Understand (I Don't Need Anything But You)

by chennieforyourthoughts

Summary

GOT7 wasn't exactly expecting to take in a whole kindle of kitten hybrids, but they couldn't just leave them, either.

Or, Mark has a fondness for strays and it's infectious.

Notes
(Fanfic Disclaimer + More ♥)
Chapter Summary

Frankly, Changbin didn’t like the light much either. He’d heard that it was how things began again, how destruction paved way for new life, but he found he much preferred the dark.

Chapter Notes

So here things begin once again! Updates are scheduled for every Wednesday/Thursday. ♥

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was black, darker than black, and when Seungmin inhaled the darkness covered his lungs. “Sicheng,” he urged, “We have to go.”

Sicheng crouched in the darkness, not liking the light which broke through it. Seungmin took a nervous glance over his shoulder at where Chris was rousing the rest, unsure of how to get the other to move.

Frankly, Changbin didn’t like the light much either. He’d heard that it was how things began again, how destruction paved way for new life, but he found he much preferred the dark.

He didn’t like the shadows of lights dancing on the wall, dancing and dancing and creeping ever closer.

“Get up top!” Chris shouted, and Changbin scrambled. He grabbed onto Felix’s wrist and pulled the younger with him to the ladder Chan had found, and the pair scrambled up it. Jisung, having already climbed onto a ledge halfway up the wall, was there to boost them onto the skeletal remains of the dome. Changbin and Felix hauled themselves on top of the metal beams and inched their way to the final brick ledge. Felix whined when he looked over the edge to the sharp drop and the gawking public gathering below; Changbin pressed closer to him to get his attention, “Look, Felix,” he said in a desperate attempt to keep the younger calm, “they brought a ladder truck. You like ladders, right? We’ll be fine, see?”

Sirens wailed as Mark made his way home. He’d stayed overtime again— Jackson had left a few hours ago— and he yawned as he stepped out of the deli where he’d bought sandwiches for his kittens.
At the corner of an intersection he crossed every morning and evening was the source of all the noise. Red climbed into the sky as the abandoned building burned, flames climbing the rafters and scrambling the metal supports.

Mark dropped his shopping bag and ran.

It was Taeyong’s engine which had responded; Mark skidded to a stop next to another Mark— one of the junior members of NCT, as Taeyong had nicknamed them. “Mark!”

“Oh, hello Mark hyung! You come this way often, don’t you? To feed the stray cats? I hope they got out— Yuta, Johnny, and Tae hyungs haven’t seen them.”

“They aren’t cats, Mark.” Younger Mark narrowed his eyes at him, so Mark continued on.

“They’re-”

“TAEYONG!” Johnny, in the process of ascending with the top of the ladder, shouted down towards the battalion chief, who had been keeping curious civilians away from the scene. “There’s hybrids up top!”

Everyone looked up.

Sure enough, there were a few person-shaped specs silhouetted against the top of the dome. Mark narrowed his eyes as much as he could, but could only count four then.

Even the Marks could hear Taeyong swear as he climbed the ladder to join Johnny. “Taeyong! Johnny! There’s ten of them in there,” elder Mark shouted up to them, and they gave him a nod of acknowledgement before Taeyong reached the top and grabbed one of the specs while Johnny disappeared into the smoke.

The minutes ticked by. “They’ll get them out, Mark hyung.” It was Jungwoo, who had taken over civilian duty while Taeyong was occupied. Mark’s hands shook. And then, from out of the smoke came Taeyong climbing down the ladder with a still body over his shoulder.

Soot and ash had coated the hybrid’s features, but a little bit of the usual dark chestnut was visible on his tail. Mark wasn’t sure if he was breathing, but he wasn’t sure if he himself was. Once they had descended the ladder, Taeyong lowered the hybrid to standing and urged Mark to help support him.

“Johnny has one of them, and six others are waiting up there to be lifted out, but we can’t find the final two. Yuta’s looking for them.”

Mark dusted off the hybrid’s hair and ears. Changbin lifted his head to rub it against his palm. He looked completely out of it— none of the strays had let Mark touch them before.

Then came Felix and Minho, both carried by Taeyong. Like Woojin, they thanked him by bumping his shoulder before joining the others. “The smoke’s getting thicker,” Taeyong reported. “We had to have Dongyoung stop the water so we could get these guys out without the risk of them slipping and falling over the edge, but the fire’s spreading. Yuta’d better hurry up.”

