he needed to find a book for a school project and Mari had pretended to believe him until Yuuri gave their computer a virus.)

“Wasn’t that—”

“I used to travel by train a lot for domestic competitions. Nationals. Block rounds.”

“...”

Yuuri flushes. “You know, local qualifying competitions,” he says.

The two women ahead of them leave with their food and Yuuri conveniently makes his escape by stepping up to the register.

“I’ll pay.”

“You don’t have to,” Victor protests, but the tip of his nose is flushed, and a small smile curls the corners of his mouth.

The whispering gets louder. Yuuri refuses to react; instead he slides his card into the chip reader and nearly jumps out of his skin when Victor leans over to press a soft kiss to his cheek. It’s so fleeting that Yuuri whips his head around to make sure it actually happened—and almost collides with Victor.

“What was that for?”

“To say thank you.” Victor’s answering smile is bright enough to burn through the pale photocopied version from a few minutes ago. And then he slides closer like Yuuri didn’t almost accidentally turn his own head into a weapon.

From behind, Yuuri hears the two young men hiss, “Victor,” and beside him Victor’s shoulders tense. He tilts his head and sees Victor’s smile unfurl into something a little more toothy and a lot more plastic. Victor keeps his eyes on the menu board, scanning the options even though they’ve already ordered.

When one of them taps Victor on the shoulder, Yuuri turns instead.

“Do you need something?” Yuuri asks, loudly. In English.

From the corner of his eye Yuuri can tell that Victor’s too shocked to say anything. Is that good? Is that bad? Victor likes surprises, right? But Yuuri has tunnel vision and it’s centered on the two young men behind them, one of whom is already holding out a magazine.

“Can we get an autograph?” the taller one asks. He has sandy hair that falls over one of his eyes like he’d asked a second rate stylist to give him a decent facsimile of Victor’s haircut and all they’d succeeded at doing was making his hair into an eyepatch. Eyepatch Hair’s friend stares though Yuuri as though he were cellophane. His hair is almost as light as Victor’s but obviously bleached that color.

(Yuuri’s always, perhaps irrationally, fallen on the “it’s natural” side of that particular bit of Victor
Nikiforov discourse. A few months ago, there’d been a popular social media campaign to give it its own episode of Buzzfeed Unsolved.)

They scan Victor’s body like they’re comparing it to a mental image and Yuuri, shamefully, flicks through his mental rolodex of Victor’s photo shoots. Definitely one with visible abs. Which leaves at least sixty percent of them as fair game. So.

Yuuri shakes his head, bites his lip, and steps in front of Victor, just a little.

“Sorry, we had a late night,” he says, leaning back against Victor’s chest.

When Victor slides his hand free from Yuuri’s, Yuuri panics, like he’s just stepped out onto the ice without skates. But Victor’s arm re-settles around his waist, and the broad expanse of his chest is warm against Yuuri’s back. A conflicted look flashes across Eyepatch Hair’s face.

“Were you on a shoot?”

“Actually we’re on our way to the World Championships of Figure Skating. Where Victor’s defending his four consecutive gold medals.” Yuuri leaves the a real Nikiforov fan would know that unspoken. Victor’s always nice to his fans. The least Yuuri can do is leave some plausible deniability.

(And it’s true, Yuuri’s been an often shameful beneficiary of Victor’s various photoshoots throughout the years. And Victor’d even mentioned the outtakes from his ESPN Body Issue spread at dinner last night. But any person with eyes can appreciate Victor’s ass—even if they’ve chosen a haircut that leaves them half blind. It takes a true fan to appreciate the way he moves on the ice, the way even the arch of his back as he glides into a spread eagle tells a story, the way he gives every facet of himself for the sake of his art.)

“Yuuri,” Victor says from behind him, just loud enough that only Yuuri can hear. Victor’s arm goes slack where it’s wrapped around Yuuri’s waist and Yuuri feels all the blood drain from his face.

Victor reaches out to take Eyepatch Hair’s magazine. Yuuri’s waist feels cold, all the heat from Victor’s body already leeched away by the cool afternoon air.

“Thank you for your support,” Victor says. His accent blurs the first “th,” but by the end of the sentence, his voice like the surface of a stone worn smooth by water. When Victor’s pen moves over the paper, fluid and practiced; another program he’s perfected over the years.

