Let's pretend, till we can't pretend anymore

by iaminlovewithyou

Summary

Youngjae pretends to be Jaebeom's boyfriend for a wedding.
Jaebeom pretends not to like it.
Jinyoung and Jackson pretend they're only in this to support their friends.
Love pretends they're all not stupid.

Notes

The title of the chapters are def's tracks on soundcloud.
The songs in themselves might not have anything to do with the chapters BUT the story of the chapters has to do with the titles.

See the end of the work for more notes.
“I will, I will, I promise,” Jaebeom said, frustratingly pulling his hair. He just wanted to end this phone call. It has been over twelve minutes already, and he just wasn’t patient enough to handle more.

“Mom. Mom. MOM! Are you listening to me? I said I will. He’ll be there.” He won’t. That’s the only issue.

Jaebeom had woken up this morning to his phone ringing for the nth time. At first, he thought it’s Jinyoung complaining about work, so he didn’t pick up. But, his phone kept ringing. After a while, when the damn phone wouldn’t shut up, he picked it up. It was his mom. Apparently one of his cousins, whom he had never heard of, is getting married in about two weeks from now. His mother wants him there and he couldn’t come up with one excuse as to why he can’t attend the wedding.

His mom played the ‘Jaebeom, I haven’t seen you in so long, I’m afraid I’ll forget what you look like’ card. Jaebeom hates it, he hates it so much- but he loves his mother. He loves her with all his heart. He knows he should visit more. He knows he should drop by often because he’s the only son they have, but it’s hard. He’s trying so hard to live with all the shit that’s happening, that as soon as the weekend comes, he’s dozing off for hours.

He promised her he’d be there, his stupid brain got trapped in her blackmail even though he visited her last month. He kind of wants to go as well, to see his family again, because nowadays he’s feeling homesick. Everything was going smoothly till his mom mentioned that she and his aunts want him to meet few people when he’s there. So, she asked him to come a week in advance.

He needs to talk to Jinyoung. Not ‘talk’ talk to him but more like yell to him as to why this is happening to him.

“Ahh Jinyoung, meet me. It’s urgent.” He grabs his jacket and is already on his way out when he hears a soft knock on his door. He zones out of his conversation with Jinyoung as he walks towards the door. It’s Saturday, it’s a free day. He’s not expecting anyone to be here.

When he opens the door he is face to face with, no mystery, Jinyoung.

“What the hell?” Jaebeom started his speech as he takes his jacket off and Jinyoung enters the apartment with a bag of food in his hand. “Why would you bloody pick up my call when you’re right outside my damn door?”

“Because you’ll keep calling until I pick up,” Jinyoung said while rolling his eyes at him and places the bag on the kitchen table. It’s 8 am and Jinyoung is probably here for breakfast. This is what they generally do. But not at 8 am.

“Before you ask me why I’m here so early, your mom called me.” Jinyoung and Jaebeom have known each other for over ten years now. That’s a decade. That’s a long ass time, Jaebeom had to admit. They know each other’s family well enough for him to know why his mother called Jinyoung before she called him.

“I told her I’ll go to that stupid wedding.” He’s frustrated now. He opens up the food bag to find two handmade sandwiches in it. He gets himself and Jinyoung plates and takes a bite of the sandwich. He
didn’t realise just how hungry he was till he took a bite.

“And she believes you. She just wants me to make sure you don’t back out,” Jinyoung said while taking a bite of his sandwich.

Jaebeom feels weird sitting in front of Jinyoung right now. It’s stupid he knows but Jinyoung is wearing pants and a white shirt with a coat over it. Looking all professional, meanwhile, Jaebeom is still in his cat pyjamas and he can’t believe he was so desperate that he was about to walk out of his house like this.

Before Jaebeom could start his rant on how childish his mother acts at times and how he’s not a kid anymore, Jinyoung got a phone call and stopped Jaebeom from speaking by raising his finger.

“Ya, what?” It must be one of those boys Jinyoung has hired for his shop. Jinyoung can’t seem to catch a break from them.

“You did what? No, don’t- yes, I know- Stop- I’m on my way, don’t touch anything.” Jinyoung sighed. Jaebeom doesn’t say anything and just stood up, went straight to his room to grab a pair of jeans. He grabbed his jacket and signalled Jinyoung towards to door. “Let’s fix it.”

Turned out that Bambam, one of Jinyoung’s worker, ‘accidently’ spilled coffee on the book Jinyoung was reading. Jaebeom thought it was intentional because he remembers Bambam complaining about how Jinyoung will not shut up about the book and insisting that the whole world should read it no matter how good they are in Korean. Deep down Jaebeom thought Jinyoung knew that as well but he preferred to stay quiet on the matter, and just went behind the counter to clean the mess Bambam had created to make it look like a genuine story.

Jinyoung owns a coffee-cum-book shop. Has been the proud owner of the shop since the past three years. The shop has never been as successful as he initially planned but he earned enough profit to keep the shop and to even hire a few workers. Jaebeom co-owned it but that’s another story.

Bambam and Yugyeom were two of them. Two very loud college students. They generally cover the evening shift but, because it’s a weekend, they’re doing the morning shift. The first day they joined, Jinyoung told them to work only five days a week and they can pick any five days they want, Yugyeom chose the weekdays but Bambam insisted that he wanted to work throughout the week. He’ll only take five days off during the month and he’ll give at least three days’ notice before taking a leave. Jinyoung agreed without another question.

Looking at all of them work is pleasing. Looking at the calm expression on Jinyoung’s face as he works his way on the counter relaxes Jaebeom as well. Yugyeom looks a bit scared, as if he’ll blurt out the truth any second. His long black hair was covering his eyes so he was saved from Jinyoung’s interrogation, because man oh man is Jinyoung good at reading eyes.

Jaebeom thought this is the moment. This is the right time to say it. He couldn’t push it any further, couldn’t keep it inside him anymore.

“I need a boyfriend.” He closed his eyes as soon as the words left his mouth.

It was silent for a while and Jaebeom started opening his eyes, he looked at the three of them, who have since stopped working and were looking at him with their jaws hanging open. Except for Bambam, who was smirking. That asshole, Jaebeom will deal with him later, he didn’t have time for it now.

“I mean a fake one, nothing real,” Jaebeom clarified.
“Oh, why? I mean, I thought everything is working fine for you.” Jinyoung came out from behind the counter and walks up to Jaebeom to sit beside him on the empty stool.

He gave a look to Bambam and Yugyeom who went back to making coffee and dealing with customers. As if there were any, it’s Saturday morning, people have sleep to catch up on.

“I told my mom I’m dating and that I’d bring him to the wedding,” Jaebeom said and rubbed his face with his hands. He’s frustrated now, he shouldn’t have said that. Should have just said his love life is as dry as a bone.

He expected Jinyoung to be angry, to shout at him for being so stupid, to throw tantrum as if Jaebeom has asked him to be his fake boyfriend. It won’t be that bad of an option, now that he thought of it.

“I understand.” Is all that came out of Jinyoung’s mouth.

“You do?” Jaebeom didn’t know how to take it. It’s a good sign, yeah. But it doesn’t solve the problem.

“She will be there as well and it’s better to look happy and content in front of her than to look like a lonely piece of shit.” It has been over three years since Jaebeom’s breakup but Jinyoung refused to call his ex by her name. He always called her “she” and Jaebeom knows that he’ll keep calling her “she” till the end of their days.

“My main intention was so that my mom and aunties will stop trying to set me up with strangers but yeah, if that’s what you wanna run with, I’m on board.”

“What’s the problem then?”

“I don’t have a boyfriend. I haven’t dated in a long ass time and I don’t have anyone to go with me. I would have asked you- hell begged you to come with me as my partner but we both know that would have been a disaster. The whole break-up would have been so pathetic to explain-”

“Jaebeom, it’ll be okay,” Jinyoung said while placing a hand over Jaebeom’s. Jaebeom was losing the plot. He was pissed off, he was angry, but at what? Not finding love? Not being able to find a decent enough human being who would want to spend time with him?

“I know you’re angry-”

“He only knows it because Jaebeom’s chin is out,” Bambam blurted out to Yugyeom and laughed.

“Hyung! I am your hyung, you asshole, show some goddamn respect,” Jaebeom said and jumped over the counter to grab Bambam, who jumps back and into Yugyeom and they both are laughing hysterically. Jinyoung shook his head and started pulling Jaebeom back.

“Find me someone.” Jaebeom is desperate.

“I don’t know many people. I know people you know and we both know we don’t have time to meet new people. Why don’t you ask someone from your university?” Jinyoung suggested. It’s a good and decent idea except for the fact that everyone in his university are shit, pure shit. He doesn’t even find them decent enough to talk to them. Taking them to a family wedding is not even a question.

He shook his head.
“How about those dating companies, those escort companies?” Jinyoung suggested.

“No, they’re too handsome and confident and everyone will know I’m faking it.”

“What’s wrong with handsome and confident?” Bambam asked.

“Nothing except for the fact that they won’t blush, they won’t act like they like me and instead they’ll be so extreme it’ll look like we’re married.” Bambam only nodded in agreement and resumed working.

There were not many people around the café so he glanced at a few, looking for a potential boyfriend. After a minute of scanning the room he understood that in this century no one is single. Everyone has a partner around even if it’s just a fling or a friends with benefit thing happening. But everyone has someone.

“How about online dating?” Yugyeom suggested.

“Are you guys even working? Jinyoung, don’t pay them for today. Their asses have been in my business for the past hour.” Yugyeom just laughed it off and turned around and went back to making coffee.

They all ran out of ideas in the next half an hour and before they knew it, it was lunch time. Jinyoung ordered Thai food because Bambam has been feeling homesick lately. They all sat in silence to eat when Yugyeom’s phone started ringing.

“Ah hyung!” Yugyeom said with a bright smile on his face.

“No no, not today but tomorrow. You forget things easily. I’ll text you though.” He went on for another few minutes and Jaebeom zoned out of their conversation and started thinking of how to get a boyfriend. It shouldn’t be that hard. He is decent looking, he would say that. He is tall and slim and got a good physic. He is- what else am I? Jaebeom thought to himself and came up with nothing.

“What do you say, Jaebeom?” His train of thoughts broke when Jinyoung said his name.

“Say about what?” He should have been paying attention.

“Jackson?” Yugyeom said.

“Jackson who?” Jaebeom asked.

“My dance instructor,” Yugyeom said.

“This game is stupid. I lost track, fill me in. Who’s this Jackson and why do I care?”

“Jackson hyung is my dance instructor, more like my dance partner, it’s complicated. Anyway, he’s single and he’s really sexy and well-spoken and funny and really talented as well and multilingual—”

“Why don’t you date him?” Jaebeom said with a smirk and grabbed another bite from his plate.

“Hyung!” Yugyeom laughed. “He can be your fake date for the wedding.”

Jaebeom is silent for a second. It’s not as bad as he initially intended. It might just work.

“Can you call him here? I don’t want to meet anyone alone.”

“Already done. He’s on his way.” Yugyeom is smiling again. Jinyoung just kept shaking his head as
if all of this was a disastrous idea. But Jaebeom knows that Jinyoung is on board because he hasn’t said anything and Jinyoung is not the type to stay quiet.

Jaebeom was supposed to meet Jackson at 8pm at the café. On that particular Saturday, the café was closed at 7:30pm. Now the waiting game began. Jaebeom looked over at Jinyoung who was looking at the clock every five minutes. The time was passing really slowly.

At around 7:50 they heard the little bell over the door ring as someone walked in. Punctual, pros. Jaebeom thought. A small man wearing a red hoodie and black jeans. Okay, he wasn’t that small but still smaller than Jaebeom.

“Jackson hyung!” Yugyeom said and went ahead to greet Jackson. They shook hand when Jackson pulled him in a hug. Skinship, cons. Jaebeom had already started working on his pros and cons list to make everything easier.

“I want you to meet Jinyoung Hyung,” Yugyeom said as he walked over to Jinyoung. Jackson and Jinyoung exchanged a quick smile and shook hands. “And this is the man of the hour, Lim Jaebeom.” Jackson walked towards Jaebeom and extended his hand for a handshake. Jaebeom just stood there and stared at him for a minute before realizing that he should probably just go ahead with the handshake just to be polite.

“Jackson Wang,” Jackson said with a small smile and bowed a little.

“Nice to meet you. Jaebeom? Hyung? What should I go with?”

According to Yugyeom, Jaebeom is older and he doesn’t care if it’s only few months, he still is older.

“Hyung will do,” Jaebeom said and walked them towards a table where they both sat with Jinyoung. Now Jinyoung had to be there. That’s important. Jaebeom at times just loses his patience and Jinyoung had to be there to keep him in check especially in front of a stranger.

“Yugyeom told me you need someone to act like your boyfriend for a wedding and well I love weddings,” Jackson started speaking but stopped when Jinyoung sighed.

“No, sorry. That was rude of me. How can people love the idea of wedding? It’s all a show off to me. If you want to be with someone you don’t need to spend almost all of your savings to celebrate. Wiser way to celebrate is with the closed ones and save all that money to actually build a future together,” Jinyoung said all that while looking straight a Jackson.

“That’s cute babe, we’ll catch up on that on your own time but this is Jackson and Jaebeom time,” Jackson said and winked at Jinyoung.

Jaebeom pressed his lips really hard to stop himself from laughing or worse, smiling. It was almost unbearable to do so when he could hear Bambam and Yugyeom losing it at the other end of the café where they’re acting like they’re working so they could eave’s drop.

What made it worse was Jinyoung’s reaction. Confident, unfazed Jinyoung had gone red. Jinyoung’s eyes is a bit wider than before as he started at Jackson. Jackson is already looking at Jaebeom as if he didn’t just shook Jinyoung’s whole world.

“Well- ahem- yeah” Jaebeom cleared his throat before he resumed talking. “Yeah, that. I need one.”
“Okay, so ask away?” Now Jaebeom don’t know how to start it. How should he go ahead with asking someone to be their fake boyfriend? What are the questions he needed to ask them? Okay, so Jaebeom already knows that Jackson works as a dance instructor. He is originally from China but has been living in Korea from last 10 years. He is good with people, talks a lot and can make any uncomfortable situation comfortable. Shouldn’t that be enough? So, what if Jaebeom didn’t feel any spark when he laid eyes on Jackson? It shouldn’t have happened, it’s not the movies. In real life people don’t fall for each other that easy. And he doesn’t even want to fall for Jackson for him to be his fake boyfriend. That’ll just be stupid.

“Who’s there in your family?” Jaebeom asked. He should know about his family if wanted this to work out between them.

“Mom, dad and me. Lived in China, my mom is a homemaker and my dad was a fencer. He got me into fencing and turned out I was good at that so I took it as a profession. Won small and big but had to quit for some personal reasons. So, I moved to Korea, my parents did too but they couldn’t live here for long. Started missing china, they went back and blah blah I was here. My aunt lives here so I started living with her. I was good with dancing because fencing gave me flexibility so to get my own place I started working at an early age. And finally, I have my own place and life is good,” Jackson finished with an assuring smile. He looked around at everyone and as to declare that this is it with his story.

“I don’t even know what else to ask you, if I’m being very honest. I don’t do this often,” Jaebeom is uncomfortable and he don’t know why. Because Jackson is nice, so so nice that he can’t find a flaw. Is being too nice a flaw? Jaebeom looked at Jinyoung to ask for help but Jinyoung is busing looking around, avoiding not only Jaebeom but also Jackson. Jinyoung looked nervous.

“No one does this often. I hope that’s true. It’s okay if you can’t think of anything. Maybe we can hang out a few times-”

“Hyung!?” A boy entered the shop with a confused look, till his eyes landed on Jackson and he smiled.

“Sorry, we’re closed.” Jinyoung stood up and walked towards the boy.

“Oh no no, he’s with me. I called him here,” Jackson said to Jinyoung who just nod and walked towards Yugyeom and Bambam.

Everyone is silent for a few minutes. Jinyoung busy with Bambam and Yugyeom, talking in whispers. Jaebeom is still sitting at his spot and looking at Jackson and the new boy and Jackson is standing a little too close to the boy, whispering something in his ear and the boy laughed. Laughed loudly, pushing his head back and hitting Jackson on his chest. Jackson is laughing as well but not with the same intensity as the boy.

The boy is wearing a grey oversized sweatshirt over black jeans. His black hair ends just above his eyes and the sigh is soothing. Looking at both of them laugh calmed Jaebeom down. Jaebeom doesn’t realize just how much tension he was holding till he relaxed his shoulders over the sight of two boys laughing.

“Youngjae, I want you to meet Jaebeom,” Jackson said as he walked towards Jaebeom. Jaebeom stood up from his spot and bowed slowly. “My boyfriend.”

“He’s not your type.”

“Youngjae, what is wrong with you?” Jackson couldn’t believe what he’s hearing, convincing
Youngjae should have been easy. The boy is so naïve he shouldn’t have judged Jackson.

“He’s not though,” Youngjae said simply and turned towards Jaebeom. “I’m Choi Youngjae, hyung’s friend.”

“Can we get back to where we were?” Jaebeom just wanted all of this to be over with. He wanted Jackson to act like his boyfriend for a week, which means they have spent at least a 4-5 days in advance to actually each other and be used to each other.

“Yes, sorry. Youngjae, you can sit here or find something to eat,” Jackson said to Youngjae and turned around to see Bambam, Yugyeom and Jinyoung standing just few feet away. “You already know Yugyeom and Bambam, that’s Jinyoung-ssi, I don’t know what his deal is right now but I want to believe he’ll help you.” With that Youngjae smiled at Jinyoung and Jinyoung took him to where the food was.

A minute later Jaebeom and Jackson was about to start the topic again, Youngjae appeared with a plate full of food and sat just next to Jackson. Watching this Jinyoung stood up from his spot and went to sit next to Jaebeom. Youngjae smiled at Jinyoung before taking another bite. No one said anything for a full minute and Jackson don’t know how Youngjae wasn’t feeling uncomfortable, maybe too lost eating.

“Anyway, let me know the date of the wedding. We can meet up every now and then to discuss few details and I can give you my number so that you can call me up to let me know anything that you think I should know,” Jackson said to Jaebeom and Youngjae stopped eating.

“Oh, so he’s the guy who needs a fake-boyfriend,” Youngjae said a bit too loudly. “I’m so sorry, Jackson messages me this afternoon but I thought he’s playing with me. He has this habit of pranking me and I always fall for stupid stuff and I thought this is one of those times.”

“You think all of this is stupid?” Jaebeom looked a bit angry.

“What? No no no, no. That’s not what I meant.” Youngjae looked at Jackson, as if praying for him to save him from this situation. “I just, I mean, I just think- I think it’s brave.”

This time everyone stopped what they were doing and looked at Youngjae.

“Brave?” Jinyoung asked when no one said anything for a long time.

“Yeah, like, it takes a lot to take a stranger to a personal event. I bet your parents will be there and all your relatives and- I don’t think I’m making sense but I could never take a total stranger to a wedding.”

Silence. Again.

“December 29. The wedding.” With that being said Jaebeom turned towards Youngjae, “I don’t think it’s brave. I think it’s cowardly, to take a total stranger to a wedding, not that the wedding is personal to me. I think it’s cowardly that I can’t find a decent person to date me, so, now I have to rely on a total stranger to not mess it up.”

“You don’t leave the house, Jaebeom. No one meets people when they’re always home,” Jinyoung said.

“Shit! Shit shit shit! I can’t do it,” Jackson said with panic in his voice.

“You said you would,” Jaebeom was confused. If this was one of those pranks Youngjae was
talking about, Jabeom is not a fan.

“I’m going home on the 23rd. I don’t get to meet my parents often so we meet during holidays. And Christmas and New Year are near so I thought I’d drop by. I even have my tickets booked and everything. I am really sorry.”

Jackson can see the disappointment on Jaebeom’s face. It was like he let him down, Jackson hated it.

“But I can try and fix you up with few of my friends, see who you would want to go out with? Or just want to go on a wedding with. They’re all nice people,” Jackson tried so hard to fix it.

Jaebeom was looking at his hands, he had no will or power to meet so many people. The thought alone was driving him crazy. It couldn’t be so bad to call his mother and explain to her how single he is, how he doesn’t think it’s happening for him, how he just wants to sleep as soon as he gets home and don’t have time to invest in relationships or emotions.

“It’s okay, we can figure something out. Thank you for your help,” Jinyoung said with a fake smile plastered on his face. Jinyoung looked sad and a bit upset and it unsettled Jackson.

“I am really sorry.” Jackson looked at Jinyoung.

“Don’t be, it’s not your fault. Honestly, we’ll figure something out, you don’t have to worry. Thank you again for meeting with us on such short notice.” Jinyoung stood up and looking at that everyone started standing up. Youngjae started chewing faster because it was time for all of them to part ways.

“Thank you for the food,” Youngjae shook hands with Jinyoung and bowed to Jaebeom and the kids before making his way towards the door. He stopped at the door and waited for Jackson.

Jackson went towards the counter and took a napkin, asked Yugyeom for a pen and wrote something on the piece of paper.

“Call me if you need anything, I’ll be available,” Jackson handed the paper to Jinyoung and Youngjae couldn’t process what just happened.

Youngjae has known Jackson for a long ass time and not once has Jackson ever given his number to anyway, no matter how friendly Jackson is with people, Jackson waits. Jackson waits for the person to ask for his number, this way he knows that he has the person’s interest. This, was not one of those times.

Jinyoung just took the paper from Jackson’s hand with a confused expression on his face. Jackson bowed and turned towards the door.

Youngjae and Jackson walked out.

“I’m going to die alone. This wedding is the death of me,” Jaebeom said and rubbed his face with both his hands.

“Jaebeom, we’ll figure something out—”

“How? We don’t have a plan B? What can I do? Take Bambam or Yugyeom? What’s your genius brain saying now? Jinyoung we don’t have a date for me, all I can do now is ask for an escort.”

Bambam and Yugyeom exchanged a look, they love Jaebeom but even with all that love they didn’t wanted to be a part of this.
“Jaebeom, we will find someone. Trust me. Or I can give a call to Jackson for you and ask him about his friends. There’s still hope.”

“My only hop-” Jaebeom was interrupted with the door being opened very loudly.

“I’ll do it, I’ll be your boyfriend,” Youngjae said.

Chapter End Notes

I accidentally deleted the notes at the end. so, now i just don’t recall what it used to be but as it's my first fic, i can bet i was nervous and almost crying.

please ignore all the minor mistakes, i am so sorry for those.

do let me know what you think of the chapter, i would love to hear from you. thank you so much for reading
“What was all that about?” Youngjae asked as soon as they left the shop. It was cozy in there but it started getting intense, especially when that Jaebeom guy started losing it.

“I feel bad, Jaebeom needed my help and I couldn’t help him out. You know I would have done it if I was staying home. I just-” Jackson started sulking his shoulders, a clear indication to Youngjae that he feels defeated.

“It’s not your fault. It’s not like you knew when the wedding is and you still said yes. I bet he’ll understand.” Youngjae wrapped his arms around Jackson’s shoulder, gave him support Jackson was asking for.

“But- He looked desperate. I sat with him for a total of twenty minutes and he barely said twenty words to me. I don’t want him to go out with someone he barely knows. I think he only said yes to this meeting because I know Yugyeom.” Jacked turned towards Youngjae and they both stood there for a minute. They stopped walking.

“Youngjae, imagine you going to a cousin’s wedding with a perfect stranger who don’t know you or your friends or anyone from your life. How uncomfortable will that be? Specially if you’re a man of few words or a single child. You have to act like you both know each other’s life in and out when you don’t even know the kind of people they hang out with. It’s sad is what it is.” Youngjae doesn’t know why Jackson cared so much about this. Yes, Jackson cares a lot about people but this particular person, Lim Jaebeom, they only met thirty minutes ago and Jackson himself said they hardly exchanged words. Then why?

And why does Youngjae care? He shouldn’t, he doesn’t. He hardly knows Jaebeom. Hardly? He doesn’t know him at all. They almost fought. This is wild. But, but there is something about Jaebeom that’s just sad. Sad in a way that it’s almost desperate. Jaebeom looked desperate. He looked like he wanted this thing with Jackson to work out but he also looked like he wanted Jackson to say no so he could suffer alone.

Youngjae understood what Jackson is talking about. It is sad. But there’s nothing that can be done now. Jackson is leaving and there’s nothing that can be done now. Unless, wait, unless.

“I’LL DO IT,” Youngjae yelled.

“You will?” Jackson looked at him in surprise. “BUT WHY ARE YOU SHOUTING?” Jackson yelled back.

“I- I don’t know,” and Youngjae started laughing. “I just got excited. But like, I mean, I can help him out. I bet it’s just for few days and—”

“And you can totally take some days off off work. You need a break and maybe Jaebeom will take
your mind off work. Like you have been an addict since you left college,” Jackson finished for Youngjae.

“Yes, I totally can, I’ll apply tomorrow. But what if he doesn’t want me? What if he said no? I should tell him first, right? Ask him, I mean. I can’t just drop in and say ‘I’ll do it, I’ll be your fake boyfriend’, right?” Youngjae didn’t even wait for an answer. He rushed towards the shop. He knew that they’d all be in there contemplating on what they should do next.

Youngjae entered the shop and without looking anywhere yelled, “I’ll do it, I’ll be your boyfriend!”

Jaebeom heard him loud and clear. Even though Youngjae, if that’s what his name is, Jaebeom can’t recall for the love of God, was breathless and panting right next second. He heard him well.

“Boyfriend. I mean fake one. Fake boyfriend. Not the real one. I’m not asking you out,” Youngjae don’t know where to stop but those shouldn’t be his last words, that he knows for sure. “Not that I don’t think you’re not good enough. It’s just too soon, I mean, we hardly know each other-”

“Oh okay,” Jaebeom said.

Jinyoung looked at Yugyeom who looked at Bambam who looked at Jinyoung. No one understood what just happened. Then came Jackson. Panting.

“Did you do it? Did he say it?” Jackson asked, out of breath. Looked around at the room and understood within a second. “He said it, didn’t he? And Jaebeom said yes? Wow. I’ll just shut up now.”

A lot went through Jaebeom’s mind in a span of a second. He wanted to ask a lot of things and wanted to say a lot of things but he ended staying silent.

“Are you sure?” Youngjae asked after a minute, more like a lifetime, of silence.

Jaebeom wanted to say yes but ended up nodding, which was practically the same thing and maybe Youngjae will just think that he talks less.

It took a minute for Jinyoung to take control, clearly no one else was going to.

“Maybe we all should talk tomorrow. I bet everyone is just tired today and-”

“I’m sure.” Jaebeom has never sounded so confident.

“Well if that’s settled, do you guys want to stay for dinner? We ordered Thai, I was feeling home-sick,” Bambam said and walked towards Jaebeom to show support. He’ll not hug him or wrap his arms around his shoulder, just the existence of his presence is enough for Jaebeom to relax.

“Sorry, our hyungs have no manners. Please, join us for dinner,” Yugyeom walked towards a table and pulled out a chair.

Jackson looked at Youngjae to study his behaviour. As much as he wanted to stay they had to go.

“Thank you for offering but my friend and I have some business to attend.” Jinyoung sighed at Jackson’s words.

Jackson walked towards Jinyoung and Jinyoung stood up straight. He wanted to look confident. He had to, it’s just Jackson and they don’t even know each other. There is nothing to be nervous about.

“Give me your phone,” Jackson deadpanned demanded.
“What?”
“I said, give me your phone.”

“What?” Jinyoung asked but his body betrayed his brain and he was already giving his phone to Jackson.

Jackson motioned Jinyoung to unlock it and Jinyoung did. Jackson started feeding something in.

“Even though I gave you my number I don’t think you’ll use it. You’ll maybe over-think too much. So, here’s Youngjae’s number. Give it to your friend whenever he’s ready. Tell him to call Youngjae if he wants to meet up and discuss all this.” With that being said, Jackson turned leaving a speechless Jinyoung and two giggly boys behind. He took hold of Youngjae’s wrist and they left the shop.

“Jaebeom, are you okay?” Jinyoung asked as he walked towards him.