Johnny was next to arrive with Woojin slung over his shoulder. The boy’s pale brown ears twitched when he heard Mark call to him, and he was quick to thank Johnny with a soft nudge and dash over to Changbin and the other hybrids.

“I hope they can find a place to stay,” the younger Mark commented when Taeyong had left. Woojin had overcome some initial wariness and interacted with Mark and Jungwoo, and now lay stretched-out across the back of the fire engine as the firefighters stroked his hair. The hybrid’s purrs made young Mark’s hand vibrate.
“We’ll take them in.” Mark was certain of it. The kittens hadn’t had a proper home in so long, and Mark had talked to the other six of his group about it in the past. Jaebum’s ruling had been that they could take in one or two in the future, but Mark suspected that this would be a situation in which all ten could find a place to sleep, if they needed it.

Mark pulled his phone from his pocket and found Jaebum at the top of his “Recents” list. He pressed call and held the phone up to his ear as Johnny returned with two dark brown-haired boys. It didn’t take long before Jisung and Hyunjin had joined their friends at the two Marks’s sides, and Mark watched in his peripheral vision as Jisung took ahold of Minho’s hand.

“Mark hyung?” Jaebum asked from the other end of the line.

“Jaebum, the old school burned down.”

There was a gasp, and Mark guessed Jaebum was on speakerphone.

“Are you alright?” Jinyoung asked, and Mark was quick to respond.

“I am. TY and his crew are here— they’re working on getting the kittens out.”

“But they’ll need a place to stay, hyung.” That was Jackson, and Mark already knew what Jaebum’s answer would be.

Jaebum’s sigh was audible even over the amount of noise on Mark’s end. “Alright. They can stay for a little while, at least.”

Jeongin had been lowered to safety, but Taeyong had to return to the building to join Yuta. “We haven’t found the last two, the one who introduced himself as Chris is refusing to leave without them,” he told Mark, “and the building doesn’t have much time left. We have to turn the water back on so the fire doesn’t spread to the businesses adjacent to it.”

Johnny carried a lump of black and clothes from the building, and Mark watched as Chris was forced to scramble down the ladder behind him as the flames finally reached the top of the bricks. “We found this one searching for the last hybrid,” he told Mark. Ten, one of the paramedics, was preparing to treat the unconscious boy as soon as he laid eyes on the pair and the hybrid lurking behind them. Johnny turned back to head into the flames one final time.

“Wait!” Mark grabbed onto his sleeve, halting his movement. “That’s Seungmin, so that means the last one is Sicheng. He doesn’t speak Korean.” Mark lifted his phone up towards his mouth so the other side could hear him clearly. “Jackson! I’m going to turn the volume all the way up on my end. Can you call for someone named Sicheng in Mandarin and tell him it’s going to be alright? He should be able to hear you.”

Mark thrust the phone at Johnny before he could hear Jackson’s response. Johnny took it and slipped away without a word. Younger Mark removed his hand from Woojin’s hair and reached towards his radio, adjusting the channel. “There,” he said. “We should be able to hear them now.”

Taeyong’s voice crackled across the connection. “Please keep repeating that, Jackson.”

“Oh, I can see him!” It was Yuta who spoke— those gathered around leaned in towards the radio, adrenaline flooding through them. “He’s listening.”

A sudden crack shot out of the radio, and the Marks watched in horror as the metal beams began to melt and the bricks cave and fall. Younger Mark was already in motion before Taeyong’s shout for Yuta reached them. Woojin stopped trying to fix Chan’s hair and watched as the boy sprinted
towards the building, pulling his helmet on as he ran.

A cautious hand curled around Mark’s wrist. Seungmin stared up at him, apparently revived, with his eyes wide. The hybrid’s tail whipped the air behind him, and Mark stood in shock as Seungmin pressed up against his side.

“Sicheng hyung?”

Sicheng saw nothing but hell. He coughed dust from his lungs and cautiously lowered his arms from where he’d been shielding his head, knocking some of the broken bricks and splintered metal from where it’d fallen on him. His wrists ached, and although he knew nothing was broken his skin had been split in a few places.

It was a small price to pay, he thought, for survival.

*But where was the man with the kind smile?* He looked first at the fire still climbing the walls, and then as he turned his head frantically from side to side to try to find the man.

