He'll Come Back for the Honey and You

by sinkingmyships

Summary

“Cooking is attractive. Like playing guitar, it demonstrates your prowess with your hands, your sophisticated knowledge of an art form... But it goes deeper than that. Cooking is a shared experience, a way to express yourself to someone you care about.”

Or: Seokjin is no stranger to a little sugar. However, Yoongi is the sweetest thing he’s come across in a long time, and there’s no recipe telling him exactly what he should do next.

[Now translated into Russian!]

Notes

I just really like all of the most over-used alternate universes, okay? And bakery AU make me feel all warm and soft and sweet...like cake...

Speaking of cake. This is a birthday present. To myself. Happy birthday to me. And happy early birthday to the world’s biggest darling sweetheart angel cake, Kim Seokjin.

#SagittariusBuddies

If you’re hungry, read at your own risk? \(\_\_(ツ)_\/\)
Cake pops are the bane of Seokjin’s existence.

He hates making them. It seems like sacrilege to destroy a perfectly good cake for the sake of—of what, exactly? Portability? Portion control? Please. No one ever eats just one. Plus there’s all the rolling and melting and dipping and drying and decorating, and cake pops are fussy.

It’s not like the seamless, methodical work of frosting cupcakes. When he frosts Hoseok’s triple vanilla cupcakes, he can put a star-tip in a piping bag and lose himself in the routine, creating a dozen ruffled buttercream rosettes in no time at all. Cupcakes and buttercream are second-nature at this point.

In comparison, cake pops are a bitch.

But if Joohyun wants red velvet cake pops for Sooyoung’s birthday, he’s damn well going to make them.

He could have Jimin make them. Jimin has far more patience for these sorts of things. However, Jimin is currently elbows-deep in a bowl of crème pâtissière, and it’d be inconsiderate to ask. So he starts with his cake, sifting the flour and cocoa powder and measuring out the buttermilk. He adds the food coloring, decides his batter looks too much like ketchup, and adds a smidge of blue to tone it down from tomato-red to ruby-red.

Once the cake is in and out of the oven, he works on the frosting. He’s in the middle of adding confectioner’s sugar to the cream cheese and butter in the bowl of his stand mixer—just little at a time so that his kitchen doesn’t become a powdery snow globe—when the service bell rings.

“Can someone get that?” Seokjin asks.

“No,” Jimin, Hoseok, and Jeongguk all say at the same time. Honestly, what’s the use of having employees who don’t do anything he asks?

He glances around. Jimin’s still occupied with his crème pat, and Hoseok is battling an enormous mound of zucchini with a box grater for his summer squash quick-bread.

“I’m not letting my brown butter burn,” Jeongguk says defensively, watching a sauce pan on the stove with near-lethal intensity.

Seokjin groans and turns off his mixer. “Thanks for nothing, guys,” he says as he walks out to the cash register.

Even though it’s rather warm today, the guy standing opposite the counter is wearing a black leather jacket, zipped all the way up, and a ring-studded ball cap pulled low over his eyes. He looks out of place, all dark and edgy amidst the bakery’s pastel walls and the floral-printed old ladies eating pistachio muffins at table two.
“Hi, welcome to Sweet Cheeks!” Seokjin says, putting on his fake customer service voice.

“Hi. You’ve, uh. You’ve got flour on your shirt.”

“I *always* have flour on my shirt,” Seokjin sighs. “It’s a curse.” He brushes a hand over his stomach, and a tiny plume of flour drifts like ash from his shirt to the floor. He clears his throat. “What can I get you?”

The guy grunts. He stares at the display of pastries for a mildly concerning amount of time, scanning left and right and up and down like he’s hopelessly trying to read a map. Couldn’t he have decided what he wanted before ringing the bell? Seokjin thinks about his half-mixed frosting on his prep station and hopes the cream cheese doesn’t soften too much in the warm kitchen.

“What’s this right in front?” the guy asks. He leans forward, sticking his face close to the pristine glass case to read the labels on the trays. “The—what, the Shorties?”

“Shortbread with fresh ginger and nutmeg, topped with peach icing. They’re the Tuesday special.”

Seokjin smiles to himself. Every day, he sells a special pastry dedicated to his friends, each baked with syrup-thick nostalgia. The Shorties are his Jimin-inspired pastry, and even after all this time, he still thinks it’s hilarious. (Taehyung agrees with him—“Short, spicy, with an ass that won’t quit,” he insists every time Jimin rolls his eyes.)

“I’ll have one of those,” the guy says. “And the largest size coffee you have. Just black, please.”

“Name?” Seokjin asks, right as a gaggle of college girls push the front door open. They’re the same ones who like to ruthlessly flirt with Jeongguk until he’s so mortified his knees shake. His frosting is going to have to wait longer, apparently.

“Yoongi.”

“Yoongi.” Seokjin repeats as he scribbles his name on the paper cup. He digs a Shortie out of the display case. He looks up in time to watch Yoongi take off his hat and push his hair up off his forehead, and oh, no, he’s hot. Sharp eyes and thin lips and a biting attitude in the arch of his brows.

If there’s one thing Seokjin knows how to appreciate, it’s a pretty face.

Were Seokjin less busy, perhaps he’d drop a pick-up line. He’s been sitting on “Would you be my secret ingredient?” for a while now. But he doesn’t really have the time. He has coffee to brew, customers to serve, cake pops to make. He’s always been a sucker for a man in a leather jacket though, and—

Seokjin pinches his own thigh. Get it together.

“That’ll be just a minute,” he says, ears burning.

His hands fumble as he starts the coffee, and he overcompensates for his embarrassment while welcoming the girls to Sweet Cheeks with a voice that’s far too cheery-loud. Nice. It’s like he’s never interacted with another human before.

But the girls don’t care about *him*, which helps clear his head. The disappointment is evident on their faces when he tells them in a bold-faced lie that Jeongguk isn’t working today. They still buy the last of Jeongguk’s maple snickerdoodles though, the ones that are all puffy and crackly and golden.

The girls leave with their cookies, and Seokjin tells Yoongi—who doesn’t appear to notice that
something is definitely off—that his coffee is ready. He only sticks around behind the cash register long enough to watch Yoongi unpack his bag at one of the tables at the back of the store, where the late afternoon sunlight barely reaches in through the windows.

In the kitchen, Seokjin says in harsh whisper, “One, JK, you owe me. I told your fan-club that you weren’t here. Two, there’s a hot guy at table six, and I may have lost my cool for a second.”

“You can’t lose your cool if you never had any in the first place,” Jeongguk says, pressing toasted pecan halves into mounds of cookie dough.

“God, you’re a brat.” Seokjin says with a heavy sigh before he returns to his cake pops and pushes Yoongi to the back of his mind.

He finally finishes the frosting, crumbles up his cake, and squishes everything around in a big metal bowl. The next step is rolling the cake-mush out into four dozen equal balls. He still has to set up his double-boiler for the red candy-melts and make icing for the small-scale piping work andfuck, he hates cake pops. Why couldn’t Joohyun have asked for a regular cake?

The service bell rings. He’s got cake under his fingernails.

“I got it this time,” Jimin says.

When Seokjin strains his ears, he hears the guy from earlier ask for their Wi-Fi password. He hears Jimin answer (“The password is sugarchildren—don’t ask why—it’s all one word.”), but then Jimin doesn’t come back for a long few moments.

“I thought you said there was a hot guy at table six,” Jimin says when he returns, his forehead furrowed. “There’s a guy there. But he sort of looks like a gumdrop. I don’t know what you were talking about.”

Seokjin manages to roll out all his cake pops and even gets half of them dipped in melted chocolate before the curiosity wins out, because he is weak and he wants to know what the hell Jimin meant. Did they look at the same person, even? He washes his hands free of cake, and when he walks out into the storefront, he’s stopped mid-step because Jimin was…right?

Yoongi’s ball cap and leather jacket have been tossed on a chair. His hair is fluffy, and he’s nearly drowning in a bright yellow long-sleeve shirt. He’s like a small sesame seed. A baby chick. The poor guy also looks frazzled, his mouth turned down in a pale umbrella frown as he flips through a notebook and clatters away at his laptop. He tips his cup back. Based on the way he shakes it a little desperately, Seokjin guesses it’s been empty for a while.


Seokjin will be the first to admit that the coffee they serve isn’t that great—they’re a bakery, not a coffeehouse, after all. Nevertheless, this guy looks up as if Seokjin had offered infinite puppies and world peace and not B-tier classic roast. He takes that as a “yes.”

“I’m Seokjin, by the way,” he says when he brings the coffee to the table, even though it’s stupid, since he’s wearing a name tag.

“I’m Yoongi,” Yoongi says, even though it’s stupid, since he already said his name. “And you’re a lifesaver.”

Here’s the thing. Seokjin doesn’t believe in cosmic ideas like soulmates or love at first sight. But the smile he gets by way of thanks—all teeth and gums and way too cute—makes an interesting (though
Wednesdays are always the slowest days. Out of all days someone might need a pick-me-up, the dead-center of the work week would probably be it, right? It never is. Seokjin has yet to figure out why.

The bakery smells spicy and sweet and woodsly this morning, courtesy of Jimin’s cardamom-and-fig tarts. Joohyun picks up the cake pops no more than twenty minutes after the store has opened, and by the time eleven o’clock rolls around, all of the morning regulars have vanished. All he’s left with is a half-full display of pastries and bleached wood tables covered in breakfast remnants.

It’s peaceful and sunny, and dust particles swim in the air like minnows as Seokjin cleans up. Then exactly like clockwork, Namjoon arrives at quarter to noon, fresh out of the contemporary literature course he’s teaching. Seokjin’s wiping down the last table with a damp rag when he strolls in.

“Can you believe,” Namjoon starts, waving a paperback book around, foregoing any greeting, “that half of my students have never heard of ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’?”

“Wow, what a travesty,” Seokjin agrees. He has no idea what Namjoon is talking about.

“So much depends upon a red wheelbarrow, glazed with rain water, beside the white chickens,” he says, as if that explains anything. “It’s a cornerstone of modernist poetry!”

Seokjin lets him rant, sweeping crumbs up from the pale wood floor in the process. But before Namjoon can spiral into a full-blown TED Talk on this poem, he says kindly, “Hey, Joonie, I think Hoseok’s been waiting for you.”

Namjoon blushes, even though the two of them have been dating for close to a million years. It’s very on-brand. “Right,” he says, and Seokjin thinks he should do something special for their anniversary at the end of October. “I’ll just…go then. Yeah.” He makes his way around the front counter and into the kitchen.

“Disaster incoming,” Seokjin calls. “Don’t let him anywhere near the ovens!”

“Yes, captain!” Hoseok calls back, immediately followed by a cacophony of crashes and bangs. There go all of Seokjin’s nicely-organized cupcake pans, probably. He closes his eyes and rubs his temples.

“Everything’s fine!” comes Namjoon’s panicked voice.

“Don’t make me childproof my own damn kitchen!”

And then a voice, way closer to his ear than he was expecting: “Do you have toddlers working here or something?”

Seokjin lets out a trill yelp and jumps, hopping around like he’s dancing on coals. He steadies himself with a hand over his heart and turns to see a leather jacket and a ball cap. The guy from yesterday. Yoongi, the confusingly hot gumdrop guy.

“Sorry, sorry,” Yoongi says, raising his hands in defense. “Didn’t know you were so jumpy.”

“It’s—fine, I’m fine. My fault for not paying attention.” That, and it’s not like he has much control over what goes on here anyway. “I didn’t expect to see you back so soon. Couldn’t resist the taste of
“More like my internet is still out and this is the closest place I could find with free Wi-Fi,” he admits. “The coffee is nice too, though.” He walks past Seokjin, dumps his bag on table six, and unzips his jacket. He’s less gumdrop-y today in a baggy black t-shirt, but the cuteness is still very much there. Seokjin kind of wants to kiss his nose.