Yuuri twists away when the employee, angel in bright yellow polyester, calls out their order from the counter. “Victor, our food’s ready,” Yuuri says.

“It was nice to meet you,” Victor says.

“We could eat with you?” Eyepatch Hair asks.

“We should really get to our train platform,” Yuuri says. “We don’t have long.”

And it’s worth it that Yuuri has to wait to eat until they’re camped out on an uncomfortable plastic bench just to the left of the track, because they get to be alone.

mamma gia: victor
mamma gia: stop leaving me on read

mamma gia: if you don’t want people to know you’ve read their messages maybe you should turn off read receipts

mamma gia: you turned them on for yuuri, didn’t you?

mamma gia: speaking of…

mamma gia: inquiring minds need to know. in bed: better than his pole dancing?

to the victor go the spoils: a gentleman never kisses and tells

to the victor go the spoils: also, six texts? really?

mamma gia: i wasn’t asking about kissing. kisses are the sprinkles on a fuck-me sundae.

mamma gia: look as much as you try, you don’t have the market cornered on t h i r s t y

to the victor go the spoils: then i don’t think you’re doing it right

mamma gia: blocked. meet me in the pit.

mamma gia: but if Yuuri fucked you too hard to give me an honest challenge I have a right to know

mamma gia: see?? you?? tomorrow??

mamma gia: V I C T O R

_______________________________________________

When the next train arrives Yuuri settles in near the window again, but he raises the arm rest, quietly inviting Victor to share his space. The train jerks to life, the hum of the other passengers is soothing, a quiet background of white noise that fills the car.

And it stays that way, Victor settled in at Yuuri’s side, feeling the heat of Yuuri's thigh bleed into Victor’s own where they’re pressed together, occasionally leaning closer and peer out the window at the passing countryside.

Then Victor’s phone rings, Yakov’s dedicated ringtone—the 1812 Overture. In the quiet of the car, it sounds deafeningly loud. Victor puts on his best camera ready smile—it feels brittle at the corners.

Victor takes the call; Yakov launches right in without a greeting. Victor gets up and shoots Yuuri an exaggerated grimace before moving two rows down to a set of empty seats. “Katya rescheduled your interview with Esquire for tomorrow morning. They’ll meet you in the hotel restaurant at eight, which means if you’re late to the rink at nine, you can’t say you missed your alarm.”

“Yakov,” Victor whines. He wanted to have breakfast with Yuuri. His eyes flick across the way to where Yuuri’s reading something on his phone.

“—After practice, you have your Sports Illustrated interview. Katya sent you the questions.”

Victor’s sure she already vetoed all the ones about retiring. Yakov keeps talking; Victor stops
listening. His itinerary has a glaring omission—Yuuri.

“Is there another rink time available?” If he can get on the ice when Yuuri’s practicing.

“No.”

“Surely they can find another time—“

“Actions have consequences, Vitya,” Yakov snaps. “You’re missing a full day of press and practice and it comes with a price.”

And then he hangs up.

Yuuri tries not to listen in on Victor’s conversation. But—Yuuri also has a shameful minor in Russian Language and Literature and Yakov Feltsman has coached Victor to over thirty gold medals and he’s never done so quietly. He’s true to form even seven hundred kilometers away. When Victor returns, his smile looks brittle and worn. Yuuri doesn’t say anything, but he watches closely as Victor’s expression melts into something softer, less practiced.

And then Yuuri’s phone rings. He can’t answer his phone because god knows who it’ll be, but he can’t exactly just let it ring because, well, his ringtone is as much of a mess as he is.

“My milkshake brings all the boys to the yard.” The train car is too crowded for this sort of humiliation.

(Then again, even if it were just him and Victor, that would still be too many witnesses.)

Victor snorts, before breaking into what has to be a laugh—though it like he’s wheezing more than anything. It has none of the practiced grace Yuuri’s seen in interviews. This Victor sounds more like a choking goose than the man who once did a commercial where he rose out of pool of vodka and smouldered a “quench your thirst,” at the camera.

(Yuuri had never lived up to that challenge. His thirst remains eternal.)

Yuuri answers his phone. There is no better option in this scenario.

“Hello?”

“Katsuki Yuuri?”