When the first drop fell, Sicheng thought it was rain. When the second drop fell, Sicheng heard a violent intake of breath from somewhere on his right. When the third drop fell, Sicheng felt the flood start and had to scramble over the twisted remains of the building to find the kind man. He started to dig, and dig, until he lost the first layer of skin on his fingertips, and water began to pool on the floor and spread towards him.

In one final, desperate attempt, the bricks came free, and Sicheng reached down….

Before the onlookers’s eyes, a hybrid crawled from the wreckage of the school’s front entrance. And he dragged a body behind him.

Ten, ever attentive, headed over with medical equipment. Mark watched him for a moment before reaching for the radio younger Mark had left; the least he could do was inform the three firefighters still in the building.

“Taeyong, Johnny, Mark? We have Yuta and Sicheng.” When the three emerged, they were quick to sprint to the side of Yuta and Sicheng, even despite their bone-deep exhaustion. Ten was equally quick to shoo all but their leader away.

Mark honestly thought he hadn’t seen a more beautiful sight than the JJP van when it pulled up on the street behind him. Jinyoung was seated in the driver’s seat, Jaebum shotgun, with everyone else piled in the back.

“Hyung! You’re okay!”

Jackson was first out of the van, slipping past the (glaring) police putting up crime scene tape to practically tackle Mark. Seungmin wanted to hiss, his place against Mark stolen, but Jackson cooed
at him ("Jinyoung! Have you ever seen anything this adorable?") and scooted over to give the hybrid some room to cling to Mark as well. Mark couldn’t muster up the heart to shake them off.

Taking the hyrbrids back to the apartment the seven shared was shockingly easy, given the number of new additions. Woojin had been reluctant to leave, but agreed to follow after Bambam once the younger Mark promised to visit him soon. (And pet him for as long as he wanted, of course.)

Surprisingly enough, it was Sicheng who put up the most trouble.

When Mark went to gather him after he’d been cleared by Ten, the hybrid had literally dug his claws into Yuta’s blanket and yowled until Mark had to let go. “He’s pretty attached to Yuta now,” the paramedic explained as he prepared Yuta for transport in the ambulance. “Yuta took the brunt of the fall for him and had to spend a while luring him out in the first place, and I think he feels badly that his hesitation kept Yuta from escaping.”

“You’re going to let Sicheng ride in the ambulance?”

Ten gave Mark an incredulous look. “Would you like to try to separate them again? Next time, I don’t think Sicheng will be so nice. And as much as you’re a lovely person, I really won’t stitch your hand back on for you because you’d deserve it.”

So the hybrid was left with NCT, and Mark, Jaebum, and Chris corralled the rest into the JJP van. “They’d better not shed on my upholstery,” Jinyoung hissed from the front, and Jaebum rolled his eyes.

“Like we haven’t done worse to it.”

The eyes of the nine hybrids grew huge as they watched the city blocks pass by. Mark guessed they hadn’t been in vehicles often, but all besides Jeongin, who huddled close to Seungmin and refused to be buckled in, handled it well. Jackson and Bambam sat on either side of Mark. Chris was seated on Mark’s lap while Woojin wasn’t able to decide whether he wanted to be on Jackson or BamBam more, and had stretched himself out on top of Jackson, BamBam, and the two between them.

It probably wasn’t the safest arrangement, given how Felix didn’t have any support and Jisung had attempted to climb onto Jinyoung at a stoplight, but not one member of the group had the heart to tell them to move.

(Well, no one besides Jinyoung.)

Chapter End Notes

After the next update, this chapter’s publication date will go back to the original.
“Didn’t you say you lived in an apartment?” Jeongin asked, eyes wide. All the group had pressed together into one shiny elevator, but even without much experience in nice residential buildings, Jeongin knew they’d been going up for far too long given the rapid acceleration of the lift.

“We do,” Mark replied, making eye contact with the hybrid through the reflection on the front metal wall.

“But we’re still going up?”

Jinyoung smiled despite himself. “You’ll see. We’re almost there.”

True to his word, the elevator doors dinged open and Jaebum encouraged Chris to step out. One by one, everyone filed out of the lift and into a wide white room. It took the hybrids’s eyes half a moment to adjust, but once they processed what they were seeing they all froze.