(That’s a thought he’s only ever had about dogs and once about Jeongguk, on a too-drunk Halloween when the kid fell asleep wearing his bunny costume. Certainly not about total strangers. This is worrisome.)

Seokjin registers Yoongi’s voice saying something, but he doesn’t catch it. “Sorry, what?”

“Yesterday you had shortbread as the special. Is there a Wednesday special?”

He nods and waves Yoongi over and tries not to think about kissing strangers’ noses. He points at his display like he’s picking a goldfish out of an aquarium. “Up top here—the Grape Monster. It’s a galette.”

“I don’t know what that is. Sounds fancy.”

This is why Namjoon’s special is what it is. Burst grapes coated in orange marmalade and flecked with black pepper (because no one ever expects black pepper), all nestled on top of puff pastry shiny and golden with egg wash. It seems sophisticated and inaccessible, like Namjoon, until you learn what it is. “It’s basically a lazy pie,” Seokjin explains. “This one is red grapes and orange.”

“I’ll take a piece. And your largest coffee.” Yoongi leans on the countertop and waits while Seokjin washes his hands in the sink next to the cooler. “Grape Monster’ is an interesting name,” he muses.

“All of the specials are inspired by my friends. That one is Namjoonie’s. He used to perform under the name Rap Monster, and he had a recent phase where he dyed his hair purple and called himself a grape.” He wiggles a spatula under a slice of galette and slides it onto a plastic plate. “Therefore, Grape Monster.”

“Do all of them have special meanings like that?”

“Most of them, yes.” Yoongi counts out a couple of bills, and Seokjin hands him his order over the counter. It’s only when Yoongi’s settled at table six that Seokjin turns to retreat to the kitchen. He needs to figure out what to do with all of Jimin’s leftover egg whites from yesterday, and he’s thinking rosewater pavlovas.

“Uh, wait,” Yoongi says, catching Seokjin at the last second. He folds his hands around his coffee.

“Yeah?”

“You said the grape thing was recent. What did you do before that?”

Before that was a work of both culinary and comedy genius, if you ask Seokjin. He says, “Namjoon has a thing for crabs. So I made cranberry and banana muffins and called them Crabberry Muffins, but not enough people got it. Dozens of customers told me I had a typo on my menu. I had to change it.”

Yoongi stares at him, unreadable. A few seconds pass in silence before he deflates. “Are all of your puns that terrible?”
“You donut know what I’m capable of,” Seokjin says with zero hesitation. He sort of wants to kick himself for it. It comes out flirty, in that ultra-practiced tone of his that oozes charm like molten lava cake.

“Guess I’ll have to find out, then,” Yoongi says.

And that’s confusing. Because that sounds like reciprocal flirting to Seokjin, except Yoongi says it blank-faced and flat-lined, until the beginnings of a smirk play at the corners of his mouth, and Seokjin doesn’t know what to do with that right now. If he should do anything with that right now.

○○○

(“I’m positive he’s into you! That’s a billion percent flirting!” Taehyung insists later on over ramen, which is encouraging, but he doesn’t know if he should be taking relationship advice from Taehyung, so he’s at an impasse.)

○○○

Seokjin splits vanilla beans down the center and scrapes out the seeds with the back of a paring knife. He’ll stick the empty pods into a bottle of vodka later. Somehow, they’re almost out of Hoseok’s I’m Your Angel Cake cupcakes already. It’s barely eight o’clock, and they can’t go all of Thursday without the Thursday special, so for now, it’s more vanilla cake and buttercream.

But he’s distracted today, and he doesn’t know why. He knows this recipe like he knows the original PokéRap—which is to say, by heart—but he finds himself having to read out of his recipe book at every other step.

He needs a break.

He puts his batter in the refrigerator and goes to keep Jeongguk company. Jeongguk has been managing the counter by himself all morning, and Seokjin hates to admit that he misses this twerp standing next to him in the kitchen. Seokjin watches him pack up an entire loaf of still-warm molasses bread into a parchment-lined box for a man in a three-piece suit.

Jeongguk turns to him once the man leaves. “Can you like, stop?” he hisses.

Seokjin blinks hard. “Stop what?”

“You’ve walked out here a dozen times already. I’ll tell you if your crush comes in, okay? Pretty sure I could recognize him—short, leather jacket, button nose, right?”

“I don’t have crushes,” Seokjin says indignantly. “I’m not twelve.” But he can feel his face turning red, which is a dead-giveaway, and maybe he should be drinking that vodka instead of making vanilla extract with it. He leaves Jeongguk alone. Brat.

He doesn’t have a crush, he mutters into his batter. Ridiculous, he tells himself while nesting polka-dot cupcake liners in his baking tins. He doesn’t even know the guy, he thinks as he whips up a fresh batch of French vanilla cream to pipe into the cupcakes. But Yoongi’s cute, and Seokjin wouldn’t mind getting to know him, and—

“So, what should I do?” Seokjin calls out by the time Seokjin’s got a couple dozen cupcakes that are ready to be filled and frosted. “Table six.”

So. The question that stands is this: how long should he stall to keep Jeongguk’s snark to a minimum? If he goes running out now, he’ll never hear the end of it. But if he waits too long,
Jeongguk will know he’s trying to compensate for something. He settles on filling and frosting enough cupcakes to restock the display case first. He takes Yoongi’s coffee to him second.

“Good morning,” he says, pushing his hair off his forehead.

“Mornings are anything but good,” Yoongi says, taking the coffee with grateful hands. He’s got his laptop open, but he’s also got his notebook spread out, pages filled with messy scribbles. There’s blue ink smudged all down the side of his pinky, seeping toward his wrist. “But hey.”

“What are you working on? No one uses pen and paper anymore.”

“Songs. Poems, when the songs grow too big to be songs anymore. I have a hard time getting ideas to come out quite right on a keyboard sometimes.”

“You should write a song for me,” Seokjin teases.

“Already working on it,” Yoongi teases back in a way that makes Seokjin wonder if he’s actually teasing or not.

Here’s the thing. Seokjin doesn’t have crushes. He’s not twelve.

But if he were twelve, he’d have the biggest fucking crush on Yoongi imaginable.

○○○

On Friday, Seokjin wakes up far too early to a car alarm blaring right outside his window.

The first thing he notices is that the sun isn’t anywhere close to rising, the sky a dark, milky grey. The next thing he notices is that his hands are sore, his fingers stiff like he hasn’t bent his knuckles in weeks.

This happens every now and then. It’s been happening for years. It makes things like buttoning his jeans or typing long text messages a pain in the ass, but all in all, it could be worse. It’ll get better as the day goes on.

He stares at his ceiling for a long time. He doesn’t want to go to work. But these days where he wakes up aching are always bread-baking days. It’s therapeutic, kneading dough. The cracking of his joints as he works sticky, craggy dough into silky balls. The smoothness between his fingers as he stretches the dough until it windowpanes. The give and the squish are nice on his hands.

So he’ll go to work. For the bread.

And for his new favorite customer.

But mostly for the bread.

There’s no use in going back to sleep, so Seokjin finds pants that he doesn’t have to button, a big t-shirt with a teddy bear on the front, and one of his pink hoodies. He lets the chill of the early morning wake him fully and bring glowing color to his face as he walks down still-sleeping streets.

It’s always a bit eerie, being the only person in the bakery, long before the ovens have turned the whole place toasty warm. Bakeries aren’t supposed to be cold and quiet. He turns on all the appliances and plays Bruno Mars from his phone so he doesn’t feel so isolated and gets to work blooming yeast in sugar water.

He doesn’t realize how long he’s been working until Hoseok comes in, perfectly on time. “The
Bread Genie’s been busy,” Hoseok says, hanging up his windbreaker and grabbing an apron.

And he has. He already has ten loaves of bread on their second rise, and he’s got a basket full of sweet cloverleaf rolls for them to eat for breakfast with the apple butter he bought at a farmer’s market last weekend. His fingers feel better already.

Jimin and Jeongguk trail in soon after, dragging a partially-asleep Taehyung behind them. Taehyung sits in the corner with fresh bread and milk until he’s a functioning human, and then Seokjin has to physically stop him from eating all of the strawberries that are supposed to go into his Little Star-Berry muffins.

Yoongi stops by too, this time with a full suite of silver hoops in his ears. “I don’t have time to stick around today,” he says, apology heavy in his voice. Seokjin’s heart sinks; he doesn’t know if he’s sad because Yoongi sounds so sorry or because Yoongi’s not going to sit at table six all afternoon. “I just…I wanted to…you know. Say hi. And get coffee. And ask if you can do me a very small favor.”

“I’ll try?”

“Tell me the weirdest thing you know.”

Seokjin knows a lot of weird shit. It’s a side effect of hanging out with Namjoon and Taehyung. He knows about the familial relationships between chickens and peacocks, about the spiral structure of the Sunflower Galaxy, about the history of flugelhorns in jazz music. But he shares the weirdest thing he knows: “Even though blue whales have the largest dicks in the world, southern right whales have the largest balls.”

Yoongi’s mouth opens, closes, opens again, like a carp. “That’s…wow. That’s something. Thank you.”

“How could that possibly help you in any way?”

Yoongi takes his coffee and his muffin and the two cloverleaf rolls that Seokjin insisted on giving him. “Gotta write your song somehow.”

“Promise you won’t write me a song about whale dicks.”

“I would never promise that in my life.”

This conversation is so surreal, so bizarre that Seokjin bursts into his full, jarring laughter, clapping his hands together in delight and surely disturbing other customers. To Seokjin’s surprise, Yoongi laughs along too, letting out this near-soundless, stuttering chuckle. It’s about time, really. Seokjin’s a comedian parading as a baker.

When Yoongi finally turns to leave, Seokjin gives him a coy wink and a blown kiss, which must take Yoongi by surprise, since he nearly smashes his face into the front door on the way out, which keeps Seokjin effervescent and giggling the rest of the day.

○○○

The most popular item on Seokjin’s menu is, by far, the bite-sized Cinnabunnies that he makes for Jeongguk on Saturdays.

In truth, the Cinnabunnies are a touch too sweet for Seokjin’s personal taste. They’re so rich in butter and caramelized brown sugar that Seokjin can’t eat more than one at a time without feeling the
cloying sweetness cling to his tongue like a heavy sweater. His customers, on the other hand, can’t get enough of the tiny cinnamon rolls. The bakery is always packed to the point of absurdity on Saturdays, as busy as an airport three days before Christmas.

It’s so busy this Saturday that Seokjin doesn’t even realize until half past ten that Yoongi’s sitting in the back of the store, at table five this time, because Saturdays always disrupt routine. He’s sharing the table with another one of Seokjin’s regulars, a mother with her two young, icing-smeared daughters.

(And no, Seokjin’s heart doesn’t melt straight out of his chest as Yoongi tears sheets of paper from his notebook so the kids can draw, shut the fuck up...)

Yoongi catches his gaze from across the room. He tries so hard to look annoyed. Curled lip, scrunched nose, rolled eyes. An exaggerated sigh as the girl closest to him reaches over and scribbles on the top of his notebook with a broken crayon, surely dug from the bottom of her mother’s purse. But here’s the thing. Yoongi’s not annoyed. Seokjin can look through him like a kaleidoscope and see how perfectly comfortable he is here: leather jacket, cup of coffee, grubby children, light pooling in dappled sun-puddles on his hands.

Seokjin smiles. Yoongi smiles back.

Later, when Seokjin takes a quick lunch break after the crowd wanes a bit, he sits down across from Yoongi and slides him fresh coffee.

“I’ve been composing a piece for the piano,” Yoongi says. “I’m trying to make it sound like this place feels.” He plays an imaginary piano in front of him, the tendons in his fingers flexing. His big rings glint like city lights on an oil slick.

“You mean loud and perpetually sticky?”

Yoongi gives him a look. “No. Sitting here at the height of the morning rush felt hectic and relaxed at the same time, and I’ve been trying to recreate that feeling.” His hands leave his pretend keys. He adds, “This place is great for people-watching. I can find a lot of inspiration here.”