While the voice sounds vaguely familiar, Yuuri has no idea who’s calling him. He checks the screen, but the number isn’t one he’s saved. That doesn’t really mean anything though. He’s only saved a few numbers. He doesn’t have most of his rink mate’s numbers—they rarely bother to call him anyway, and even Yuuri doesn’t have enough self loathing to see the words “pity invite” flash across his screen every time one of them calls.

“Yes?”

“This is McKenzie Taylor from Herez Pilton, can you comment on your relationship with Victor Nikiforov? Any secret kinks—“

Yuuri thinks of the basket of lube, flushes, and hangs up.

“Who was that,” Victor says, smiling, not even trying to pretend he wasn’t listening in on Yuuri’s
“Shut up.”

“Rude.”

“Fine. Shut up, please.”

Victor just laughs. “I think the other Yuri—Plisetsky—would like you. Mila too.”

Yuuri thinks of a bathroom in Sochi and isn’t sure who’s been more misjudged in this scenario—Plisetsky or himself. He’s met Mila a few times and she’s always reminded him of Minako: takes no shit, can probably read your mind.

“Do you spend a lot of time with them?”

“At the rink, sure. We watch a lot of videos together.” Victor says, waving his tablet in front of Yuuri’s face. Yuuri vows not to get distracted until he notices that Victor’s been watching videos of Yuuri. Then the most pressing issue is whether to burn himself or the tablet.

Victor sets the tablet in front of them, shifting slightly, inviting Yuuri to lean into his seat. “Like this.”

Victor is blunt and sometimes he’s incredibly insulting. His advice swerves wildly between incredibly vague, and meticulously technical.

Yuuri drinks in every word.

“What were you thinking with that hand position?”

“Well…that wasn’t what I wanted to do but Celestino—”

“Celestino’s not the one skating the program.”

“Celestino believed in me even after Sochi. I trust him.”

“But do you agree with him?”

Yuuri bites his lip. He thinks about staring at his ceiling in Detroit, unable to sleep after a gruelling practice. He thinks about how they’d run though his free skate that day—again and again and again; he thinks about letting the scalding hot water from the locker room showers slide over his skin but doing little to loosen the knot of tension between his shoulders; he thinks about how after his shower, with the wet drip of his hair spreading across the back of his t-shirt like a stain, he slid on his brand new tennis shoes and felt the irrational itching sensation at the back of his neck that they were pinching his toes because they no longer fit.

“I trust him,” Yuuri says.

“Well trust me when I say that he’s not maximizing your talent, your strengths.”

“How would you even know what those are?”

“I’ve watched all of your routines.”

“Yeah. Exactly.”

_______________________________________________
On the third leg of their trip, the train ride to Copenhagen, Victor scrolls through a mountain of unanswered messages, his apps littered with angry red notifications. Yuuri’s sitting next to him, but the arm rest between their seats is down, and he’s turned towards the window, looking out at the passing countryside. The early afternoon light filters in through the window, cupping the curve of Yuuri’s cheek; Victor wants to reach out and do the same. Last night’s Yuuri would let him—banquet Yuuri would hold Victor’s hand there himself. But this morning’s Yuuri is at turns bold and bashful; quick to claim Victor as his own just moments before going skittish and shy, as though Victor were a predator stalking him through the woods, treading on an errant twig at the wrong moment and spooking him into flight.

But.

At the train station, Yuuri has stood in front of him as though Victor were the one who needed to be shielded, as though he believed there were parts of Victor he hadn’t let the public lay claim too—and more than that, as though those were the parts of him most worth protecting.

Everything happens too fast once they arrive in Copenhagen where they board their last, short train ride to Malmo. Every second takes them closer to reality bending itself back into the shape it once was, thirty minutes to and across the border. They arrive at the hotel before Victor knows it.

“We’re sorry, Mr. Katsuki,” the concierge says, staring at Yuuri just a little too closely. She has the sort of love struck gaze Victor imagines must be mirrored on his own face. Her desk is covered in loose sheets of paper and she looks like she’s been asked to make too many if-you-could-just-do-this-one-tiny-thing special accommodations in too short a period of time.

“You don’t have anything?” Yuuri asks.

“No, we’re completely booked,” she says. She looks like she’s on the verge of tears, “maybe you could stay with m—”

“Excuse me, I have a reservation under Nikiforov,” Victor says.