As they had first noted, the room was indeed wide and white, and there were a set of pale grey shelves on either side. A few vases and books sat on each, and above them were paintings. When Seungmin took a glance over towards them, not wanting to stare too long, the numbers scrawled in pencil on the bottoms caught his eye. From what he could tell, they were all originals.

“A penthouse,” he murmured, and near him, Yugyeom nodded. The youngest human had moved to the front of the group, feeling oddly drawn towards the strays. Perhaps it was a sense of responsibility? No, not that…. maybe a wish to get to know them better? Chris looked pretty close to his and Bambam’s age, but then again he’d heard hybrids aged differently…. 

“Welcome to our penthouse,” Jinyoung announced, and while it could have sounded boastful, it was said in a tone which merely stated what had quickly become more obvious to the newcomers. For it was indeed a penthouse, and Minho was practically positive that it was the penthouse of one of the tallest skyscraper apartments in Seoul because he could recognize the buildings outside of the window in the adjacent room.

“This is….?” Chris began, still looking around like everyone else. “This is too much. We do not know how to thank you.”

“Well,” Jinyoung appeared thoughtful. “You could start by taking showers to make sure you don’t have fleas?”

“EXCUSE ME?” There was a flash of black, and then Minho was standing in front of Jinyoung, looking remarkably irate. “We are hybrids, not heathens!”

Chris and Jaebum winced, one right after the other.

Looked like they’d have a ways to go, yet.
When Nakamota Yuta opened his eyes to see the sadly-familiar bright white of a hospital room ceiling, the very last thing he expected to see in the next moment was a black cat curled up on his chest. For one, he was around ninety-percent sure he hadn’t somehow acquired a cat, but there it lay in a perfect little ball. For another, he didn’t think the doctors, nurses, and techs would allow animals other than service animals to visit the patients in their rooms, but that understanding of his was questioned as the minutes ticked by.

He really didn’t want to wake the kitty up, but his breathing was regulated by the oxygen mask strapped behind his head and his chest was forced to expand and contract in a way Yuta was certain was not comfortable for his new friend. He carefully raised one of his arms (Dang it, how much had Ten and the doctors given him? He couldn’t feel his fingers.) and watched closely to make sure he barely brushed the fur on the cat’s back. The feline blinked awake and stretched, kneading its paws on his stomach before standing. Yuta watched in amazement as it pressed against his palm before pausing. It seemed to realize he couldn’t feel it and wandered up to rub their cheeks together instead. Soft purrs vibrated into him where the cat was pressed against him, and as he felt the sedatives kicking in and pulling him back to sleep he had the sudden thought he’d heard those purrs before.

When Nakamota Yuta dreamed, it was of water—a flood, really—that washed him free from the rocks.

Upon waking for the second time, Donghyuck was the first thing he saw. The younger firefighter was leaning over him and taking up most of his range of vision—a feat Yuta couldn’t help but be slightly impressed by. Mark was apparently nearby but blocked from his sight—Yuta wasn’t very surprised by that—and was talking to him, new sentences being said before Yuta’s artificially slowed brain could process the previous ones. “Mark, you’re probably overwhelming him.”

That Yuta could clearly identify as Taeyong; when Donghyuck finally scooted back and out of his personal space and Mark stopped talking, the battalion chief stepped up to the side of Yuta’s bed and took the oxygen mask off. “Hyung, I hope I didn’t cause too much trouble?”

Taeyong couldn’t help reaching out to smooth Yuta’s hair where it had been ruffled by the elastic band. “Not at all, Yuta.” A smirk climbed its way onto the elder, “But you did almost give most of us premature deaths from heart attacks. Everyone but Ten, that is. And you acquired a cat blanket.”

Yuta began to laugh but regretted it almost immediately. Each breath sparked pain throughout his upper chest, and his laughs broke off into gasps. “Easy, easy,” Taeyong murmured, rubbing circles into Yuta’s neck. It was a technique their leader used to calm worried “trainees” as NCT had taken to calling them, and although it was usually performed on the back of the hand Taeyong had correctly come to the conclusion it would help Yuta focus more if he could actually feel it.

Once his breathing had stabilized (with the mask back on, much to Yuta’s inner annoyance—he’d always hated them), Mark joined Taeyong. “You’re probably beyond bored already, hyung, so I’m getting Johnny to bring your kitten back to keep you company. Your doctor says he can stay this time—he’s been very good about not ripping out your IV.”