“Yeah, I am. I think I’ll be fine. Isn’t this what we all wanted? For me to get a fake boyfriend? Now we have him. I just hope I don’t keep forgetting his name.” Youngjae isn’t a hard name to remember, considering he has friends named Youngjae. But Jaebeom is scared that he just might be too nervous to say his name out loud. Or maybe saying his name out loud will make it all too real for him to handle.

“I just think I should rest, go home and take a nap. It has been a long day anyway.” Jaebeom started collecting his stuff but Jinyoung stopped him. He knew too well that if Jaebeom left without having dinner, he’s going to directly go to bed.

“As your boss—”

“We own this shit-show together.” Jaebeom interrupted.

“As I was saying, as your BOSS, I insist you stay for dinner.”

“I have things to do. Jinyoung, I would have but you know—”

“Sleeping is not a thing,” Bambam said and started cleaning the table. Yugyeom started arranging the plates, getting things ready for dinner.

“Why is he still not fired? We co-own this. Don’t I have a say in who stays and who goes?” Jaebeom eyed Bambam, who just laughed it off and took a seat.

“Well, why don’t we discuss this over dinner?” Jinyoung motioned Jaebeom to take a seat.

“Oh, and he raised my pay as well,” Bambam said while smirking.

“And your bonus for Christmas is cancelled because of this,” Jinyoung mentioned which made Bambam cry for the next fifteen minutes.

The dinner was set and everyone launched themselves on the food in front of them. Jaebeom will never admit it but he has loved every part of this since day one. Since the first day Jinyoung bought two teenagers in their shop and gave them a part-time job. But it was not charity, they were interviewed. There were contracts made and terms negotiated but Jaebeom knew that no matter what, the kids were going to get the job in the end.

But this is not the time for sad stories or to think of the sad times, this was time to celebrate what’s in front of them. Jaebeom loved these dinners or whenever he got to hang out with everyone because
they knew how to respect his space. They knew how much distance to keep and how to cozy-up when required. They knew that saying ‘I love you’ is not the only way of expressing love for another person. He respected them and they respected him.

After dinner Jinyoung and Jaebeom stayed by the shop to close it, gave a head up to the kids to leave and take an off tomorrow because it’s a Sunday.

Jaebeom and Jinyoung started walking towards Jaebeom’s apartment.

“He’s cute,” Jinyoung said but refused to look at Jaebeom.

“Yeah, Jackson is.” If Jinyoung wanted to play this game, Jaebeom was all in.

Jinyoung, with his mouth wide open looked at Jaebeom and playfully hit his arm. “Yaa, drop that. You know I’m talking about Youngjae.”

“Oh, were you? I didn’t know you noticed him at all,” Jaebeom replied while rubbing his arm.

“Talking to you is a waste of energy, Lim Jaebeom.”

“You still do it for free.”

“Getting back to my original point, are you sure about him?” Jinyoung asked sincerely. Jaebeom knows he’s worried but they signed up for this. Moreover, Jaebeom signed for this. It couldn’t go all that bad.

“It’ll be fine. What’s going to happen? My parents will figure out I lied and he don’t love me? It’s no big deal, he won’t be the first.”

“Jaebeom,” Jinyoung wined. “It has been over a year now, don’t be so hard on yourself, don’t close yourself up. Let people in. Everyone is not the same. You know we all love you.”

Jaebeom looked at Jinyoung and made a cringe face which made him laugh.

“You asked for it.” They we just outside the building and entered the elevator. Jaebeom lived on the seventh floor so the ride was long.

“Stop being annoying.” Jaebeom pushed at Jinyoung’s shoulder.

“Jaebeom, the light of my life.” At this point Jinyoung was louder than the last. Jaebeom shushed him. “Jinyoung-ah, it’s legit midnight people are trying to sleep, keep your voice down.”

“Oh Jaebeom, what will I do without you,” Jinyoung clenched Jaebeom’s arm and they both were laughing when the elevator’s door opened.

Jaebeom got out first, “Jinyoung stop or I’m throwing you out of my building.”

“Jaebeom but I’m so in love with you, you make my life-“ Jinyoung bumped into Jaebeom.

“Ouch, that hurts,” Jinyoung said and started rubbing his nose. Jaebeom wasn’t going to move. He stood there with his mouth hanging open.

He couldn’t believe his eyes so he looked back at Jinyoung to make sure what he was seeing was right, Jinyoung was frozen on his spot. This just made sure what Jaebeom was seeing was right.

Youngjae was standing outside of an apartment, with keys in his hand and a man sitting outside his
“So, you all know each other, I’ll assume. I’m Mark,” the tall-lean man said and waved towards Jaebeom and Jinyoung who were too in shock to register him.

“Let me know whenever you guys are ready for intros,” he said again and turned towards Youngjae. “I told you to get it fixed but your lazy ass wouldn’t.” Took the keys from his hand and shook the door several times and unlocked the door.

“Hi,” Jaebeom said when mark started pushing Youngjae inside. They both stood at the door to look at Jaebeom. He cleared his throat.

“You must be my new neighbour,” Jaebeom tried too hard to sound casual but his voice betrayed him. He cleared his throat again.

“I just moved in last week, I even dropped by your apartment once but you weren’t home,” Youngjae said with a smile on his face and Jaebeom relaxed at the sight of it. It’s Youngjae.

“I must have been at the shop, but yeah, welcome to the neighbourhood.” He smiled back.

“This is Mark,” Youngjae said after realizing how awkward this must be for Mark.

Mark shook hands with Jaebeom and Jinyoung and a small introduction took place with who’s who. Jaebeom still wasn’t sure what Mark was to Youngjae. He waited for Youngjae to clear it up.

“So, you moved in with Mark?” Jinyoung asked because clearly Jaebeom wasn’t asking the right questions to get the answers.

“Oh no no, he has his own place,” Youngjae replied. A failed attempt from Jinyoung’s part. They waited for more explanation but nothing came. Now all four of them were awkwardly standing right in the hallway with nothing to talk about.

“I got him food. He hadn’t had his dinner yet. So, I thought I’ll drop by,” Mark said because no one else were going to say anything.

“Oh, you didn’t eat with Jackson?” Jaebeom didn’t know why he asked.

“Jackson had a night shift tonight. He had to rush. So, I called Mark and asked if he can come over.”

Silence. Again.

“You guys should go ahead with your dinner, we’ll leave. I have an early day tomorrow,” Jinyoung said his goodbyes to Youngjae and Mark and nodded towards Jaebeom, meaning he’ll call in next 15 minutes to ask what the deal with Mark is.

“I’ll go set the table and why don’t you say goodbye to,” Mark gestured towards Jaebeom with a confused look, “your friends?” And he walked inside, leaving Youngjae and Jaebeom alone.

Right then and there, Jaebeom realized that this is the first time that they have been left alone.

For some reason Youngjae looked nervous, Jaebeom wanted to ask but he felt like he was crossing a line so he stayed silent and said the first dumb thing his mind could think of.

“Boyfriend?” It took Youngjae by surprise and he started laughing. “Who? Mark Hyung?” He laughed even louder this time. Though there was nothing funny in this situation but looking a Youngjae laugh so freely made Jaebeom smile.
“You think I can get that?” Youngjae smirked.

“I think you can do better, if you ask me,” Jaebeom smirked back and dusted invisible dirt off his shirt.

“Even you?” Youngjae’s voice was hesitant.

“Do you want to?” Jaebeom’s voice was serious and Youngjae stopped smiling. They’re playing dangerous now. It’s too soon for all this. Are they flirting?

“I work for Mark’s firm, I’m studying accounting. His father is a big business man in the U.S. and they want to expand their business and I offered to help out. He studied with Jackson and Jackson introduced me to him and that’s how we met,” Youngjae changed the topic and for some reason Jaebeom was disappointed.

“Oh, oh okay. I shouldn’t have asked like that. I’m sorry.”

“No no, you have every right to know who your boyfriend is having dinner with.” Youngjae smiled again and Jaebeom did too.

It was easy this time. Jaebeom was relaxed. He took a step backwards. “I should get going then, I’ll see you around for sure. Don’t want to keep your friend waiting with cold food.” With that he turned to go to his apartment.

“Wait.” Youngjae’s voice made Jaebeom turn.

“About the wedding. When can we sit and talk about it?” Youngjae asked and took a step towards Jaebeom.

“Whenever you’re free for it.”

“I’m free tomorrow, I mean, I’ll ask him for a leave for about a month. I haven’t taken a day off since I started working and I think I deserve it.”

“Oh no, no you don’t have to waste your holidays on me.”

“Who said I’m wasting them? And shouldn’t it be my call? I’m tired anyway and I think it’ll keep my mind off things.” Youngjae smiled again and Jaebeom realized that it’s next to impossible to not smile whenever Youngjae is smiling.

“Well, then we can meet tomorrow, how about noon?” Jaebeom was not willing to wake up before 10am tomorrow, it was a Sunday for the love of God.

“Works for me, I’ll see you then.” Youngjae smiled again, said his goodbye turned to enter his apartment. Jaebeom watched him leave. It’s creepy but he convinced himself that he’s allowed now.

Jaebeom’s apartment was 2 doors on Youngjae’s right. Technically still neighbours if you ask Jaebeom.

As soon as Jaebeom entered and locked his door, Jinyoung called.

“Colleagues, just like us,” Jaebeom said without waiting for Jinyoung’s question.

“Are you sure?”

“I asked him if they’re dating and he freaking laughed.” Jaebeom was already changing and was
getting ready for bed.

“You did? And he laughed? Must be colleagues then.” Jinyoung must have reached his home by now and from what Jaebeom knows, he must be going through stupid books to read.

“Mark and Jackson were in college together I guess, that’s how he met Mark,” Jaebeom just wanted to talk about anyone but Youngjae.

“Youngjae said that?”

“Hmm.”

“You think Jackson and Mark are dating?” Jinyoung sounded serious and Jaebeom wanted to laugh.

“I don’t know yet, do you want me to go back and ask?”

“Are you just looking for excuses to go and talk to him?” Jinyoung teased.

“Why don’t you just text Jackson? You have his number after all. Just ask him directly.”

“I’m not interested in him, I just want to know why everyone is dating everyone?”

“No one is dating anyone. All I see is couples breaking up.”

“Stop looking at negative shit all the time then, anyway I lost his number,” Jinyoung said in a low voice.

“What? How? Didn’t he write it down for you or some shit?” Jaebeom was comfortably under his covers ready to sleep.

“It was with me and after dinner I left it on the table while I was cleaning it and Yugyeom had no idea,”

“No, don’t tell me. Really?” It was funny for Jaebeom. He wanted to laugh and he kind of was laughing.

“There were gravy stains on the table and Yugyeom cleaned it with THAT napkin. Now I only have Youngjae’s number on my phone.”

“That reminds me, you should give that to me,” Jaebeom didn’t wanted to sound greedy but he bet he did.

“All you care about is that new boy and not me. Wow. I’m going to bed. Suffer.”

“Hey, Jinyoung wait,” Jaebeom was laughing, “also, I have called him tomorrow at noon, do you want to drop by as well?” Jaebeom wanted Jinyoung there, he didn’t want to screw this up. But a tiny voice inside him wanted Jinyoung to refuse.

“I’ll be there. Now sleep. Goodnight.”

They hung up and in next five minutes Jaebeom received a message from Jinyoung with Youngjae’s number and a text saying, he’s cute, admit it.

Jaebeom will never. Not to anyone’s face.

He turned the lights off. It was a long day, a long long day. A lot happened. He has a fake boyfriend
now. He recalls the moment Youngjae entered the shop and said he’ll be his fake boyfriend. How at first Jaebeom wanted to refuse, not because he didn’t want anyone anymore but because it was Youngjae who entered. Youngjae is too young and too bright for Jaebeom. Jaebeom doesn’t know if he could handle that. He wanted to say no because the whole wedding will be a huge pain in the ass and he doesn’t want Youngjae to suffer because of him.

But he said yes, maybe because that young boy’s laugh made people feel special. Like he’s just laughing for them, maybe because he’s so good-looking that no one at the wedding will be looking at him, maybe because he looked so determined and scared when he entered the shop for the second time that evening, maybe because he wanted to hear more of that laughter or maybe because he just wanted someone to be there with him that day and Youngjae offered.

Tomorrow will be interesting for sure. Tomorrow he’ll act on his instincts. Tomorrow he’ll know if Youngjae is it or if he made a wrong decision. Tomorrow they’ll start their journey of fakeness and Jaebeom was looking forward to that.

Sleep didn’t come easy and stressing over about the future wasn’t going to help no one so Jaebeom shut his eyes tight and tried to stop thinking about the boy 2 doors away.

His no-sleep sleep was disturbed with his phone buzzing. If this was Jinyoung, he’ll heard a handful.

See you tomorrow. The message said and another one came right after. It’s Youngjae btw in case you don’t have my number. Jackson gave me your number, he took it from Yugyeom.

Before Jaebeom could think of replying another message came in. This must look creepy, I’m so sorry. Please forget about it. Goodnight. I’m really sorry.

Jaebeom smiled to himself and replied to the text with, Jinyoung just gave me your number, I was about to text as well. Goodnight. I’m already in bed. I’m tired. Jaebeom lied about the first part but he thought he was allowed.

Youngjae replied within a second. You were? I should have waited to see what you were going to say. Sleep well.

Jaebeom slept within a minute of reading that. He just wanted tomorrow to be here already.

Chapter End Notes

So? Let me know what you think of it? Like it? No?
Let me know if you want to see more of a character. I’ll see what I can do.

Thank you for reading.
Hello! So, I've decided to drop "Hyung" from all the conversation. Because, I'm not Korean and honestly I had to keep reminding myself to put hyung in, so I thought it'll just be easier if I let it go.

“How are you two love buds handling things?” Mark teased Youngjae from his spot on the couch. They both were supposed to have dinner when Youngjae entered the apartment but as soon as Youngjae was inside instead of going directly for the food, he jumped for his phone. He debated for a long time before he actually started typing something.

With the way Youngjae’s eyes lit up, Mark knew it was trouble for the younger.

“He thought we were dating.” Youngjae said as he grabbed for his bowl of rice.

“He did?” Mark laughed, “And did you explain that I’ll never stoop so low?”

Youngjae threw a pillow at Mark’s direction, “You know you’ll never have me.”

“I don’t even want to, ew.”

“I need few weeks or maybe just a week off from work” Youngjae blurted out. He didn’t know when the right time was going to approach and he’s not that great with keeping things to himself so he just did what he does best, he spoke.

“For the wedding thingie?” And Youngjae nodded to that.

“Sure.” Mark kept eating.

Youngjae sat up straight, he had a feeling that Mark was not going to have any problem with it but the way he said yes without asking anymore questions made him nervous.

“Are you confident?”

“Do you want me to say no?” Mark asked.

“No no no, I just wanted to make sure you’re okay with it.”

“Youngjae, the amount of time you have dedicated for our business, I can never repay you that in money. A vacation is the least I can offer you.”

“You can repay it in money as well, just increase my goddamn pay,” Youngjae smirked and started eating again without making eye contact with Mark.
“Now you’re reaching.”

They both sat and ate in silence. That’s what they have been doing for a long time now. Every now and then Mark will drop by with massive amount of food because according to him ‘Youngjae hasn’t been eating well and ramyeon is not real food’. Mark cares, that’s what he’s good at. He sits and observes and knows what he’s needed and when he’s not. He always brought extra food so that Youngjae can eat the healthy leftovers for days.

Youngjae lives alone, even when his family is hardly 2 hours away. He still wanted to alone because he wanted to experience freedom, all his life he has been with people who love him and support him and have always had his back and he is so great full for each and every one of them. But he had never had to face the world alone and he wanted to. He wanted to experience what it’s like to earn money that you can spend on yourself, to pay bills, to go grocery shopping, to cook, to survive without his family. Since his elder brother’s marriage and him deciding to stay with his parents, his house was already full with way too many members, it was easy to get lost in all that but you can hardly get any peace until you’re in your room late at night. He just wanted to live alone and see if he can make it.

“He seems decent though,” Marks voice broke Youngjae’s chain of thoughts.

“Hmm? Oh, Jaebeom? Yeah, I guess. I mean I hardly know the guy.” Talking about Jaebeom made him feel at unease. He wasn’t sure why, but he wanted to topic to end as soon as possible.

“Let me know if he gives you trouble, I can handle him.”

“And so can I, but thank you. I hope we don’t have to see that day.” And Mark just nodded in agreement.

They finished dinner and when Youngjae’s eyes started drooping, he called it a day. Tucked Youngjae safely in bed and locked his door before leaving. Mark wanted Youngjae to be happy and to be in a relationship, a real one, not a fake one for some wedding. At night he prayed that the coming year fill everyone’s life with love. Maybe God would be willing to listen to him.

Jaebeom woke up to a bang on his door. He looked at his clock, it was barely 10am. He was raging with anger when he walked towards the door.

“Good Morning, Sunshine,” Jinyoung barged in with two cups of coffee in his hand.

“What the hell are you going here? It’s hardly 10? Why are you here?” Jaebeom closed his door and spoke as loud as his morning voice would let him.

“You asked me to be here.”

“Yeah, at noon!”

“You said the meeting is at noon, I am here early to make sure you’re ready for everything,” Jinyoung went around the kitchen and sat on one of the stools closest to the fridge.

“We’re just going to talk. I don’t need a stupid pep-talk before that.” Jaebeom’s hair was in every direction, his eyes puffy from sleep and his voice harsh.

“Where are you going?” Jinyoung asked as he watched Jaebeom walk past him.

“To my room, to get some more sleep.”
“Lim Jaebeom, go to the washroom and brush your teeth, take a bath if you have to or dry-clean, I’ll set the table and everything. Do not make me repeat myself,” Jinyoung said in a straight voice. Even though his voice was low but it was strong and Jaebeom heard all parts of it.

He groaned and walked towards his washroom, cleaned himself up and put on new clothes and walked back to the kitchen. Without a word he took the coffee Jinyoung got for him and started sulking with it.

He’s not nervous or excited. After last night, he thought he’ll feel more, maybe a bit more excited or any kind of emotion at all. But today, he felt nothing. It was just like meeting up with a friend and talking about your life. Nothing exciting.

Jinyoung kept looking at Jaebeom every now and then, he started reading his book while Jaebeom was gone and now he can’t seem to focus on it anymore, studying Jaebeom was far more interesting right now.

The kept quiet for a while, Jinyoung busy in reading his book and studying Jaebeom and Jaebeom busy with his coffee and overthinking stuff.

The doorbell rang at eleven fifty-five. It couldn’t be anyone else than Youngjae, Jaebeom straighten himself up and walked towards the door, looked back at Jinyoung for assurance and Jinyoung did a single nod to relax him.

As soon as Jaebeom opened the door he was welcomed by loud noises. Not a single noise but plural and before he could grasp the situation Jackson was pushing Youngjae in with loud ‘Hi and hellos’.

“ Took you long enough to open the door,” Jackson looked at Jaebeom while talking to him and kept pushing Youngjae inside. Jaebeom closed the door without answering.

When Jackson turned he came face to face with a confused Jinyoung.

“Oh, hello there,” Jackson smirked.

“What are you doing here?” Jinyoung asked, still confused because Jaebeom never told him Jackson was coming along with Youngjae.

“That’s one way to greet me, but look,” Jackson walked towards Jinyoung with four cups of cold-coffee. “I got us these.”

Jinyoung was still very confused. Jackson looked past Jinyoung and saw two cups of coffee already on the table. Jackson pressed his lips in a smile and bumped went ahead to place a hand on Jinyoung’s head, when Jinyoung stood there, confused. Jackson bumped their head and said with a smile on his face, “Great minds think alike,” he kept looking directly in Jinyoung’s eyes and the way Jackson was smiling, lips pressed together and making a face slightly similar to a Squirtle, made Jinyoung smile as well.

Jinyoung covered his mouth while he laughed and pulled himself back, he looked at Jaebeom and pointed his thumb towards Jackson and avoided any eye contact with Jackson.

Jaebeom wasn’t paying much attention to those two though, his eyes darted back towards where Youngjae was standing. He didn’t look uncomfortable but he didn’t look comfortable either. Jaebeom debated what to do but before he could open his mouth to say something Youngjae met his eyes, for a second none of them made a move but then Youngjae smiled, closed mouth but still warm and loud. Jaebeom smiled back.
They all sat at the kitchen table. Jaebeom and Jinyoung at one side and Jackson and Youngjae on the other. They all took a sip of their coffee that Jackson brought. Jaebeom realized there’s nothing as “too much” coffee. Jackson mentioned that it’s organic coffee so the taste might be a bit different.

“So, shall we start?” Jaebeom questioned and looked at everyone, they all nodded but no one said anything.

After getting the hint that they all suck at this conversation, Jackson cleared his throat and started speaking.

“Shall we start with how long you two have been together? That’s the first questions every asks.”

“Yes, good idea,” Jaebeom was a bit excited about all this, he has always enjoyed making up stories ever since he started reading a lot of books. “How about a couple of months?” He eyed Youngjae.

“How many? You have to be exact with numbers and dates,” Jinyoung said.

“2?” Jaebeom wasn’t sure anymore.

“How about a few weeks?” This time Youngjae spoke with uncertainty. He wasn’t looking at them anymore, he was looked at his coffee while speaking again. “That way, we don’t have to know each other well. Like, if we say we’ve been dating for a couple of months that means we have known each other during that phase and that could be tricky. We can say we just started dating and more than half of their other questions will be eliminated. We’ll act like we’re still trying to figure each other out.” Youngjae finally looked up after he was done talking, he looked at everyone but their expressions were hard to read.

“But we can say we’ve been dating for a couple of months,” He added when no one spoke.

“No no no, no I like your idea. That’s better, we can say we just started dating two weeks back. That’ll work. That should work. That’s a great idea.” Jaebeom was beaming. He liked the thought process of Youngjae’s. When they first met, he didn’t think much about the boy in that way but the younger one is thoughtful.

“Great, next questions. How did you meet?” Jinyoung asked and Jaebeom and Youngjae looked at each other. Brining in Yugyeom and Bambam to the story would be messy. That’ll expose a lot of Jaebeom’s personal life. He would have no problem sharing it with his parents but talking about the kids with the rest of his relatives and people he hardly sees once in every three-four years, isn’t what he wanted. He thought hard on what they could possibly say and then he looked at Jinyoung and Jackson. This should work.

“We met through mutual friends.” He waved his hands between the two of them to make it clear who the mutual friends were.

“Oh no no no,” Jinyoung said at the same time as Jackson said, “That’s perfect.” Then they looked at each other, Jackson looked at Jinyoung a question mark on his face and Jinyoung looked at Jackson with fear? Jaebeom didn’t know, he doesn’t consider himself a good judge of expressions.

“Then they’ll ask me about you,” Jinyoung said to Jackson.

“And then you’ll get a chance to talk about me,” Jackson said and Jaebeom and Youngjae smiled, this was going to take time.

“But I hardly know anything about you.”
“You know my name.”

“I will not reply to every question with ‘His name is Jackson’, I don’t know you at all.”

“Then let’s fix that,” Jackson said and leaned forwards with his elbow on the table, he leaned towards Jinyoung who didn’t flinch. They were close but not close enough for them to read each other’s features. “Let’s get to know each other better.”

Jaebeom saw Jinyoung holding his breath. Jinyoung was never one of those who would lose his composer, no matter what the situation was. Jinyoung was a good actor, he’ll never show his real emotion but this situation is different. There’s a hint of curiosity and fear on Jinyoung’s face but it’s gone within a second.

After a few seconds Jackson leaned back, laughed and took another sip of his coffee, avoiding eye contact with all of them.

“Let’s stick to it then, you guys met through us,” Jinyoung said. His voice was different.

“And how did you two met?” Youngjae asked.

“That’s a story I’ll take care of,” Jinyoung said looking at Jackson.

The air was different and Jaebeom wasn’t feeling so sure of himself. Jinyoung sensed it and started the topic again. They went back to basic questions, who asked out whom and how and when was their first date and all sort of questions. Jaebeom felt full with so much information he kept quiet for a long time.

Jaebeom saw Youngjae elbowing Jackson and Jackson nodded and turned towards Jaebeom, “So, shall we talk about the touchy-touchy stuff? Kisses and hugs and hand holding and all?”

Jaebeom rubbed his face with both of his hands. He was a bit embarrassed, deep down he knew they would eventually have to talk about it but not this soon.

Jinyoung laughed a little, not the shy kind of laugh but a ‘you’re so screwed’ kind of laugh.

“I’ll talk to him about it when we’re alone,” Jaebeom said pointing towards Youngjae and Youngjae looked up, nodded and ducked his face down. Jaebeom can see his tiny shy smile and it took everything in Jaebeom not to smile back.

After about another hour of this they fell back to normal conversation, occasionally bringing Yugyeom and Bambam into it and Youngjae kept mentioning Mark. Every time Mark’s name came in the conversation Jinyoung would look at Jaebeom and Jaebeom would smirk.

“Well, all the best with the wedding stuff, I mean your story is so simple, I would get bored. I bet no one is gonna ask you anything because they’ll think you’re an old married couple,” Jackson said and elbowed Youngjae, “Maybe blush a little whenever you’re around Jaebeom to make it look real.”

Youngjae laughed, full open mouth laughter. Jaebeom tried not to look. It was hard. He wasn’t attracted towards Youngjae but Youngjae’s presence is loud and people always look at loud. That’s the explanation Jaebeom gave himself.

“Then what would you have done? What would have been your story?” Jinyoung leaned in and asked.

Jackson looked at him, smiled and leaned towards Jinyoung.
“Aah, Jinyoung, if we were fake dating,” he moved his hand between them, “the story go something like this.”

“In a rainy day,” Jackson began his story and Jinyoung and Youngjae are already laughing, Jaebeom looked at him with amusement.

“Late at night when all your employees are gone and you’re about to close the shop, the bell on the gate rings, ding ding ding ding,” Jackson was animated when he spoke, moved his hands a lot and made changed voices with every sentence.

“I entered and asked ‘Is the shop still open?’, and I drop my coat because it’s soaked wet and you turn around, I run my hand through my hair,” Jackson did what he said, ran his hands through his hair with his mouth open and eyes closed, Jaebeom was more interested in looking at Jinyoung, who have stopped laughing now and he’s listening and watching.

“And you would say ‘It’s always open for you’, and then you walked towards me and ripped my shirt open and-”

“That’s gross, I will never do that,” Jinyoung cut him off with his cheeks turned a shade of pink.

“So you say, but have you seen me in the rain?” Jinyoung wasn’t having it, he stood up and took the cups from the table and dumped them in the trash can. Everyone went silent. Jackson cleared his throat, stood up and walked towards Jinyoung.

“I’m sorry, if I crossed a line,” Jackson said as softly as he could.

Jinyoung didn’t say anything. Jaebeom didn’t know why Jinyoung was upset. Why he looked at bit angry. Youngjae looked tensed as well. The air around them were different now, uncomfortable.

“Youngjae, are you planning on staying?” Jackson turned towards Youngjae, hurt clear in his voice.

“Mark called this morning, he wanted to have lunch with us. Late lunch. He wants to talk about this new girl he’s seeing and I’m already disgusted and can’t do that alone so if you and Jaebeom don’t have anything else to talk about, do you wanna join me?” That was Jackson’s cry of help. Even Jaebeom understood it. Youngjae just stood up and held Jackson’s hands, squeezed them and smiled at Jackson.

“We should get going. It was a nice talk. If you want to talk more, you can always text. We can always meet up later,” Youngjae looked at Jaebeom and Jaebeom just said yes. Jinyoung went into Jaebeom’s room.

They both turned and walked out of the apartment. Jaebeom walked into his room and saw Jinyoung sitting on the bed.

“Are you okay? What the hell happened?”

“Nothing, I don’t wanna talk about it,” Jinyoung said with sadness in his voice, it was deep and low.

“Talk to me, Jinyoung. Jackson is probably beating himself up for it, did he say anything that wrong?”

“It’s stupid and childish and now I don’t know what to do.”

Jaebeom went to sit next to Jinyoung. “Talk to me.”
“He looked happy, Jaebeom. He talks like we’ve all known each other for so long, he’s so easy with people.”