A smoldering coal of pride settles in the center of Seokjin’s chest. The bakery is his life, and it’s always nice to hear people say lovely things about it. “I know what you mean.”

Yoongi slides a folded piece of paper out from the back of his notebook and straightens it out. It’s a picture of a bunch of oddly-shaped planets and six-pointed stars and two full moons, all amid a purple sky. “According to little kids, the universe is purple. There’s a lot to unpack there.”

(That sounds like something Namjoon would say, honestly, but yes, a child’s metaphysical reflection of the cosmos is whimsy at its finest.)

“And you.”

“Me?”

“You’re very,” Yoongi says, then trails off, his lips drawing downward in a pout.

Seokjin waits for any number of things he’s told on a frequent basis—handsome, or beautiful, or he’s gotten dashing once or twice. He’s well-aware of how good he looks, and he never turns down a chance to flatter himself.

But Yoongi finally finishes, “Meticulous.” Seokjin blinks. “I’d love to see you in the kitchen one
Seokjin feels his ears burn, and the squeaking laugh he lets out is due more to surprise than humor. While he was prepared to handle praise for his appearance, he was significantly less prepared to handle just about anything else. Nevertheless, he’s grateful: he echoes, “One day,” and he doesn’t realize how much it sounds like a promise.

“I’m not jealous!” Jimin says as he downs the last of his third mojito. He clunks his highball glass down on the table with far more force than necessary.

Seokjin’s still tending to his first vodka tonic. Rarely does he pass up one of Jimin’s offers to go out drinking, but tonight he regrets it. Tonight, Taehyung is out to dinner with Yoonwoo and Jihan and Hyungsik, which always makes Jimin foolishly and inconsolably jealous. That, and Jimin forced him into a pair of ridiculous leather pants, and his thighs are starting to sweat.

“You’re definitely jealous,” Seokjin says over the music of the bar.

“No, you don’t understand.”

“You’re right, I don’t.”

“I’m not jealous. I’m impatient. I want to hold his hand right now.”

“You can hold his hand when he comes home. He’s never out that late, anyway.”

“Right now,” Jimin repeats solemnly.

Seokjin sighs. Jimin is no lightweight, but he always gets whiny when he’s tipsy, and he’s already making a beeline to the center of Whine Town. Seokjin’s not up for taking care of a giant, slightly-drunk baby right now. “Come on, I’ll let you hold my hand until we get you home.”

“It’s not the same,” Jimin grumbles, but he holds Seokjin’s hand regardless as they leave the bar, and he looks pretty damn pleased about it. Then he starts talking about Taehyung’s hands in alarming detail. How big and warm they are, how nice the pale crescents on his nails are, how long his fingers are, how they’re so perfect for holding. Seokjin has to clamp his own hand over Jimin’s mouth before he can start rambling very loudly and very publicly about how Taehyung fingers him.

Seokjin takes Jimin home. Maybe he should stay until Taehyung comes back: Jimin’s flopped face-down on the couch, and Seokjin doesn’t want him to accidentally suffocate in the cushions. However, Seokjin’s half-hard in his stupid leather pants, and he knows exactly why.

Taehyung’s hands.

Well, no.

It was a tangential thing. It was Jimin talking about Taehyung’s hands, which made Seokjin think about Yoongi’s hands, and now he feels too hot.

He wrestles Jimin onto his side and tucks a yellow blanket around his shoulders. Jimin complains about wanting to hold hands even as Seokjin’s closing the door behind him, but his pants are getting more uncomfortable by the moment, and he’s not staying.

As he walks home, he tries his best to think about literally anything other than Yoongi’s hands.
Literally anything. Thoughts are funny little creatures though: the ones that get pushed away are the ones that claw hardest to the top.

It looks like there’s a new deli opening up a few blocks over. The ink stains on the sides of Yoongi’s hands.

That person in the Lexus definitely ran the red light. The way Yoongi twirls his pen across his knuckles as he brainstorm.

When was the last time he talked to his brother? The curvature of Yoongi’s fingers as he plays his imaginary piano.

Tomorrow is sugar cookie day. The salt on Yoongi’s fingertips as he traces Seokjin’s lips.

He needs to remember to buy toothpaste. Yoongi sliding his hands through his hair and pulling.

The nights are starting to get cold. Yoongi’s hands sneaking up his shirt, down his pants.

It took eighty-five steps to get to the end of the street. Yoongi’s nails digging into Seokjin’s skin so he can see where he’s been touched.

Jeongguk keeps sending nihilistic memes in their group chat. Yoongi’s open palms stroking down his bare back as he bends Seokjin over a grand piano.

Seokjin stumbles into his apartment, keys clattering and hands shaking, and he barely turns the lock on the door before he pushes his stupid pants to his knees. He’s way harder than he has any right to be. It’s humiliating that he walked home like this.

He grazes his fingers over the head of his cock, and a hiss slips through his teeth, and he’s already sticky-wet and flushed; he doesn’t even want to tease himself like he usually likes, so he skips straight to pumping his cock with a tightly-formed fist until his entire body is thrumming. The slide could be easier, better with lube or even spit, though he doesn’t quite care as he edges toward frenzy, his pace feverish, still almost entirely dressed and touching himself in the middle of his living room.

He dips back into the fantasy he had been spinning, lets it blow out like glass. Yoongi’s fingers in his mouth. Yoongi’s hands on his chest, his waist, his ass. Yoongi’s lips at his throat, tongue running over teeth marks. Yoongi’s voice, clear and hard as precious gems, telling him how pretty he looks when he’s so desperate. He can all but hear the clamor of piano keys as he braces himself while Yoongi fucks him good and deep.

Sweat trickles down the small of his back beneath his shirt and jacket, borderline-suffocating heat creeping up on him. It only takes a couple short minutes of stroking himself with quick flicks of his wrist before his orgasm hits so hard it leaves him breathless and heavy. A shudder ripples through his body when he gives himself a few extra pumps, tiptoeing around the line of discomfort as each touch pushes him closer to the realm of hypersensitivity.

He stills. There’s come sliding down his knuckles. His pulse races even in his fingertips. It feels as though he’s emerged, dripping, from the ocean, swaying to a constant shoreline rhythm that he wants to carry with him like an amulet.

He stands up, cleans up, strips his clothes away. On a scale from one to ten, his guilt level is only around a three. That’s better than he thought it would be. He doesn’t make a habit of jerking it to his friends, except that one time when—never mind. The point is that he’s not spiraling into post-orgasmic panic like he did that time, which is good. Definitely good.
In the darkness of his room, Seokjin puts on clean boxers before he falls into bed. He’s so sleepy suddenly. With bleary eyes, he clears the notifications from his phone. There’s a message from Taehyung, sent twenty minutes ago:

**Tae [11:49pm]**

JIMIN SAID YOU HAD A BONER WHEN YOU LEFT

Seokjin groans, tosses his phone aside, and snuggles up alone. Some texts don’t deserve to be answered.

○○○

So now it’s Sunday afternoon, and Yoongi is sitting at table six again, dressed in red plaid and a t-shirt for a band Seokjin doesn’t recognize, and Seokjin can’t quite look him in the eye yet.

Last night felt like a turning point, like jumping into a deep hole, a portal, a Polaroid camera flash, and Seokjin knows what he should do from here, but he doesn’t know.

Between boxing up Jimin’s hazelnut profiteroles and chatting with customers, Seokjin casts shy glances over at Yoongi. It always seems like Yoongi knows when Seokjin is staring. He’ll look up from his laptop or his notebook and catch his gaze before Seokjin looks away as if they are both north poles on a magnet, repelling each other.

Behind the cash register, Seokjin has a cupcake-shaped sticky note with his phone number written on it. He spends all afternoon waffling over how, when, if he should give it to Yoongi.

It’s all a bunch of elementary school nonsense.

Hoseok comes out of the kitchen with the tray of cookies he’d helped Seokjin decorate with royal icing. They’re Seokjin’s sugar cookies, cut into hearts and always frosted red, even though his friends say they should decorate them in different colors for different holidays. No. Always red.

“What are you waiting for?” Hoseok asks, looking pointedly at the sticky note.

“I’m not waiting for anything.”

“You’re joking, right?” When Seokjin doesn’t reply, Hoseok rolls his eyes. “Listen,” he says, dropping his voice to a conspiratorial whisper, “we all know you want him to butter your butt and call you a biscuit. Don’t even deny it.”

“You’re disgusting,” Seokjin says, as if he didn’t jerk it last night to thoughts of Yoongi fucking him on a piano. No one needs to know about that.

Hoseok gives him a terrible smirk. He tears the note off the counter, and before Seokjin can even think to reach out, Hoseok has already marched halfway across the storefront. “I thought you should have this,” he hears Hoseok say.

Here’s the thing. Seokjin loves Hoseok to death. He really, truly does. But sometimes? Sometimes Hoseok is at the top of his shit-list. Like right now.

He slinks into the kitchen and pretends to take stock of their dried fruits, even though all the canisters are almost full. He’s not fooling anyone. Hoseok comes back wearing a satisfied grin, and Seokjin wants to melt into the floor.

It takes no more than five minutes for the service bell to ring.
Jeongguk, Jimin, and Hoseok all stop what they’re working on to stare at him expectantly. He stares back, eyes panicky and wide. Hoseok gives him an enthusiastic thumbs-up, his fingers stained icing-red. Jimin throws him a salute. None of them show even the remotest signs of moving.

The bell rings again. “Seokjin?” Yoongi calls.

“Go, go!” Hoseok whisper-shouts, waving his arms frantically in the direction of the door.

“You’re all fired. Literally all of you.”

“You said that last week, too,” Jeongguk says.

Seokjin doesn’t have a clever reply at the ready, so he steels himself and finds Yoongi fidgeting in front of the cash register, shoulders hunched. He’s chewing on his bottom lip, looking uneasy for the first time in the haven of the bakery. He lays the sticky note on the counter. “I got the feeling that you don’t want me to have this,” he says carefully, and shit.

“No, I do!” Seokjin says, way too loud. Yoongi’s either blind or too polite or both to come to that conclusion. He lowers his voice. “Believe me, I do. I wish it hadn’t happened like that, though.”

“Oh,” Yoongi says, visibly relaxing. He gives a gummy smile and reaches out for the paper again. “I’ll take this back then.”

What Seokjin wants to say: You know what else you should take? Me. Out to dinner.

What Seokjin actually says: “Do you want a cookie?”

Yoongi clings to the paper and nods. “I meant to ask you about them earlier, but I got distracted with this stupid line in this stupid song.”

“The whale-dick song?”

“Jesus Christ, you’re unbelievable,” Yoongi says. “No, it’s completely unrelated to—to that. Tell me about the cookies.”

“These are sugar cookies made with cream cheese so they’re super soft and fluffy. Crispy cookies are banned in this household. They’re, uh. My own special. I call them Red cookies.”

“That’s it? Red? No stupid joke?”

“My heart is red,” Seokjin explains as he slips a cookie into a wax paper sleeve. “R, revolution. E, evolution. D, drop in the ocean.”

“A concept.”

He grins and concentrates all the dormant corniness inside him into a teasing quirk of the lips and a waggle of the eyebrows. “Revolution. E, evolution. D, drop in the ocean,” he says with a grand bow, presenting the cookie with flair enough for a dozen fairy tale princes.

Yoongi sighs from his nose, long and dramatic, and it’s funny, because Seokjin gets that often. That’s what people do when they’re trying not to laugh at his jokes. “Drop in the ocean, huh? Maybe
I should take a break from the garbage I’m working on and try for the whale-dick song after all. That’d fit in well.”

What Seokjin wants to say: Why write a song about whale dicks when you could write a song about my dick instead?

What Seokjin actually says: “You know what else you should take? Me. Out to dinner.”

Yoongi laughs, the apples of his cheeks plumping up and making him look so much younger. He waves the sticky note in front of him. “I’ll text you.”

○ ○ ○

“You’re welcome,” Hoseok says smugly, biting into a Red cookie.