When Johnny and Sicheng arrived, Yuta’s grin absolutely sparkled, even through the unwieldy mask. The taller quickly made his exit alongside Taeyong and Mark, and Yuta would be damned if he said they all didn’t have evil glints in their eyes.
So much for Taeyong being the best hyung.

Sicheng was careful when he sat down on the side of Yuta’s bed, cautious not to move anything connected to the injured man. Yuta reached up himself and removed the mask so they could talk. “Hey, I’m not going to break.” The hybrid’s ears twitched and he fidgeted, and Yuta realized Sicheng wanted him to keep his mask on. He stretched his arms out and, much to his surprise, Sicheng leaned in for a few seconds before catching himself.

“Put your mask on first, hyung,” The hybrid raised an eyebrow as he said it, and Yuta started abruptly coughing. His lungs burned with every breath until he shook, and through the haze of tears he watched Sicheng scramble off the bed for the medical call button. The hybrid’s ears were pinned flat as he reached out for Yuta, who worked to open his eyes when he felt Sicheng wipe away the tears. Despite his obvious fear, Sicheng sung softly under his breath, and something about it urged Yuta to focus on it.

As the doctor and accompanying techs burst through the door, Yuta grabbed ahold of Sicheng’s sleeve (he’d never been so thankful for one of Johnny’s simplest black long-sleeved shirts before) and refused to let go. They would have to work around the hybrid if Yuta had his way.

Indeed he did, but as soon as they had been left alone by the professionals Taeyong and Crew™—Chenle had indeed tried to copyright that, after one particularly ill-fated game of Truth or Dare—flooded into the room. “I left you two alone for four minutes—four minutes, that isn’t even five. What happened?” Taeyong certainly did not look pleased, but Sicheng appeared to be newly fearless at the moment.

“I told him, ‘put your mask on first, hyung,’ and then he died.”

“Well, judging by how Taeil looks like he just saw a ghost, I don’t think Yuta was the only to be surprised by you today.”

“I’m so sorry to keep startling you,” Sicheng said once the others had meandered out. “My mistakes cause you harm.”

Yuta absolutely hated crying, so he was thankful that Sicheng curled up on top of him again because he could bury his face in his hair. “It was my choice to go in, Sicheng, and my choice to try to talk with you. You are at fault for nothing.”

The quiet that fell between them was a little bit awkward but mostly soft. “Hyung?”

“Yes, Sicheng?”

“Are you crying again?”

Yuta’s first instinct was to deny it, but Sicheng had other plans; he grabbed onto Yuta’s wrist, fingers carefully spread around and not on the IV site, to keep him from moving away. “I can hear you,” he said, “and I know what someone sounds like when they’re crying. Jeongin and Seungmin used to cry when they got homesick.”

Yuta’s second instinct was to curse Sicheng and his ridiculous feline hearing.

“I’m sorry I made you cry,” Sicheng whispered, not relinquishing his hold on Yuta now that he’d caught him.

“It’s alright,” Yuta admitted, but had to quickly pull himself together when Taeyong strode into the room, shopping bag slung over one forearm.
“WE BOUGHT WHIPPED CREAM!” Chenle screamed as Taeyong cheered, the younger’s voice going into dolphin mode.

“Oh my god,” Sicheng whispered to Yuta, eyes wide as saucers.

“You would think Taeyong would have something better to do with his time such as, I don’t know, his job,” Yuta whispered back.

“Or Jaehyun.”

Yuta snorted, not knowing who Sicheng had heard that from but finding it very factually accurate. “Or Jaehyun.”

But once the others learned that Sicheng had never actually had whipped cream, there was no turning back.

After far too many jokes and quoted song lyrics, Yuta decidedly did not find himself tightening his grip on Sicheng. Not at all.

Hours later, when visiting hours were over, Yuta still had an armful of delighted kitten hybrid. He’d have to ask Taeyong to buy more whipped cream at some point so he could give it to Sicheng again; his startled purrs had been both unexpected and unexpectedly adorable, and the deep rumble of them was enough to put Yuta to sleep. As unconsciousness swept over Yuta for the second time, the last thought of his was, actually, true cream would be better, and sure enough, instead of being a riot of noise his dreams were cut through with the soft feeling and sound of pleased kitten.

Yuta couldn’t remember a better sound.
Some, both hybrid and not, are missing their homes.