“Is that what’s bugging you?”

“The story he started telling, I took it as a joke, because it was a joke, but a part of me wants it. A stupid part of me wants him or someone to come to my shop and knock me off my feet. I started getting angry because it’s all made up. It’s a story. It’s fiction.” Jaebeom let Jinyoung rant.

“Do you know how many broken relationships I have had? How many people I haven’t connected with because they think I’m too boring or not that interesting, because my interests are different and because I’m an old man trapped in a young boy? Because they think my stories are too long? Because I can’t hold a conversation for more than 5 minutes.” Jinyoung took a deep breathe.

“I know he wasn’t flirting with me, maybe he’s like that with everyone, but it felt good. The way he looked at me, it felt good. Even if it’s the same way he looks at you or Youngjae or even that Mark.” With that both of them laughed.

“I’m sorry, I just, I guess I was just jealous. It’s stupid. I am jealous of how easy it’s for him.”

“You don’t know that,” Jaebeom said and Jinyoung looked up.

“You don’t know that it’s easy for him or not, you don’t know if he looks at you differently or if he looks at everyone the same way. I just- I don’t know if you’re interested in him or what but I think you own him an apology. You should have looked at him when he thought you might have been hurt.”

They both sat in silence for a minute of two. Jinyoung said his byes and walked out of the apartment. He has his shop to look after afterall.

Jaebeom went back inside and saw that Jinyoung left the keys to shop on his kitchen table. He took a hold of it and as soon as he opened his door to get out he saw Jackson.

He took a step back and Jackson smiled. Walked inside without asking, looked normal.

“We have to talk.” Jackson folded his arms and Jaebeom wanted to laugh.

“About Jinyoung?”

Jackson looked puzzled as if there’s nothing to talk about Jinyoung. “About Youngjae.”

This had Jaebeom’s attention. “What about him? He doesn’t wanna do it?”

“No, what are your intentions with him?” And this time Jaebeom did laugh.

“What are you? His dad? Are you here to give me a lecture on how I shouldn’t break his heart and all that?”

“Yes,” Jackson said, dead serious.

Jackson wasn’t smiling anymore and Jaebeom realized it’s all more serious than he anticipated.

“I am not going to, I have no intention of hurting Youngjae. This is all fake anyway, you know that already.”

“Don’t get too close if you’re not planning on staying,” Jackson said and unfolded his arms, looked a
bit defeated. All of this was very confusing to Jaebeom.

“I’m not going to, I am not planning on getting close to Younjae. It’ll all be over in over one or two weeks. Then we might just be good neighbours by the end of this all.”

“Younjae is sensitive.”

“He can take care of himself.”

“I know he can. He gets attached, he gets clingy, he gets emotional, he hugs and laughs and he will beat you up while laughing. He’s that clingy.” Jaebeom wasn’t getting the point of it all.

“Are you in love with him?” Jaebeom asked, even more confused than before.

“No,” Jackson laughed. “I guess what I’m trying to say is, don’t take it as signals that he’s into you if he does all that if you’re not into him. I might sound confusing but those things, what I just mentioned, only has meeting if you’re into him, otherwise know, that he’s a free-spirited kid who love human touches and there’s nothing more to read into it.”

Jaebeom is still silent. He had no idea what he could possibly say to that. He was this digesting it, still confused.

“Jaebeom, I think I-” Jinyoung walked inside, Jaebeom realized that when Jackson entered, he forgot to close the door.

“I’m already done, I’ll leave,” Jackson said and dramatically bowed to Jaebeom and then to Jinyoung and said, “Your Majesty” and he walked out.

Jaebeom was laughing at the extraness but could see guilt forming on Jinyoung’s face. Jinyoung took the keys from Jaebeom and before he could walk out Jaebeom said, “Talk to him.”

Jinyoung saw Jackson standing at the bus-stand right out of the building. He waited for a couple minutes before approaching him.

“Hi,” Jinyoung said and Jackson kept looking straight, smiled and said Hi back.

Jinyoung stood right next to Jackson and kept some distance between them. They both were looking straight at the road now, a bus came and went and Jackson didn’t get in.

“I’m here to apologize,” Jinyoung finally blurred out.

“You don’t have to,” Jackson said and buried his hand into his pocket.

“You weren’t out of line, I was just having a rough day and I don’t know what came over me and I just-, I am really sorry. I didn’t mean to take it out on you.” Jinyoung turned towards Jackson.

Jinyoung realized that Jackson has a huge head, in a cute way, a big button. Pointed nose, full lips. Jackson’s side profile was masculine.

“You don’t have to apologize, I’m sorry, I sometimes forget that we just met, that we’re not used to each other,” Jackson said and took a deep breath and turned towards Jinyoung. “Your aura is relaxing, Jinyoung. It’s comfortable.” Jackson said with a hint of a smile on his face.

“I just got too comfortable. I’ll keep myself in check the next time, if there’s a next time,” Jackson said that with a smile. As if he was teasing Jinyoung.
Jinyoung kept looking at him, Jackson is a few inches shorter but not too short, they’re basically the same height.

“Maybe you,” Jinyoung started speaking, “maybe you could, you know, if you want, maybe you and I, I mean my shop is—”

They were interrupted by a car honking at them. They both jumped with fear and Jackson clenched his heart.

“Mark, I could’ve had a heart attack!” Jackson yelled on top of his lungs and Mark laughed from his car. Signalled him to get in. Then he realized Jinyoung was there as well and waved at him, Jinyoung waved back.

“So, what were you saying? Maybe you and I could what?” Jackson asked innocently.

“Nothing, it’s not important. You go, enjoy. And thanks for understanding,” Jinyoung felt embarrassed, what was he thinking? He felt so stupid.

“Are you sure? I mean you can still tell me.” Jackson looked determined to know. Jinyoung started backing away from him. “I’m sure. Enjoy. I’ll see you around.”

Jinyoung cursed himself and walked towards the direction of the shop. He pulled out his phone and called Jaebeom.

“I’m stupid,” are the first words out of his mouth when Jaebeom picked up. Jaebeom laughed on the other end.

“I’ll assume it went well.”

“He’s too nice, Jaebeom. I hate him.”

“Convince yourself and you will.”

“I almost asked him to grab coffee with me.”

“You did not? Wow, I am proud. I taught you well.”

“You taught me well? You haven’t been on a single date in over a year. Anyway, I didn’t call to chit chat.” Jinyoung was smirking. So, what everyone’s love life is a mess, he can still find humour is Jaebeom’s fake one.

“Youngjae’s home alone.”

“He went out with Mark and Jackson, they legit discussed it in front of us. Were you not paying attention?” Jaebeom sounded a bit anxious.

“I was just with Jackson and Mark came to pick him up and there was no Youngjae. So, well I’m assuming he’s still home. So, you know what I meant, right?” Jinyoung was smiled so broad his cheeks started to hurt. There was a different kind of fun in teasing Jaebeom.

“I don’t know what you’re saying, I’m gonna hang up now.”

“So eager to talk to Youngjae that you wanna hang up right this second?”

“Go get laid, you shithead. Oh, wait! Jackson just went out with Mark.”
“Jaebeom, you know that was low.” Jaebeom’s laugh was the last thing Jinyoung heard before he hung up.

Jaebeom debated for a minute, should he call or text? Or Should he even do anything with the knowledge that Youngjae could be alone right now.

What was he even supposed to say if he was going to call? He got no plan but he still found himself dialling Youngjae’s number. It started ringing and he started taking deep breaths. He made a deal with himself, if Youngjae’s not going to pick in the first seven rings, he’ll just hang up.

Youngjae picked on the fifth ring. Jaebeom cursed himself. He is clueless and stupid.

“Hello?” Youngjae’s voice was soft and small.

Jaebeom kept quiet. This is a bad idea.

“Hello?” Youngjae said again.

“Hi! It’s me, Jaebeom.” Jaebeom was still taking deep breaths.

“I have your number saved, you know.” Youngjae was talking easily and this made Jaebeom even more nervous.

“Are you home?” Jaebeom asked?

“Yeah, Jackson wasn’t feeling like going out so I stayed home and Mark came to pick him up to get some ice-cream, organic of course. He’ll not have anything that’s not organic. He’s obsessed, we think it’s just a phase but he believes that’s the life motto.” Jaebeom just heard him talk for awhile. Youngjae was sharing too much.

“I’m sorry, I get nervous at times and don’t know when to shut up.”

“Do you wanna come to my place?” Jaebeom asked and then he heard himself, he didn’t want Youngjae to get any wrong idea.

“I mean, so that we can talk about the rest of the details. If that’s fine with you. You can say no-”

“I’ll be there, give me five minutes.” Youngjae interrupted.

Those were the longest five minutes ever. Finally, there was a knock on the door and Jaebeom opened the door to a smiling Youngjae.

They walked inside and Jaebeom thought going into the bedroom would be a bit too intimate, so they sat on the couch. Jaebeom at one end and Youngjae at the other. Jaebeom crossed his legs and turned towards Youngjae. Asked him to relax as well and Youngjae imitated Jaebeom.

“I didn’t tell you one thing about the wedding,” Jaebeom knew this was supposed to happen sooner or later.

“What?”

“They’ve shifted the date of the wedding. It’s on 25th now. It’s Christmas that day,” Jaebeom said.

“That gives us a total of four days. It’s already 21th today. Which also reminds me that Jackson is going tomorrow.” Jaebeom don’t know why Youngjae mentioned it.
“We have to leave tomorrow.”


“Yes, tomorrow. It’ll be 22 nd and my parents want to meet you as well and if we don’t stay there for at least three days, they’ll come back here to spend some more time with you,” Jaebeom said with disappointment in his voice. Jaebeom love his parents but they can get way too involved in his love life.

“By what time?” Youngjae was considerably content with all this.

“Around noon, so that we reach late and have to stay for a shorter period of time.” This made Youngjae laughed and Jaebeom let him look at the younger boy. Youngjae dropped his head back while laughing, clenching the pillow that’s in his arm. Jaebeom knew people use ‘hahaha’ while texting but Youngjae was that text. His laughter was like ‘hahaha’.

Jaebeom didn’t realize but he was smiling, almost laughing.

Youngjae contained himself.

“Then we should leave after lunch so that we reach by the evening.” Jaebeom agreed to the plan. They talked a bit more, about families. Jaebeom told him that he’s the only son. Youngjae on the other hand had two elder siblings, a girl and a boy. Jaebeom told him about his parents and Youngjae told him about his. They sat there and talked a long time.

Talking about stories from when they were kids, from their teenage years, from when they decided to live alone.

Jaebeom realized that Youngjae is very close with his family, they drop by once a month to meet him and he drops by once a month to meet them. Youngjae told him he’s fond of dogs and Jaebeom told him he loves cats.

“Maybe we should get a cat and dog together,” Youngjae said and laughed again.

That sounded very domestic to Jaebeom. He swallowed.

“You should pack a suit and a couple of shirts and a few jeans. I don’t think you’ll need more. Some sweaters, yes. But nothing more.” Youngjae nodded to that.

“How long is the drive going to be?” Youngjae asked, he gets sleepy on rides.

“A couple of hours, depends on traffic, shouldn’t take more than two hours.”

Youngjae smiled. Jaebeom realized that’s his way of saying, he acknowledged what you said.

“Anything else I should know?” Youngjae asked.

“I mean, we still have to talk about everything from scratch and make some ground rules to be on the safer side of things.” Youngjae smiled to that as well.

They talked for few more minutes and Youngjae started looking at his watch, every five minutes his eyes will dart towards his watch.

“Any place you need to be?” Jaebeom asked.

“I promised Jackson that I’ll help him with packing.”
“You should go, it’s okay, we have a lot of time.” Jaebeom stood up first. Youngjae looked at him for a few seconds and then stood up as well. They were both standing face to face.

“Youngjae, I wanted to say,” Jaebeom began speaking but then he saw Youngjae smiling the brightest he has ever been. It was that ear to ear smile that people talk about. His teeth on display and his cheeks turning a shade, his eyes closing a bit as he smiled.

“What?” Jaebeom stopped and asked.

“Nothing, it’s stupid, you tell me. What you wanted to say?”

Jaebeom was smiling as well, “No, you first tell me why you’re smiling like that.” Jaebeom pointed towards his lips and Youngjae laughed.

“You’ll think I’m stupid.”

“I already think you’re stupid, you agreed to be my boyfriend.” Jaebeom realized a second later that he said ‘boyfriend’ and not ‘fake boyfriend’. He prayed, hoping Youngjae haven’t noticed it.

“You said my name for the first time,” Youngjae said as a matter of fact.

Jaebeom went quiet for a second. Jaebeom understood Youngjae. A name sound different coming out of different mouths.

Jaebeom smiled. “If it’s gonna be a reaction like this, then I’m going to use your name more often.” Jaebeom leaned in a bit as he said, “Youngjae”.

Youngjae laughed again. Jaebeom wanted to believe he blushed a little too.

They said their goodbyes and Jaebeom closed the door.

“Ahh, Youngjae. You still haven’t called me by my name,” Jaebeom said to himself.

We went to his room and started packing. He got a message from Jinyoung, asking him to drop by the shop tomorrow morning before leaving. After packing and replying to all the messages. He went to bed.

He tossed and turned and ended up staring at Youngjae’s name on his phone.

*I’ll pick you up at 3pm tomorrow*. Jaebeom wrote to Youngjae. Youngjae replied within a second. *I’m nervous and excited. I hope they’ll like me.*

Jaebeom laughed. Found it all very adorable. *They will love you, believe me. My mom will forget about her own son when she meets you.*

*Hahahaha, you think so? I wish. It’ll be fun. We’ll gang up on you*. Jaebeom imagined Youngjae laughing.

Jaebeom’s phone buzzed again and there was another message from Youngjae. *I promise to be the best fake boyfriend, Jaebeom*.

Jaebeom choked on air. It’s fake. He kept reminding himself.

*I’ll treat you so good, Youngjae*. Jaebeom replied and his cheeks were burning. He hated it. He shouldn’t be feeling like this.
I’ll expect nothing less. Goodnight now. Rest. You looked grumpy this morning. Youngjae replied and Jaebeom smiled, the tension in his body formed a minutes ago was gone now.

Well, you’ll just gotten yourself an exclusive deal to look at the same grumpy morning face for the coming days. Goodnight, Youngjae. I’ll see you tomorrow.

Jaebeom didn’t wait for a reply, he turned off his wifi and slept within a couple of minutes.

Tomorrow, Jaebeom and Youngjae are going to drive to his hometown. Tomorrow, Jaebeom is going to make Youngjae meet his parents. Tomorrow, things might start to change.

Chapter End Notes

This is my valentines day gift for you.
Sorry, nothing much happened but yeah, it was important to keep the story going.
Let me know what you think of this chapter. Do let me which part you enjoyed the most and if you’re looking forward to something.
Jaebeom didn’t know how he got here but he found himself sitting in the café listening to Yugyeom and Bambam bickering about their schedule while he sipped his coffee.

Yugyeom got Bambam into dancing, since then Bambam has started attending the dance class with Yugyeom. Each week Jaebeom heard them talk about someone new, someone who’s doing well or someone who has potential, or someone Bambam thought was trying to hit on Yugyeom, or someone Yugyeom thought Bambam was flirting with. This week is nothing special. They went on and on about the new kid who’s really good but lacks confidence.

Jaebeom was trying hard to keep up but he just wanted Jinyoung to be here so that he can leave after his conversation with him.

It was going to be a long day. He was confident of that. He hadn’t heard from Youngjae since last night but they have planned to leave after lunch. He was looking forward to it, like he was last night. Yesterday had been pleasant. After the initial meeting all four of them had, he thought things with Youngjae would be awkward but when they met afterwards, it was nice. He would not deny that. Long ago Jaebeom promised himself to enjoy all the nice things in life, he would not overthink and ruin it.

Jinyoung entered the café in a rush. His hair was undone and his clothes were off. He looked like he just woke up.

“Jinyoung? Are you okay?” Jaebeom asked from his spot.

“My alarm didn’t go off,” he said and rushed behind the counter.

“You’re a morning person,” Bambam said as if that was supposed to explain something.

“Why am I here?” Jaebeom asked, already done with the whole conversation.

“Because you love us,” Yugyeom said and threw a heart at him. Jaebeom’s chin was out in a split of a second.

“I wanted all of us to talk before you leave for the wedding today.” Jinyoung made his way from behind the counter and sat next to Jaebeom. The two young kids stopped doing their work and joined them.

“What talk?”

“Listen to me okay, how long will you be staying there?” Jinyoung asked, now that the wedding date has been moved to 21st he’ll have to stay for a less amount of time.

“Maybe till 22nd, I guess. I don’t think it’ll be fair of me to keep Youngjae away from his work for so long.”

With the name of Youngjae, the two kids pressed their lips together and suppressed a laugh.

“Jinyoung, fire them. I swear, it’s either them or me.”
“We haven’t done anything.” Bambam was practically laughing throwing his hands up in the air in protest.

“If you two, speak one word or smirk or smile or move a muscle, I’m out of here. Jinyoung can have his little talk with me over the phone,” Jaebeom tried to threaten them but he doubts it worked, the next thing he knew Bambam turned to a laughing Yugyeom and pulled out his chin, mocking Jaebeom and said, “Don’t move a muscle.”

Jaebeom jumped from his seat towards Bambam, who leaned as far away from the table as he could so Jaebeom couldn’t touch him from across the table.

“Bambam, Yugyeom, if you guys are not going to cut it out, I’ll send you both back to work.” Jinyoung sounded annoyed so they stopped.

“Anyway, the 22nd is like five days away and I’ll only be there for two days. I can stay for longer if you want.”

“I guess we’ll be fine.”

They all sat in silence. Jaebeom wasn’t sure what was bothering Jinyoung but there was something he wasn’t telling him.

“Anything else? Or I can leave now?” Jaebeom asked when no one said anything.

“Eager to meet Youngjae?” Bambam said and when Jaebeom looked at him, he and Yugyeom took it as their cue to get behind the counters.

“It’s just, last night, Youngjae called me.” Jinyoung wasn’t looking at Jaebeom, he was playing with his hands.

Something in Jaebeom unsettled at that. He wasn’t sure what but it didn’t feel right.

“What did he say?”

“Nothing out of ordinary, he just wanted to know about you. Wanted to know what he’s getting himself in. I- I told him to talk to you directly but he wanted an outsider’s opinion, someone who knows you but isn’t you.”

Jaebeom could understand that but the mere fact that Youngjae called Jinyoung last night to know about Jaebeom got his heart racing and he don’t know if it’s good or bad kind.

“And what did you say to him?”

“I told him a little bit about this and a little bit about that. How we became friends, how we started the shop, how we have two kids, things like that. Random stuff. I didn’t go too deep in your family. Told him your parents are nice and they love you and that they’ll love him. I guess I understand why he called but I just wanted you to know that he did.”

Jaebeom nodded at that. It’s all fair and he understood that and at that his phone vibrated. It was a message from Youngjae, asking him at what time they’re leaving. He replied back asking if 4pm works and they fixed the time.

Jaebeom looked at his watch and he still had a couple of hours to kill, he could go back and pack the rest of the things and have lunch and call it a day.
“I should probably go, I haven’t had lunch and I have to meet-” he stopped himself, already feeling eyes on him from behind the counter.

“I just need to pack and leave.” He finished.

“Eat with us, you can have lunch here.” And before Jaebeom could reply plates were being organized on the table and food was being placed.

This was a trap, they scammed him and made him believe it was just a meeting when it was lunch with these idiots.

They all dug in, ate peacefully, talking about nothing in general. Jaebeom realized one thing: that Bambam will drop Jackson’s name every few minutes just to get a reaction out of Jinyoung but Jinyoung was a good actor. Jaebeom knew that.

He’ll stay stuff like “Jackson danced so well yesterday. Jackson looked so toned. Did you see the boy eyeing Jackson and wanting to partner with him all the time?” Bambam stopped since it wasn’t working but Jaebeom noticed Jinyoung’s jaw clenched with every mention of the other’s name.

It was at two when he decided to head home and get everything sorted.

“We’ll miss you Jaebeom,” Yugyeom said and went in to hug Jaebeom. Jaebeom is not much of a hugger but he loves the kid, he’ll never tell him that in person but he lets him be hugged for few seconds before he tried to wiggle out of it.

“Don’t be a sap, I’ll be back in a couple of days.”

“Don’t go wild on Youngjae, he looked naïve,” Bambam remarked and Jaebeom looked him straight in the eyes but Bambam kept laughing.

“He’s not a kid, he can take care of himself.”

“Oh, so you’re planning on going a bit wild.” Bambam cooed and Yugyeom elbowed him, telling him to cut it before Jaebeom loses his cool.

“Jinyoung, I hope you get laid when you’re there. It’s been too long.” Bambam is losing it today. He has said every inappropriate thing he could come up with.

Jinyoung’s mouth dropped open. Jaebeom was about to ask Bambam to cut it when he thought of a better comeback.

“He won’t be getting any because Jackson’s not going.” This had everyone laughing, except for Jinyoung, who has betrayal written all over his face.

“I thought we were friends.”

“You thought wrong and I have to go now, for real. Thanks for the dinner.”

Jaebeom hugged both the kids and walked with Jinyoung outside of the café.

They both stood outside for a minute in silence, looking at nothing in particular. It was comfortable.

Jaebeom turned towards Jinyoung and he could see Jinyoung is concerned. He has always been, that’s his nature. It brought a warm feeling inside Jaebeom because that concern meant that Jinyoung cared and he wanted him to know that he cared as well.
“Try not to miss me too much,” Jaebeom said to lighten the mood. It’s not like they haven’t been apart a lot, it’s just they like to know that the person is within reach. That Jinyoung would come running in a heartbeat when Jaebeom would need him or vice-versa.

“I won’t even notice.” Jinyoung laughed.

“Try not to miss him too much.” And then there was silence. A soft smile spreading on Jinyoung’s lips. Jaebeom smiled back. It has been way too long since Jaebeom has seen Jinyoung being interested in someone. He wasn’t sure if Jinyoung was truly interested in Jackson but there was something between them that’s for sure.

They hugged and Jaebeom started walking towards his place. The walk was short and when he got home he started rearranging his luggage, that’s what he was used to do to keep his mind distracted. He still got some time before he was supposed to meet Youngjae. He was not nervous.

Soon after Jaebeom got a message from Youngjae and it said that he was outside his apartment so they can leave whenever Jaebeom was ready. Jaebeom looked around his place to make sure everything was in order before he left the apartment. He saw Youngjae leaning on the sidewall, typing something in his phone.

“Are you ready?” Jaebeom asked to get Youngjae’s attention. He turned around to lock the door of his apartment.

Youngjae looked nervous. He wasn’t saying anything, just have Jaebeom a little nod before he collected all his stuff and made his way towards the elevator.

Once they were both in the elevator Jaebeom studied Youngjae, he was wearing golden thin framed round glasses, with a brown overcoat, black jeans and black sweater to go with it.

Jaebeom on the other hand had an oversize t-shirt underneath his black long coat and wore baggy pants. Youngjae looked like a fashion student while Jaebeom looked like he was staying at home.

They didn’t bother each other with conversation when they were in the elevator. They got out and walked towards Jaebeom’s car. Once Jaebeom was done putting all the luggage in the backseat, they sat in silence for a while. Youngjae rubbing his hand to make them warm and Jaebeom turning the heater on.

“Are you nervous?” Youngjae asked after a while. Jaebeom looked at him to understand what his expression said but came up with nothing.

“No, are you?”

“Yes, I am very nervous. What if I mess up? What if they don’t like me? What if I said something wrong-”

“Hey, hey, Youngjae!” Jaebeom tried getting Youngjae’s attention but Youngjae kept talking, too nervous to pay attention.

“And they’ll want me gone, what if I don’t know what to say when they ask me a-”

Jaebeom placed his hand on top of Youngjae’s. Gently he started rubbing his hands on Youngjae’s. Partially it was to keep him warm.

“You won’t mess up, okay. Everything will be fine. They’ll love you. And if you feel like you can’t answer something, you don’t have to. Just smile and laugh. Don’t stress yourself out. They’re nice
people. I bet they’re more nervous than you are.” With that Jaebeom pulled his hands back. Youngjae’s hand were a bit cold but soft, so soft. He turned on the engine and got on the road, tried hard to distract himself from the feeling of Youngjae’s hands in his.

“Easy for you to say, they’re your parents.”

Jaebeom smiled, kept his eyes on the road because the things the sun is doing to Youngjae’s face should be illegal.

“How long will it take?” Youngjae asked, finally settling in the passenger’s seat.

“Shouldn’t take more than three hours with this traffic, could be four if I drive slow,” Jaebeom replied.

“So, let’s just start then, what are we going to tell them?”

“That we met through mutual friends few weeks ago and started talking and then I asked you out on a date and you just couldn’t resist me and said yes.” Youngjae laughed at that. Pretty hard, throwing his head back and putting a hand on his stomach.

“Hey, you’re hurting my feeling by laughing so hard at that,” Jaebeom said with a pout.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to. Yes, you’re a catch. I got lucky.”

Jaebeom smiled for a second before putting on the serious face. They stopped at a red light and Jaebeom pulled out his phone, he snapped a picture of Youngjae. Youngjae was adjusting the radio, he had his hand stretched out and his mouth a bit open in concentration and the sun was doing wonders to his skin.

“Did you just take a picture of me?” Youngjae asked with wide eyes.

“Isn’t that what people do when they’re dating? Have candid images of each other on their phone? My cousins are gonna ask for them and I can’t just be like ‘I never took any’, considering I enjoy photography.” Jaebeom tried hard to explain it to Youngjae that it’s not for him.

“You like photography? That’s nice. I didn’t know. What else do you like?” Youngjae sat back and turned towards Jaebeom. The red light turns to green and they start moving.

“I like to read, I like comics, I like art, cats, cooking. I don’t know, I mean I like normal stuff, I enjoy a lot of things.”

“I have never touched a book, I have never been around cats, I can’t cook to survive. Jaebeom, I think we’re a perfect match.” Youngjae laughed.

Jaebeom turned his head to look at Youngjae, fondness in his eyes. Blood rushed to his cheeks because this was the first time Youngjae said his name. He liked it. Liked the sound of it. Liked the pop sound Youngjae made with the ‘beom’.

“What? Why are you smiling like that?” Youngjae asked and crossed his arms.

“I can’t laugh now?”

“Not when nothing happened. Tell me.”

“It’s nothing. Tell me what you like? I told you my stuff.” Jaebeom tried to change the topic.
“Changing the topic won’t take you anywhere but anyway, I like dogs, video games, singing, I sing at times but don’t make me do it in public, I play piano, I don’t know if I love it but I do play it sometimes. What else? I like eating, if that counts.”

Jaebeom smiled again. In last ten minutes, Jaebeom has realized it’s easy to laugh and smile around Youngjae. It’s very natural. Things don’t even have to be funny, and that thought is crazy to him.

“Will you ever play the piano and sing? I wanna hear you sing.” Jaebeom kept his eyes on the road, didn’t know why he felt this heat in his body when he asked Youngjae that. It felt intimidate.

“You want me to sing and play for you?”

“I mean, you don’t have to. I just, thought- I mean, if you ever want to that is, I-” Youngjae started laughing again and Jaebeom stopped talking.

“You get flustered easily,” Youngjae noted.

“Says you?” Jaebeom smirked at him.

“At least I won’t deny it but I know you will.” And that was just a fact.

“Let’s set some ground rules for when we’re there? What are you comfortable and uncomfortable with?” Youngjae asked.

“I- I’m not big on skinship, so if you could resist this,” he moved his hand up and down his body, “that’ll be great.”

Youngjae laughed again and Jaebeom made it his mission to make him laugh more. “It’s a hard thing to ask from me but I’ll try to control myself. So, no hugging, no touching. What else?”

“I guess that cuts it, stay close to me so you don’t have to deal with a lot of people alone. If someone asks you something about me and you don’t know just say that we just started dating so we’re still into the whole ’getting to know each other’ phase.”