“Thank you. But also fuck off.”

○ ○ ○

Mondays are for sleeping in. Mondays are Seokjin’s days off. Mondays are good days.

It’s right before two in the afternoon on Monday and Seokjin’s been awake for all of forty-five seconds, which is glorious. There are errands and chores that he should do today, and he should probably call his mother. But he can already tell, one whopping minute into his day, that he’s going to accomplish almost none of those things. He’s going to sit on his couch and catch up on the last three weeks of The Great British Bake Off.

As he rubs the sleep from his eyes, he fumbles around under his pillow for his phone. He’s got several messages in a newly-formed group chat, with everyone minus Namjoon:

**Tae [10:13am]**
What are we doing for joons birthdya :DDD

**Hobi [10:17am]**
He says he refuses to go out, not after last year

**Chim [10:18am]**
That is……………….fair

**Tae [10:18am]**
Wait whaat

**Gukkie [10:19am]**
Yeah remember how we got kicked out of two bars and dared joon to draw dicks on his office door and he almost got fired

**Chim [10:19am]**
We also lost namjoons phone

**Hobi [10:20am]**
NO, ONE OF YOU FUCKERS THREW HIS PHONE IN THE RIVER

**Chim [10:20am]**
And you got drunk on like half a bud light and then you cried because you thought we lost seokjin when he went to pee
Tae [10:21am]
K fine these are all valid xcuses

Tae [10:21am]
We can still do cake dna presents right

Hobi [10:21am]
Of course <3 <3

Seokjin lets those go unanswered for now, since he knows Taehyung already bought Namjoon’s birthday present and would give it to him regardless, and Hoseok and Jimin have been planning to make a Ryan-shaped cake for months. There’s another message, one much more intriguing:

Unknown Sender [12:37pm]
Is it weird to say that I kind of miss your stupid jokes? —Yoongi

Kim Seokjin [1:51pm]
My jokes aren’t stupid!!!

Yoongi [2:00pm]
They definitely are

Kim Seokjin [2:01pm]
Sticks and stones may break my scones but words will never burn me :P

Yoongi [2:03pm]
I can’t believe you

Kim Seokjin [2:03pm]
You butter believe me

Yoongi [2:06pm]
I know I asked for it but wow no

Kim Seokjin [2:06pm]
It’s a piece of cake to rile you up tbh

This banter continues on and off throughout the rest of the afternoon, between the leftover pasta Seokjin eats for a late lunch and the load of linens he throws in the laundry. Half of the things Seokjin sends are thinly-veiled attempts at hardcore flirting, and the other half are dumb icebreakers, like debating whether or not hot dogs are sandwiches. Yoongi sends him a few of pictures of his puppy, Holly, to which Seokjin replies, “He looks like fried chicken.”

After a long shower, Seokjin returns, cozy and relaxed in his terry bathrobe, to a series of messages that he imagines was written by a very flustered Yoongi:

Yoongi [4:40pm]
Do you want to go to a thing with me

Yoongi [4:40pm]
Tonight I mean at like 7

Yoongi [4:41pm]
My friend is reading poetry at an open mic downtown
Yoongi [4:41pm]
I’ll buy dinner?

Yoongi [4:41pm]
Sorry that sounds like I’m bribing you I’m sort of asking you out

Yoongi [4:42pm]
Also sorry this is so last minute but

Seokjin changes Yoongi’s name in his phone to “Gumdrop” and says that he will be there.

○○○

Seokjin’s been to his fair share open-mic nights. He took a couple years of performing arts classes before dropping everything to bake instead, and he thinks spoken-word poetry can be tedious to sit through. It’s a lot of poets vague-yelling about people they used to know and metaphors about things growing out of the cracks in their ribs. But like hell was Seokjin going to turn this down, “this” referring largely to Yoongi in his leather jacket but also to dinner.

The poetry is easier to handle with an enormous plate of pork belly nachos in front of him. Seokjin was worried that, outside of the safety of the bakery, they’d descend into droning small-talk and awkward silences, but they don’t. Between poets, Yoongi tells him sheepish stories about the songs he played at this place as a rookie artist, when only two people would bother paying him any attention.

“Those songs were terrible,” Yoongi admits around the ice in his drink. “My stage name was Gloss, if that tells you anything about how good I was.”

“Do you still perform?”

“Only for Holly.”

“I’m sure he’s the best listener,” Seokjin says. “I bet your songs were better than you think. Artists are ten times harder on themselves than the audience is.” Even in the dim light, Seokjin can tell Yoongi’s smiling face has gone pink, and Seokjin wants to kiss the color right from his skin.

Throughout the night, two different people make “things growing out of the cracks in my ribs” metaphors—one with a mangrove forest and one with an ancient shrine—but overall the vague-yelling is kept to a surprisingly pleasant minimum. Someone even presents a poem about rage-quitting RPGs, which has Seokjin clapping like a seal as he laughs. Yoongi’s friend Suran is a stunning wordsmith, performing a poem about sharing a glass of wine, looking like a mermaid queen with seafoam green hair all the while. The sheer pride on Yoongi’s face as Suran waves to the audience makes Seokjin happy-warm in the weirdest way.

“I guess that’s it, then. This was nice,” Yoongi says as the last poet gets their snaps from the crowd and a waiter has cleared the plates from the table. He fidgets with his hands, looking a bit lost.

Seokjin’s not yet ready to relinquish the night. He’s got a little work to do at Sweet Cheeks, and the least he can do is provide dessert. “I’ve got some prep work to do at the bakery for tomorrow. You can come with, if you want. You wanted to see me in the kitchen. Now’s your chance,” he says, and Yoongi beams at him.

○○○

By some miracle, Seokjin manages to wrangle Yoongi into helping prepare the Shorties, which taste
best after the dough’s been chilled for several hours. He hands Yoongi a big chunk of ginger, a teaspoon, and a microplane. “Peel and grate, Gloss,” he instructs.

Yoongi draws his lips together in a tight line. “I regret telling you anything,” he says as he begins to gently scrape the ginger’s skin away with the spoon.

“No one can resist this, not even you,” Seokjin says, framing his face with his hands like a blooming flower.

Yoongi grumbles something that sounds suspiciously like “especially me,” but Seokjin isn’t sure.

“What was that, Yoongi-chi?”

“I said, ‘You’re full of shit,’” which is absolutely not what he said, but Seokjin only laughs. It’s funny how Yoongi does this, pretending like his whole squishy face doesn’t give him away.

Seokjin starts on the Shortie dough, asking Yoongi to dump a couple tablespoons of grated ginger into his bowl. Yoongi squeezes his shoulder as Seokjin mixes the ingredients together. The ginger’s sharp, fresh scent clings to Yoongi’s hands, delicious and overpowering, and it’s so distracting that Seokjin almost forgets to add the nutmeg.

“I want to bake something for dessert,” Seokjin says as he finishes up the Shortie dough, rolling it into a log and swaddling it in plastic wrap. He does not think, I want to impress you. “Any requests?”

“What’s the easiest thing you can make?”

Aside from a few cheater no-bake things, the easiest recipes he knows are sugar cookies and scones. Yoongi’s already had his sugar cookies, so: “How about blackberry scones?” and Yoongi nods.

He gets butter from the freezer, heavy cream, a lemon. Flour, sugar, baking powder. Yoongi helps some, but for the most part, he sits on a stool next to the stainless steel prep station and takes notes in the journal he carries around. He asks questions here and there, about strange-looking utensils and which apron by the back door is Seokjin’s favorite.

It’s unusual having an attentive audience like this. Namjoon and Taehyung hang out in the kitchen a lot too, but they don’t ask questions, with the exception of “Can we have the rest of the brownie batter?” But it’s not a bad kind of weird, not at all. Seokjin likes this kind of attention, likes knowing that Yoongi is watching him so intently.

When he gets a bag of frozen blackberries, Yoongi raises a disbelieving eyebrow, his pen coming to a halt. “The Kim Seokjin uses frozen fruit?”

Seokjin scoffs and gently tosses handfuls of berries into his dry ingredients. He measures out the cream and drizzles it into the bowl. “You’ve obviously never made scones before,” he says. “Fresh berries break down faster and bleed all over the dough, and it ends up looking like badly tie-dyed socks.”

Yoongi laughs and writes something down in his notebook, and Seokjin begins to fold everything together. It’s a dry dough, crumbly and cold, and there are still pockets of flour scattered in the middle as he turns it out to shape it. It’s a good dough. This will be an excellent batch, flaky and tender. He can tell.

He makes two discs with the dough, divides them into triangles with a bench scraper, and explains to Yoongi what a bench scraper is when prompted. He tessellates the scones on a tray before sliding
them into the oven.

While the scones are baking, Seokjin makes a simple glaze of confectioner’s sugar and lemon juice and begins to clean up the counter. Occasionally, he casts a glance over at a scribbling Yoongi. God, he’s so curious about what he’s writing. Yoongi looks so focused, so concentrated, his bottom lip pulled between his teeth, and Seokjin doesn’t remember the last time he was this enamored by someone’s idiosyncrasies.

Actually, here’s the thing. He doesn’t remember the last time he was this enamored by someone at all.

The scones don’t take long in the oven. By the time Seokjin plates two of them, still steaming and dripping obscenely in thick lemon icing, he finally musters up some courage.

“What are you writing, anyway?” he asks as Yoongi takes a bite of his pastry. Seokjin takes a bite too, satisfied with how they’re soft and light and not too sweet.

Yoongi freezes, looks away, clears his throat. Seokjin frowns. He didn’t mean to cross a line or anything—

Yoongi writes one more thing down and pushes his notebook over, sitting very primly on his stool. He wipes icing away from the corners of his lips.

Seokjin skims through the notes. On one page, there’s a list of details about his kitchen, from the shelves lined with jars of rainbow sanding sugars to the Yoshi piñata that perpetually hangs in the corner. On the next page, there are vague observations on Seokjin’s order of operations, plus a line that says “fresh berries = tie-dyed socks,” which makes him giggle. And on the third page, a handful of random bullet points:

- NONSENSE IS BETTER THAN NOTHING
- In the light, whole things shimmer + merge + vanish completely + I’d like to vanish with you
- Smiles like Christmas + laughs like the New Year
- That’s a lie he laughs like a strangled fox but it’s cute
- Sweet cheeks, sweet tooth, sweetheart (???)
- That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet (?)
- Sweet dreams, sweet nothings, sweet spot, short + sweet, sweet talk, sweet escape, sweet potato, home sweet home (??????????????)
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- I’d like to kiss you.

Seokjin’s mind goes blank. He stops mid-bite. The last line is written more carefully than the rest, not so much like chicken-scratch. Deliberate and intentional. Something at the back of his throat flutters, like he’s poised at the top of a precipice and he’s scared to come down.

He reaches over and tugs the pen out of Yoongi’s hand.

What’s stopping you? he writes on the next line.
“Your mouth is full of scone,” Yoongi says dryly. Seokjin blinks in surprise before he bursts into a gale of laughter, louder than loud, and he covers his mouth with his hands so Yoongi doesn’t have to see what he’s chewing. Heat swarms his cheeks. He swallows, keeps laughing, watches Yoongi’s nose scrunch up.

And he goes for it, stretching over the prep counter on his tiptoes.

It’s an honest kiss, peach-soft and innocent. It’s barely more than the press of their lips together at first. Yoongi brings his hands up to cup Seokjin’s cheeks, warm and guiding and encouraging. Seokjin tilts his head further, and it’s fascinating—if not wholly flattering—how easily Yoongi opens his mouth beneath his own, how readily he welcomes Seokjin’s tongue between his lips. All Seokjin wants to do is lick the sugar from Yoongi’s mouth and make sure the only thing Yoongi tastes is him.

Yoongi pulls back, breath stuttering on an exhale, and there’s this lopsided grin on his face. He looks at once a little pleased and a little dazed, but entirely adorable. “These are amazing, by the way,” he says. Seokjin doesn’t know if he means the scones or the kisses, but he can’t care at all as he’s drawn back down.