She hands Victor his keycards and Victor catches Yuuri’s elbow before he slips away.

“Stay with me.”

“I can’t.”

“Really? Do you have someone else—somewhere else to stay?”

“No, but I—“

“Then stay with me. I have the space.”

“Okay.”

“Yuuri, I insis—yeah?”

“Yes.”

How long does it take for something to become a routine? Victor asks himself as they stand side by side at the sinks, just like they had that morning. The truth is that when it comes to routines, all of
Victor’s have revolved around skating. This is a new dance, weaving himself through the threads of another person’s life, rather than wrapping his own so tight that he’d found himself spun into a suit of impenetrable armor.

Yuuri’s drooping from a day of travelling, eyes fluttering closed as he bangs his hip on tile as he sways against the sink. There’s undoubtedly a new bruise blooming on his hip but he’s warm against Victor’s arm as he leans against Victor’s side and allows Victor to fold him into bed.

As Victor lies in bed, Yuuri curled up within arms reach, he thinks of how Yuuri’s the first person to bring him to bed that didn’t try and make it a threesome between them, Victor, and their expectations. It takes him a while to fall asleep.

The next morning, Victor wakes up before their alarms with a weight on his chest and hair tickling his chin. He’s used to a warm weight beside him in bed, and he always misses Makkachin when he travels for competitions. Weak early morning light leaks in through a set of sheer curtains Victor doesn’t remember pulling over the window. What he does remember is how he coaxed Yuuri into bed next to him, how, unlike the night before, Yuuri left a body’s worth of space between them, how Yuuri had inched closer and closer in the safety of the dark.

If Victor closes his eyes, he can almost imagine that they’re in his apartment in St. Petersburg, in a bed that always felt too big but now feels just right.

Against his chest, Victor can feel the rise and fall of Yuuri’s breath start to pick up. Yuuri begins to stir but when a sliver of sunlight hits his eyes, he burrows into the closest available surface. Which happens to be Victor’s chest.

(Victor is *not* complaining.)

“Good morning, sleeping beauty,” Victor says. Yuuri just shakes his head. Victor can feel the vibrations from Yuuri’s voice but he can’t hear what, if anything, he’s saying. “‘What was that?’”

Yuuri looks up. His hair is a mess, sleep-mussed and shot through with static, and his eyes flutter back to closed abandoning the struggle of staying open. “Define ‘good,’” he says before laying his head back down, turning it away from the light.

“Quality. Excellent. Superb. Outstanding. Exceptiona—” Victor doesn’t get to finish because Yuuri claps a hand over his mouth.

“Stop talking,” he grumbles, shooting Victor a dirty look through half-lidded eyes. Victor, presses kiss to the palm of Yuuri’s hand before gently tugging it away from his mouth to lace their fingers together. He’s absolutely delighted. It’s been too long since one of his competitors took him off his pedestal long enough to find him annoying as a person and not just as an obstacle.

“Do you have another suggestion? I’m sure I can think of something else to keep our mouths busy.”

(He makes a mental note to tell Chris because that was an *excellent* line.)

“Yes. Wake me up when there’s breakfast,” Yuuri says, shifting off of Victor’s chest as he snags a pillow from the mostly unused side of the bed and shoves his head underneath it.

“*Yuuri,*” Victor pouts. He runs his toes up the side of one of Yuuri’s calves where their legs are still tangled. Yuuri kicks him.

Victor sighs but he’s smiling. He leans over the side of bed grabs the phone.
“Hello, room service?” He keeps his eyes on Yuuri as he puts in their order. Yuuri’s burrowed back into the blankets, but the curve of his smile is visible from beneath the pillow.

As soon as Victor’s hung up the phone, he shifts closer, moving to worm his way back under the blankets while they wait for the food to arrive. Yuuri shoves the pillow off his head, turning to stare at Victor, who preens a little under the attention.

“What are you wearing?”

It’s more like what Victor isn’t wearing. Yuuri’s soft and bedwarm—so warm that Victor’d shed his clothes throughout the night like a one night only burlesque act. By the time morning arrived, Victor’s down to his customary thong and incredibly glad he waxed before Worlds.

“This old thing?” Victor asks, fluttering his eyelashes.

(It’s new. Victor had bought it especially for this competition.)