“Sounds good to me. Anything else? I mean, I just don’t know what parents talk about when they meet their kids boyfriend and girlfriend.”

“You’ve never met anyone’s parents before?”

“Nope, never got to that stage.”

“How long was your last relationship?” Jaebeom asked because he really wanted to know. Now he was interested.

“Maybe a couple of months, he just wasn’t too much into me, he found some other hot girl and started seeing her and then they got close and he called it off with me,” Youngjae didn’t sound sad so Jaebeom didn’t ask much. Just listened to what he was saying.

“What about you? How long was your last relationship?”

“Four years.” Jaebeom hated talking about his past life and that bitch of a woman.

“Wow, that’s- that’s long. So, I’m your rebound?” Youngjae said to lighten the mood and it helped, Jaebeom smiled again.

“Not technically, well, we separated a year ago or maybe longer than that. So, no, you’ll not be the
rebound.”

“I’m flattered.” After a minute of silence Youngjae spoke up again, “Do you wanna talk about it?”

Jaebeom turned and looked at him for a second, his expression soft and unreadable, “Maybe someday.”

Youngjae wasn’t stupid enough to stretch it. “What else? Anything else I should know? How’s your family? How’s your mom and dad? How are they around people you’re dating?”

“I don’t know how to say it, but I’m an only child so they’re protective but also nice. They’ll love you, if you’re worried about that.”

“Hmm, oh and I wanted to ask this but do we have to share the same room?”

“Same bed, if I’m being honest,” Jaebeom said and blood rushed to his face. His neck felt warm, his cheeks felt warm, his ears felt warm. The thought of sharing the same bed with Youngjae made him nervous. Even though Jaebeom has had a girlfriend but he never made it his habit to share the bed. He liked his own space.

“Oh,” Youngjae said with a shaky breath.

“Will you be okay with it? I can sleep on the floor or something, I don’t have a couch in my bedroom so. Or I can just say it’s all too new for us and we’re not at that stage of sharing the bed together.” Jaebeom was concerned. He didn’t want Youngjae to be uncomfortable.

“No, no. I would rather sleep with you than anyone else.” It sounded innocent till it hit Youngjae what he has just said.

Jaebeom turned red, there was no denying the colour on his cheeks were because of Youngjae’s words.

“I’m sorry, no no-” Youngjae started to panic, words loud but voice louder. “I meant, sleeping in the bed, platonic, like I would rather share the bed with you than the people in your family.”

“It’s okay it’s okay, I get it. It’s not like you actually want to sleep with me,” Jaebeom replied with a shy voice. Low enough so that Youngjae couldn’t hear but he was sure that he did.

“I move,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom turned towards him with a confused expression.

“I move in my sleep. I toss and turn so if your bed isn’t big enough, we’re gonna have a problem.”

Jaebeom smiled. “My family will eat your brains out and you’ll be so tired by the end of the day that you’ll be asleep as soon as you hit the bed. No tossing and turning then.”

“Well, we’ll put that theory to test tonight.”

“Let me know if you want me to stop somewhere if you want to have a break or something.”

“Jaebeom, we have to face your family, I noticed you haven’t even touched the speed limit, you’re as slow as a snail.”

“I just, this is the first time I am making them meet a boy.” And with that Youngjae turned his head towards Jaebeom.

“I’m your first?”
“What? Oh, no no. Not in that way. But they have never actually met any of the guys I had a fling with. I haven’t dated anyone in last year or so and the last guy I was with was before my last girlfriend and we weren’t even dating properly. I mean, yeah, you could say you’re the first.”

Jaebeom turned to look at Youngjae, his eyes were wide, he was clearly panicking.

“Youngjae, it’s fine. No one will say anything. Trust me.” They sat in silence for the next half an hour. Time ticked slowly and Jaebeom regretted ever opening his mouth.

“You’re overthinking it,” he said because the silence was eating him up.

“Easy for you to say.”

“Honestly, if you for even a second feel uncomfortable or judged or just straight up offended, you can leave. I’ll explain everything to everyone, I just don’t want you to feel out of place there.”

Youngjae nodded. They were close to Jaebeom’s house now. Hardly half an hour away. They have been travelling for long. Youngjae has started getting tired. Maybe he wasn’t that used to long trips.

“We’ll reach in next ten minutes or so.”

“Don’t make me nervous than I already am,” Youngjae said and laughed. His laugh relaxed Jaebeom.

“I wanted to ask you something.” Jaebeom hesitated. He has been wanting to ask this for a long time but he wasn’t sure how to get to the topic.

“Yeah, sure.”

“Why me? Like why did you offer?” Jaebeom finally let those words out. He wanted to ask this since day one but he finally got the chance to do it.

Youngjae looked puzzled. Jaebeom stopped the car around an abandoned building. There wasn’t much traffic on the road but he kept the dipper on. He turned towards Youngjae and sat with half of his leg on the seat and crossed his arms. He was nervous.

“Why did we stop?” Youngjae asked, still puzzled.

“My house is down this lane,” Jaebeom replied as a matter-of-fact.

“Wow, okay.” Youngjae took a deep breath. His heart was beating fast now. They were close. So close to Jaebeom’s house now. He signed up for this because of stupid Jackson.

“To answer your question. I don’t know.”

“I think you know.”

“I know,” Youngjae looked at his hands on his lap and let out a small laugh. “It’s stupid though. It’ll not make any sense.”

“Tell me, let me be the judge of that.”

“Promise you won’t laugh.” Youngjae looked Jaebeom straight in the eyes and Jaebeom did everything in his power not to reach out to that face.

“Yes, I promise.”
“So that I have a story,” Youngjae said it in a way that implicated that Jaebeom should understand it. But Jaebeom was even more confused than before.

“I don’t get it.”

Youngjae laughed nervously. He started playing his shirt. He had to keep his hands busy to distract himself.

“I have never done anything in my life, I don’t have a story to tell. I have lived a very simple, boring life.” Jaebeom waited for Youngjae to continue.

“I’ve never had a life changing moment. Whenever I go around or out with people, everyone has something to talk about, something or some moment that defined them, that changed them. Made them who they’re today. Even if it happened when they were kids or just few months back. People have a story to tell.”

Youngjae stopped and took another breath, he turned his head to look at Jaebeom. Youngjae’s eyes were soft and bit moist, his voice was a bit shaky in a way that indicated that it was taking everything in him to say it.

“Being here, with you right now. Is something I never thought I’d be doing. I never thought I’d be out of my house for so long with a stranger. I’m not saying that I only did it because of the adventure or anything but I wanted to do something that’s very unlike me. I’ve always played it safe in life. I was never anything special or extraordinary.” Youngjae’s voice started rising and his eyes started shifting from one place to another. Unfocused and nervous.

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae took a deep breath and relaxed his shoulders, he looked tense, he looked at Jaebeom again, “I’ve been a good son, a good student, not brilliant. I have two siblings, my parents had to make ends meet and even though I love my family so so so much, I never felt special. I felt safe and warm and loved but not special. I have been an above average student, never topped my class but I never failed a subject either. If you go back to my school and ask any of my teachers, they’ll not remember me. I left and went to college and got my degree and started working. Leaving my parent’s place was something but it wasn’t everything. It was reckless, it wasn’t exciting but it was new and refreshing. But being here, with you,” he said and looked Jaebeom in the eyes. They sat like this for a few seconds. Youngjae collected his thoughts and Jaebeom just kept looking. This felt intimate. Sitting here, hearing Youngjae talk, felt intimate and it scared Jaebeom.

“It makes me nervous, in a good way. It makes my blood rush, it makes my heart race,” Youngjae continued. For a second Jaebeom felt good but he wanted Youngjae to say those words for a total different reason.

“Like, I can tell that whatever you had in that last relationship of yours, it changed you, changed your perspective of people and it affected you. I want something, someone to affect me, change me for better or worse but to just have some kind of an effect on me. Because right now, I’m the same me I was when I was in high school and that’s a really long time back. I might have matured with age but everyone does. And even if this turns out bad, I won’t regret it. Whatever this is that we’re doing right now, all of it makes me excited and I can’t recall for the life of me when was the last time I was so excited. I couldn’t sleep last night because I was looking forward to this,” Youngjae said and smiled softly. Jaebeom kept looking, his expression blank and he was scared to say anything, afraid his voice might sound broken because of how dry his throat felt right that moment.

“And honestly, I guess the only other ‘out of ordinary’ thing that happened to me was when I was a kid, very little, and I was getting back home a guy stopped me and asked me for money and I started running and started crying and my mom opened the door at the right time so he ran.” Youngjae
laughed. The atmosphere was light again, Jaebeom had his mouth hung open. For a split second he thought Youngjae was joking but there was no mischief expression on his face.

“Really? That happened?” Jaebeom asked in between of his own laugh.

“Yeah! Wild, right? I was coming back from school and my parents were supposed to be at work but thankfully my mom was home. I was really scared and I was very small.” They laughed again. The heaviness Jaebeom was feeling in his chest was disappearing.

At that moment Youngjae looked innocent, a few years younger than his actual age, his laugh was a little tensed but he was relaxing, the sun was setting behind Youngjae and Jaebeom just couldn’t stop looking. The shadows dancing on his face was making his skin look ever softer. Jaebeom wanted to reach out. To touch, even if it was for a second. Before he could process what he was doing, his phone was out and he clicked a picture.

“Hey, stop with that,” Youngjae said and grabbed Jaebeom’s phone from his hand. He looked at the picture on the screen and smiled. “I look good, wow, look at this.” He turned the screen towards Jaebeom but Jaebeom was too busy looking at Youngjae. He didn’t even bother looking at the phone. Youngjae was too mesmerized with his own picture he just kept nodding and kept saying ‘wow’.

“Yeah, you look beautiful,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae didn’t need to know which image Jaebeom was talking about, the one right in front of Jaebeom’s eyes or the one on his phone’s screen.

Jaebeom was so caught up with all this he didn’t realize why Youngjae had his back turned towards him and Youngjae started leaning towards Jaebeom. Jaebeom’s eyes were fixed on Youngjae’s head, his mouth a bit open with the shock of sudden closeness. But he kept looking, gave him the permission to look.

He heard the shutter noise from his phone and looked up, realized that Youngjae just clicked a picture of them, together. This is their first picture together. Youngjae leaned back to his original spot and took a look at the picture, satisfied, he handed the phone back to Jaebeom.

“To convince others, you said you want to have pictures. What’s more convincing than a picture of both of us?”

What Jaebeom didn’t mention was that no one would dare to ask him for the pictures. They all respected Jaebeom’s personal space and would never force him to show the picture until unless he decided to show it to them himself.

“Let’s go now, your parents must be expecting us.” Youngjae sat straight and looked ahead.

“Youngjae, about what you said earlier-”

“We don’t have to talk about it, it’s fine, I was being stupid.”

“No, you weren’t. I won’t talk about it if you don’t want to, but if you let me speak, I would like to say something,” Jaebeom said and waited for Youngjae to say something. Youngjae kept looking at the road in front of them.

“Look straight and talk. Don’t look at me when you’re talking, I- your gaze will feel heavy and I don’t want to have a breakdown right before I’m meeting your parents.”

Jaebeom smiled and shifted on his seat to look ahead.
“Youngjae, stories don’t make people special, they make themselves special. I know I am no one to say it, but you influence and ground people around you, I have seen the way Jackson is around you and how he seeks out to you, and even if I only saw Mark for few minutes, I understood his presence around you. Youngjae, I understand that you might not think you’re special or you might not have felt special, but for someone out there you might be special and, in that way, you make them special. I don’t think I’m making sense but don’t do things just to make a story out of it. You don’t have the control over the stories that make your life but you have control over how you handle it. Things that happen which changes people’s life don’t happen because they want it to happen, but what you make out of those things and how you get ahead of it, that matters, that makes you you. I didn’t choose the circumstances that led to what happened in my last relationship but I chose the path I’m on right now.” Jaebeom wasn’t sure where he was going with that. He couldn’t find words to describe how much he wanted Youngjae to know how important he is.

“I want to tell you something, when I was in school, I was a pretty stupid kid, not a bully but I used to think I was above people. I used to think I was cool and because I used to do b-boying and was confident, I was popular. I was a rebel, was an only child so I used to get away with a lot of things. There was this time in school where getting lunch from home was considered uncool. It was considered lame because you’re still relying on your parents and me being stupid, I stopped taking lunch to school. I would starve for seven hours before I could get back home and have lunch and I started losing weight. Long story short there was a kid in my school and he noticed all this, never said anything but one day when no one was around he offered me his lunch, I said no and he placed it in front of me and left. I ate it. It happened again and again and again. He would get extra lunch so he could share it with me. This happened for two years and at our graduation he came up to me and said, ‘Lim Jaebeom, I can’t babysit you forever, take care of your own health.’ And he gave me his home-cooked meal for the last time. This is plain and a boring story. For him, he just shared his lunch every day with a kid, but that’s the only part of school I still remember. I still remember his name, I still remember his face. I have forgotten so many of my close high school friends but I will never forget him.” Jaebeom stopped talking again.

He was sure he wasn’t making any sense anymore.

“Youngjae, I guess what I’m trying to say is I’m grateful we met and I know this will sound selfish but I’m also glad you’ve never had a story before because if that’s the reason why you’re here right now, I’ll take it.”

From the corner of his eyes Jaebeom could see Youngjae smile. He looked down at his hands while smiling.

“Thank you,” was all Youngjae said and Jaebeom started the car again.

“Now let’s get this over with, just few days here and then you’re back to your own life.” Somehow it pained Jaebeom to say that.

They stood outside of Jaebeom’s house, with luggage by their side, Jaebeom looked ahead and Youngjae looked at Jaebeom. Nervousness in the atmosphere.

“Youngjae, if you wanna leave now or anytime when we’re there, please do it. I don’t want you to put yourself in a position you’re not comfortable in.”

“I understand, also, just smile okay,” Youngjae said and stepped closer towards Jaebeom with his back turned towards the front door. “I think someone is looking at us from the window, don’t look,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom leaned towards his left to look at the window. “I said don’t look.”

Youngjae started jumping in front of Jaebeom to block his view. “They’re all crazy and acting like
He walked ahead and before he could knock, his mother opened the door.

“I have missed my favourite son,” she said and hugged him, tight, a bit too tight. And kissed every area on his face.

“I’m your only son,” Jaebeom said and kissed her forehead.

Youngjae stood behind looking at them talking to each other. There was a fondness in his heart. Kids talking to their parents with love and respect always made his heart warm. No matter what the age of the kid is. It brought out the softness in the parent’s face and Youngjae loved it.

“Introduce us.” Youngjae heard Jaebeom’s mother speak.

“Yeah, sorry!” He turned around and gave a smile to Youngjae. His mother took a step towards him, she looked at Jaebeom and then at Youngjae and then back at Jaebeom.

“Mom, this is Youngjae and Youngjae this is my mother,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae can sense the nervousness in his voice. Youngjae bowed to his mother.

“Youngjae? That’s a nice name,” his mother said and took another step towards Youngjae. He held out her hands and looked at Youngjae, “Do you mind?” She was asking for a hug and it made Youngjae smile. He looked at Jaebeom who was smiling as well.

“No, of course not.” Youngjae closed the space between them and hugged her. She felt warm and it made Youngjae smile. He looked at Jaebeom and he was smiling as well. There was a hint of innocence on his face, that’s what parents do to their kids. Bring out the kid in them.

“Let’s get inside, Jaebeom’s father has been asking about you both.” With that they walked inside.

The inside of the house was spacious, kitchen in the right corner with a table outside of it, a set of sofas in the centre and on the left was a staircase which led to a room upstairs, it wasn’t hard to guess that room belonged to Jaebeom.

“Why don’t you both go and freshen up? I’ll get the dinner ready.” Jaebeom’s mother turned towards Jaebeom and Jaebeom nodded. He took the luggage from Youngjae and started walking upstairs.

“Don’t act so smart kid, I saw you making the boy carry his own luggage,” his mother said and Youngjae laughed. He was relaxing now. Jaebeom smiled but didn’t say anything and they walked towards his room.

The room was big enough for two, but Youngjae was more interested in the bed. He just wanted to know if the bed is big enough or not, in the corner was the bed, pushed towards the wall. It wasn’t big but wasn’t small either. Was big enough for a single kid but these two can manage if they try and if Youngjae could stop moving at night.

Jaebeom placed the bags in one corner and stood right next to Youngjae. The room didn’t have much of anything, blue coloured walls, with a working table and a bed and a closet. The washroom was inside the room and Youngjae was thankful, he didn’t want to leave the room at night.

“Are you okay?” Jaebeom asked for a while.

“Yeah, yeah! I’m good, your mother is nice.” Youngjae turned towards Jaebeom and realized they are standing too close, not even a foot away from each other. Youngjae swallowed. Not letting his
eyes travel anywhere other than Jaebeom’s forehead or eyes.

“I know it’s not too late but my parents sleep early, do you want to go down and have dinner now?”

“Yes, yeah sure.”

It felt awkward, two boys standing in a room, unaware of what to do next.

Jaebeom walked out and Youngjae followed him.

They all sat to have dinner, Jaebeom introduced Youngjae to his dad and turned out his dad is a man of few words. The shook hands and Youngjae was scared for a second.

They started digging in their food making small talks about work and the wedding. Jaebeom sat next to Youngjae and the parents sat in front of them. All four of them enjoying their food, Youngjae wasn’t hungry because of all the nervousness but he still ate.

“Youngjae, what do you do?” Jaebeom’s father asked.

“I’m an accountant,” Youngjae said and wasn’t surprised with the look that he gave him. People don’t expect people like Youngjae to be accountant. He wasn’t being shallow but looks speak and Youngjae himself knew that his looks don’t talk about accountancy.

“That’s great, you enjoy your work?” This was new, no one has ever asked Youngjae if he enjoyed his work, people have asked him questions regarding the pay or where he worked or why he chose this field and if it was what he always wanted to be.

“Yes, yes, I’m happy. It gets a bit dull now and then but I enjoy the numbers.”

“Good good, happiness is important.” They smiled and went back to their food.

Jaebeom’s mom asked them how the travel was and Jaebeom replied to that, she asked how Jinyoung was and when was he visiting. She said he has missed him and Jaebeom said he has missed her as well.

After the dinner Youngjae offered to help out and Jaebeom’s mother turned towards Jaebeom and said, “He’s a keeper.”

It made Youngjae blush, he looked down and smiled. “Aw, look at him, he’s so shy,” She said and pinched his cheeks. It made Youngjae laugh. Jaebeom watched it all for a second before walking towards them and then he pulled Youngjae towards himself and rubbed Youngjae’s cheeks with his hands.

“Stop flirting with my boyfriend.” Youngjae didn’t know what it was, Jaebeom’s hand on his cheeks, their next to nothing distance or him calling Youngjae his boyfriend for the first time, but all the blood in Youngjae’s body rushed towards Youngjae’s face. His cheeks were on fire, his neck felt warm and his ears were red for sure.

“Stop making him blush and help me clean the dishes.” Jaebeom looked at Youngjae and smirked because no doubt Youngjae was blushing. Youngjae playfully pushed Jaebeom and smacked his chest.

Jaebeom held his chest and pretended to be hurt and started laughing.

Youngjae offered to do the dishes with them but Jaebeom’s mom said there will be more dishes to do
tomorrow and he can help out later. So, he sat on the chair and watched them clean up.

After they were done, Jaebeom asked Youngjae to go upstairs and take a bath as he must be exhausted from all the traveling they did and he’ll talk to his parents for a while and will meet him there.

Youngjae nodded and walked upstairs. Took out his pyjamas and went to the bathroom. Took a long relaxing shower. He wasn’t thinking too much about today, if the rest of the day went like this, it’ll be okay. After we was out of the shower he looked at the watch and it was only 10pm at that time. He checked all his messages and there was a new message from Jaebeom, it said that he’ll be a bit late and that Youngjae should just go to bed. Youngjae replied saying he’ll take the side towards the wall.

There were five missed calls from Jackson in the half an hour. Youngjae decided to call him back.

“Youngjae, I swear I was on my way to Jinyoung’s shop to ask him what Jaebeom did to you and why you’re not picking up your calls,” were the first thing out of Jackson’s mouth.

“You just need a reason to talk to him.”

“This is not the time to state facts,” Jackson said and they both laughed, “Tell me you are okay so that I can go to bed early.”

“I’m good, we had dinner and his parents are so nice. I love his mom already.” Jackson went silent for few seconds.

“Don’t get attached, Youngjae. You know it’s all temporary.” Youngjae hated the feeling in his chest just then. As he registered Jackson’s words, he hated how tight his chest left right that second.

“I’m just saying people are nice. There’s nothing more to that.”

“I just don’t want you to get hurt.”

“I know and I’ll take care of myself and Jaebeom is nice as well,” Youngjae said. He then told him about his day, skipped some of the talks but told him he was safe and sound. Jackson told him that he and Mark went to shopping together, he wanted to buy Christmas presents for his parents and Mark offered to help.

“Are you going to drop by the coffee shop?” Youngjae asked and they both know which shop he is talking about.

“There’s not a strong enough reason for me to drop by.”

“Say you just wanted to see him, or is that too cheesy?”

“That’s too real, I would rather say I came to see Yugyeom.”

“Jackson, don’t beat yourself up, go see him if you want to.”

“Youngjae, isn’t it past your curfew? Go to bed.” Youngjae laughed and after ten more minutes of them bickering, they hung up.

Youngjae laid down and went back to texting with people, replied to few of Mark’s messages and went back to replying to Jackson. He has exchanged numbers with Bambam, Yugyeom and Jinyoung but they weren’t on the texting basis.
He got a message from Jinyoung though, when he was still on the call with Jackson, Jinyoung simply asked if they’ve reached and if everything’s okay, he said he tried calling Jaebeom but he’s not picking him.

Youngjae replied stating that everything’s fine. Told him the same story he told Jackson few minutes back. After exchanging few more texts, Youngjae’s eyes started feeling heavy. He pulled the covers on top of him and looked at the time, it was fifteen past eleven. Jaebeom wasn’t here and he wasn’t sure when he’d be here. He tried staying up for a little more time but his eyes and tiredness failed him.

He woke up again when he felt the dip in the bed, he tried focusing his eyes but it was too dark.

With sleep overtaking his whole body he let out a small, “Jaebeom”. The bed shifted before the body in front of him settled. Blankets on and Youngjae could feel the warm coming for the person’s body.

“Shh, go back to sleep,” Jaebeom whispered. “I’m here now.”

Youngjae didn’t remember anything else, he just remembered going back to sleep with sound of Jaebeom’s voice ringing in his head.

Jaebeom laid down and let his eyes adjust to the darkness. He was tired, it was 1am and he didn’t expect to be up this late. His legs were sore from all the driving, his muscles were tensed, the bath didn’t help much either.

With the light moon-light that entered the room from his window, he could see Youngjae’s face, still in shadow and covers drawn to his nose, he could still see the eyes and the forehead and parts of his cheeks.

Jaebeom smiled. He wanted to touch those cheeks. The feeling of his hands rubbing his cheeks at the kitchen still lingered on his arm. He smiled to himself. He is being stupid, he shouldn’t be thinking like that. Jaebeom kept looking at the boy in front of him, their faces were close but Jaebeom tried maintaining the distance. Looking was allowed, he told himself. He could look. He looked at Youngjae’s face for one last time before letting sleep take over him.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to give you this chapter before the come back! I'm so proud of myself that I did it.
I hope you enjoy it.
Let me know what you think of the chapter, the part(s) you liked.
This is long but I hope that it wasn't too boring.
Thanks for reading.
AO3 is so slow today, it took me 2 hours to post this! it's legit 5am right now.
Youngjae woke up and saw that the bed was empty. He tossed and turned for a while, wasn’t sure what to focus on. He then reached for his phone and looked at the time. It was one in the afternoon. He panicked and sat straight on the bed. He couldn’t believe he slept for so long and that Jaebeom didn’t even wake him up.

He wasn’t sure what to do next? Go downstairs and check? Or just take a bath and go out to see what’s happening? All of it sounded stupid to him. After five minutes of debating, he called Jaebeom and after several rings Jaebeom picked up.

“Hello?” Confusion clear in Jaebeom’s voice.

“Shhh, don’t say my name, I don’t want your parents to know. Where are you?” Youngjae whispered.

“Kitchen.”

“Can you come up for a second?” Youngjae asked and he heard Jaebeom’s mom asking who he was talking to. Youngjae was in full panic mode.

“Please don’t tell her, I am so embarrassed, can you come faster please?” There was silence on the other end but Jaebeom hasn’t hung up yet, so Youngjae pressed his ear in the phone again.

He got startled when the door opened and Jaebeom entered, he was laughing, loudly.

“Stop laughing at me,” Youngjae yelled in a whisper which made Jaebeom laugh even louder. Youngjae wasn’t panicking anymore. Something about the whole situation calmed him down.

“I said stop laughing!” Youngjae was smiling now, still whispering and Jaebeom held his stomach. Still laughing.

Youngjae took the pillow that was there on Jaebeom’s side of the bed and threw it will full force. Jaebeom didn’t see that coming and fell on the floor. Startled.

“Oh God, Youngjae. You’re so funny,” Jaebeom said and stood up, swiped a fake tear from the corner of his eye.

“You think it’s funny? I’m panicking here. Your parents are gonna hate me. What kind of a person sleeps till 1pm at someone else’s place? Let me tell you, not a decent one.”

“Youngjae, hey, it’s fine. They didn’t even question where you were. Mom even noticed how tired you were last night, when you went to bed, she asked me not to disturb you when I went back in the room.” Stating that made Jaebeom’s face go hot, blood rushed to his neck and cheeks. He started looking at the floor.

“Oh, so you’re blushing over the idea of sleeping with me?” Youngjae made a smirk remark. “Cute.”

Where does all that confidence come from? Jaebeom would always wonder.

“Don’t make me say stuff you’ll regret,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae put his hands up in surrender.
“When did you wake up?” Youngjae asked instead.

“At around 7 or 8, I guess. I wanted to make breakfast for them and I know how much my mom loves my cooking.”

“Why didn’t you wake me up?”

“Because you were sleeping.” Because Youngjae looked so peaceful that Jaebeom himself wanted to stay there for another hour, because waking him up meant being around him longer and Jaebeom had no idea how long he can go before trying to touch him again. Jaebeom has never felt the urge to be this close with someone and it scared him.

Youngjae groaned, still in bed, still in Jaebeom’s bed and Jaebeom just stared for a while, he was allowed.

“What’s the plan for today? It’s already one.” Youngjae stood up to pick clothes for the day.

“Well, the lunch is about to be ready and then mom wants to go for some wedding present shopping, I don’t know why they wait till last minute and dad is forced to go to the tailor because his suit is a mess.” Jaebeom explained and made himself comfortable on the floor.

“What about us? Are we gonna be alone in the house today?” Jaebeom felt nervousness in Youngjae’s tone.

“As much as you want to be alone with me, we can’t,” Jaebeom smirked and expected Youngjae to throw him a look but instead colours ran to Youngjae’s cheek and neck and he bowed his head to hide his blush.

“What are we doing then?”

“You get to decide which one of my parent you want to go out with.”

“Are you for real?” Youngjae turned, panic clear in his eyes.

“I mean, yeah. One of us have to accompany one of the parent to get things done.” And then it hit him, Youngjae might not be up for it. He was stupid enough to not consider that Youngjae might be uncomfortable. Before Youngjae could reply, Jaebeom spoke again.

“Or you can stay here and I’ll try and get everything done, I mean, I know they’re not your parents and you’re not even my boyfriend, so, it’s not like you have to try out that part and actually get to know my parents. You can stay here, I’ll tell them you’re getting dinner ready for all of us.”

They both were silent for a minute, Jaebeom started being anxious, he thought he messed up. Panic so thick in his chest he was scared to speak.

“I’ll go with your mom,” Youngjae said, his back still facing Jaebeom. Jaebeom took a deep breathe, trying to calm himself down. Jaebeom looked up, still zoned out.

“She talks a lot though, she’ll ask questions, she’ll ask like 100 questions and she’ll figure it out,” Jaebeom said.