Time passes in slow kisses and scones, and Seokjin has to be awake in seven—six—five hours so he can come back and open the bakery for the day. He must tell Yoongi good night sooner rather than later. But first he asks for one more kiss, one more kiss, just one more, one more kiss before they finally part ways for the evening, sending each other off like lovers sending bottled messages to the sea, hopeful and longing.

○○○

September melts into October like cotton candy on the tongue, so fast Seokjin hardly registers that the calendar has changed. Honestly, he probably wouldn’t have noticed for a few days it weren’t for the fact that Taehyung bursts into the bakery on the first of the month to wish everyone a Happy Jimintober.

Yoongi eventually has someone come fix his internet problem, so he doesn’t have to sit at table six anymore, but he still comes anyway. He still buys his cup of mediocre black coffee every time. And aside from the initial Hoseok Incident, Seokjin has been blessedly successful at keeping his obnoxious children-slash-employees from interfering with this fledgling relationship.

However, every couple of months, Seokjin calls for an after-hours meeting to pitch ideas for the new seasonal menu. Usually, it’s less of a meeting, per se, and more of a “let’s get tipsy and fantasize about eating our weight in Nutella” kind of gathering. Namjoon and Taehyung generally come, and this time, Seokjin invites Yoongi, since he’s at the bakery as often as either of them these days.

It’s a little intimidating, shoving Yoongi head-first into the general chaos of his social group. Taehyung shows up wearing three neckties—none of them around his neck, of course—and toting an armload of sangria wine coolers because he and Hoseok don’t get along with the beer that Jimin buys. Taehyung soon discovers that he and Yoongi grew up in neighboring districts, and they start speaking in casual, quick-fire dialect with each other. When Namjoon arrives, he all but declares Yoongi as his new best friend (much to Hoseok’s squawking dismay) after they immediately bond over music and poetry.

So, all in all, it’s going better than expected.

Seokjin pries the cap off a bottle and passes it to Yoongi. He cracks one open for himself and unearths a legal pad from a shelf packed with recipe books. Jeongguk weasels his way onto what
used to be Seokjin’s stool, next to Yoongi, and Seokjin doesn’t bother arguing.

“I have an idea,” Taehyung says, shoveling leftover cookies-n-creme frosting into his mouth.

Seokjin quirks an eyebrow. “An idea?”

“Yeah, for the menu. Two ideas, actually.”

“Okay, hit me.”

“I think you could make a fortune catering for bachelorette parties,” Taehyung starts, licking at his rubber spatula. “You can make dick-shaped cake pops and market them as Cakesuckers. It’s a multi-million-dollar business venture, probably.”

There’s a beat of stark silence before Jimin, Hoseok, and Jeongguk break down into howling laughter. Namjoon shakes his head, and Yoongi cracks a wry smile.

“Ten points for creativity. But this is a family-friendly establishment, so no.” That, and he still hates making cake pops. He taps his pen on his paper. “Does your second idea have anything to do with body parts?”

Taehyung pouts. “No, my second idea was hot chocolate cupcakes. With marshmallows.”

“Much better,” Seokjin says, jotting it down. A Dutch cocoa cupcake with a brûléed marshmallow topping, perhaps. “That one can be arranged.”

Throughout the evening, they come up with a handful of excellent ideas—Jimin is planning to experiment with apple-chai croissants, for example—though the more bottles that pile up in the recycling bin, the worse the ideas get. By the time they collectively invent the monstrosity that is the Cheeto-Frito-Dorito pumpkin-spice pie, Seokjin decides to call it a night.

“When are you going to bake something special for Yoongi?” Jeongguk asks quietly, before they shut all the lights off and lock the doors.

It takes Seokjin aback for a moment. As the oldest of their group, Seokjin is always watching everyone else. Watching, looking out for, preventing anyone from spontaneously making irreversible, life-altering decisions. He supposes that Jeongguk, as the youngest, is always watching everyone else too, in a different way. Jeongguk catches and remembers the smaller details that would otherwise fall through the cracks. Seokjin shouldn’t be that surprised that he asked.

“We’ll see,” is all he says in response.

○○○

In truth, Seokjin has no idea when he’s going to bake something special for Yoongi.

Here’s the thing. While creating the pastries for his friends, Seokjin never had to think much about them. Jimin just feels like spiced shortbread. Jeongguk just feels like miniature cinnamon buns. Yoongi doesn’t feel like anything. Or maybe it’s that Yoongi is an anomaly, feeling like too many things all at once.

Yoongi, who puts on this front of stoicism, who refuses to laugh at most of Seokjin’s jokes, who looks unapproachable and standoffish when he wears a snapback and his leather jacket. Yoongi, who calls his tiny dog his precious baby boy, who writes songs in a bakery with wooden garden
chairs and carnation-pink walls, who confesses things like, “When I grow up, I want to be a better person.”

Yoongi, whose kisses are filled with sweetness and lightning.

○○○

The remainder of October passes in a blur of birthday candles, an anniversary pie, and disgusting candy corn, and November happens in chunks of experimental bakes on this newly-charted journey to find a pastry that feels like Yoongi.

On the first of November, when the month is barely five hours old, Seokjin goes into work running on thirty minutes of sleep and makes cranberry biscotti with candied orange peel and a white chocolate drizzle.

The night before, he and Yoongi had gone to Heeyeon’s Halloween party. Yoongi had insisted on dressing up as matching zombies, and Seokjin was more than happy to go along with his plan. They became a whirlwind of screeches and heart palpitations, of funny white lies spoken through black-lipsticked mouths: “No, we weren’t actually scared! We were method acting.”

So, the biscotti is an artistic rendition of all the orange-Creamsicle Jell-O shots they downed and their blood-stained zombie rags. It’s pretty delicious—nine out of ten, will make again—but Seokjin decides after the first crunchy bite that Yoongi doesn’t feel like biscotti.

○○○

He makes a sour cherry torte the next week, and it’s supposed to be a good-natured jab at Yoongi’s tart attitude, but it’s so disingenuous that even Namjoon calls him out on it.

“What is this for?” he asks, digging a fork into the latticed crust.

“I’m trying to bake something that describes Yoongi.”

“And you think ‘sour’ describes him?”

“He’s a grumpy old grandpa sometimes. It’s a joke.”

Namjoon scoops up a mound of cherries. He gets half of it into his mouth and the other half on the counter. Seokjin hands him a paper towel, just like he’s done a thousand times before for a thousand other messes. “It tastes amazing, as expected, but the reasoning feels wrong,” he says skeptically.

Seokjin sinks in on himself. Namjoon is right: even as a joke it seems off. Seokjin regrets it enough that he doesn’t even let Yoongi know that the torte exists.

○○○

The third week, Yoongi mentions, in passing, that he loves churros.

The problem is that they don’t have an industrial deep-fryer at Sweet Cheeks. Seokjin’s not into the idea of frying churros on the stovetop—it’s too much of a hassle, and he’s not a fan of boiling, splattering oil—but éclairs, like churros, are made from choux dough. He fills baked éclair shells with spiced chocolate, brushes them with melted butter, and sprinkles them with cinnamon sugar.

Jeongguk almost fist-fights Yoongi for the last éclair, but despite their success, Seokjin thinks they’re too contrived. Or too pretentious. Or simply too un-Yoongi-like.
By the end of November, after feeding Yoongi’s caffeine addiction for three months, Seokjin makes salted caramel tiramisu. He dunks house-made ladyfingers in strong espresso and brandy, arranging them in rows and layering them with mascarpone-caramel custard and whipped cream. He dusts the whole thing with cocoa powder and flake salt.

The tiramisu is extraordinary. Good-enough-to-get-laid levels of extraordinary.

Good-enough-that-he-does-get-laid levels of extraordinary.

Yoongi doesn’t stop by the bakery the day Seokjin makes tiramisu, said he had to help his parents with errands. Which is fine—it’s not like he has any obligation to Sweet Cheeks or anything. Shortly before Seokjin closes up shop for the evening, however, Yoongi texts him, and Seokjin can all but hear him whining from across the entire city.

Gumdrop [4:19pm]
So hungryyyyy

Gumdrop [4:19pm]
Need fooooood

Gumdrop [4:20pm]
Feed meeeeee

Kim Seokjin [4:22pm]
Eat my ass ;)

It starts, as these things often do, with a kiss.

Actually, it starts with the two enormous pieces of tiramisu that Seokjin takes to Yoongi’s apartment, and how they sit pressed together on his couch and eat, and how Seokjin lets out an involuntary moan around his first bite.

It starts with how Yoongi has caramel stuck on his cheek when he leans over and kisses Seokjin. It starts with how Yoongi whispers in the small, small space between their mouths, “That’s the best thing I’ve ever eaten.” It starts with how Seokjin’s pride swells like a hot air balloon, how he soaks up the praise.

He moves their empty plates to the coffee table before he climbs into Yoongi’s lap. Yoongi’s hands rest on Seokjin’s waist as he arranges himself with his thighs on either side of Yoongi’s hips.

Overall, Seokjin is taller than Yoongi, but like this, perched on his legs and looking down, Yoongi is forced to tilt his head back and follow the movement of Seokjin’s mouth the way a sunflower tips to chase the arc of the sun. Seokjin pulls Yoongi’s bottom lip between his teeth. He’s gentle but impatient, for he lives for this specific brand of anticipation: the brash teasing and the sharp firecracker breaths and the air sitting heavy with suggestion. He can sense the silhouette of desire looming behind each kiss.

“I know it was a joke,” Yoongi says as Seokjin grinds none-too-subtly into his lap, “but I’ve sort of been thinking about eating you out ever since you texted me.”

“Oh,” Seokjin says. Oh. He blushes. It’s not like him to get all flustered like this, yet here he is anyway, at a loss for words.
One of Yoongi’s hands slips down to Seokjin’s ass. It would seem almost innocent, if it were not for what he’d just said. A hundred different thoughts flash through Seokjin’s mind, but most of them only add up to one big holy shit.

“Fuck, okay,” he amends, snapping himself out of his bashful daze to kiss along the sharp line of Yoongi’s jaw.

“Okay? Are you sure?” Yoongi asks.

Seokjin has been sure since September, give or take. If Yoongi is offering, Seokjin’s sure as hell not turning him down. “Yes, yes, I’m very, extremely sure.” He rubs himself shamelessly against Yoongi’s stomach, as if to prove with his hardening cock how sure he is.

“God,” Yoongi says. “Up, get up, not here.”

“Why not?” He presses closer, seeking any kind of friction against the softness of Yoongi’s body.

“Because Holly is sleeping two feet away, and I’m not corrupting his innocence.”

Seokjin would have laughed—he swears he would have—if it were not for the way Yoongi pulls insistently at the front of his waistband, letting it snap back against his abdomen. He scrambles away instead, stumbling over his own legs. In these few quicksilver moments of separation, he catches the way Yoongi’s eyes trail like comets down his body, unabashed and unrestrained, and he preens.

Yoongi leads him to the room opposite the kitchen and closes the door with a soft click. His bed is rumpled and unmade from this morning, the blinds are still drawn, and the lone lamp casts a low, warm glow on the white sheets. Seokjin immediately crowds his space and tugs Yoongi’s hoodie up over his head before shedding his own, relishing in the sudden reveal of skin.

“Look at you,” Yoongi says as Seokjin steps out of his sweatpants, bold and impatient, and god, does Seokjin love the reverence in his voice. It’s the type of voice people usually reserve for watching the tropical sun set on the water, or praying.

Seokjin shifts his weight to one foot so the lines of his body are stronger, the meandering taper of his waist more pronounced. He knows he looks good, and he’s more than happy to have Yoongi’s attention like this, but: “I’d prefer if you’d do more touching and less looking,” he says.

“I’m working on it.” Yoongi draws him closer again, big hands on slim hips, and leaves a feather-light pathway of kisses along the expanse of his clavicle. “Can you get on your knees for me?” he asks into the hollow of Seokjin’s throat.