Hello, I am back! I want to say that I am very sorry for such a sudden and unexpected hiatus of my works, but now that my writing time has returned I will be updating this and my other WIPs and writing new pieces. Thank you all for sticking with me, and I hope you continue to enjoy this new version of Understand!

Updates are now weekly on Wednesday (or Thursday depending on time zones)!

I made a Twitter so I can take requests: @chenniepenny

Things quieted down after a few days, passing all the way through calm and into completely uneventful. Once the initial newness wore off, the most exciting thing to occur was Jackson making breakfast. And not burning it.

Jisung lay sprawled across the dark cream couch in the penthouse’s living room. It was his favorite, because its color and proximity to the floor-to-ceiling windows allowed it to get to the perfect sunny spot napping temperature. His eyes were closed, but the tip of his tail flicked back and forth from time to time as he dreamed.

Then his nose crinkled, and the rest of his face followed suit. Jeongin was leaning over him and pressing the lightest hint of a kiss to the tip of Jisung’s nose. Chris walked in, nibbling on something unidentifiable from the kitchen, and raised an eyebrow.

“What’cha doin’?”

“Getting revenge,” Jeongin replied. Chris stared at him a moment before shrugging.

“Okay,” he said. “Just—“

“Don’t do anything stupid?”

“Ugh, just go away,” Jisung groaned and rolled over onto his stomach so his face was no longer a target. “Let me sleep for once.”

“That’s like, all you’ve been doing for the past two weeks,” Hyunjin commented, as if he and most of the rest hadn’t been doing the same thing.

Chris shrugged again and wandered off to see what was going on in one of the other rooms. The
others didn’t know it yet, but he’d been working with Jaebum and Jinyoung during the day when he was bored and Woojin during the night when neither could sleep.

He doubted either of them would be able to sleep well for a while yet. Sometimes, in the darkness cracked open by artificial light from outside, Chris wondered of what Woojin would dream, if he were to sleep. He knew what his was from experience— the penthouse was too quiet, unnervingly so after so long spent as a stray on the ever-busy streets— and chose to stay awake writing and watching the late-night drinkers and partiers traverse the city with Woojin. Chris’s hands itched to climb during those hours, seeking the bite of the wind and the adrenaline of inching his way up too-tall buildings to survey his clouders’ territory, dearly bought and dearly defended.

The same hands bore the scars of those disputes, Chris and a rival— sometimes a stranger, sometimes a friend— circling a set number of paces apart until their seconds called start.

All in all, luck and wits had been on Chris’s side. His first true fight, he’d been fighting for Woojin, and when it was finished and he was dragging his stunned and limp prize over to lay at the other second’s feet, what Chris bore to remember it by were deep slice lines across his palms and a notched ear from his opponent’s teeth. Woojin was the one to clean them for Chris later, when they’d retired to the abandoned school Chris had won for them right after sunset. Woojin was always the one to patch him up, even after they had invited other strays to join them, and always would be.

Chris got the feeling that was what his second dreamed of, even now.

Chris’s dream was different. It was always from Jisung’s perspective, every single time, without fail. And that was what made it so difficult for him, what ate away at his heart, stealing bite after precious bite of sleep.

First, the dark, and then—

“Easy, Wyatt! If you slip up, we won’t be able to get the lock to open.” Jisung blinked awake, but spent a moment wondering if he was still out for the count when nothing came into his view.

A solid minute passed, and then he saw the eyes.

"Holy!” The cat hybrid was pressed against the back of his cage faster than the two crouched in front of it could register that he was awake. Jisung’s silence— something he prided himself in— meant that he startled the dog and other cat hybrid enough to make them freeze in place.

“Be quiet, MK, or they’ll hear us.” The dog hybrid shook his head before resuming his efforts on the lock. The cat cautiously approached again, turning a friendly smile towards Jisung once he’d conquered his own racing heart.

"Hello there, let me try that again. I’m MK and this here is Wyatt, and we’re going to break you out.” MK’s brow furrowed and his contagious smile turned into a frown as he watched his partner work, before he turned back to Jisung with a guilty shrug. “Assuming my friend can manage to find his magic lock-loving fingers again.” The cat pouted for a second, seeing the captive was still plastered as far away as he could get from them. "Most of the time his lovemaking works, though, so don’t you worry!”