Youngjae turned towards Jaebeom and walked towards him, Jaebeom had to look up to see Youngjae and Youngjae was looking down at him. “Then why would you say it’s my choice.”

“Because I thought you’d pick my father.” Youngjae laughed at that. Moved back a little.
“We didn’t speak at all last night, if I’m being honest, he scares me. I think he hates me.”

“It’s impossible, I mean, he told me himself, he thinks you’re a decent man. His words not mine.”

“Okay, what time? When are we leaving? I go take a shower now and meet you down for lunch? Or do you want me to have lunch first and shower later.”

“Shower, lunch and then we’ll leave. And you don’t have to worry, dad doesn’t talk much, if he asks you anything just be as close to the truth as you can.” Jaebeom stood up and gave a towel to Youngjae, a spare one. He went downstairs to finish making the lunch.

Half an hour later they all sat at the lunch table and ate their food, making small talks here and there. Jaebeom’s mom shared some childhood stories about Jaebeom and asked Youngjae about his own childhood. They compared how different things were. Jaebeom’s dad on the other hand, laughed now and then and didn’t speak much but he was observing. Youngjae found him looking at Jaebeom and him with fondness in his eyes, it warmed Youngjae’s heart but it ached a little as well. Because at the end of the day, what they were doing was all fake.

“Youngjae, you play anything in school?” It took some time for Youngjae to register that Jaebeom’s dad asked him a question.

“Yes, oh, I used to play football.” He nodded his head.


“You didn’t know?” Jaebeom’s mom asked Jaebeom and he panicked.

“It never came up,” Youngjae replied instead and went on to explain his love for football. Jaebeom’s dad, being the football fan, he started talking more and opened up a little. For some unknown reason Jaebeom’s heart started beating faster.

After lunch, Youngjae offered to help with the dishes but Jaebeom’s mom insisted that he just clean the table and leave the rest to them, after he was done he stood and watched Jaebeom and his mother.

It made Youngjae realise something about Jaebeom, he is made for home. Jaebeom is made to be around his parents, around people even if he acted like he doesn’t like it. As much as Jaebeom enjoyed his privacy, he still finds comfort around people. He finds comfort in his mother’s voice, in his dad’s silence, in Jinyoung’s laughter, in Bambam and Yugyeom’s bickering.

“Youngjae, why don’t you go change and I’ll see you soon,” Jaebeom said and with that Youngjae went upstairs.

Jaebeom needed to call Jinyoung, he already had five missed calls from him. He went out of the house so that he could talk in privacy.

“Jaebeom, are you for real? It took you five hours to return my calls?” Was the first sentence out of Jinyoung’s mouth.

“I’m sorry, I got… busy.”

“I knew that Youngjae was gonna change you, but I thought it’d be for the good.”

“Haha, Park Jinyoung is so funny.”

“He is, but enough about him, you tell me how is everything? Is your mom suspicious? Is your dad
okay?" Jinyoung sounded concerned.

"Yeah, yeah, everything’s fine, they like him. It’s not a surprise but my mom, I don’t know how to say this, but she has been warm towards him. Talks more about him than me."

"She likes him?" Jinyoung was surprised.

"Is that bad?" Jaebeom turned around towards the house and there was no activity inside.

"No, but, you have never had anyone home since, you know, and I thought she’d be more, I don’t know, suspicious? Anyway, how’s Youngjae?" There was mischief in his voice.

"He is fine, if you wanna talk to him, just call him. Stop wasting my time."

"Jaebeom, don’t blush, tell me how things are? Is he nicer than what we imagined in the beginning? Or is he difficult? Tell me details, I wanna know or I’ll make Bambam call you."

"I will block Bambam. But Youngjae, he is nice. Decent, civil, if that’s what you’re asking. He laughs and smiles a lot, gets shy around people but talks a hell of a lot when we’re alone. He’s also handling all of this fairly well, better than I expected honestly. And he," Jaebeom stopped himself from completing his sentence, felt his cheeks getting warmer.

"And he what, Jaebeom?" He could hear the smirk in Jinyoung’s voice.

"And he could suck my dick," Jaebeom said it as a comeback.

"Of course, you want that." Jinyoung was full on laughing now, the voice loud and clear in Jaebeom’s ear. His cheeks went red and blood rushed to his ears.

"I-I, you know I didn’t mean it like that. Jinyoung stop laughing. Park Jinyoung, I swear to god I’ll call Jackson right this second if you’ll not stop." That stopped Jinyoung.

"Oh Jaebeom, if you’re actually developing a crush on Youngjae, it’s cute."

"I’m not."

"Sure, tell that to your dick." With that, Jinyoung was laughing again and it made Jaebeom roll his eyes.

"Whatever, when are you reaching here?" Jaebeom tried hard to change the topic, anything to distract his mind from Youngjae.

"Tomorrow morning. I have some errands to run tonight, fix things up for the shop. Bambam and Yugyeom wanted to join as well but I told them off."

Jaebeom meant to invite the youngers but his extended family is not close to him and he didn’t want to sound like a burden so he dropped the idea.

"Great, I’ll see you then, just drop me a message when you leave."

"Sure."

"Have you seen him around?" Jaebeom smirked, he knew that Jackson is out visiting his family but he still wanted to tease the younger.

"Yeah, he dropped by an hour ago, got me breakfast," Jinyoung said as a matter of fact.
“He did? I thought he is went home.”

“Then why the hell would you ask?” Jinyoung sounded annoyed and it made Jaebeom laugh. Laughed joked about how Jinyoung could just book a ticket to go meet Jackson and Jinyoung threatened to not show up at the wedding at all if he kept teasing him.

They hung up after a while and Jinyoung relaxed a little. Whenever Jaebeom is visiting home, it scared Jinyoung a little. Jaebeom used to get so homesick that at times when he would be back at home he would just call his parents to come visit him. They’d spend months with him. Although those were rare cases, it still happened.

It was almost four in the evening and Jinyoung had a lot to complete before he needed to leave for Jaebeom’s. Keeping the kids in charge of the shop was scary but his only option. He made Bambam and Yugyeom repeat every rule. He asked them to call him every hour to give him updates. Now, he just needed to go to do some grocery shopping to complete the things he need for the shop.

He needed to fill the shop’s refrigerator with food that the kids can eat when he’s gone, otherwise they’ll survive on instant cups and that is not healthy. He grabbed his keys and walked out. Called the kids on his way to make sure they’re at the shop and everything is going smoothly.

He did his errands in quick successions. He walked in, grabbed everything he wanted and walked out. Walking towards his house is when Jinyoung first saw him. The guy in the black hoodie. He looked familiar but Jinyoung couldn’t see his face. Something in Jinyoung made him follow the guy, they were walking in the same direction so it wasn’t stalking, Jinyoung convinced himself.

When Jinyoung was supposed to turn left, the guy in black hoodie turned right and that’s when he saw the side profile. Jackson. But this couldn’t be true. Jackson wasn’t here. Was he hallucinating?

Jinyoung stood there for another minute. This couldn’t be right. Before he understood what’s happening, he was already following Jackson.

Now it’s stalking.

His actions were fast, his heart beating faster. How was this possible? Jackson told them he was gonna visit his parents. Did he lie to get out of the wedding date with Jaebeom? Did he not like Jaebeom? But Jackson was so nice to all of them, was he faking it? Hundred questions flood Jinyoung’s mind.

Jinyoung saw Jackson enter a building, he followed him inside. He saw him unlocking a door and went inside. This must be Jackson’s home. Jinyoung had to confront him, had to ask him why he lied, had to ask him why he’s still here, had to ask him what’s happening? Jinyoung found himself standing in front of Jackson’s home with a grocery bag in his hand. He rang the bell. He waited for few seconds and Jackson appeared on the door.

“Jinyoung?” The shook was clear on Jackson’s face and voice.

“What the hell? Why are you here? You told us you were visiting your parents.” Jinyoung was infuriated.

“How did you know where I live?” Jackson was more confused than ever, but he levelled his voice.

“Answer my questions first.” Jinyoung was just pissed off. The audacity Jackson had right that minute, was laughable.

“Were you expecting someone?” A woman came from behind Jackson, shorter than Jackson.
“Uh, Mom, this is Jinyoung,” Jackson turned towards the woman, his mother, and then back at Jinyoung, meeting his eyes for the first time.

Jinyoung was stunned, frozen, if the earth could just swallow him whole right now, that’d be great.

“Jinyoung, this is my mom.” Jackson kept his eyes on Jinyoung when he introduced them.

“Jackson, where are your manners? Invite him in. He even bought groceries. How caring.” She pushed Jackson aside so that Jinyoung could enter. “Come in, we were just about to have dinner.”

Jinyoung couldn’t move, he had no idea what to do next. He was not expecting this. Did Jackson lie about visiting his parents? Then why were his parents here? Did he lie about living alone?

“Oh no no, please enjoy your meal, I should be heading-”

“Nonsense,” Jackson’s mother said and pulled him inside. “You came all the way here and now I’m not letting you go. Have dinner with us, Jackson never lets us meet his friends. Says they are too busy.”

Jinyoung smiled towards the woman and turned towards Jackson who was still standing by the door, his expression unreadable.

When Jinyoung entered the living room he saw a man sitting there, probably Jackson’s father. Jinyoung greeted him with a smile. Jackson’s whole family looked so friendly and welcoming, he felt guilt building in his chest.

Jackson walked in the living room and straight in the kitchen, “Jinyoung, can I see you for a second,” he said it in the nicest way possible.

Jinyoung walked towards the kitchen, the wall of the kitchen hid them from Jackson’s family.

“Before you say anything, I’m so so sorry, I shouldn’t have done that.” Jinyoung felt guilty, way too guilty to even look at Jackson’s face.

“Jinyoung,” Jackson whispered, he doesn’t want his parents to hear them talk, “why are you here?”

“You said you were going to meet your parents and that’s why you can’t go with Jaebeom and then I saw you today and, I don’t know, I think I was just furious and acted out of impulse and followed you, I know I shouldn’t have. But I just wanted to know why you lied,” Jinyoung whispered back.

“I didn’t lie.” Jackson folded his hands over his chest and took a deep breath. He closed his eyes, this was not the time for him to lose his patience, especially when his parents are out there. “I was going to visit them but they kept pushing the date so I didn’t book the tickets and then they surprised me yesterday. They’re staying for a week. Apparently, Mark and Youngjae planned it with my parents.”

It all made sense to Jinyoung now but he still felt bad, he didn’t plan to intrude like that. He didn’t plan to be in Jackson’s personal space.

“I’m so sorry.” Jinyoung was not going to cry in front of Jackson, he promised himself.

“Thanks for the grocery though, I was running out of stuff.” Jackson took the grocery bag and placed it near his refrigerator.

“What? No, that’s for-”

“My mom already thinks it’s for me and anyway, the story is that I didn’t know my parents were
coming and I invited a few friends over to my place and I forgot to mention it to you that the plan has been cancelled and that’s why you’re here.”

Jinyoung wasn’t sure if that would work. “I brought groceries, what kind of a friend does that?”

“So, you wanna tell them we’re dating? Plan another fake-boyfriend thing here?” Jackson smirked while he started placing the ingredients from the grocery bag into his refrigerator.

“No, I mean, we shouldn’t. If they ask me about the grocery bag, what do you want me to say?” Jinyoung wasn’t sure of this plan at all but he wanted to help, especially after the mess he has made.

“Come up with something, you bought the groceries.”

Before Jinyoung could reply to him, Jackson’s mother came into the kitchen. “Are you boys done catching up? We are starving and Jackson hasn’t cooked for us in such a long time, we can’t wait.”

“Mom, we’ll just be out, Jinyoung here was helping me with the food.”

That was the first time Jinyoung looked around the kitchen, there was food everywhere, something on the stove and something on the slap. He couldn’t even name the dishes.

“We’ll wait outside, don’t get occupied,” Jackson’s mother said and winked at them before she left. Jinyoung’s mouth hung open.

“She thinks we’re together?” Jinyoung whispered so low Jackson could hardly make out what he was saying.

“Jinyoung, you brought groceries. To my house. At the time for dinner. What else do you want her to think?” Jackson was smiling now.

“Help me with dinner now, we’ll freak out later. And I know it’s not dinner time yet but old people get hungry early, so if you don’t wanna eat just be polite and eat a little.” Jinyoung nodded to that.

They served the dinner together, sat at the dinner table making small talks, Jinyoung could see the smiles Jackson’s parents exchange every time Jackson said something to Jinyoung. This is not want Jinyoung wanted.

“So, how did you two meet?” Jackson’s mom asked.

“Oh we, through mutual friends, my friend works slash dances with him and we all hung out together once.” Jinyoung always found the mutual-friends plan the safest. That story could never go wrong.

But Jackson’s parents looked at him with suspicion, as if he was lying, which he was but how do they know it.

Jackson laughed, “What? Why are you looking at him like that? Do you want him to say that one rainy day I went to his shop, oh by the way, he owns a coffee-cum-book shop. And I asked him if it was open and they were already closed and I was wet because of the rain and he turned to me and said it’s open for you, you know, because I was soaked. And that’s how we met.”

The whole table stopped eating, Jinyoung was stunned because he couldn’t believe that Jackson still remembered that story. He thought it was something it said at that moment but here they were, Jackson reciting the same thing again.
Jackson’s mom started laughing, “You’re too much, I can’t have a meal in peace.”

“You started it,” Jackson pointed his chopsticks at his mother and she took the chopsticks away from him. They bickered for a while but Jinyoung couldn’t concentrate much.

“I need to use the restroom.” Jinyoung said as soon as they were done eating. Jackson stood up and took him to his room, the washroom was in Jackson’s bedroom and Jinyoung felt out of place being in his bedroom.

“Take your time, I know you need space to breathe.” Jackson said and Jinyoung nodded. When Jackson left the room Jinyoung walked inside the bathroom and took a good look at himself, he washed his face and looked at himself again. He could see the guild on his face.

He tried telling himself that it’s okay now, that it’s no big deal and that Jackson’s family didn’t mind but he couldn’t escape the thought that he wasn’t invited. Every parent is nice enough to invite a friend to dinner but they weren’t expecting him.

He walked out of the restroom but couldn’t walk out of the bedroom. He looked around, he knew he shouldn’t, this was not his place. He saw a fencing suit on a mannequin and some equipment lying next to them. There were a lot of music cds and albums around as well.

But his eyes couldn’t leave the table that was right next to Jackson’s table. It had a group of four photographs. One was a picture of Jackson with his parents and what Jinyoung is assuming, his elder brother. Another one was a bit candid picture of Jackson’s family without him. The next picture was a group shot of Jackson with Bambam, Yugyeom, Mark and Youngjae and the picture next to that was a candid picture of them four without Jackson.

Those set of pictures made Jinyoung smile but his heart felt heavy at the same time.

“They give me strength,” Jackson said from behind. It startled Jinyoung, he jumped and held his chest. Jackson laughed. His laugh softer than Jinyoung has ever heard.

“Those pictures, you have been staring at them for some time now and didn’t even notice I entered. They give me strength.” Jinyoung nodded at Jackson’s words.

“Jackson, we’ll go out for a walk now,” Jackson’s mom said from outside the room. “Jinyoung, it was great meeting you, please join us for another meal soon.” She entered the room and gave Jinyoung a hug. Jinyoung melted and hugged back with a smile on his face.

“Yes, of course.” She walked out leaving both of them alone again.

“Why them?” Jinyoung asked, pointing towards the picture with Bambam, Yugyeom, Mark and Youngjae.

“I met them all at times when I was losing hope, it’s complicated to explain. They all entered in different time but they all helped me in believing in myself. In believing in certain aspects of life. It’ll take me forever to explain and you don’t want that.” Jackson laughed again, this time it sounded fake.

The truth was, Jinyoung wanted him to explain. Jinyoung wanted Jackson to tell him everything, to speak to him, he wanted Jackson to be able to talk to him but Jinyoung was scared that he was asking for too much.

He looked down, at his feet or the ground, his mind a bit too occupied with that’s happening.
Jackson felt the sudden tension in the air, he could see Jinyoung’s body stiff a little at his words. He didn’t know what caused that, which emotion did that but he wanted Jinyoung to relax. So, he did what he does best, tried making him laugh.

“Your picture could be up there too.” Jackson leaned in and smiled. His lips pressed together and his eyes a bit bigger.

Jinyoung looked up, their faces were close, he didn’t wanted Jackson to take the wrong idea so he playfully pushed his shoulder and laughed. “As if.”

“No, I’m serious,” Jackson said in between of his laugh.

“What would I be there for? They all helped you believe in something? What did I made you believe in?” Jinyoung’s tone was serious but his expression was playful. Jinyoung was a good actor.

“For making my parents believe that their son is worthy to be loved by someone like you,” Jackson said. There was heaviness in his voice and Jinyoung’s throat ached. Jinyoung didn’t let go of his playful expression, couldn’t let Jackson know that his words affected him in more than one way.

There were so many things Jinyoung wanted to say, so many words ran through his mind. Jinyoung knew the more time he’s going to take answering that the more tension all of this will create.

“Then maybe your parents should have a picture of me on their bed stand,” Jinyoung said the first witty thing he could think of. His heart was aching for all the wrong reasons. He wasn’t supposed to be feeling this way.

“That’s just gross and you know it,” Jackson laughed again, still sounding fake and he walked out of the room. Jinyoung followed him out.

Now that Jackson’s parents weren’t home there was no reason for Jinyoung to stay.

“I think I should leave. I have to leave for the wedding early morning and I was to run by the shop one last time to make sure Bambam and Yugyeom can handle things smoothly.”

“Yeah, sure, I would have accompanied you but my parents can be back any time now. They don’t go for walks that often, they must have thought we needed some alone time.” Jackson explained.

Jinyoung smiled and started walking to the front door, Jackson following him.

“I have to go buy the groceries again,” Jinyoung said.

“If you think that will make me want to give back the food, you’re wrong. Enjoy shopping though.”

“You’re so difficult.” Jinyoung smiled.

Jinyoung knew it was now or never for him. Before he walked out the door he turned around and looked at a confused Jackson.

“I want your number.” Jinyoung’s brain failed him. “I mean, I don’t have it and now that we’ll be seeing more of each other, I thought I should have it.”

Jackson stayed silent.

“You don’t have to give me your number, you know what, it was stupid, I am not even sure if we’ll see each other again,” Jinyoung said and faked a laugh.
“I thought you had my number, I remember giving it you.” So, that’s why Jackson was silent, Jinyoung thought.

“Idiot Yugyeom, whipped the table with the napkin.” Jinyoung looked down. “And I didn’t ask him for it because, I don’t know, at that time I thought it’d be better to just ask you for it but when the next time we met, we were around people. And now that I think of it I could have just taken it from Yugyeom, it wouldn’t have made a difference.” Jinyoung was nervous.

“Give me your phone.” Jinyoung was confused for a second but pulled out his phone from his pocket.

“I would like to see you again, Jinyoung. If you want it too,” Jackson said while giving him his phone back. They didn’t break eye contact.

“Ah, my heart fluttered. Now go before I ask you to say for dinner with me,” Jackson said playfully, moving his whole body while clenching his chest. He practically pushed a laughing Jinyoung out of his house but Jinyoung didn’t mind. His heart fluttered too.

On his way back, he couldn’t stop thinking about Jackson, he needed a distraction. Jinyoung went to the shop and finished up all his work and by eleven he was home. He still couldn’t stop thinking about the Chinese boy. He called Jaebeom.

“It’s eleven.”

“Hello to you too,” Jinyoung said.

“This better be urgent.”

“Why? Are you getting some action with Youngjae?”

“Park Jinyoung, I swear to God.”

“Come up with better threats, Jaebeom.”

“What do you want?”

Jinyoung decided to make the whole conversation about Youngjae but he needed a talk with his best friend.

“I had dinner with Jackson and his family today.”

“What?” It was not Jaebeom’s voice that came from his phone.

“Are you with Youngjae? Am I on speaker?” Jinyoung panicked a bit.

“Jinyoung, it’s eleven, we just came to bed after dinner, we have to get up early for the wedding and he heard you over the phone, you’re not on speaker. But what? You had dinner with them? How and why?” Jaebeom said.

“I have to call Jackson.” Jinyoung heard Youngjae say on the other end of the line.

Jinyoung explained everything to Jaebeom, missing out some details he thought was way too intimate for a conversation over the phone.

“Wow,” Jaebeom couldn’t form more words.
“Is that all you have to say?” Jinyoung asked.

“No, I mean. I guess I understand why you went to his place but everything afterwards was a bit too intense. I want to say more but Youngjae is with me and I know you don’t want me to discuss this in front of him.”

Jinyoung knew Jaebeom had a point there. Anything they say, Youngjae might tell that to Jackson.

“Jaebeom, can you ask Youngjae what Jackson said and tell me tomorrow.”

“Jinyoung, God, do you want that?”

“Yes.” Jaebeom promised him he will and with that they hung up.

Jaebeom and Youngjae were in his room now. They both had dinner outside with the respective parent and when they came back they were too exhausted to stay up so decided to crash early, that was until Jinyoung called.

Youngjae was still on the call with Jackson and he kept laughing every now and then. There was a spark of jealousy that ran through Jaebeom, watching Youngjae laugh so bright over someone else’s words. Jaebeom pushed it aside. Jackson and Youngjae were friends even before he got to know Youngjae. Jaebeom was not going to be petty about it.

Jaebeom laid on his side of the bed, left enough space for Youngjae so that they don’t get too close.

After a few more minutes, when Youngjae realized that Jaebeom has already went to bed, he said his goodnights to Jackson and laid next to Jaebeom.

Jaebeom was lying on his back, his face turned towards the ceiling. Youngjae was lying facing Jaebeom and Jaebeom couldn’t bear the gaze on his face anymore. He turned off the lights. The darkness in the room still felt bright with Youngjae next to him.

“How was it with my dad?” Jaebeom asked when he realized that none of them are going to sleep anytime soon.

“He’s funny.” Youngjae laughed and adjusted himself in the bed.

“You had fun?”

“Yeah, we talked about football and then the Olympics and then different sports and he even said how he wanted to try a sport too, we talked about you as well. But don’t worry, nothing special. Just you being a rebel of a child.”

“I was a good kid.” Jaebeom smiled.

“He will fight you over this.” Jaebeom smiled some more over those words. Talking to Youngjae was easier than he anticipated. He thought it was going to be so difficult to hold a conversation with the younger, but it was so smooth.

“My mom likes you.” Jaebeom wanted Youngjae to know this.

Youngjae didn’t say anything to that. After a second, Jaebeom realized that wasn’t the best thing to say. Jaebeom’s family wasn’t supposed to get attached to Youngjae, Youngjae was never coming back to his house again. These were just facts. Jaebeom tried so hard to think of anything to change the topic.
“Jackson told me about Jinyoung,” Youngjae said before Jaebeom could say anything.

“What did he say? Jinyoung was freaking out. He must have apologized like a billion times.”

“Jaebeom, if I tell you something will you keep this between us?” Youngjae’s voice was soft, so soft it made Jaebeom’s heart beat fast.

“Yes,” Jaebeom replied as softly as possible.

“Pinky promise?” Youngjae said and Jaebeom laughed, which made Youngjae laugh as well.

“Do you have your pinky out?” Jaebeom asked.

“Isn’t that how it’s supposed to be done?” And before Jaebeom could reply to that he felt a hand on his bicep. Youngjae was looking for his hand, he ran his hand lightly over Jaebeom’s touching him as softly as possible, leaving goose-bumps on Jaebeom’s skin. When Youngjae reached his hand, he held out his pinky and squeezed it with his.

This little contact of skin knocked all air out of Jaebeom’s lungs. Youngjae’s hand lingered a little too long on his skin.

“I think Jackson likes Jinyoung.” Jaebeom tried concentrating on Youngjae’s words.

“Oh,” was all Jaebeom could say. His cheeks were this warm, his ears and neck still buzzed from the blood rushing to them. His mind was all Youngjae.

“Are you okay?” Youngjae asked after few minutes of silence.

“Me?” Jaebeom felt dumb, he felt powerless, he couldn’t let this happen to him. “Yes, oh, I was thinking.”

“Jackson might or might not admit his feelings soon but I can see it. I have known him for a really long time.” Youngjae sounded enthusiastic but Jaebeom had something else on his mind.

“How are you so sure? How can you see it?” Jaebeom asked.

“Hmm, well I have seen the way Jackson looks at him, the way he talks about him, he was pretty bummed out when he gave Jinyoung his number but never received a message. And today, he felt like his family accepted Jinyoung, which is such a huge step for him. Jackson... he is so stupid, he finds excuses to talk to Jinyoung, finds excuses so he can meet him but there are none. Even though they have known each other for such a little time but he looks at him with, I don’t know how to describe it, he looks at him longer that he looks at me or Mark,” Youngjae tried explaining and Jaebeom kept quiet.

“There was this one time when he literally begged me to go to your shop with him so that he can meet Jinyoung again, but we couldn’t come up with a decent excuse as to why we were there so he sulked for a while and went back home.”

Jaebeom laughed, he could imagine Jackson doing that. Youngjae laughed him with.

“What about Jinyoung?” Youngjae asked.

“What about him?” Jaebeom knew what Youngjae was asking but he wasn’t sure it was his place to talk about Jinyoung’s feelings.

“Jaebeom, Jackson means a lot to me and I want to know if this is right for him, I don’t want him to
get his heart broken or for him to wait for something that’ll never happen. Mark and I tease him a lot but I hold myself back because the more I tease him the more I can see him thinking about Jinyoung in a way that is more than friendship. So, please, tell me if there’s a chance here or not.” Youngjae sounded sincere. Jaebeom would be in trouble if Jinyoung found out.

“You promise this will only stay between us.”

Jaebeom could feel the smile forming on Youngjae’s face when he said, “Yes.”

“Jinyoung is shy, not in the terms that he won’t say or do something, but in that he’s scared to feel. Jackson is, it’s hard to explain. Jackson makes Jinyoung fearless in a way that it scares him.” Jaebeom paused to think of something else to say but realized that he had spoken more than enough. He could hear Youngjae shuffling in bed next to him.

“I get it,” Youngjae said but didn’t add anything else.

“Enough about those idiots, Jinyoung will be here tomorrow why don’t you just talk to him yourself.”

“I’ll let Jackson handle that his way.”

Jaebeom was about to drift off when a soft ‘Jaebeom’ woke him up.

“Hmm,” he mumbled.

“If I mess up tomorrow, please know I didn’t mean it to happen,” Youngjae’s voice sounded so low and sacred for a second. Uncertain of what tomorrow will bring.

“Hey, hey,” Jaebeom turned to face him, the dim light of moon in room illuminated Youngjae’s face, he couldn’t make out all the emotions on his face but he could make out his eyes.

Youngjae’s eyes were beautiful, Jaebeom could look in them for years, Youngjae however broke the eyes contact and looked elsewhere.

“You won’t mess up and even if anything goes wrong, it’s okay. I’ll be by your side, you won’t be alone. Jinyoung will be there as well and so will be my parents. My mom answers almost everyone’s questions so don’t be pressured if someone asks you anything in front of her.” Jaebeom tried to calm him down and Youngjae’s eyes soften.

“Jaebeom, I know I’m asking for too much,” Youngjae began.

“Anything,” Jaebeom assured him.

“Please don’t leave me alone tomorrow,” Youngjae sounded so little for his voice, he couldn’t keep his eyes stable in one spot.

“Never,” Jaebeom smiled and tried to reassure him. Jaebeom wanted to reach out and hold Youngjae, to give him a hug or to just hold him while he sleeps. He wanted to touch him, to have his warm surround his own. But he couldn’t, he can’t, he wasn’t allowed. So, he watched, watched till Youngjae’s eyes stopped moving, watched till Youngjae’s breath was even and watched till he fell back to sleep.

Jaebeom couldn’t get himself to sleep anymore. His mind going back to their conversation, about how Youngjae could see that Jackson’s falling for Jinyoung.
He recalled the whole conversation and started pointing out thing he himself had done. How his own body had ached for Youngjae, how he had made excuses just to talk to Youngjae, how he himself have tried going over to Youngjae’s place but backed out because he couldn’t find a decent explanation to do so.