Seokjin nods and plays the coquette, because he’s an expert at it. While Yoongi digs a bottle from the drawer in his nightstand, Seokjin crawls to the center of the bed, bracing his hands on the mattress and arching his back in a lunar crescent. He throws a brazen look over his shoulder, eyes hard with challenge as he shakes his ass.

“You’ll tell me if there’s anything you don’t like, right?” Yoongi asks.

“Safe word is pancakes.” Seokjin’s mouth quirks up into a smirk.

“Be serious,” Yoongi admonishes. “I want to be good for you.”

“Yes, I’ll tell you.”

“Better. Let’s get these off now.” Yoongi runs his fingertips down Seokjin’s back, from his
shoulders all the way to the elastic of his underwear, summoning goosebumps like snowfall with every touch.

Up until now, Seokjin’s mostly been able to ignore how he’s fully erect, how every single look, caress, word from Yoongi makes a thick heat coil in his belly. But as Yoongi slides his underwear down his thighs, telling Seokjin to lift his knees so he can take them all the way off, his cock is significantly harder to ignore.

He wants to touch himself so badly. He can hear Yoongi stripping off his jeans. The clatter of his belt buckle, the short rip of his zipper, the rustle of denim falling to the floor. The passing time does nothing for the way his cock twitches between his legs or the precome that wets the sheets.

It’d be so easy to grip his length and ease some of the tension himself.

He doesn’t. He won’t. He resolves that he’s not going to touch himself before Yoongi does. He wants to be good for Yoongi, too.

The mattress dips as Yoongi settles behind him. “Baby,” he whispers.

Seokjin shivers. Lowers himself to his elbows. Rests his forehead on the curve of his wrist. Waits.

Yoongi’s hands are cold against his ass. The metal bite of his rings is especially jarring. Yoongi touches him experimentally, kneading and squeezing and spreading, and everything grows warmer—his hands and his rings and Seokjin’s whole being—and just as Seokjin starts to get comfortable with these ephemeral touches, he feels the dry drag of one of Yoongi’s fingers over his hole, and he swallows down a sound that borders on a sob.

Yoongi pets over his hole so lightly it nearly tickles, leaving Seokjin restless and sensitive and naked in a dozen different ways. It’s so viscerally intimate. Almost too intimate without the glide of spit or lube, just skin on skin, pure contact. He shudders in exhilaration as Yoongi toys with him, and he doesn’t even know what he wants. He can’t decide if he wants that gratifying relief now or if he wants Yoongi to play with him until he falls apart.

The one thing that he knows he wants, however, is to see Yoongi’s face. God, he wants to know what Yoongi looks like while he touches Seokjin like this, when Seokjin has laid his body bare for him. How dark are his eyes? Is he tracing his lips with his tongue in concentration, in desire, still tasting Seokjin on his mouth? Are his cheeks red, burning as vibrantly as Seokjin feels?

And then: a sudden wetness—a slick insistence replacing Yoongi’s fingers, teasing at his rim.

And then: a low, hungry groan that Seokjin will hear in every erotic fantasy he has for the rest of his entire life.

And then: the fluctuating flex of Yoongi’s tongue, sometimes broad, flat stripes and sometimes quick flicks, a syncopated pattern that makes his muscles go taut like tightrope wires.

The slide of Yoongi’s lips is as agonizing as it is transcendent. He licks in glacial-slow loops and leaves wonderfully messy kisses. Seokjin’s always liked it messy like this, likes how he knows he can make his partner’s mouth water, likes how it makes him indelicte. He wiggles backwards and tries to get Yoongi closer, impossibly closer, the only way he could possibly be closer is if—

Yoongi opens his mouth wider, and then his tongue is pushing inside him. Seokjin gasps. His knuckles flash white as he grips the bedding. Yoongi’s tongue traces in deep, and his nails dig into
Seokjin’s sides as he tries to keep him still. When Seokjin’s muscles tighten, Yoongi makes this satisfied sound in his throat that has Seokjin’s cock twitching against his stomach.

Yoongi pulls back before Seokjin can get used to his rhythm. “Good?” he asks.

The feeling of saliva dripping and cooling over his entrance is obscene, and god, yes: “Good,” he repeats. “So fucking good.”

He hears the telltale snap of a bottle of lube being opened, and then Yoongi’s fingers are petting over his hole again, languidly circling his rim, slipping over skin like he’s avoiding the commitment. No one’s ever touched him like this—not even himself—and he feels so many things all at once but can’t put a name to any of them. “Yoongi,” he says with a frantic edge in his voice.

“I’ve got you,” he says. He presses a kiss to the small of Seokjin’s back, right at the curve of his ass, before he eases in one finger.

That’s—that’s a start. A great start. But Yoongi is in no rush whatsoever. He takes his damned time pushing in past each knuckle. Twisting his wrist. Pulling out. Reaching back in. He spends eons teasing with one finger before he adds another, and no matter how ready Seokjin is for it, it still requires a second to adjust. Two fingers become three. He focuses on how he knows the stretch will dissolve into something sweeter, focuses on how Yoongi works his tongue back into his ass in tandem with his fingers, focuses on how those fingers are angling for—

“Oh god,” Seokjin says as Yoongi grazes his prostate. “Jesus, fuck.”

Yoongi does it again, again, always light, never pressing that hard or for that long, never quite enough. Seokjin’s whole body jerks on its own accord, expanding and contracting like he’s an entire universe, scorching like a star.

“Could you come just from this?” Yoongi asks quietly. He taps against that spot again, and Seokjin muffles a moan into the sheets, his breath collecting warm and damp in the fabric.

“No, I don’t know, I don’t—oh, fuck.” Yoongi reaches between Seokjin’s legs, brushing the underside of his cock, nothing more than a casual, appraising touch, and Seokjin’s head spins. Maybe he could come like this out of sheer desperation. He’s already capsizing under a swelling flood of arousal, but, but: “I—ah—I want you to fuck me, please just fuck me,” he says. Yoongi stills, and Seokjin feels it when he hums against his ass.

Yoongi removes his fingers carefully and licks one last, fat stripe across his hole. Seokjin’s thighs quiver. The bed jostles as Yoongi stands up, and Seokjin repositions himself so he can see Yoongi for the first time in who knows how long: Yoongi is flushed the loveliest pink all down his chest, and fuck, Seokjin wants.

They make electric eye contact as Yoongi finds a condom. Seokjin finally caves and wraps a hand around himself. Precome smears in the palm of his hand, and he gives his cock a few torture-slow pumps, just enough to ease the unruly edge, digging his thumb into the leaking head. He reaches around himself and tests how nicely Yoongi’s opened him up, his middle finger slipping in so easily.

The whole time, he’s hyperaware of Yoongi watching him touch himself. Yoongi never stops looking at him, not even for one precious moment. Somewhere, in some sky-high part of his mind, he makes a note of this: maybe (definitely) another time he’ll have Yoongi watch while he gets himself off on his own terms. He thinks they’d both enjoy that, Seokjin the spectacle and Yoongi the audience.
He registers Yoongi’s gravelled voice saying, “You’re so beautiful, baby.”

Yoongi rearranges himself behind Seokjin. His hands are all over, fingertips tracing lines down his back and over his ass and across his thighs. It’s pretty much exactly what Seokjin wanted that night in September when he spun that fantasy of Yoongi touching him—the only thing missing is the piano, which is next to unbelievable.

Soon, he feels Yoongi’s cock between his cheeks, a teasing and portentous weight that has Seokjin nearly vibrating with want. “Come on, come on,” he urges, and he lets the desperation seep into his voice like water into a sinking ship.

And then Yoongi’s pushing in, slick and heavy, until he presses flush against his ass. They stay unmoving like that for far too long. Seokjin’s chest heaves. It’s so otherworldly good to feel his own body work to accommodate the thickness of Yoongi’s cock, and he’s more than ready to have Yoongi pounding into him, using him to chase his own climax.

Eventually, Yoongi moves, withdrawing until Seokjin can barely feel him anymore. When Yoongi rolls his hips forward, Seokjin reaches blindly behind himself once more. His hand lands on soft belly and a thin trail of coarse hair before dropping to where their bodies meet. To where his rim is stretched around Yoongi’s cock. The tips of his fingers skim along Yoongi’s length when he pulls out again, all solid heat beneath the slip of latex.

It’s careful and maddening and Seokjin doesn’t want to be coddled anymore. Not while he’s panting into the bedspread. Not while he can feel Yoongi’s cock throb inside him.

“Ah, Yoongi, fuck, Yoongi.”

“Are you alright?”

“I’m fine, just—ah, god—just go, faster, need more.”

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Yoongi.”

“Baby.”

Now here’s the thing: Seokjin is not above begging. Not in the least. His mouth may be pretty, but he’s more than ready to dirty it with placating words like fuck my ass so hard I’ll feel you for days or make me come on your big dick, do it.

But currently, he can feel his muscles clenching around what little Yoongi has given him, and his thoughts are amorphous, some backtracking blur of yes yes yes yes yes, and all he says is a murmured, “I can take it. You feel so good.”

He rocks backwards until Yoongi’s cock slides in deep and sharp and exactly how he wants it. Yoongi takes the hint (thank god) and starts to move faster, faster, fuck, yes. Seokjin’s whole body lurches forward each time Yoongi pushes into him, and he tries to brace himself, encouraging Yoongi to go harder, deeper, faster still. It’s rough and incredible, and this is how Seokjin begins to unravel like the changing of the seasons.

Between snaps of Yoongi’s hips though, before Seokjin comes without knowing what it looks like while Yoongi fucks him, before he no longer has the breath for real sentences, he manages to say, “Wait, let me see you.”
Yoongi comes to a stop and pulls out. “Anything you want,” he says, and the predatory fervor in his voice makes Seokjin all shivery hot. Seokjin hears bits and pieces of Yoongi telling him how well he’s doing, how amazing he is, but he doesn’t catch all of it, since Yoongi rubs his fingers over his hole when it flutters around nothing, and Seokjin chokes on a high whine.

When he rolls over, his cock, dripping and red, bounces on his stomach. The pool of precome he’s left on the sheets sticks to his back, which is gross, but then Yoongi’s pushing his thighs apart and lining himself back up, and Seokjin can’t care about anything except having Yoongi’s cock inside him again.

Like this, Yoongi is merciless and perfect, pulling nearly all the way out and slamming back in, moving at a relentless, smooth tempo. Sweat plasters his hair to his forehead, and his dark eyes brim with something akin to awe. He’s wearing a silver, gossamer-thin chain around his neck, and Seokjin wants to use it to pull him down for a kiss, but he also doesn’t want Yoongi to stop even for a second.

He’s glad he can see Yoongi this way.

As they move, the keen slap of skin hitting skin reverberates throughout the room. Each sharp noise mixes with the ripple of lube and the litany of unrestrained whimpers that Seokjin lets flow from his mouth after Yoongi whispers, “I like hearing how good you feel. You can be loud, baby.” When he bends one of Seokjin’s legs up toward his chest, he hits his prostate head-on, and Seokjin cries out uninhibited.

“Wanna come,” Seokjin says, reaching for his cock again.

“Me, too,” Yoongi says. “Need you to come first. Can you do that for me?”

Seokjin nods blearily. He can do that. It’s not like it’s going to take long.

He fists his cock, and he struggles to keep his eyes open. He’s never been this turned-on before, has never been this deliciously full, has never been this hard and wet, and as he fucks up into his hand, he knows he’s on the fringes of his tipping point. His stomach tightens. His body is volatile, and it’s only two more deep thrusts before he’s coming over his hand, across his abdomen, messy and intense.

Come drips into the divot beneath his breastbone. His chest blooms in stuttering, harsh breaths. The friction of Yoongi still fucking into him starts to feel raw as he comes down from his high. Now more than ever he can feel every inch of Yoongi’s length inside of him, still pushing into his prostate, and he doesn’t mean for it to happen, but his eyes go glassy-wet as the pleasure begins to give way to overstimulation.