“It. You. It’s. Your skin has a lot of surface area.”

“Thank you,” Victor says, hand twitching, his best smile spreading across his face.

(He’s not going to prod his hairline. He’s not.)

Yuuri opens his mouth. Maybe to tell Victor he wishes Victor was wearing a bodice so that he could rip it off—because that’s clearly where this conversation was going—when their phones start ringing in tandem.

Right. He has an interview.

And the short programs are this afternoon.

Victor slides out of bed to go shower while Yuuri stares at the vaulted ceiling, listening to Celestino on the phone. Celestino mentions that Morooka had pulled him aside at the rink earlier and asked for an exclusive interview. After the past two days, Yuuri’s not sure why anyone trusts him to form sentences—and why they’d want to record them.

“He said he’ll meet you in the hotel restaurant at eight,” Celestino says, snatching away the mirage that Yuuri has a choice. Fifteen minutes later he’s sitting in the hotel restaurant hoping that Morooka will magically forget what Yuuri looks like. That he’ll develop temporary amnesia and end up in a new life where he’s suddenly a florist in love with the tattoo parlor owner across the street.

Mooroka shows up early and brimming with enthusiasm. Yuuri’s distracted all through his interview, catching glimpses of silver hair across the restaurant, hoarding each of them like a magpie.

“After a strong showing at nationals, and Four Continents, how are you feeling about skating your short program later today?”

“Like I still have room to improve.”

“You finished school this year, are you making any plans for next season?”

Moving back home. Moving to Antarctica. Deleting the internet, because it was a mistake. “No, I prefer concentrating on the current one and it hasn’t ended yet.”
Across the restaurant Victor stands up from his table, catches Yuuri’s eye, and winks. Yuuri shuts down.


“Um. No comment.”

Mooroka frowns and then looks at his scrolling down further in his list of questions.

“Do you have any special surprises planned for the competition?”

If Yuuri does something surprising, it’s not going to be something he’d planned.

“I’ll let you know when I do.”

Mooroka chuckles, pauses. “Wait. When?”

Victor sees Yuuri in fragments at breakfast—the curve of an ear, the fall of his hair, the fluid line of his arm.

“Where do you see yourself in five years?”

He’d laughed and spun some coy response. That's between me and my third eye, he’d said punctuating it with a wink.

They’d finished the interview early. Victor lingers outside of the locker room, pretending that he’s not waiting for Yuuri, when a shadow falls across his phone screen.

“Thanks for waiting for me,” That Canadian Skater says in all his square jawed, fake French, artistically bankrupt glory. His arms are folded across his chest. “Did you want to follow me in so you could practice coming in second,” he acts, follows it by turning to pose, like he expects a camera to be waiting for just this moment. Like Victor’s supposed to be thrilled to bear witness.

Oh god, is that how I look when I wink? Victor thinks, trying to compartmentalize his latest minor existential crisis.

(And it’s entirely That Canadian Skater’s fault.)

When Chris shows up, Victor chokes back a sigh of relief.

“Victor, I need to tell you what I really think of your costume now that the season’s almost over,” Chris says, hooking his arm through Victor’s, and nodding at That Canadian Skater as they make their way into one of the less populated hallways.

“I demand details and also apologies for leaving me on read like a hoe.”

“I was busy,” Victor says.

“Busy or busy?”

“A lady never tells.”

“Well, good thing we’ve already established you’re a hoe,” Chris says, leaning against the wall, looking Victor up and down like he’s found something that’s out of place.
“Uncalled for.”

“Hm, well I think it was also uncalled for when you didn’t answer any of my calls or texts.”

“You should get a PCS deduction just for that pun.”

Chris ignores him. “So?”

“So what?”

“Is that the face of a man who’s been freshly fucked or freshly fucked over?” Chris asks, just as two other skaters come within earshot.

“It’s the face of a man ready to leave you in the dust during the short programs.”

"Victor."

"Fine. This morning he told me to shut up and I said 'Do you have another suggestion? I’m sure I can think of something else to keep our mouths busy.'"

"I'm so proud of you!"

"It's a great line, right?"

"No. It's a terrible line. But I'm still proud of you." Chris gives him another long look, “You know, I’ve known Yuuri since Juniors. He beat your junior world record. He’s really good.”