Jaebeom needed to stop thinking, this wasn’t the same thing Youngjae was talking about though. Jackson himself knew of his feelings, right? This wasn’t the same. He kept repeating the same thing over and over till his brain got tried.

His eyes started feeling heavy and he could feel the sleep taking over him.

Oh, Youngjae, what are you doing to me? He said to himself, before he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Oh god, I pulled through, took me ages but I did it. I know this was a Jinson centric chapter but I love my bubs and they're a big part of the story.

Talk to me about the story, let me know which part you like. How do you think the story is turning.

The wedding chapter is next sooooo I'M EXCITED.

I hope you guys are enjoying it, thank you so much for supporting it. Also, I know this is a short chapter but I promise next one will be longer.
“Just come downstairs whenever you’re ready, I’m in my parent’s room,” Jaebeom said over the phone.

“You called me for this?” Youngjae laughed.

“I wasn’t gonna go up and tell that to you.”

“I still don’t get why you’re dressing down, when I’m dressing up.”

“Did you hear it yet?”

“Oh my god, I heard it. Don’t reply to it. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean- you know what, I’ll be there when I’m ready. Bye.” Youngjae could still hear Jaebeom’s laughter from downstairs.

It’s the wedding day, the day he was here for. He wasn’t all that nervous but he was anxious. He wanted things to go well. After they got up, Youngjae realized that Jaebeom left him in the morning again. It has become a pattern now, even though it has happened twice. This time, no one was home. Jaebeom’s parents already left and Jaebeom said that they are supposed to leave in an hour as well.

Youngjae was about ready. He wore a black long coat and white shirt underneath it with black pants and black shoes. Youngjae decided that long coats are his ‘thing’ for events. He parted his hair and styled it. He was ready for the wedding.

He walked down to Jaebeom’s parent’s room. Jaebeom stood in front of a mirror, his eyes fixed on a bow tie hanging on his right shoulder and a tie hanging on his left. Jaebeom looked clear, his skin softer than Youngjae remembered. His hair parted in a way that exposed his almighty forehead. Jaebeom wore a simple black suit, light blue shirt under it. He looked simple yet elegant. This was a new side to Jaebeom.

Youngjae stood by the door and just looked at him, his chin coming out and going back in. The movement of his head, the rushed gestures of his hands. It was clearly hard for him to pick what to wear. But apart from that, Jaebeom looked good, at least from his side profile. Looked decent, young, more of his age and less of the grandpa everyone assumed he was.

“The tie,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom jumped. Clenched his heart, “You scared the living shit out of me.”

Youngjae laughed and walked inside the room. Walking in someone’s parent’s room was always weird for him, it wasn’t his territory.

“Go for the tie, it’ll look good.” Before Youngjae could even complete his sentence, Jaebeom was already tying his tie. Head down, concentrating on the knots.
Youngjae had the urge to walk over and do the tie for him but he backed out, thought it would be too domestic and it would end up confusing both of them. So, he just stood there and watched. Youngjae pulled out his phone and clicked a picture. He tried justifying it by thinking that it’s for the same reason as why Jaebeom has his pictures.

“Nina,” Jaebeom said but didn’t look up.

“Hmm?” Youngjae asked in confusion.

“My ex, her name. Nina.” The room’s atmosphere changed. Youngjae didn’t expect them to talk about that now, he had an idea that they’re in this position because of an ex but he didn’t wanted to intrude.

“Oh,” was all Youngjae could let out of his mouth. He wanted to ask how she was, what she was like and how they met and why they broke up. But he wanted Jaebeom to tell him all of that on his own terms.

“She’ll be at the wedding so you should know. A lot of people knew about us so there will be questions and comparisons and I don’t want you to feel insecure about it,” Jaebeom said and met Youngjae’s eyes. The eye contact was intense but soft. It was like Jaebeom was trying to provide support but his words were failing him.

Youngjae took a step towards Jaebeom, he wanted contact. Human contact. But knew asking it from Jaebeom was out of question.

“She’s- she... her-” Jaebeom was having a hard time, he was struggling to start the story.

“It’s okay, you don’t have to tell me if you don’t to,” Youngjae assured him and took another step towards Jaebeom. Now they were hardly a couple of steps away.

“I want you to know. You are my boyfriend, you should know.”

“Fake boyfriend,” Youngjae regretted those words as soon as they were out. For some reason, there was hurt on Jaebeom’s face and it made Youngjae upset and even uncomfortable.

“But they don’t know that and I don’t want them to think I don’t share stuff with you.”

“Okay, so tell me.”

“We met during the end of the high school, right before college. We dated back then and then she started talking about moving out of the town and we made plans for the future, we said we’ll figure everything out when the time comes.”

Jaebeom went silent for a second, he avoided looking at Youngjae. He played with his hands and rubbed his neck now and then. He closed his eyes in between of words and Youngjae can sense it was clearly difficult for him.

“She- we never had sex. We decided we’d wait. We’ll, I kinda forced her to wait. Jinyoung started getting in my head. He told me she is only in it because of a bet. We started dating because she made a bet with someone that she’d date me for six months. It was more like, her friend asked me out once but I told her I’m not interested and then Nina said she can have me anytime she wants and they made a bet. She asked me out, I thought she was hot and I said yes. Turns out she was pretty great,” Jaebeom smiled at the memory and Youngjae smiled with him.

“It wasn’t all bad, the relationship. We had fun. We enjoyed each other’s company. Her parents liked
me and mine liked her. It was all good. But once I got to know of the bet, I made sure that I’ll not sleep with her for the first six months, maybe seven. It was high school, people made stupid bets all the time.”

Now, Youngjae wasn’t sure if Jaebeom was trying to defend her actions or if he was trying to defend his past. He just nodded, kept quiet and just heard everything Jaebeom had to say.

“Well anyway, few months into the relationship, we were getting serious. She told me about the bet, apologized and told me how she saw the future with me, I was stupid and I believed her;” Jaebeom let out a laugh. The pain and hurt clear on his face, he looked at the ceiling and smiled. Youngjae could tell that Jaebeom was fighting back tears but he didn’t know what to do. He stood there, as if frozen.

“We were madly in love, I started distancing myself from all my friends because I wanted to spend more and more time with her, we started looking for jobs and places, and at that time it didn’t even register that we were too young for all this and we weren’t thinking rationally,” Jaebeom took a breath before continuing again.

“She started talking about sex, started talking about how we should take our relationship to another level. There were talks about me, you know how young people are, ‘oh they’ve been together for months and haven’t slept together yet,’ that kinda nonsense, I let it get to me. I remember I once snapped at Jinyoung because he was trying to talk sense in me,” Jaebeom laughed again. Every time Jaebeom laughed, Youngjae’s chest ached. Youngjae hated the sound of that laugh. Hated how broken it sounded, hated how painful it sounded.

“I thought we were ready as well. One night after some party or something, we were too drunk to keep track of things, but of course, we thought we’re sober enough to make right decision. We slept together that night. Few weeks later, she told me she was pregnant. We had unprotected sex and this was the outcome. Of course, it came as a shock to me. I wasn’t ready for a kid, but looking at her, I knew she wasn’t ready for one as well. I took three jobs. Told her everything will be okay. I dropped out of college, devoted my life to taking care of her and the unborn baby,” Jaebeom’s tone was rough, sharp and faster now. It scared Youngjae.

“We regularly kept going to the doctor to check if everything was okay and everything was. They both were healthy. I zoned out of my life for a few months, I don’t remember that time. I worked and worked, tried earning money in all possible ways and then once after someone mentioned that she was four months pregnant, it hit me.” As soon as those words were out of Jaebeom’s mouth, it hit Youngjae as well. Youngjae’s mouth fell open and that was the first time Jaebeom looked at him, he smiled.

“The kid wasn’t mine. I kept going over and over every event in our lives and there was no way she was four months pregnant. I asked her and she called me irrational, started yelling at me, started saying I’m doubting her. There was lot of screaming and crying involved and I knew it wasn’t good for the kid. I asked her, kept asking her. When I threatened to get the DNA test, she spilled it all out. She only wanted to date me because I was a thrilling bet and nothing more,” another laugh emerged out of Jaebeom’s mouth. They both were standing too still in that room. It all looked and felt so small at that moment.

“She started sleeping with other people in the first month of our relationship. She said she tried loving me but it was too hard. She did tell me she kept falling in and out of love with me as if that was supposed to make me feel anything. Even after she got pregnant, she kept hooking up with random men when I worked my ass off for a family that was never there. For a home, we never built.” Jaebeom stopped talking, he looked at his hands and realized he was shaking. Since the day
they separated he has never fully spoken about it. Jinyoung knew everything because he was there but this was the first time he was actually talking about it.

“We broke up soon, I shifted soon. We never spoke again. She cheated on me. Made me feel worthless. I want to believe she had her reasons-”

“There was no reason,” Youngjae shouldn’t have said it but it was too late. Youngjae tried getting back to his senses. He realized they both are standing too close to each other now. Their faces just few inches away, but none of them made an effort to move back.

“But-”

“No, you didn’t do anything wrong, there was nothing you could have done to save that relationship. Jaebeom, the relationship was never there. She used you because it made her feel powerful, you were in love with her and she took advantage of your vulnerability.” Youngjae wanted to cup Jaebeom’s face and tell him it’s alright, tell him that it’s not his fault. He could see it on Jaebeom’s face that even after all these years Jaebeom has been beating himself up for what happened.

“You’re talking just like Jinyoung,” Jaebeom said and laughed. Tried lighting the mood. Youngjae liked this laugh better. Filled with spirit, filled with life, filled with Jaebeom. Youngjae smiled.

“You’re a much better fake boyfriend than she was a real girlfriend,” Jaebeom leaned towards Youngjae’s right ear and whispered.

Youngjae swallowed. His cheeks went warm and his stomach went crazy. “Then keep me,” Youngjae replied in a soft whisper. Jaebeom’s breath hitched. He found it hard to register Youngjae’s words. Wasn’t sure if he said it as a joke or if he was serious.

This is fake, this is all fake. Jaebeom reminded himself. He laughed again and leaned back.

“We should get going before someone starts calling us.” Jaebeom wanted out. The tension in the room was too heavy.

“Thanks for sharing that with me,” Youngjae said instead and Jaebeom just nodded in his direction, indicating the end of the topic.

“I wanted to ask you one thing.” Youngjae has been thinking about it for a long time now. He thought this is the time to just be straight with Jaebeom.

“Yeah, sure.” Jaebeom started adjusting his tie and Youngjae smiled and stepped into his space. Replaced Jaebeom’s hands with his own and started adjusting the already perfectly knotted tie. Just an excuse to be close.

“Why not Jinyoung? Why didn’t you ask him to be your boyfriend for the wedding?” Youngjae asked and looked at Jaebeom. Jaebeom’s eyes heavy on his face, Jaebeom ran his eyes all over Youngjae’s face. From his eyebrow to his eyelashes, from his mole just under his eyes to the bridge of his nose and by the time his eyes travel to Youngjae’s lips, he forgot about the question. He looked at those pink lips, lacked moisture and there were bite marks on them, he has noticed that Youngjae has a habit of biting his lips. Something wild erupted in him. His train of thoughts jumps from one subject to another. He wasn’t sure if Youngjae knew he was looking but he knew Youngjae wasn’t stupid.

“Am I interrupting the start of a make out session?” Jinyoung’s voice made both of them jump to different directions. With just inches between their faces now they were ten feet away from each other.
“You asshole,” Jaebeom said and walked towards Jinyoung.

“Not my fault your mom gave me a spare key,” Jinyoung said while giving a hug to Jaebeom. To Youngjae’s surprise Jinyoung walked towards him and gave him a hug as well. Jinyoung smelled nice.

“But seriously, I think I just saved Youngjae,” Jinyoung said and winked at Youngjae. Youngjae was sure his whole face was red by now and Jaebeom was out the door in a heartbeat.

They all drove to the venue. Talked about this and that but nothing in particular, Jinyoung told them about Bambam and Yugyeom and even though it has just been few days, Jaebeom has missed them. Youngjae mentioned that Jackson once dropped by Jinyoung’s shop with Mark but Jinyoung wasn’t there so he left as soon as he could and they didn’t order anything. Jinyoung asked a thousand questions and Jaebeom just laughed.

Jaebeom liked this, all of them together talking about their friends, laughing and smiling. When they were parking, Jaebeom’s eyes landed on the rear-view mirror and he realized Youngjae has been looking at him. Jaebeom’s first impulse was to look away but he kept looking because Youngjae kept looking. All soft features but no smile, just a straight face and it made Jaebeom nervous, then Youngjae smiled and gave him a small nod. Jaebeom just kept looking.

“Do you guys wanna stay here or actually go attend this shit show?” Jinyoung interrupted.

“Let’s go.” And they were out of the car.

Youngjae was nervous now, it hit him hard that he knew nobody here. He couldn’t even say he knew Jinyoung, they have hardly met two-three times and they have never had a conversation. Youngjae was nervous.

Jinyoung turned towards them, pushed Youngjae and Jaebeom together, “Just stay put, okay. Stay together for as long as you guys can but don’t be clingy, no one likes a clingy couple. I know this is new and wrong and I don’t know what Jaebeom was thinking but we’re all here now,” Jinyoung said and turned towards Youngjae, “You can always leave if you feel uncomfortable, we’ll handle this. Please know that no one is pressuring you to stay. If you don’t like anything, if you feel something is wrong, just leave or ask me, I’ll leave with you. Jaebeom can’t go, it’s his family wedding but I will. Just let me know if you ever want an out or if it ever gets too overwhelming.”

Youngjae’s heart felt warm. The concern Jinyoung showed made him relax. He couldn’t say anything at that moment, too nervous to open his mouth but he nodded his head so Jinyoung knew everything is understood.

“We already had this talk,” Jaebeom told Jinyoung and Jinyoung just rolled his eyes.

Jinyoung walked inside first, followed by Jaebeom and Youngjae. Jaebeom stayed by Youngjae, looked at him for assurance that everything was okay.

“Stop looking at me, I don’t know about the people but you’ll end up making me more nervous than I am,” Youngjae said without looking at Jaebeom. Jaebeom could sense that Youngjae was nervous, his smile was different. He was more alert and on the edge. He wished he could do something to make him calm down.

They all sat at their place for the wedding ceremony to start. It all happened too fast, the whole wedding. The walk down the aisle, the vows, the kiss, the whole wedding. Now came the hard part, the whole celebration. The meeting with everyone who was there, the chittering of people who met
once in a blue moon because of these weddings. All of it made Jaebeom hate it. He hated all of it. People acted like they all cared when in reality they were only here for the gossip, they only wanted to know how other’s lives were so they could flaunt theirs.

“And how is my young man,” an old woman said from behind Jaebeom. Jaebeom smiled to himself, his favourite aunt.

“Gamora,” he smiled and turned and gave his aunt a big hug.

“You still call me that,” she replied and hugged him again, kissed his cheek and patted his head.

Jaebeom turned to Youngjae, who stopped eating as soon as he heard the woman’s voice, “She is my aunt, I call her Gamora because once she forced me into watching this marvel movie with her and she kept saying how much she loves Gamora’s character and it started from there. She’s Gamora now.” His aunt laughed with the memory.

“Are you going to introduce me to this handsome man?”

“Oh, yeah, sorry.” Jaebeom turned towards Youngjae, the game has begun. This is show time.

“He’s my boyfriend, Youngjae. And Youngjae, she is Gamora,” Jaebeom said and smiled.

“Pleased to meet you,” Youngjae said and bowed to the woman. She laughed and pulled him in a hug, a long hug. For a woman who was clearly in her sixties, her grip was strong. Youngjae just smiled because he didn’t want to be rude.

“A good one you got here,” She said after the hug and smiled at Youngjae.

“Thank you,” Youngjae replied.

“I was talking to Jaebeom, you are a gem. He on the other hand, good luck to you, son.” Youngjae laughed. Blushed a little at her words but laughed. Jaebeom elbowed his hand and said, “Don’t encourage her.”

“I’ll leave you two now, I have go catch up with so many people now. I heard Nina is also here, have you met her yet?” the whole environment changed. Youngjae could feel Jaebeom clenching his jaw.

“No, I haven’t,” he replied and tried keeping his voice as neutral as he could.

“I never liked her, but be polite. Otherwise, there will be talk.” She left right after that and that gave a lot of room for explaining on Jaebeom’s behalf.

He turned towards Youngjae who was still working a blush, it made him smile. Youngjae always made him smile.

“What was that all about?” Youngjae asked, his eyes fixed on Jaebeom’s face.

“No one knows why we broke up. I mean, of course my parents know and the guys she slept with knows, but no one else. Half of the people present here heard the rumour that I got to know that the kid wasn’t mine so I left. They think it was very irresponsible of me and that I should have taken care of the kid irrespective of that fact that it wasn’t mine. The other half, they just think I couldn’t handle the responsibility and that’s the reason I left.”

“Why didn’t you tell anyone what truly happened?”
“Because of the kid,” Jaebeom’s voice was soft, slow and low. Even though there were people around, they felt alone.

“I didn’t want the kid to grow up in a neighbourhood which hated his mother. I had my fresh start when I moved out, but she never got to move out. If I told everyone what has happened, she would never have been able to live here. The hate and negativity, I didn’t want anyone to live like that. So, I never cleared the air, what can they do? Hate me? If anyone truly cared, they would have asked me or my parents but they jumped on the first rumour they heard. So, I’m okay with whatever they wanted to believe.” Youngjae kept looking at Jaebeom, his heart hurting with pride. A man can think so much about others. No matter how much Jaebeom hated that woman he never wanted anything to come between the kid and the future.

Youngjae was getting emotional and he knew it, his eyes became glassy, he blinked hard. He couldn’t figure out if Jaebeom was smiling or frowning but there was a confused expression on his face. Youngjae closed the distance between them and he wrapped his arms around Jaebeom’s neck. Youngjae closed his eyes and flushed their chest together. Youngjae couldn’t figure out if what he was doing was wrong or right but he started panicking when he didn’t feel Jaebeom’s hand around his waist. He started backing away, ‘I’m sorry’ already on his lips but before he could do or say anything he felt a pair of arms about his waist, pulling him back in and flushing their chest together.

Youngjae could feel Jaebeom’s rapid heartbeat mirroring his own. He could feel Jaebeom burying his head in his neck and inhaling deeply. Youngjae closed his eyes at that and smiled weakly. There was a rush in his chest he couldn’t explain. There was fluttering feeling in his stomach he couldn’t explain. He felt powerful and vulnerable, both, at the same time. Jaebeom smelled different. Sharp and strong, a mixture of the perfume he wore that day and the soap he uses. Jaebeom’s grip was strong around Youngjae’s waist and with this angle, Youngjae was on his tiptoes.

“This has stopped looking fake to me,” Jinyoung’s voice startled them. Both missing the touch and warmth of each other. Both refusing to look at each other. Jaebeom just turned and walked away. There was a bright smile on Jinyoung’s face, his eyes wrinkled and his lips never parting.

“How is he?” Jinyoung asked and Youngjae wasn’t sure what the question implied. Jinyoung knew Jaebeom better than anyone and that question felt odd.

“Good?”

“I want to apologize on his behalf before he does something stupid,” Jinyoung said and walked over to stand on the left side of Youngjae, looking at the crowd in front of them. They were indoor. Half of the party went outside, maybe that’s why it was so easy for Youngjae and Jaebeom to hug because hardly anyone was here.

“You shouldn’t.”

“What?” Jinyoung was confused.

“Stop taking the fall for him. If he messes up, it’s on him. I don’t want to come to you saying ‘thanks for the warning’. I know you’re only trying to protect him.”

“I’m trying to protect you,” Jinyoung interrupted.

“Why?”

“Youngjae, he has these self-destructive tendencies. His brain and heart has made him believe that it’s okay. That whatever shit he pulls on himself, is alright. I don’t want collateral damage. Because
he thinks he’ll be saving the other person. He’s stupid like that,” Jinyoung sounded concerned, worry clear in his voice. He sounded like a person who spoke from experience.

“You know too much about the collateral damage.” Youngjae wanted to sound curious but he ended up sounding rude. Jinyoung laughed.

“I’ve been around to see it. It’s a long journey for him. You know how people say that some people need saving. Jaebeom isn’t one of those. There is no saving for him till he realizes what he’s doing. He, Youngjae, every day he is hurting himself. Every day he is in pain, he can’t let go of the past, he can’t let go of the what happened. He can’t let go of her. He needs to come to terms with all of it himself. We can just watch and support but he’ll have to do it himself. The Jaebeom I know now and the Jaebeom I used to know, are two different people.”

Youngjae understood, his throat felt tight. He swallowed the glass of water he picked up from the table beside him.

“I think I get it? I mean, it’s hard to understand but I get it. But, I think you’re right and wrong. If you think he doesn’t need saving... Jinyoung, we all need saving. It’s not dependence that we need. Reality with someone else is saving. Saving doesn’t need be a dark thing. Saving can be a situation. For him, saving is just an illusion of things he desired and things that broke him. I know it’s not my place to talk, but, Jaebeom don’t need to be strong in front of someone to be saved, he needs to be vulnerable in front of someone to be saved. He needs to pick the person who saves him,” Youngjae said with a lump in his throat. Everything hurts. His head was heavy, his heart was aching. He could see Jaebeom laughing with his mother and two other women. He could see Jaebeom’s dad approaching them with two other men. He could see Jaebeom but he felt like he couldn’t the reality of all it.

“You have saved him, you did,” Youngjae continued. His eyes still fixed on Jaebeom.

“You did more than anyone could ever do. You stayed. You were there, always there. Even when he was being stupid or impulsive or was acting like a kid, you were always there. I don’t know the kind of relationship you both have but it’s more than friendship. I don’t think he can exist without you. He can live without you but I don’t think he can exist. Talking of Nina, he lived without her and he existed without her. I don’t think he’ll ever forget about her, you don’t forget the past that made you who you are but you chose to forget the pain it gave you. He just needs to make that decision for himself.”

Everyone around Jaebeom were gone now, he stood there, looking out of the glass door. Youngjae could see a girl approaching him, he could see the smile on her face, she tapped Jaebeom’s shoulder and the realization hit Youngjae. Jaebeom’s whole mood fell. His eyes were that bright anyone, his posture still. He still smiled but things were different.

“Youngjae, take care of him. As long as you can.” He heard Jinyoung and nodded to him.

“I have to go and be the boyfriend I’m supposed to be.” Youngjae was already walking towards them. He wasn’t sure if this was what Jaebeom wanted him to do, to interrupt him and his ex-lover but by the looks of what he and Jinyoung just discussed, he couldn’t risk finding out.

Youngjae stood few steps away, looked at them, and took few deep breaths before making his way to Jaebeom.

Jaebeom’s hands were turned into fists and it just showed how Nina had the upper hand in their conversation.
“Am I missing something?” Youngjae said and poked his thumb in Jaebeom’s fist, making him open his hand for him. He slid his fingers in Jaebeom’s and started making circles with him thumb on his hand. Tried his best in trying to calm Jaebeom down.

All of them stood silent for a few seconds before Jaebeom cleared his throat and took charge.

“This is Nina.” He motioned towards her but kept his eyes on Youngjae, who just smiled and bowed. “Nina, this is Youngjae, my boyfriend.” He kept looking at Youngjae, his expression softening. Youngjae could feel Jaebeom’s eyes on him but he kept looking at Nina. He smiled and he extended her hand for a handshake, never letting go of Jaebeom’s hand, Youngjae shook hands with his free one.

“Nice to meet you.” She smiled. She was beautiful, gorgeous in all ways. Tall, clear skin, good healthy hair and looked confident. She looked like a woman who knows her business.

“I didn’t know you started dating,” She made a comment at Jaebeom, who turned at her voice. His grip on Youngjae’s hand started to go tight and Youngjae pressed his lips.

“I didn’t know we were on speaking terms.” Jaebeom said. Youngjae just smiled.

“It’s good to see you dating again, I never thought you'd be over all of it so soon.”

“Wanted me to give it another decade?”

“I didn’t mean that.”

“Then what do you mean by that? You took a month before getting over me and we were still dating, so yeah, what do you mean?” Jaebeom leaned a bit closer to Nina and Youngjae tensed. He hated all this. Youngjae pulled Jaebeom back a little and his free hand gripped the same arm he was holding and started rubbing it. Youngjae laughed to ease the tension.

“You’re not gonna ask about the child?” She asked, it was so hard for Youngjae to read her expressions, he wasn’t sure if she was enjoying all this or was really interested.

“Not mine, don’t care.” Jaebeom smiled with clenched jaw.

“Nina, why don’t you try some more food from over there,” Youngjae pointed towards the food counter, “It’s delicious and so is the cake, I hope you enjoyed the wedding. I’ll take Jaebeom from here, thanks for stopping by to talk to him.” Youngjae smiled and bowed and before Nina could utter another word they were walking out.

Youngjae didn’t let go of Jaebeom’s hand even when they were out. It was a bit darker now but still early evening, people were dancing and laughing and the smell of alcohol was strong everywhere. Youngjae kept walking without knowing where they were going. He stopped by when they were out of public eye but not out of the public. There were less people around this area and even though there were no chairs here, they had big stones and marbles they could sit on.

Youngjae turned to Jaebeom and let go of his hand. Jaebeom’s grip was still tight and Youngjae struggled with it, it made him smile. But Jaebeom kept looking at him, still serious and pissed and angry. Youngjae smiled, walked a little closer to Jaebeom, not as close as they were when they were standing in Jaebeom’s parent’s room.

He placed both his hands on Jaebeom’s neck and started rubbing his Jaw. Jaebeom frowned with confusion.
“What are you doing?” Jaebeom asked.

“Your chin is out,” Youngjae said as innocently as possible. Jaebeom’s mouth fell open and he pushed Youngjae. They both started laughing. Youngjae threw his head back because of the laughter and Jaebeom’s front teeth were on display.

“That was so lame.”

“What? Really? I didn’t wanted people to think you were angry with me,” Youngjae said in between of his laughs.

“Thanks for before,” Jaebeom said after he collected himself.

“That’s what boyfriends are for.” Youngjae winked and Jaebeom dropped his gaze because of the blush working on his neck.

“How was the wedding?” Jaebeom asked when they sat on a big marble, they were sitting close enough because of how small the marble was.

“Good, I think I convinced everyone we’re together. No one really asked much. Those pictures you took of me, I’m starting to think they were for your own pleasure,” Youngjae said and kept his eyes on the people dancing in front of them, a bit far away but still there.

If Jaebeom didn’t know better he would have thought Youngjae was flirting, again.

“Guilty,” Jaebeom said in surrender and they both smiled. Youngjae turned towards Jaebeom again, “I still want to know, why not Jinyoung. I think it’s because explaining the break up would have been messy, considering how close you both are. And your families are involved as well, so I’ll change my question a bit. Have you never thought of dating Jinyoung? I personally think, he is stunning. Dead gorgeous, he’s smart and he’s funny as well when he’s not trying too hard.” They both laughed at that.

“Why don’t you date him then?” Jaebeom commented.

“I’m already dating his best friend.” Jaebeom would never get used to all this, his laugh caught in middle and he looked at Youngjae. Was he flirting?

“But not for long,” Jaebeom said.

“Why are you always such a grandpa? Anyway, Jackson already has Jinyoung on his mind and Jinyoung is really not the one for me. He is intimidating.”

“He is intimidating, Jinyoung, are we talking about the same man?” Jaebeom started playing with his hand.

“He is, have you ever tried talking to him, I was just talking to him and I was scared I will say something wrong and will piss him off. I am scared I might sneeze when he’s talking and it’ll piss him off.”

Jaebeom started laughing, loud and full of life, according to Youngjae, Jaebeom this way looked five years younger than he already was.

Jaebeom held on to Youngjae’s hand for support, scared he might fall backwards. He never let go of the hand. Skin wasn’t touching but the sleeve of Youngjae’s suit was soft.
“Well, Jinyoung, I don’t know how to say it.” Jaebeom wanted to talk about something, to take his mind off the arm his hand was on.