It’s when Yoongi loses his rhythm that Seokjin knows he’s coming. Yoongi bows his head forward as he rides out his release, mouth open and teeth bared as he pants out a choked-up “Fuck, fuck, Seokjin, baby.” His hips falter in shallow, erratic bursts before finally stilling, still buried in Seokjin’s ass. He relaxes. Slips out gingerly. The tension in his shoulders evaporates as he drapes himself on top of Seokjin like ivy.

They lay there in the candescent afterglow for several long moments, merely breathing, clinging to this lingering kind of astral sensitivity. Yoongi holds himself above Seokjin, peppering lazy kisses at the juncture of his neck and shoulder. Seokjin brings his clean hand up to pet through Yoongi’s damp hair, and he doesn’t want to move for the rest of forever.

“Jesus Christ,” Yoongi mutters.
Yoongi laughs, sounding blissed out and tired. He flops over to discard the condom and, after a couple of bleating complaints, manages to get Seokjin to his feet. They take turns cleaning each other up in the bathroom, wiping away come and sweat with warm washcloths and drinking sips of tap water. Seokjin’s legs are still wobbly like pudding as he redresses, and he learns, pleasantly, that a post-sex Yoongi is a snuggly Yoongi: Seokjin can hardly peel him off himself long enough to get his hoodie back on.

Back on the couch, by the mercurial blue glow of the television, he cradles a yet-uncorrupted Holly against his chest and sits between Yoongi’s legs. One of Yoongi’s hands comes to rest on Seokjin’s belly, the other flopping Holly’s ears back and forth. Seokjin settles into the safety of Yoongi’s arms and thinks, simply, that he would like to stay.

He notices their dirty plates and forks left abandoned on the table and almost laughs in disbelief. Somehow, after everything that has transpired, after a pair of dessert-induced orgasms, Yoongi still doesn’t feel like tiramisu.

Seokjin can’t explain why, but it just doesn’t fit him, even though Seokjin will definitely, definitely make it again in the near future.

For reasons.

○○○

It’s so embarrassing.

When he goes into work the next morning, minding his own business while whipping up praline and pumpkin mousse to go on top of shortcakes, Hoseok and Taehyung immediately sense, like a pair of supernatural sex-sharks, that he got laid. He has no idea how they can tell. He’s not acting any differently than usual, he’s not dressed any differently than usual. He’s making mousse in an oversized sweater—nothing out of the ordinary there. He doesn’t even have any hickeys.

And yet.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean may I, Kim Taehyung, please eat this pear that I am holding in my own two hands?”

“No, what do you mean, ‘something is different’? Nothing’s changed since you were here—” Seokjin glances at the clock on the wall “—seventeen hours ago. And yes, you can eat the pear.”

“He’s right,” Hoseok says suspiciously. “But it’s not just something. It’s you.”

“What the fuck are you two talking about?” Seokjin snaps. He’s doing that thing where he’s squawking like an angry parrot again, but Taehyung and Hoseok are used to these outbursts, so they ignore him.
Taehyung inspects him more closely, looking him up and down a few times, which is unnerving. “Oh, my god,” he says. “You and Yoongi did the nasty!”

“Oh, yeah, that’s it,” Hoseok agrees as easily as though he’s confirming that circles are round and today is Wednesday. “He finally buttered your butt, huh?”

Seokjin wants to jump off a cliff. He doesn’t understand. He would have told them sooner rather than later—Yoongi’s dick is absolutely worth bragging about, after all—but this is beyond his comprehension. “How?” he asks.

Taehyung takes a huge bite of his pear. Juice dribbles down his chin. “My eyes aren’t big for no reason,” he answers cryptically.

○○○

On Seokjin’s birthday, he shows up at his bakery at ass-o’clock in the morning and Jimin is already there, tying gold mylar balloons to the chalkboard sign they keep out front. The sign has been erased —two days ago, Namjoon had written, “Currently reading: Of Mice and Gingerbread Men”—and it now says, in big block letters, “BIRTHDAY BOY INSIDE!!!”

“What are you doing?” Seokjin asks, swatting a balloon against the wind.

“Making sure everyone on the street knows it’s your birthday,” Jimin says brightly. The tip of his nose is tinged pink from the cold morning air.

“It’s not my birthday, though.”

Perhaps it’s a bit cruel, but the ghost-white look of panic that washes over Jimin’s face is worth it. Jimin whips out his phone before shoving the lit-up screen in his face. His background is a super-blurry selfie of Taehyung. “It’s the fourth of December, asshole. Don’t make me call your mom. She’d send me your birth certificate if I asked, she loves me that much.”

Seokjin grins. Jimin would call his mom, and his mom would send his birth certificate, she loves Jimin that much. “Sorry, not sorry.”

“You’re a jerk,” Jimin says, smothering him in a hug anyway. Jimin ties one last double knot to the sign before they head inside, where there are more balloons on either side of the cash register. Jimin has pulled their Yoshi piñata down from its hook in the kitchen, dressed it in a curly rainbow wig and a pair of enormous yellow sunglasses, and set it up at table one.

They share tea in the peace of dawn, letting the steam fog their glasses while they wait for the ovens to preheat and blocks of butter to soften. Jimin has more tact than Hoseok and Taehyung, and he breaches the subject of Yoongi casually.

“So at first, I thought you and Yoongi were total opposites,” he says. “He was like, all dark and tough and quiet, and he said he hates PDA. But then the other day, after we went to that escape room, he was climbing you like a tree, and he literally screamed because we saw a poodle wearing rain boots. You’re both super weird.”

“Thanks,” Seokjin says dryly.

“The point is, you’re a lot more alike than you originally seem. I like him.”

“Me, too.”
“So what kind of thing is this? He’s been around for a few months now. Is it an exclusive thing? A serious thing? Just a sex thing?”

Seokjin smiles into his cup of ginseng. “It’s the best kind of thing, I think,” he says.

And Jimin understands, because Jimin always understands.

Jeongguk shows up not long after that and gets to work on stenciling chocolate cheeks and chocolate wings onto little angel cookies. For what Seokjin thinks is the first time ever, Hoseok is late, but he’s late because he had stopped to buy hash browns for birthday breakfast, which is admissible.

Seokjin eats greasy potatoes and gets equally-greasy hugs from everyone, and then he washes grapes for this morning’s Grape Monster. He pulls a box of puff pastry from the freezer (yes, he uses premade dough—he respects himself too much as a human being to go through the process of laminating puff pastry once a week) and begins the process of shaping the galette, moving his hands in a familiar rhythm and singing all the wrong words to the Troye Sivan album Jeongguk puts on their speakers.

After they’ve all got trays of pastries going in the front display and Seokjin opens the bakery for the day, his phone buzzes in his back pocket.

**Gumdrop [6:58am]**
Did you sit in a pile of sugar

**Gumdrop [6:59am]**
Because you’ve got a sweet ass

**Kim Seokjin [7:02am]**
Are you drunk at seven in the morning????????

**Gumdrop [7:06am]**
That’s your birthday present. Happy birthday

Seokjin won’t lie. It’s one of his favorite birthday presents to date, and he laughs at it until Jeongguk sticks a spoonful of peanut butter in his open mouth to shut him up.

But it’s not his birthday present, as he learns later on, because that’s how Yoongi works. Yoongi drops by after the commotion of the morning has waned and hands him a plastic shopping bag. This bag contains—otherwise unwrapped—a set of cookie cutters shaped like the Kanto starter Pokémon, and Seokjin at once begins a grocery list for everything he needs to make lemongrass Bulbasuars, burnt sugar Charmanders, and sea salt Squirtles.

Seokjin ends up putting Project Yoongi on hold for the end-of-year holidays.

He’s got the worst creative block he’s had in a long time, and the guilt has been nagging at him ever since Jeongguk brought it up. But nothing he bakes feels quite right, and with the holidays coming up, he doesn’t have the mental capacity to dedicate to figuring it out. All his thoughts sound like cotton candy at this time of the year, all wispy and pure sugar. He measures his days in how much cocoa powder he accidentally inhales and the number of mocha-peppermint doughnuts he sells, and on the rare occasion he’s not thinking about pastries, he’s…well, he’s thinking about Yoongi sucking his dick, which Yoongi does frequently and flawlessly.
Like now, the Sunday before Christmas, somewhere close to midnight, wherein Seokjin is sprawled out naked with a very eager Yoongi kneeling between his legs. It’s rather cold to be exposed like this, but here’s the thing: Seokjin loves being naked in Yoongi’s bed. Not even because of the general promise of an orgasm but because it usually means that Yoongi is naked too.

Yoongi is maybe two steps away from delicate, short and lithe and elegant. The pearl-salt curves of his hipbones are so prominent that Seokjin can cup them in his palms like he’s trying to catch the rain. His shoulders are marked by a sugar-dusting of pale freckles, and he blushes a luminous pink far more easily than he’d ever admit.

The missing two steps, however, manifest themselves in the broad, solid plane of his chest and in the network of thick veins that crawl from the backs of his hands up his forearms like fault lines, suggesting strength and finesse and control.

There’s nothing delicate about Yoongi’s mouth, either, with his surefire smirk and his fucking tongue. Once, he had made a remark about having the most advanced tongue technology in the world, and even though Seokjin had fake-gagged at how slimy it sounded, he’s continually blown away at how correct Yoongi is.

Or, just…blown, period.

Yoongi’s lips work so smoothly down his length, taking him in like it’s a competition. His tongue curls and traces deliberate, snaking lines from the base to the tip, licks up the precome that beads at the slit, and it makes all Seokjin’s nerves crackle like radio static.

Sometimes Yoongi pulls off all the way and just teases, blowing cool air over the wet head of his cock or kissing down to his balls, and Seokjin thinks he does it just to make him whine. (Seokjin lets himself be loud, doesn’t hold back his voice now that he knows Yoongi gets off on it.) Sometimes Yoongi attaches his mouth to the expanse of Seokjin’s thighs instead, biting and sucking unapologetic bruises there, making him squirm before taking his cock down his throat again.

This time, when Seokjin comes, one of Yoongi’s hands is holding his own and the other is splayed on his hip, all reassuring gestures as Seokjin spills into Yoongi’s mouth and—he knows that a lot of people love him, basks in that love all the time, but now, quivering under Yoongi’s eclipsing touch, Seokjin feels adored.

○○○

(The next morning, waiting for coffee to brew in the kitchen in their underwear and flannels, Seokjin catches Yoongi’s gaze drop and snap back up again, over and over. It’s hilarious how hard he’s trying not to stare and how badly he’s failing.

“It’s kind of pretty, isn’t it?” Seokjin asks, tracing the galaxy of spotty red marks on his thighs. He doesn’t mind in the least, but Yoongi did do quite the number on him.

“Yes,” Yoongi stammers. Seokjin laughs. He wonders if it sends the same thrill through Yoongi as it does through him knowing that he can look down and see the ghost of Yoongi’s mouth still there on his skin.)

○○○

Sometimes, it seems like Taehyung has connections literally everywhere. He gets into exclusive clubs, lands the best concert tickets for cheap, somehow never has to pay for ice cream at the shop on the next block because the aunties there have all but adopted him.
Taehyung’s been planning some wild New-Year’s-Eve-party-meets-dual-birthday-party with Jisoo. He has somehow convinced (charmed? begged? bribed?) Seojoon into hosting the party at his house and not in Taehyung and Jimin’s shoebox studio apartment, which is barely large enough for the two of them and their calico kitten. To be honest, Seokjin has no idea about how this party is being funded, but he suspects that Taehyung’s been calling in all his favors and exploiting all the connections he has in the city.

Seokjin and Hoseok make the cake for this event, an obnoxiously large thing done in flavors that are great on their own but make zero sense when put together. Classic double-chocolate cake with chocolate ganache on the bottom, earl grey and vanilla cake with lemon curd on top of that, carrot cake with orange Grand Marnier cream on the next layer, and champagne cake with cherry preserves on top. He had tried to convince Taehyung into something more traditional—or at least more coherent—to no avail.