“I know,” Victor says, not mentioning he’d made a playlist of his favorite of Yuuri’s programs.

Chris looks unconvinced. “And what about next year?” he asks.

Victor closes his eyes and leans his head back against the wall behind him. Even with his eyes closed, he can feel Chris standing there on the other side of the hallway; waiting.

“I don’t know yet,” Victor says. It’s the truth. Part of Victor desperately wants to coach Yuuri, to spend time with him and Makkachin, to make room in his schedule for Yuuri the way he hadn’t for anyone else.

But.

This is the most excited he’s been for a competition in years. He wants to skate against Yuuri again, to see what he’d glimpsed in Yuuri’s messy but triumphant phoenix of a program at Japanese Nationals and Four Continents. To see it bloom into something more, something worthy of Yuuri’s grace.

“It would be so boring without you though, Victor. What would you even do?”

How many times has Victor asked himself that same question? How many days had he lacked an answer until Yuuri crashed into his life, tragic tie and all.

“There are other things to do besides skate,” Victor says, folding his arms across his chest.

“Yeah, and I know that. But I didn’t think you did.” Victor bristles but Chris keeps going. “I still don’t know if you really do.”

“How’s Anna?” Victor asks, changing the subject without an ounce of subtlety or regret.
Chris frowns, but responds, “an adorable brat who’s too beautiful for her own good and knows it.”

“I’ll toast to her good health, then.” Victor says. He glances at his phone screen; he needs to get on the ice. He tilts his head towards the dressing room, and Chris follows, telling Victor all of the ways his cat would take over the world if she only had thumbs.

Yuuri goes to the rink early to watch Victor’s practice. Victor marks his jumps as he runs through the routine, focusing on the flow between elements, the story he’s telling. Victor’s theme this season is identity, and his short program this year is set to a new piece he commissioned, “Narcissus.” Victor’s always treated his two programs as two halves of a whole, and this one is no different; two inverse images of isolation. As Victor finishes his short program, arm tilted towards the ground; Victor pointing at his own reflection shimmering over the ice.

Victor smiles at him as he skates off the ice and Yuuri wonders how much time he has left.

Yuuri’s practice is—adequate. He leaves the ice with a normal amount of bruises.

(He’s already decided to sneak in here tonight alone.)

No one’s waiting for him in the locker room, at least not anyone he knows. Most of them either left earlier or were scheduled for a different practice group. Victor’s not in the room when Yuuri heads in to shower and grab his costume.

When he arrives back at the rink Victor’s waiting for him in the locker room, looking like he’d slipped the rink attendant a nice tip to make sure his lighting was perfect, his hair already set and sprayed for the ice.

“Are you keeping the double flip in the second half?” He asks. “I think you should change it to a triple. You weren’t even tired after practice, you should take advantage of that stamina,” he says, like they’re still on the train, huddled together and watching skating videos on Victor’s tablet.

Yuuri’s face burns.

“You should do it. I want someone to give me a real challenge.” Victor continues, pouting.

“Don’t let Chris hear you say that.”

“Why not? He knows what his scores are, he could use the challenge too,” Victor’s tone is light, but it’s too forceful to come off as sincere. He crouches down and starts undoing the laces on Yuuri’s skates.

“What are you doing?” Yuuri hisses.

“Helping you put on your skates. You act like no one’s ever done this for you before.”

“You do this for your rink mates, too?”

“Never!” Victor says cheerfully, starting in on the other boot.

Once he’s done with his Yuuri’s boots, Victor leans back, satisfied. Victor doesn’t have his skates on yet—he’s in a later group than Yuuri.

“All good?” Victor asks.
Yuuri gets the sense that he’s asking about more than the skates. Yuuri nods; he knew what the deal was when he decided to say yes.

When they call his group to the ice over the stadium’s loudspeaker, Victor follows him to the ice.

“I have time to watch,” Victor says. Yuuri can see his phone vibrating from where it sits on top of the rink boards.

And Yuuri, because he’s bound to do something he’ll regret on international television at every competition he attends and self control is fake, chooses that moment to pull Victor in by the lapel of his short program costume, to look Victor right in the eyes, and to say, half demand, half plea, “Don’t take your eyes off of me.”

Chapter End Notes

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+ catch me on tumblr

End Notes

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