“Jinyoung is,” Jaebeom said and looked at Youngjae, under this soft lights Youngjae looked a bit older, a bit more mature than he was supposed to be. His expressions all soft, his eyes a bit heavy, his lips plump and red because of all the heat from his body. Jaebeom needed to stop looking at them. It’s dangerous territory.

Next thing happened too fast, out of nowhere Jinyoung came from behind Youngjae and yelled in Youngjae’s ear. Youngjae screamed on top of his lung and jumped towards Jaebeom. Youngjae’s head falling between Jaebeom’s leg and chest. He clinched to Jaebeom’s legs and started laughing when the fear started fading from his body. Jaebeom laughed as well, putting his arms around Youngjae and hugging him lose to give him space to breathe. Jinyoung just stood there and watched them with a warm smile on his face.

“You scared the living shit out of me, oh my god.” Youngjae still held onto Jaebeom’s leg. Jaebeom started rubbing his arm with his hand and kept on laughing. Leaning close to his head and ruffled his head with his free hand.

“Are you okay?” Jaebeom asked, still laughing.

“Am I okay? I am not okay, my heart can’t take it,” Youngjae replied and turned his head in Jaebeom’s direction. They were close, too close. Jaebeom could feel the heat coming out of Youngjae’s face, he could see those eyes clear as a night’s sky and he could see the mole under his eye. He stopped laughing. He kept looking, his eyes fixed on Youngjae’s lips and then to his eyes and back to his lips.

“Guys, there are kids around, please.” Jinyoung was still laughing.

“You’re such an asshole, I don’t know what you want from me.” Jaebeom pulled out his phone and started dialling out of anger.

“Jaebeom? Everything okay? Is Youngjae okay?” Jackson’s voice was heard loud and clear and the smile dropped from Jinyoung’s face. Youngjae started laughing again and a smirk appeared on Jaebeom’s face.

“Yeah, Jackson, everyone’s good, everything’s good. I called-” Jaebeom was facetimeing Jackson, Jinyoung started walking backwards in slow motion and Youngjae rushed towards him to keep him in position.

“Youngjae wanted to talk to you.” Jaebeom turned the camera to that Jackson could see Jinyoung and Youngjae. Youngjae stood behind Jinyoung, his arms around him. Locking him in position.

“Is that? Is that Jinyoung?” Jackson asked after a second. Jaebeom could see a smile appear on his face as soon as his eyes landed on Jinyoung.

“Oh, yeah. But enough about him. Jinyoung is boring, Youngjae wanted to talk.”

“Jackson how’s everything? How’s Mark?” Youngjae asked.

“Why are you locking Jinyoung? What is happening?” Jackson kept coming close to the screen to check what’s happening.

“Nothing, he’s a bit drunk-”
“I’m not,” Jinyoung turned his face towards Youngjae.

“He is.” Jaebeom and Youngjae yelled in union.

“Well, drunks never admit they are,” Jackson said through the screen.

Jaebeom couldn’t tell if Jinyoung was frustrated because he couldn’t see Jackson or what?

“I am not,” Jinyoung yelled again.

“Whatever you say cuteass.” This had Youngjae and Jaebeom laughing. Jinyoung just smiled so big he had to drop his head down to hide it.

“Jackson, you’re missing one hell of a party,” Youngjae said.

“My mom and dad leave tomorrow. Whenever you’re home, just drop by. Bring your friend if you want to.” Jaebeom just smiled at Youngjae and Youngjae fixed his eyes on Jinyoung.

“I don’t think he wants to come,” Jaebeom commented.

“I hate all three of you,” Jinyoung said, still struggled in Youngjae’s arms.

Jaebeom heard his mom calling out his name, “Hey, I have to rush, good seeing you, nice abs though, I’ll see you around. Bye.” Jaebeom hung up before Jackson could say his goodbyes.

“Jackson has the best body I have ever seen, like he works out like crazy. You should see it,” Youngjae said to Jinyoung and Jinyoung started working off the pink colour on his neck.


“Nope, but Jinyoung don’t need to know that.” This got Jaebeom a punch on his arm and they both laughed at that.

If this morning you would have said to Jaebeom that he would be sitting a chair in front of Youngjae and a five-year-old who willingly wanted to make two ponies on his head, he would have laughed and went back to bed.

“Why are we doing this?” Jaebeom regret every decision that led up to this.

“Because you love us,” Jennie said and smiled at Youngjae.

“What will two ponies accomplish?” Jaebeom asked again.

“We have to know who make better ponies,” this time it was Youngjae’s voice. They were in a competition, Youngjae somehow convinced Jennie that no one could ever make better ponies than his. This led to a competition.

Jaebeom placed his hand on Youngjae’s thigh and squeezed it hard. Youngjae yelped and pulled some of Jaebeom’s hair, gripped it harder than necessary and Jaebeom let out a pained groan. He looked up and their eyes met. Blood rushed to Jaebeom’s head, all of it too intense, it made Jaebeom dizzy. He closed his eyes and looked straight again, not wanted to lose himself like this.

Youngjae played nice after that, kept small talks with Jennie and laughed whenever she said something. Youngjae made the whole pony as slowly as he possibly could, Jennie on the other hand, being a five-year-old, kept pulling on his hair to keep them all in the rubber band.
“Jennie, sweetie, it hurts,” Jaebeom said and rubbed his head.

“It hurts?” Jennie’s voice fell and it worried Jaebeom.

“Oh no no no, not that much. It’s all good now.” Jaebeom smiled at Jennie, her eyes looked sad.

“I’ll kiss it better,” Jennie said and planted a kiss on Jaebeom’s head, right where she was making her pony.

“Better?” She asked with hopeful eyes.

“It’s feeling better, kiss it again,” Jaebeom said and lowered his head to give more access to her. She planted more kisses.

“You do it now,” Jennie pointed to Youngjae. Jaebeom looked at him, their mouth fell open. Both wanted to say something but words failed them.

“Come on, do it. He’s in pain,” Jennies jumped in her spot.

Jaebeom kept looking at Youngjae, “He’s alright, look, he looks fine. You did it. You made it better,” Youngjae said and patted Jennie’s head.

“I’m in pain.” Jaebeom’s mouth failed him again. He didn’t mean to say it but he did. There was no going back from this. Jaebeom kept his eyes on Youngjae who looked confused. Youngjae slowly placed his hands on both sides of Jaebeom’s cheeks. Pressed them gently before he leaned in and kissed Jaebeom’s hair. Jaebeom closed his eyes in the process, felt Youngjae’s lip touching his hair and a bit of his scalp. Shiver ran down Jaebeom’s spine.

“Better?” Youngjae asked and Jaebeom nodded in astonishment.

“I wanna go to mommy,” Jennie said and Youngjae picked her up, Jaebeom zoned out the whole conversation, his eyes fixed on Youngjae.

He shouldn’t feel like this, he wasn’t allowed. This was wrong. Youngjae was just doing him a favour. He shouldn’t get attached to this.

The ride home was silent. Jinyoung left an hour ago, his mother lived nearby so he decided to drop by. Now they had, Jaebeom’s parents in the back seat and Youngjae sitting on the passenger’s side. Every now and then, his mom would make a comment about the wedding and they all would share their views.

Once they entered the house everyone started making their way towards their rooms. Youngjae stood in the hall when Jaebeom’s mom came to talk to him. Jaebeom went to drink a glass of water.

“They all loved you.” Jaebeom heard his mother say when he entered the room again.

“They were all nice to me,” Youngjae replied.

“I’ll leave you boys now, I’m too tired to stay up. When are you two leaving tomorrow?” She asked.

“After lunch, before lunch. We’ll see when we wake up,” Jaebeom replied and stood next to Youngjae. She smiled and kissed both of them on the cheek before she went back to her room.

The atmosphere in Jaebeom’s room was different than that of last night’s. It felt dense and there was some tension. Youngjae tried hard to laugh it all off and to make jokes here and there but Jaebeom couldn’t concentrate.
Youngjae went in the bathroom to change and Jaebeom changed in his room. They avoided eye contact. They talked now and then, asking how the wedding went and what they thought of the people but never nothing too personal.

Once in bed and with the lights out, Jaebeom let himself relax.

For no good reason, his heartbeat was fast and he couldn’t stop thinking about the boy lying next to him.

“Are we going back with Jinyoung tomorrow?” Youngjae asked from his place.

“Yeah.”

“Jackson really wanted to come to the wedding and he thought it’s crazy because he doesn’t even know you guys well.”

“True.”

“Once we are back home, you should meet Mark properly, you will like him.”

“Sure.”

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae’s voice sounded concerned and stirred something in Jaebeom.

“Hmm,”

“Is everything okay?”

“Yeah, everything went well.”

“No, with you?” Youngjae asked.

“Me? Yeah, I’m good.”

“Is it about Nina?” Youngjae asked with uncertainty.

“What? No, no. I- I didn’t even think much about her all night,” because of you, he wanted to add that.

“Then what is it? You seem distanced.”

“It’s stupid,” Jaebeom tried laughing it off.

“Tell me, I mean, if you want to. I’m here. I’m listening.”

“Sleep, Youngjae. You must be exhausted,” Jaebeom said instead.

“Hmm.” Jaebeom hated how small Youngjae’s voice sounded.

The room was getting too suffocating for him. Being around Youngjae was getting too suffocating for him now. Whenever Youngjae was around, Jaebeom had this urge to touch, to feel his skin on his. But he wasn’t allowed. But why wasn’t he? Jaebeom felt like he was cheating Youngjae, like he lured him in and now he’s trying to get something Youngjae never bargained for. But then again, Youngjae volunteered. Youngjae volunteered to be here. Youngjae wanted to be here. No one was holding him here against his will. No one made him do anything against his will.
All of it was driving Jaebeom crazy. He shouldn’t be feeling like this. Youngjae can speak for himself. Jaebeom need not make the decisions for him. Maybe, this one night, Jaebeom will let his desires talk. It’s wasn’t just lust; if you want emotions, if you want to be around a person without physically touching them, if you want to touch a soul and their heart without physically doing so. It wasn’t lust.

“Youngjae,” Jaebeom said as softly as he could, as low as he could, as to if Youngjae was asleep, he didn’t want to wake him up.

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae said and it drove Jaebeom crazy. His name on Youngjae’s lips come out a worship, came out as a prayer. Jaebeom laid down straight, facing the ceiling. He heard some shuffling in bed and he could feel Youngjae’s eyes on him.

“Stop looking at me,” Jaebeom said, breathless for no reason.

Youngjae laughed, “Is that what you wanted to say?”

“Look somewhere else, I can’t- I can’t- it’s too nerve-racking for me,” Jaebeom wanted to be straightforward, didn’t had the energy to beat around the bush.

Youngjae shuffled some more and was facing the ceiling as well.

“I won’t judge you,” Youngjae said and it made Jaebeom smile through all the tension.

“You may not like what I have to say,”

“Try me,”

“Promise me one thing first, you won’t interrupt me till I’m done talking.”

“Promise, do you wanna do pinky promise as well?” This made Jaebeom laugh, his nerves were relaxing.

“You’re such an idiot.”


“Let me start okay, quiet. Let me- let me see how I want to start. Don’t laugh or I just hope I don’t offend you and this doesn’t change anything.” Jaebeom took a deep breath. He closed his eyes and opened them again.

“Youngjae, I want to kiss you,” Jaebeom blurred it out in as low a voice as he can manage.

“I know, this is all too fast and it’s not even real.” Jaebeom paused and took another breath.

“Youngjae, I haven’t been able to stop thinking about it. I can’t keep you out of my mind. I don’t know much right now, but I know I want to kiss you.”

Jaebeom’s heart was racing too fast, his head felt heavy and light at the same time.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to. I don’t want to do anything you’re uncomfortable with, I am ready to wait. In fact, I’ll change what I just said. I want you to kiss me, if you want to.”

Jaebeom wanted to know what Youngjae was thinking but he was scared.

“I don’t want things to be awkward between us, if you don’t want to do it. You don’t have to. I would still wanna be friends with you and Jackson and meet that Mark you talk about. If you don’t
“want this, we can act like I never said anything and go back to us being us.”

Jaebeom was on the verge of panicking now.

“Youngjae, I want you to kiss me when you’re ready and if you’re ready.”

Jaebeom went silent. The only thing he could hear was his own heartbeat, loud and clear in his ears.

“Say something now,” Jaebeom sounded beat. He wasn’t sure what Youngjae was going to say, honestly, he was just too scared of losing something that was never there.

Slowly a laugh was heard, not the mockery kind but the kind that made Jaebeom calm down. He took another breath and smiled.

Jaebeom wasn’t sure what Youngjae meant by that laugh but he was just thankful Youngjae wasn’t resenting him. His laughed calmed all his nerves down. His laugh made his heart race in a good way. Jaebeom thought that was it for the night. That was all the assurance he would get form Youngjae.

Then he felt fingers on his cheeks, he froze. Youngjae caressed his cheeks, fingers running up and down in slow, long strokes. Every cell in Jaebeom’s body was aware of that movement. Jaebeom wanted to hold his hand but he stayed still, let Youngjae do whatever he was doing.

After caressing his cheek and jaw, Youngjae ran circles on his cheek with his thumb. Jaebeom’s whole cheek was on fire, he was sure Youngjae could feel the warmth coming from his cheek.

When Youngjae retracted his hand, was when Jaebeom could breathe again.

“Good night, Jaebeom,” Youngjae’s voice was too warm and happy for Jaebeom to register. He just nodded in darkness.

Jaebeom was scared for tomorrow. Wasn’t sure how things will run then. But he let himself enjoy this moment. He placed his hand where Youngjae’s was and pressed his palm into his cheek. He smiled to himself. Maybe they’d be okay. Maybe all of it would be okay. Maybe Youngjae would never kiss him and maybe he would. Jaebeom would live with all the maybes as long as Youngjae is in it. As long as Youngjae and him will be okay. No matter what form of together they’d be in, but as long as they’d be together, Jaebeom would be okay.

Chapter End Notes

It’s the wedding, so all that happened. I hope you enjoyed it. Thank you so much for taking time reading this. It means a lot to me.
Let me know what you think of the chapter, if you liked a certain part or just share any kind of thoughts you have.
I’ll try and update soon. haha.
Jaebeom wasn’t sure how exhausted he was till he woke up to an empty bed at eleven in the morning. He was exhausted, and they had a long ride ahead of them. He went to take a shower and to clean up. His mind kept drifting to the conversation of last night. He won’t say he regretted any of it because he doesn’t.

He was scared though. Scared that things might be awkward between him and Youngjae now, scared that he won’t be able to meet his eyes now, scared that Youngjae might start distancing himself from Jaebeom, and scared that he might not want what Jaebeom wanted.

Jaebeom needed to focus on something else, this wasn’t going to help anyone. He quickly changed and went downstairs. He could already hear Youngjae’s laugh from a distance and he smiled, a genuine heart-warming smile. He slowed down and tiptoed around so that he could see his mom and Youngjae making breakfast together, but they couldn’t see him.

It all looked too domestic, it all felt too domestic. Youngjae got along with his mother so well that he was making breakfast with her, alone, comfortably. Jaebeom wasn’t sure if he was surprised or amused. He stood there for a while and kept his eyes on them. Watched them as they laughed and passed each other ingredients, they sang in between as well. Jaebeom smiled, a full-fledged-open-mouth smile.

“Cute, right?” The whisper in his right ear made him jump and he screamed. He turned to find Park Jinyoung smiling with his mouth closed.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” Jaebeom yelled, all eyes were on him.

“You’re awake? Good, we made breakfast or lunch, whatever you wanna call it now.” Jaebeom’s mom started arranging the dining table.

Jinyoung walked towards her to help her set the table. Jaebeom just kept looking, his heart racing as if he was caught doing something he wasn’t allowed. Jaebeom avoided Youngjae’s eyes. He knew Youngjae’s looking but he can’t find it in him to look back.

Jaebeom wasn’t embarrassed of what happened he just wasn’t sure if Youngjae and him were on the same page. He was scared that he might have asked for something Youngjae isn’t willing to give.

They all sat for breakfast, his mother making small talks and Jinyoung and Youngjae joining her. His father must have left early for work or he was still sleeping, no one could tell. Last night his father drank a lot, he must be hungover.

“Jaebeom, you like the food? Youngjae helped,” his mother asked.

“Yeah, yeah, it’s great,” Jaebeom said over a mouthful. His head still hung low.

They got over breakfast really fast, Jinyoung felt the tension in the air and advised that they leave early as it’ll be a long drive.

Youngjae went upstairs to pack the little he had and Jinyoung and Jaebeom started cleaning the kitchen.
“You both had drunk wild sex last night or what?” Jinyoung asked in a whisper.

“Are you crazy? Stop talking.”

“I’m just curious, you won’t even look at him and he won’t stop smiling.” That got Jaebeom’s full attentions.

“He was smiling?” Jaebeom asked with uncertainty.

“Yeah, like he always does.”

“Was there something different about his smile?” Now that got Jinyoung’s attention, he turned towards Jaebeom with his hands crossed on his chest and smirked.

“Was it supposed to be?”

“I don’t know, you tell me,” Jaebeom said nervously, started playing around with the utensils to have something to do.

“Why don’t you tell me what happened?”

“Nothing happened.”

“Should I ask Youngjae?” Jinyoung smirked again.

“Jinyoung, I swear to god, if you say a word to Youngjae-“

“You’ll do what?” Jinyoung stepped closer to Jaebeom, his voice intimidating.

“I’ll tell Jackson you like him.” Jinyoung’s eyes went wide, he opened his mouth and closed it again, as if he wanted to say something but words failed him.

“You wouldn’t,” Jinyoung tested.

“We can always find out.” Jaebeom had the upper hand and he knew it.

“You know it’s not true, I don’t like him that way,” Jinyoung tried to sound confident.

“That’s up to him to decide what he wants to believe,” Jaebeom said and Jinyoung huffed out a laugh. “I can’t believe you sometimes.”

With that they stood outside the house. Youngjae and Jinyoung putting all the luggage in the backseat and Jaebeom being trapped in his mother’s hug, he loved it but he won’t tell her.

“Mom, we’ll be late,” Jaebeom smiled in the hug.

His father joined the soon after, he was sleeping because of the hangover. Jaebeom hugged him and said his goodbyes. Jinyoung went up to Jaebeom’s mother and they had a little chat of how he should call often and drop by whenever he can. He then walked towards Jaebeom’s dad and they shook hand, laughed and hugged.

Jaebeom saw his mother walk towards Youngjae who was still standing by the car, he looked uncomfortable, maybe because he wasn’t sure where he stood with the family.

“You,” Jaebeom’s mother said and hugged Youngjae, “I’m so happy you came.”
Youngjae smiled in the hugged and hugged her back. “I’m glad as well.”

“You have my number now.” Jaebeom wasn’t sure when they exchanged numbers or why he wasn’t feeling uneasy about all this. “Call me whenever you want to, if you want to know more embarrassing secrets of Jaebeom, you should call me.” Jaebeom’s mother laughed and so did Youngjae.

“Mom,” Jaebeom whined.

They both ignored him. “Thank you for coming, I am happy that Jaebeom found someone like you, he can be… difficult, I want to say, at times but please know everything comes from a good heart.” His mother sounded sincere and guilt settled on Jaebeom’s chest. How would he ever explain to her that none of this is real. Everything that felt too real, was just fake. Youngjae have been faking it, Jaebeom has been faking it. It’s all fake.

“Take good care of my son, he seems tough but he’s just stupid.” This made them laugh and Jaebeom faked the laugh as well.

“I’ll, thank you for having me. Last few days have been great. Thank you,” Youngjae sounded sincere and he hugged the woman in front him again.

“If we’re all done being saps, can we leave?” Jaebeom said over their heads. His mother said something to Youngjae but Jaebeom couldn’t pick up, they laughed again.

Jaebeom walked towards Jinyoung and whispered, “Sit on the passenger seat, I’m begging you.” Jinyoung didn’t question him.

When Youngjae started making his way towards the passenger seat Jinyoung walked faster to grab it. He smiled at Youngjae and with ease, sat in front. Youngjae didn’t mind. He went in the back and Jaebeom took the wheel. They waved goodbyes and Jaebeom’s mother yelled at Jaebeom to call and visit more.

Everything went silent for a few minutes when they hit the main road. Jaebeom adjusted all the mirrors, even thought there was no need but he wanted to do something, make some kind of a sound.

“So Youngjae,” Jaebeom’s heart quickened as soon as Jinyoung said Youngjae’s name, “How was the wedding?”

“It was good, yeah, I enjoyed it. Everything looked so beautiful. It was fun.” Youngjae kept his answers short.

They fell silent again.

“I’m sorry, I’m tired. I woke up at 5 this morning and when I went downstairs for water, Jaebeom’s mom was already up so we started talking and then ended up making breakfast,” Youngjae explained.

“Oh, couldn’t sleep?” Jinyoung asked but there was mischief in his voice and Jaebeom sensed it.

“Sort of, yeah, you can say that,” Youngjae’s voice came out low.

“What kept you up?” Jinyoung will be the death of Jaebeom.

“Umm, things,” Youngjae said after a pause. Jinyoung turned towards Jaebeom and Jaebeom could see the smile on his face from the corner of his eyes.
“Like what things?” Jinyoung pushed.

“Why don’t you sleep there? In the backseat. We have a long way to go, I’ll drive safe, you can rest,” Jaebeom suggested but kept his eyes on the road.

“Yeah, I should.” They both avoided Jinyoung.

Youngjae did some adjusting and then he was fast asleep. After about half an hour Jaebeom called out his name to make sure he was asleep and when there was no response he turned towards Jinyoung and hit him on the leg with his fist.

“What the hell?” Jinyoung yelped.

“Don’t scream, you’ll wake him up. And you know why I did that, you deserved it.”

Jinyoung just laughed, “Give me your phone, I wanna see yesterday’s pictures.”

“I didn’t take screenshots of naked Jackson if that’s what you wanna see,” Jaebeom knew how to play this game.

“That’s not why I asked, now give it to me.”

Jaebeom unlocked his phone and passed it to Jinyoung, you swiped through images and made short remarks. There were a lot of images from yesterday, of Jinyoung and Youngjae and of them together. Jaebeom didn’t take selfies much but he was good with capturing others. There were a few images of his aunts and uncles and the bride and groom, a few children, night sky. He took a lot.

“There’s a lot of Youngjae in it,” Jinyoung said.

“Yeah and you too.”

“This is a good selfie,” Jinyoung said and turned the phone towards Jaebeom, they were at the red light so Jaebeom leaned towards the phone to get a better view. It was the picture Youngjae clicked for his phone when they were driving to his parent’s house. Jaebeom never actually got around to look at the picture but now he could see it. His eyes on Youngjae’s head, his expression soft, Youngjae laughing with his head falling back, it all looked so natural and maybe it was. The picture looked powerful, Youngjae held a lot of power, he legit looked like he had Jaebeom wrapped around his finger and maybe that was true, in that moment it was true. Jaebeom could remember that in that exact moment he only had one boy in his mind.

“Jaebeom, it’s green,” Jinyoung said pushing Jaebeom back and turning the phone.

“Sorry.”

“You really have a lot of pictures of him,” Jinyoung laughed lightly. It was true, Jaebeom captured Youngjae in every moment he could. He clicked images any time he could.

“I asked him to kiss me.” Jaebeom could hear the nerves in his voice.

“What?” Jinyoung wasn’t sure he heard him right. “You asked him to kiss you?”

“Yes.”

“You asked Youngjae to kiss you?”

“Yes, I asked Youngjae to kiss me, now can we stop saying it, he’s right behind us.”
They both fell silent for a second. Jaebeom wasn’t sure why he told Jinyoung but he wanted to tell someone, wanted to talk to someone. Wanted to know that he wasn’t acting stupid or irrational. Jinyoung was the closest he had to a brother.

“He said no?” Jinyoung was concerned. Sounded too scared to ask the wrong question.

“He didn’t say anything,” Jaebeom said and they fell silent again.

“Maybe he is thinking about it.” Jaebeom shrugged when Jinyoung said that.

“You know you didn’t do anything wrong, right?” Jinyoung asked.

“I mean, I wanted to that’s why I asked him, it must be already intimidating being under my roof and in my bed and then I just wanted him to be comfortable. I don’t know where we stand now.”

“Jaebeom, don’t get me know but I think Youngjae is doing the right thing. Maybe not kissing you last night was the smartest thing he has done.” Jaebeom was confused.

“I mean,” Jinyoung turned around to make sure Youngjae was really asleep and when he saw Youngjae’s expression, lips a but parted and chest falling and rising in slow motion, he was convinced. “You guys just met, you have known him what, two weeks, max. You have spent so much time together in those few weeks that you think you’re into him, I’m not saying you’re not or that you can’t be.” Jinyoung paused again.

“What I’m trying to say is, when you spend a long time with someone in a short period of time, you’re bound to develop feelings, that’s natural. Youngjae don’t seem like the kind who’ll risk everything on those feelings, maybe he just wants to go back to reality and see where you guys stand and maybe you should go back home and see if you really want this.”

Jaebeom stayed silent, he was driving, he can’t get lost in Jinyoung’s words right now.

“When you go back home and you both will sleep in your own beds, you’ll get more time to think. Maybe he’ll kiss you and maybe he won’t but I want you to be sure that you’re not just leading him or yourself on just some infatuation. You both deserve better than that.”

Jaebeom just nodded. Jinyoung was right but Jinyoung already knew that, there was no point in stating the obvious.

They changed the topic soon after, talked about Jinyoung’s mom to Jaebeom’s mom. Stayed on safe topics, avoided names like Youngjae and Jackson.

Jaebeom wanted to know what’s happening with Jackson, even though Jinyoung told him about their last meeting at Jackson’s place but Jaebeom wanted to know what Jinyoung was feeling and thinking.

But maybe it’s too soon to ask, if Youngjae and Jaebeom have known each other for two weeks, Jackson and Jinyoung haven’t spent that much time together either. Jaebeom made a mental note to make plans with Jackson and to invite Jinyoung.

After hours and hours of driving they reached home. Jaebeom parked outside his building and asked Jinyoung if he wants to be dropped.

“My legs are sore from all the sitting, I’ll just walk from here, you can keep my luggage for now, I’ll pick that up tomorrow.”
Jinyoung walked out of the car and waved him goodbye. Jaebeom stayed in the car for a little longer. At some point he had to get out and wake Youngjae up but he was too scared to face Youngjae now. This was the first time they were truly alone together.

“Are you gonna keep sitting there?” Youngjae’s voice scared the living shit out of Jaebeom. He held his chest and started laughing, Youngjae was confused for a second but he laughed with him.

“When did you wake up?” Jaebeom kept his eyes straight.

“Few minutes ago, maybe when Jinyoung left. I’ve been sitting here for minutes and you’ve just been sitting and staring ahead.”

Jaebeom laughed again and walked out of the car, Youngjae followed him out. Jaebeom made sure to avoid eye contact, he wouldn’t be able to take it. Jaebeom dragged their luggage out and gestured for Youngjae to go ahead as he needed to pick his and Jinyoung’s luggage out.

“I’ll stay with you, we can walk together,” was the last thing Jaebeom wanted Youngjae to say but he said it.

When they entered the elevator and Youngjae clicked for their floor, they stood in awkward silence. Jaebeom could practically hear Youngjae’s smile but he was too scared to look up to confirm.

Once they reached their floor Jaebeom hurried towards his door.

“So, you’re never gonna look at me now?” Youngjae said from behind. Jaebeom shut his eyes and pressed them hard before opening them and then he turned around.

“It’s nothing like that,” Jaebeom replied.

“Do you regret it?” Youngjae sounded ambiguous. It did something in Jaebeom’s chest.

“No,” Jaebeom said in a heartbeat, maybe he shouldn’t have replied that fast but the smile that spread on Youngjae’s face was worth it.

“Okay,” Youngjae said and stepped towards Jaebeom. Jaebeom dropped the luggage he was carrying on the floor. It didn’t make much sound because it was already floor length but Jaebeom felt it and he was sure Youngjae felt it as well. Jaebeom tried thinking of anything to say, anything at all but he couldn’t form a sentence.