So he’s stuck grating carrots until his palms are stained yellow while Hoseok steeps tea bags in simmering milk.

It takes two days to get all of the layers made and assembled with their fillings, and it takes another day for Jimin and Jeongguk to cover the whole thing in airbrushed fondant and edible silver glitter—a rather sophisticated look in relation to the train-wreck of flavors inside.

Speaking of sophisticated looks. Taehyung had specifically told everyone to dress up, and New Year’s is one of the few times Seokjin doesn’t mind forgoing his standard baggy sweaters for something showier. Might as well start the year off looking good—not that he ever looks bad, but still. So on the day of the party, he leaves the top button of his sheer black shirt undone, because nothing sends his friends into a spiraling breakdown of Victorian modesty like the mere idea of his nipples or a couple inches of his throat. He slicks his hair up off his forehead and finishes with a teardrop earring and this stupid-expensive skull ring he impulse-bought.

When Seokjin arrives at the party—late for his standards but still early enough that Jimin hasn’t started stripping—Taehyung appears like magic in front of him, hugging him so hard he gasps, showing him where to put his coat, and bedecking him in tangle of metallic beads, all within a few seconds.

Seokjin guesses Taehyung invited every last person he knows to this party, down to his dentist, and all of Jisoo’s friends are there, and probably some of Seojoon’s too, and whoever else may have wandered in. There are just as many familiar faces as there are unfamiliar, and he goes around chatting with Bogum and a couple women who say they work with Jisoo. He snags a plateful of chicken lollipops (a horrific, delicious concept for an appetizer) from the kitchen and then does shots with Seungkwan, Jeonghan, and Soonyoung.

The hours tick by and Yoongi still has not arrived. He spent the evening with his brother, but he said he’d be at the party eventually. “Wouldn’t miss the chance to kiss you into the New Year,” he had said on the phone earlier, right before hanging up. But his turtle-slow ass isn’t here yet, midnight is creeping nearer, and Seokjin is getting antsy.

If Seokjin had bothered to check his phone, he would have seen Yoongi’s string of texts—

**Gumdrop [10:33pm]**
Sorry traffic is bad will be there in half an hour?

**Gumdrop [10:39pm]**
This taxi driver looks kinda like Waluigi and it’s freaking me out
—but he doesn’t check, so it’s a delightful surprise when Yoongi finally shows up, looking like an angel with rosy color on his cheeks and snow in his hair.

“You’re here!” Seokjin says over the music, scooping him up in his arms and yelping when Yoongi’s cold lips meet his cheek. “Took you long enough.”

“What can I say?” he says as he unwraps his scarf. “I’m a sweet boy who shows up late and leaves early. A honey boy.”

“The sweetest,” Seokjin confirms. He slings half of his beads around Yoongi’s neck and tugs him along to get him a drink.

(A honey boy. A honey boy?)

They work on getting pleasantly buzzed, and he notices, through the cloud-cover of alcohol, that Yoongi almost always has one hand somewhere on his body. His shoulders, his hips, his waist, the small of his back. Always anchoring, always steadying, as if to say please stay close to me. Seokjin always leans into his touch, as if to say I’m right here.

Quarter to midnight, someone cuts the music and blows an air horn. Then Taehyung and Jisoo are standing on a table thanking everyone for coming. He hopes they’re both still sober enough to maintain their balance. (Taehyung doesn’t drink very much or very often, but when he does, things can go downhill rather quickly. He doesn’t know how well Jisoo can hold his liquor, but regardless, Seokjin doesn’t need to worry about broken arms and split lips tonight.) There are a few inebriated birthday toasts and New Year’s speeches, lots of laughing and hollering and raising red cups and plastic champagne flutes in the air.

Taehyung holds his wrist up to his face and squints at his watch like he’s trying to remember which numbers are which. He shouts, “Thirty seconds!” There’s a lot of shuffling around—people digging their phones out of their pockets and pushing through the crowd to reunite with their midnight kisses. And then:

Ten! Nine!

Yoongi reaches up to cup Seokjin’s face, his thumbs brushing over his cheekbones.

Eight! Seven!

“Happy New Year,” Yoongi says.

Six! Five!

“Happy New Year,” Seokjin repeats, the corners of his wide, wide smile disappearing beneath Yoongi’s hands.

Four! Three!

A honey boy, Seokjin thinks.
Two!

Yoongi’s mouth is on his already and he doesn’t mind at all, wouldn’t have minded if they started at the top of the countdown or an hour ago.

One!

The house erupts in cheers, and there’s confetti all over, and fireworks sparkle somewhere in the distance, and the music kicks back up, and the pounding bass thumps fast, and Yoongi keeps kissing him slow. This is definitely the best start to a new year, and Seokjin cannot stop thinking about Yoongi calling himself a honey boy.

Seokjin is a little drunk and a lot inspired, and he finally thinks he knows what to bake for Yoongi.

Seokjin doesn’t actually bake on New Year’s Day.

Instead, Yoongi takes him to the studio where he records his music. They don’t defile the piano (this time), but Seokjin sits next to him on the bench while Yoongi fidgets.

“It’s still a rough draft,” Yoongi says as a nervous disclaimer. He cracks his knuckles and straightens his back. His hands hover over the keys. “I wanted you to hear it, though.”

And he begins, playing a piece with a lilting melody, soft and unfocused like the morning sun. The piano is somehow both lofty and immediate, hectic and relaxed, and Seokjin realizes that this must be what Yoongi meant when he said he was trying to compose a song that felt like the bakery. In this song, Seokjin hears the complex choreography they do in the kitchen every day, the granulated sugar between his fingers, the customers who walk in scowling and leave smiling.

“It’s beautiful,” Seokjin says when the final note fades into the silence of the studio. “It really is. Does it have a name yet?”

“I’ve, uh, been calling it ‘The King of Hearts.’”

What Seokjin wants to say: *Play it for me again.*

What Seokjin actually says: “I’m a little bit in love with you.”

“That’s convenient,” Yoongi says without hesitating. He tilts his head and catches Seokjin’s gaze. “I’m a little bit in love with you, too.”

And—it’s funny? It’s not a big ordeal. Seokjin doesn’t think the universe has moved for them. “That makes me happy,” he says with a smile. He plays what he remembers of Chopsticks, but he falters after a few bars because he has a thought.

“Yoongi-chi? Did you know that—that I also lo—”; but he’s unable to finish, giggling at the joke on the tip of his tongue.

“You can’t even commit to your own ridiculousness.”

Through hiccupsing laughter and an accidental elbowing of the piano keys, he manages to say, “Did you know that I also loaf you?”

Yoongi stares at him for a long time. Seokjin almost apologizes; he knows it’s stupid. But Yoongi lays one hand over Seokjin’s, squeezing their fingers together. “I loaf you too, you dork,” he says,
his voice nonchalantly but his grin like cursive.

Ah. There it is.

The way Seokjin’s heart opens like a locket. The way his face warms at the shifting, aqueous concept of love. The way a voice resonates somewhere in his mind, declaring with the divinity of a fortuneteller, yes, you’ve found something special.

○○○

(Seokjin asks Yoongi to play the song for him again. Seokjin thinks about asking Yoongi to play the song for him always.)

○○○

When Seokjin does make it back into his kitchen—on Friday with strawberry muffins to make and holiday decorations to take down—he gathers his ingredients for a layered honey cake his mother told him about once upon a time.

It’s an interesting recipe, unlike anything he’s made for the bakery before. It involves first cooking butter, sugar, eggs, and honey on the stove until the mixture foams up and turns a dark caramel color. When he takes it off the heat, he folds in the flour (getting some of it all over his shirt, of course) and is left with something that resembles a biscuit dough rather than a cake batter. He rolls the dough out on the counter and cuts a dozen large, thin rounds before baking them on sheet trays.

For the filling—well, while looking up recipes for this cake, Seokjin struggled to find any sort of overlap between sources. Some recipes called for a loose buttercream, others for a vanilla custard, and others for a stiff whipped cream. He ends up going with a filling based on condensed milk and sour cream so that it’s thick and heavy with a tangy bite. He layers cake, filling, cake, filling, until the whole thing is leveled and oozing cream down the sides.

The real showstopper for this cake is a big piece of honeycomb molded from white chocolate. He fucks up the first attempt by shattering it while removing it from the silicone mold. His second attempt is successful though, and he lays the delicate sheet across the top of the cake. With a steady hand, he fills each tiny chocolate cell with bubbles of honey until the whole thing is glistening like amber.

Though completed, the cake won’t be ready to eat until tomorrow. The cake layers are hard and crispy right now, but tomorrow, after the filling has soaked into each layer, the cake will be spongey and fork-tender. And this—this feels right. Seokjin hasn’t even tasted it yet, but it feels more like Yoongi than anything else he’s done. It’s unique and intricate. Softens over time. Probably best with coffee. And of course, inspired in full by his honey boy.

He leaves it in the refrigerator overnight. Saturday passes in a blur of cinnamon buns, as Saturdays usually do. He calls for one of his meetings after the bakery closes. It’s on such a short notice that Jimin doesn’t even have time to go buy beer. Instead, they all sit around one of the prep stations drinking banana milk through neon straws like a bunch of kids, which almost feels more appropriate.

“I’m sure you’re all wondering why I called you here tonight,” Seokjin starts. Jeongguk rolls his eyes, and Seokjin leans across the counter to smack his arm. “Starting tomorrow, we’ll be selling a new Sunday special.”

“What’s the occasion?” Hoseok teases, loud and stilted, and it’s obvious that he knows. Namjoon nudges him with his elbow, and Hoseok’s mouth just turns up in a heart-shaped grin.
Seokjin brings the cake out of the refrigerator and looks directly at Yoongi. “This is the Honey Boy. I’ll be making this instead of sugar cookies.” He cuts the cake into even slices, breaking the layer of chocolate and hardened honey with a crisp snap, then slides the first piece over to Taehyung, who’s been making grabby-hands ever since he brought out the serrated knife.

After all his friends receive a piece of cake and a fork, Yoongi says hesitantly, only loud enough for Seokjin to hear, “Can I talk to you for a second?”

Seokjin nods and leads him out to the storefront, letting the kitchen door swing closed. They stand there in the near-dark, the streetlamps outside casting halos of light on the floor. “What’s the matter?” Seokjin asks.

“I’m really flattered, but…you’re discontinuing your cookies?” Yoongi tugs at his hoodie strings. “What about ‘my heart is red’ and the poem and the concept? You can’t give that up. Especially not for me.”

Seokjin thought about this; he knew it’d come up one way or another. This isn’t a sacrifice. This isn’t an obligation. It’s something new, sure, but this is just him doing what he loves most—for the person he loves most.

He ducks his head and nestles his face against Yoongi’s shoulder. “I’m not giving anything up, Yoongi-chi. I’ll still make the cookies whenever I feel like it. My heart is red, but my heart is also yours.”

“Oh,” Yoongi says, quiet and shy. “In that case, it’s—it’s an honor.”

Seokjin laughs, and Yoongi laughs too, the kind of airy laugh Seokjin knows comes with crinkly eyes and a wide, gummy smile. His heart is red and his heart is Yoongi’s, and perhaps most of all, his heart is so full with the way his friends are giggling in his kitchen, the way it’s beginning to snow beyond the bakery’s windows, the way Yoongi’s hands find their place on his waist like an echo finding its voice, the way he knows he’s exactly where he should be, here with Yoongi, melting effortlessly into each other, slow and golden and sweet like honey.

End Notes

There are at least 64 canonical Easter eggs and hidden jokes in this piece (yes, I counted). How many did you catch?

Here’s the moodboard! There’s a picture of the Honey Boy there if you were wondering about that.

Come say hi on twitter or go anonymous on curious cat!

Please go show the artists some love!!!

○Moodboard by btsficsrecs
○Churro éclairs by itsraemin
○The Honey Boy!!! by huilien_
If you’re new to my nonsense and you enjoyed this, I have more Yoonjin fics you can check out!

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