Wyatt stopped his work long enough to stare at MK, clearly offended. “I do not make love to locks,” he huffed.

“Oh, that’s right, you only make love to a certain Yuto Mizuguchi.”
“I really, really hate you sometimes.”

“So you’re from ONF?” MK swallowed his shriek upon finding the new voice right next to his ear, making sure that his reactions were not enough to scare Jisung again.

“The one and only,” Wyatt grinned, and the lock popped open. He slid his kit back into one of the many pockets of his jacket, deep enough in the interior that Jisung could only guess how many he had. “Taeseon sent out a message to the rest of the packs once his scouts found you’d been kidnapped— there’s a new one in town, and they’ve overstepped their bounds.”

“ONF stands with you, and has agreed to go along with TRCNG’s message to return you safely to your leader.”

“The leader who is indefinitely grateful for your assistance.”

All three startled at the voice which echoed throughout the cramped space. “Chan!” MK and Wyatt both bowed respectfully as Chris stepped into the room.

“Chris-ssi, it is an honor to finally meet you.”

“As it is for me as well. Thank you for freeing Jisung— I would be more than happy to grant your pack some of our land in acknowledgement.” Both hybrids bowed once more before exiting through a.... trap door in the ceiling?

“Feel free to use this on your way out,” MK shouted during his exit. Once he and Wyatt were gone, Chris turned on his flashlight.

Jisung flinched at the light, but not at Chris’s soft touch. He ran a thumb over Jisung’s cheekbone, checking for injuries. “Are you alright?” The elder asked, and Jisung swallowed.

“I think my ankle’s sprained, hyung, but not broken.” In the off-white glow of the flashlight, Jisung could now see Chris better. The leader certainly looked worse for the wear— although they appeared to have missed anything critical, a line of five sharp claw gashes spread lengthwise across his neck, and that was only the first thing Jisung had noticed. He was sure there were more injuries elsewhere.

“Then I’ll carry you.” Jisung didn’t get the chance to protest before he was swept off his feet. “Kangmin will cover us when we get topside.”

This particular night Chris spent stretched out on his bed next to Woojin, both of them facing the foot of the bed and counting the cars going by below the penthouse. They made it to four-thousand five-hundred and seventeen by the time they became bored, and filled the rest of the night with what stories they still remembered from their original homes.

Some nights the stories were easier to tell than others.

Sicheng had never before had the level of autonomy he was already experiencing with Yuta. The
elder had moaned about the hospital’s cuisine—or lack thereof—and practically begged Sicheng to go out and buy him some real food. Preferably with a soy and ginger marinade, maybe with a little bit of sake in there as well if Sicheng couldn’t smuggle a bottle in? The sheer number of possibilities suddenly available made Sicheng’s head swim. Should he go to a restaurant and hope they do takeout? Check Internet reviews using one of the firefighters’ phones? Ask Taeyong or someone else for help? Simply walk down the street until he sees a place and use his decent skills to decipher the meaning behind the majority of the kanji on the windows? Not for the first time, Sicheng was pleased that although his Korean was not as strong as he would need to live on his own in Seoul, he could generally figure out most kanji from his experiences at home.

Up until then, Sicheng had held great respect for Yuta and his public service, and trust in his strength in character (he’d been the one not to leave Sicheng after everyone else had), and even an odd draw towards Yuta’s effervescent yet sensible personality, but not a feeling of true understanding and connection. In that rather detailed yet oddly vague request for familiar food, Sicheng found himself looking at someone else come to Korea for as-of-then unstated reasons, missing the simplest things from his country.

_Hopefully there was someone in Taeyong’s battalion who was free and could read kanji as well._

Chapter End Notes

Sorry there's less Yuwin this time, but I've got a longer bit planned for Sicheng and a friend next week that didn't really fit into this chapter.

Also, a moderately random aside, but when I went to China with friends there was only one of us who could read hanzi because she knows kanji, and when we got to our hotel she translated the hanzi on the side of the building for us... and it was something involving "alcohol." Yes, we _were_ actually at the right place, but the kanji --> hanzi definitely did not correlate in terms of meaning that time!
Chapter Five will go here, so please enjoy Felix the Cat as a placeholder.
Chapter 5

Chapter Six will go here, so please enjoy Felix the Cat as a placeholder.
Chapter 6

Chapter Seven will go here, so please enjoy Felix the Cat as a placeholder.

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