Youngjae stood too close to him, his face just inches away from his, Jaebeom wasn’t sure what expression he was carrying but Youngjae looked confident. He looked like he knew what he was doing. Youngjae locked his eyes with Jaebeom and smiled.

Jaebeom’s heart was racing way too fast for it to be normal. Jaebeom couldn’t smile back, he physically couldn’t move.

“Youngjae,” he sounded breathless.

Youngjae leaned towards Jaebeom’s right side and moved his lips towards Jaebeom ear, “You’ll have to earn the real deal.”

Youngjae backed away with a laugh and Jaebeom exhaled the breath he was holding. “You tease,” Jaebeom said when his brain finally started working.

Youngjae laughed again and walked backwards towards his door. “Dinner’s on me if you want it,
drop by.” Youngjae was still laughing as he opened his door. There was no awkwardness or tension between them.

“You’re a freaking tease, Youngjae,” Jaebeom repeated and turned to open his own door. He was pretty sure his cheeks were pink, the heat on his neck and cheeks changing the shade of his skin, he hated the effect Youngjae had on him.

“Offer still stands Jaebeom, freshen up and meet me if you want to.” With that Youngjae was inside his apartment and Jaebeom was still struggling with the lock.

Once inside Jaebeom let himself smile. Smile bright and big. Youngjae just kissed him on the cheeks. Maybe they’ll truly be okay.

He called Jinyoung, he had to tell him. Jinyoung took way too long to pick up but Jaebeom wasn’t even pissed.

“Youngjae is a freaking tease,” Jaebeom was still smiling.

“What he do now?” Jinyoung asked.

“Told me that I’ll have to earn the kiss, how do I do that? What does that mean?”

“Jaebeom, I can’t believe we’re discussing this.”

“I’m as confused as you are.”

“I’m not confused,” Jinyoung laughed over the phone. “Get to know him first, then see where it leads you.”

“He invited me over for dinner. I don’t know if I should go or not.”

“Jaebeom, you have crap in your fridge, just please go and have dinner with him. The boy means good.” Jinyoung wasn’t walking towards his house, he walked towards his shop. Even though it’s closed he just wanted to go check on it.


“He asked you over for dinner, not sex. It’s just food. Go enjoy dinner.” Jinyoung stood outside his shop with no intention of going in. He just stood there and looked at it. Proud smile on his face. He remembers the day Jaebeom and him opened it and their first customer came. Mrs. Wu, a Chinese woman, he remembers asking for her name and giving her a free muffin as she was the first customer.

He turned around and started making his way towards his apartment. It was a bit far off but not far enough to take a cab.

“I should go, I’ll freshen up first and then I’ll go.”

“Just don’t wear that Snoop Dogg shirt please.” Jinyoung could hear Jaebeom laughing and saying something over the line of ‘It’s comfortable’, but then they talked for a few seconds before hanging up, Jaebeom asked Jinyoung to call him once he’s home and Jinyoung promised he will.

Jinyoung wanted to walk a little longer, it’s cold at thing time of the year but he was prepared. He hugged his coat tighter and took the long route home. It wasn’t late, it was hardly ten but there were less people on the street. Only some teenagers roaming around, taking advantage of the youth age.
Despite being young himself, Jinyoung has always felt old, as if he was forced to grow up so fast. Having two younger sisters, he always felt like a kid with them but outside, he has always met people who judge you based on your age. He hated it. So, he started acting mature at first, then he started getting mature. Way mature than his actual age.

He’s fine though, have lived like this for far too long. There were times when he wanted to act his age but the circumstances never allowed it.

Making a sharp right, there’s a park. Jinyoung never paid much attention to the park but he was always made sure to give it a look while walking. He liked trees, plants, nature. There were a few swings here and there and a few benches scattered around.

There were always couples in the park at this time, sitting on benches, eating dinner together but as it started getting colder and colder less and less people visited the park.

As he walked closer he saw a man sitting on one of the benches near a tree, the shadow from the tree made it impossible for Jinyoung to figure out what that person was doing. Something about the figure made it look familiar.

Maybe the head, Jinyoung has seen that head before. Jinyoung realised he has unknowingly started walking towards the man. When he walked closer he realized that that man is perhaps Jackson.

Jinyoung smiled to himself, what were the chances of him running into Jackson? Jinyoung was about to say something when he gazed over Jackson’s posture. His head was hung low, his shoulder looked defeated, his legs were spread and his elbows rested on his thighs, hands between his legs.

Jinyoung stood there for few more seconds, unable to decide what to do next? Should he stay and ask Jackson if everything is okay or should he leave because they’re not that close?

After debating for a while Jinyoung walked towards the bench and sat on the left side of Jackson, it took a few seconds for Jackson to realize that someone was sitting next to him. Jinyoung kept looking in the front. He avoided looking at Jackson, maybe it would be too overwhelming to do so.

Jinyoung heard Jackson shift a little and took a deep breath. With a very warm voice Jackson turned towards Jinyoung and said, “Jinyoung, if you-”

“Shhh,” Jinyoung interrupted him and placed his hand on Jackson’s left hand. He gave it a little squeeze to assure Jackson that everything will be okay even if they’re not right now. Their eyes met.

For a second, Jinyoung couldn’t think straight, Jinyoung’s heart was racing fast and his whole body felt heavy, Jackson looked so small, so so small right in front of him. He looked nothing like the man Jinyoung met at the shop or the man Jinyoung met at Jackson’s house.

Jackson looked defeated, his eyes looked heavy. He wasn’t crying but his eyes were red as if they wanted to cry, wanted to let it out of his system. Jackson just looked at him with a poker face, the smile that he once wanted to greet Jinyoung with, gone from his lips. He looked sad.

Jinyoung gave Jackson a sad smile, a simple nod with that smile and he saw a tear roll down from Jackson’s right eye followed by another from his left. Jackson dropped his head again, this time he allowed himself to cry. His right hand came over where Jinyoung’s hand was placed on his and he pressed it between his hands. He bend down and placed his forehead on his knees, and Jinyoung could feel the hot breath that Jackson let out, on his hand. His breath was shaky from all the crying.

Jinyoung didn’t utter a word or made any move. He sat there in silence, as quiet as he could be. He wasn’t sure what he was to Jackson but right now he was his support. It takes a lot of courage from a
person to cry in front of someone you don’t know. It’s like sharing a part of yourself.

Jackson has always looked so strong, so confident that it never occurred to Jinyoung that hardships are there in everyone’s life. No matter what or who you are, there comes a time when you feel lost or defeated. He wasn’t sure what Jackson was going through or what was happening in his life but he wanted to be there for Jackson. He wanted to be by his side.

Jinyoung’s throat started to hurt, started getting dry. Jinyoung wasn’t going to cry. This was not the time. Jinyoung felt his heart go heavy again. The sight of Jackson made everything in Jinyoung’s body hurt. He wanted to console him, give him a proper hug, whisper encouraging words in his ear but Jinyoung knew this wasn’t the time. Jackson don’t need shallow promises of tomorrow being a better day maybe all he needs is someone by his side for tomorrow’s hardship.

When Jackson’s grip started getting loose on Jinyoung’s hand he thought Jackson would let go but Jackson kept holding his hand. He moved back a little to give himself some breathing space but he didn’t sit back properly.

Jinyoung could feel some tears on his hand but he didn’t move, didn’t say anything. Jackson’s breath was hitching but his crying died down. Slowly and steadily Jinyoung started making small circles with his thumb on Jackson’s hand. He tried soothing him down, at first Jackson’s hand twitched a bit and Jinyoung thought he would pull his hand back but he didn’t.

Jinyoung looked ahead, he was sure Jackson wouldn’t want to be seen like this. He waited for a moment for Jackson to say something, anything. They both sat in silence. Jinyoung lost the track of time. He was just glad Jaebeom hasn’t called in or messaged him yet, the disturbance would ruin it all.

After a while Jinyoung felt Jackson move a little, uncertainty clear in his movements. Jinyoung stayed still. Jackson placed Jinyoung’s hand back on Jinyoung’s lap and Jinyoung stayed still. After taking few long breaths Jackson stood up and without looking back or saying a word he started walking, maybe towards his own house.

Jinyoung sat there for a little while longer. He wasn’t expecting much to happen today, he for sure never thought he would bump into Jackson in such a state. But he did. He did bump into Jackson. There was a lot of thing he wasn’t sure of anymore. He was tired as well, it was a long day. Maybe he should sleep on it. He didn’t want to dwell too much on the fact that Jackson didn’t said a word before leaving.

The irony of this park was, as happy as it looked there were sad stories written in it every day. Jinyoung remembered watching couples here and now he would remember being with Jackson here. A place is never just a happy place if it can’t be a sad place as well. But people still always came back.

Once home, Jinyoung went straight to bed, he was tired and even though he hadn’t had dinner, he wasn’t hungry at all. Jinyoung was the kind to think, think what has happened. He has had a habit of over thinking.

Once he was tucked in his bed, he took the phone from his bed stand, decided to drop a message to Jaebeom as he promised. When he turned it on he realized the battery has drained out. With exhaustion he stood up and looked for his charged, while he waited for his phone to turn on properly, he thought back to Jackson. He wanted to know what was happening but he didn’t want to intrude.

Maybe one day Jackson himself will speak up about it or maybe they’ll live like this. As he turned on
his wifi, he started receiving bunch of messages. He hasn’t even realized how long it has been since his phone died but when he looked back at the first message he got it must have been at least three hours.

There were messages from Yugyeom and Bambam, asking if he has returned and if he would want to visit the shop and do they need to keep it open for longer. Later Bambam messaged him with a, ‘Man, at least reply, we’re leaving now.’

Next bunch were from Jaebeom and Youngjae, asking if he has gotten home or not. Youngjae’s was a bit longer, thanking him for the time he had at Jaebeom’s parents. He enjoyed every bit of it with him. Jinyoung smiled at that and with no further messages he decided to turn off his wifi and go back to bed.

When he went to the setting, a message popped up. Jackson. Jinyoung was so focused on the name that he didn’t even read the message.

It wasn’t long, it was a simple Thank you.

Jinyoung felt light, as if his worries disappeared. As if as his stress was taken away from him. The message wasn’t all that much in itself but it was more than enough. There was possibly nothing else that could have been said at that moment.

Jinyoung debated if he should reply or not and if he should reply then what should he say but he decided against it. All of it was enough and suddenly Jinyoung was hungry. The starvation hitting him like a truck. He went to his kitchen to make himself something with a smile on his face. He was happy.

Jaebeom was panicking, what should he wear. It’s not a date, Youngjae just called him because he knew Jaebeom wouldn’t have anything in his refrigerator. He has heard Jinyoung complain about it quite a lot of times, so he wasn’t surprised that Youngjae remembered.

Should he change? He didn’t want Youngjae to think that he dressed up for him. Changed for an occasion that’s simply just dinner.

Should he wear the same outfit? He also didn’t want Youngjae to get the idea that this means nothing to him.

He wanted to call Jinyoung, ask him what he should do. But Jinyoung’s last message to him was that he was going to bed early and Jaebeom didn’t want to disturb his beauty sleep.

After debating for about fifteen more minutes he decided to just throw a simple loose pants on with the same shirt he was wearing today.

He took some deep breaths and walked out of his apartment. He stood outside of Youngjae’s apartment for a while. Debated if he was too early or too late for the dinner invitation he received. After a while he knocked lightly.

“Jaebeom, it’s open.” Came Youngjae’s voice from inside. Jaebeom pushed the door open and walked inside.

Youngjae’s apartment was similar to his own. It’s the same building so things look exactly like how they are but Youngjae’s apartment gave it more a ‘home’ feel. A table, bigger than that of Jaebeom’s. There were few records hung on the wall, some books on music scattered around of the sofa area. Some blankets thrown over on the sofa, it was all cosy.
“How do you know it was me?” Jaebeom asked when he couldn’t find Youngjae.

“I don’t invite two men on the same night,” Youngjae said while he emerged from his room. He was in his pyjamas and a white shirt with a massive ‘supreme’ written with red.

“I should consider myself lucky, if it’s me tonight?” Jaebeom can play this game as well, no matter how nervous he was.

Youngjae laughed and this time he truly fully laughed, not like the time at the wedding where he was surrounded by people and he was faking it majority of the time but like the time when they were in Jaebeom’s bedroom with the light turned out and Jaebeom would say something silly and Youngjae would just laugh.

Jaebeom smiled and followed Youngjae in the kitchen area.

“Take the plates and I’ll reheat the food,” Youngjae said and went towards his microwave. Jaebeom obeyed and pulled out two plated from the stand and stood there not knowing what to do next.

Youngjae went towards the sofa area and took the blankets to his room asked Jaebeom if he wanted to sit down or up.

After fifteen more minutes of rushing around they sat on the floor with food and plates between them.

“Mark sleeps on my couch once in a while because he finds my bed uncomfortable,” Youngjae said with a mouthful. Jaebeom just nodded.

“Did you think I would come? For dinner?” Jaebeom asked instead.

“Yeah,” Youngjae said bluntly and poured some water in his glass.

“Why?”

“Why? You didn’t want to be here?” Youngjae stopped eating.

“No, but why did you think I would.”

“I don’t know, I mean I invited and assumed you wouldn’t have food. Thought maybe you would want to hang out.” Youngjae looked confused, as if he was uncertain of what he was saying.

“Do you think maybe we can know each other better?” Jaebeom asked and kept his eyes on his food.

“You want to know me better?”

“And I want you to know me better as well.” Jaebeom still wasn’t ready to face Youngjae.

“You know you’ll have to look at me for us to be having a conversation.” Youngjae laughed.

Jaebeom took a deep breath and looked up, “Are you happy now?” Jaebeom was blushing, there was no denying that he just prayed to all higher powers that Youngjae wouldn’t noticed.

Youngjae did. He threw his head back and laughed. “You’re so cute when you’re blushing.” Then he went on pour some rice on his plate.

“I am not.” Jaebeom tried really hard to keep his voice steady and to not smile at all.
“Not what? Cute or blushing? You can only pick one.”

“Both. I am none of those things.”

“Well, your face didn’t get the memo,” with that Youngjae blinked and Jaebeom stopped midway with his spoon in his mouth.

They went on like this for a while and Jaebeom found himself relaxing. Over the course of last few days he has spent with Youngjae he has realized one thing, Youngjae is pretty straightforward, he said want he’s feeling and he gets what he wants.

After Jaebeom insisted that he should do the dished and Youngjae laughed at him, they found themselves on Youngjae’s sofa. It was the softest thing Jaebeom has ever sat on.

“Wow, no wonder Mark sleeps on this,” Jaebeom said and bounced on it a little.

“Not you too, Mark is enough of a baby for me to handle, I can’t with two of you.”

Jaebeom sat in a corner and Youngjae sat on another, they both faced each other, Youngjae crossed his legs and had them on his sofa and asked Jaebeom to relax. Jaebeom stayed the way he was, legs hanged low and his body turned towards Youngjae. The sofa was compact enough for them to have another person in between them but they still left close, really close.

“Can I ask you something?” Jaebeom said in a low voice, it was late, it was already eleven and he was still in Youngjae’s apartment.

“Yes please,” Youngjae smile. Youngjae has the brightest smile, every time he genuinely smiles, Jaebeom’s gaze is hooked on it.

“Tell me about your past relationships, like you know mine, I wanna know yours as well.” This has been on Jaebeom’s mind for awhile now, he wanted to know about Youngjae’s relationship but today the opportunity presented itself and he grabbed it.

“Hmm, well, they were for sure not as interesting as yours.” They both smiled and Jaebeom deliberately pulled out his chin which made Youngjae laugh louder.

“I have dated few people, I started once I got into college, I never really dated in school, I don’t know why. Never found anyone interesting enough, I guess. In college, well, I don’t wanna brag but I got asked out a lot from both, men and women.” It wasn’t a surprise to Jaebeom, Youngjae was beautiful, his face was appealing and if you got to spend some time with him, you’ll be charmed by his personality as well.

“At first, I said no to everyone. They all just wanted sex and I actually wanted a relationship. Then there was this guy in my math class, we used to hang out a lot and used to do projects a lot and I knew he always had a crush on me so I thought why not, he was cute as well and was intelligent. We started going out but there was no spark, like, my heart never raced whenever he held my hand or kissed me and I know it sounds stupid but I just never felt that connection with him. Then I made a mistake, I went out with him for over two years. I still feel so bad for him, right before I broke up he started telling his friends how I’m the one for him,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom could hear the sadness in his voice.

“I felt so bad and I felt stupid because in all those years he was so blinded by love he could never figure out that I’m not it, that I’m not the one, that I’m not even half invested in this relationship as he is. So I broke it off with him, it was painful on his end. I stopped dating for a while. Then Mark once set me up with his friend.” Youngjae’s expression changed.
“I’ve dated two of them and believe me when I say that as nice as Mark is, his friends are totally opposite. It was all well in the start, you know it’s new, so all the rush is new but when the honeymoon period is over, he started showing up less, started making excuses as to why he can’t come over or why we can’t hang out. He—” Youngjae stopped all of sudden and looked at Jaebeom, kept his eyes on him.

“Jaebeom, let’s promise not to lie to each other, no matter what. No matter how small or big or stupid anything is, let’s not lie.” This caught Jaebeom off-guard. He just abruptly nodded which brought out a smile on Youngjae’s face, an assurance.

“Well, turns out he started telling his friends that I was just a hook up and that we weren’t dating, he was embarrassed of me I guess, I wasn’t as rich as all of his friends, I wasn’t as flashy as them and I wasn’t as reckless as them. I got to know it really late though and he didn’t even bother breaking things up with me, just stopped hanging out. Mark felt so bad he bought me lunch for a month, I told him it’s not his fault. Mark is amazing, you should meet him properly.” Youngjae was smiling again and it suited him.

“Well the last guy I dated, he and I fought a lot over nothing, basically he found me boring, we had nothing to talk about, nothing to do, making out with him felt like a punishment to me,” Youngjae laughed remembering his past and Jaebeom laughed over his statement.

“I really don’t know why I was with him, I mean at first he really did love me or so I thought, everything was good, nice. He gave me attention and made me feel nice and then he just stopped and he started acting like he was doing me a favour by dating me. I asked him what changed and he said that at first he was trying to woo me, that’s why all the pampering and sweet stuff but now I was already his so he don’t have to try anymore. I never felt more worthless in life, I felt like shit over something that wasn’t even my fault.”

They both stayed silent for a few minutes, Youngjae stood up and dimmed the lights and came back laughing, “The lights were too bright. Anyway, my past relationship was disastrous as well. So, there’s that.”

“Do you still believe in love?” Jaebeom wasn’t sure if he asked Youngjae that for himself or if he really wanted to know.

“I… I mean yes. I fell in love with all of them, even the one I only had platonic feelings for. I still feel in love with him. Not enough for me to want to spend the rest of my life with him but you know, when you’re with someone and it’s new, you think you can conquer the world with them by your side. I have been in love and I’m not afraid to fall again but this time, I hope it stays.” Youngjae smiled at Jaebeom, he kept looking at Jaebeom as if he was trying to send him a message and hoped that Jaebeom gets it.

“And you? Do you believe in love?” Youngjae asked with hesitation.

“I don’t know, after what happened last time, I distanced myself for everyone, my family, friends, co-workers. I forgot how it was to have a person next to me. Even with Jinyoung around, there were times I felt uncomfortable, unwanted, ugly. I hated myself and everything in general. I blamed myself for a long time over what happened, thinking that maybe I didn’t love her enough, maybe if I should have truly loved her she wouldn’t have done what she did. There was hesitation in me to open up or to let people in, there still is. But when Jinyoung practically forced me to go out, I think I fell in love again,” Jaebeom said. He realized at first his voice was filled with anger and rage but by the end of it, it was soothing. He had a lot to thank Jinyoung for. He looked over at Youngjae and Youngjae looked a little confused and upset.
“I fell in love with people and places. I love that stupid shop more than anything, I love the street cats, I love art, I love music, I started loving people. I... Youngjae, don’t tell this to anyone ever I swear,” Jaebeom said and rubbed his face. Youngjae just laughed and nodded in excitement.

“I love Jinyoung and even Bambam and that stupid Yugyeom. No matter how annoying they are they’re my family. No matter how new Bambam and Yugyeom are in my life but they have made a place in my life.”

Then their conversation went nicely, about people they love and places they love. They almost got into an argument over cats and dogs but they let it slide. Jaebeom realized that talking to Youngjae was easy and it was natural. They come up with topics together, asked question after questions. Laughed together and no one was judged anyone. They laughed at each other when they didn’t agree with each other but they never gave each other looks of disapproval.

The night went on and so did the topics, Jaebeom found it surprising that Youngjae is enjoyed gaming a lot, he hadn’t had the time to do it that much but he loves them. When he was younger he would sit in front of a computer for hours. Youngjae even got Mark into gaming.

Jaebeom could feel the tiredness in his eyes but he wouldn’t get up, he stayed there and stretched his arms, placed it on top of the sofa. Jaebeom realized that his hand was way too close to Youngjae’s face, if he would just move it a little he would be able to touch Youngjae’s face.

And he did, with everything in him, he moved his hand towards Youngjae’s face which was resting on the sofa. Jaebeom’s heart went wild with the contact. The pad of his hand brushed against Youngjae’s cheek. He kept his eyes on Youngjae, just to see if there was any discomfort but with a lazy smile Youngjae leaned into the touch.

Youngjae’s full right cheek in Jaebeom’s hand and oh God was it soft. Jaebeom ran his thumb over Youngjae’s cheek and Youngjae moved his head in approval. In the dim light Jaebeom could see Youngjae as he closed his eyes while a smile rested on his lips.

Jaebeom wanted to run his thumb over Youngjae’s lips. His lips looked chapped but those things can be fixed. Before his mind ran south he moved his attention back to Youngjae’s cheek. It was warm, full and soft. Jaebeom never wanted to let go.

“Thank you for coming for the wedding,” Jaebeom said. It was long overdue, since they have been back he hadn’t had the chance to thank Youngjae properly.

Youngjae opened his eyes and smiled at Jaebeom, “Your parents are so nice.” This affected Jaebeom because he wanted Youngjae to get along with his parents and now that they liked him for real, he was panicking.

“They like you,” Jaebeom said instead.

“Tell them I like them too.”

Jaebeom nodded at that. His eyes moved towards the clock that hung on the wall. He squinted his eyes for a better view because of how dim the lights were, this can’t be right. He turned towards his phone and panicked.

“Shit, I should leave,” Jaebeom stood up from his place and it took everything in him to remove his hand from underneath Youngjae’s cheek.

“What happened?” Youngjae looked concerned.
“It’s late, it’s one thirty am, don’t you have work tomorrow? I’m so sorry I kept you up this late.” Jaebeom moved around to see if he hasn’t left anything behind.

“Jaebeom, it’s Sunday. It’s an off.” Youngjae laughed, still seated on the sofa.

“Oh,” Jaebeom must have looked stupid but the look on Youngjae’s face said otherwise.

“I should still leave, it’s really late and we had a long day today.”

“I mean, I slept in your car, so I’m good for another few hours but yes,” Youngjae said and stood up, walked towards the light to turn them on fully. “You have been driving for hours, you should rest.”

Jaebeom wanted to protest, wanted to say that he was good to go for another few hours as well but he felt like he would cross an imaginary boundary.

“W-we should do this again.” Jaebeom looked down, didn’t had the courage to look at Youngjae.

“You’re so cute when you’re shy,” Youngjae said and walked towards Jaebeom.

“Stop calling me cute,” Jaebeom protested with a smile.

“Then stop acting cute,” Youngjae mocked him. Jaebeom liked this, it made him feel better. Were they flirting? He had no idea. But whatever it was Jaebeom liked how upfront Youngjae was.

Youngjae stood too close to him now, they were just a foot away from each other. In nervousness Jaebeom turned around towards the door and mumbled a goodnight.

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae said in a whisper, if Jaebeom wasn’t on high alert he would have missed it. He turned and saw Youngjae was looking down. Was he nervous?

“There’s something I want to say,” Youngjae sounded nervous but sure.

“Hmm,” was all Jaebeom could say. Words refused to form, did he mess up somehow?

“Jaebeom, I guess at this point I know what you want from me and you know what I want from you.” Jaebeom held his breath at those words, blood rushed towards his neck. Youngjae looked determined but there was a hint of pain in his expression.

“Maybe we’re not on the same page now but I think we both have the same end goal with-with this,” Youngjae said and moved his hands in-between him and Jaebeom.

“I don’t want to get both of ours hopes high and then have them shattered. Jaebeom, I guess what I’m trying to say is, I’m not it. I’m not what you’re looking for. Yes, we had couple of great days together but maybe that was it. You and I are never different from each other and I have tried dating different people and it never works out.” Youngjae looked pained. As if he had this same conversation with himself over a thousand times.

Jaebeom didn’t know what to say, he wanted the world to end now. This should be it for him. His heart was beating so fast it physically hurts. His head was hurting. His face felt heavy. He wasn’t sure why Youngjae was saying all this or what made Youngjae believe that they’re this different.

“Jaebeom, I’m not demeaning myself, if you think that’s what I’m doing. I just think I’m not worth your time. And Jaebeom I can take another heartbreak if that comes from you but I don’t think you can take another heartbreak.”

Jaebeom’s head was spinning, they had such a great time together. Jaebeom was at loss of word, he
stood too close to the door that he could just walk out right that second but his legs seemed frozen. He couldn’t move, couldn’t breathe, couldn’t say a word even if he wanted to.

They stood like that for a while, Jaebeom just kept staring at Youngjae, hoped that he would take back his words, prayed that all of it never happened.

Youngjae on the other hand kept looking at Jaebeom, hoped he would understand what Youngjae meant. Prayed that he would say something to better the whole situation.

But they both stood silent for way too long. It started getting uncomfortable for Youngjae.

“Jaebeom? Say something, please.” He almost wanted to beg, wanted Jaebeom to yell at him or to just say few words. Anything but the silence.

Jaebeom opened his mouth to say something but his mind was blank, he couldn’t process what has just happened. He kept opening and closing his mouth for too long and then he just shut his eye tight. Took a deep breath and walked towards Youngjae, kept a safe distance as well.

He made sure to keep his eyes on Youngjae. Wanted Youngjae to look at him, see that what he was doing was not right. But maybe that’s what Youngjae wanted. Maybe they don’t have a future together, maybe all of this was just pretend for him. But Jaebeom couldn’t let go without even giving it a try.

Jaebeom looked down at Youngjae’s hand and debated if he should do what he was thinking or not. Slowly he took Youngjae’s hand into his own. It was warm and still soft. Jaebeom realized that Youngjae’s hand was shaking.

“Youngjae,” Jaebeom’s voice was shaking, he took another breath before he continued. “You said that you knew your first boyfriend wasn’t the one for you before your heart didn’t beat fast when he held your hand.” Youngjae looked confused and he tilted his head, as if asking Jaebeom to elaborate.

Jaebeom placed Youngjae’s hand on the left side of his chest, right at his heart.

“This, Youngjae, is what you do to me,” Jaebeom said.

Youngjae could feel the rapid heartbeat on his palm, it scared Youngjae. Youngjae knew his heart was beating just as fast but having Jaebeom show him just what Youngjae’s little gestures did to him, made his heart beat ever faster.

Youngjae kept looking at his hand placed on Jaebeom’s heart. With all the people Youngjae has ever been with, he has made sure to check their heartbeat at different times, he liked the idea of driving someone crazy in a good way. But they all had a steady heartbeat, Youngjae convinced himself that that was because he made them feel at peace but this was different.

Having Jaebeom like this was different. Something he always wanted to experience.

“If you meant what you said, I’ll respect that and I’ll not push it. But if there’s still a chance, if there’s ever a chance of- of us, I’ll wait for you, Youngjae.” Jaebeom’s voice broke Youngjae out of his thoughts. With his lips parted a bit, Youngjae looked up towards Jaebeom, who still looked scared, as scared as when Youngjae started speaking in the first place.

This time Youngjae was at loss of words, he has prepared his speech the second he entered back into his apartment. He has been thinking of it since the time Jaebeom asked him to kiss him. But maybe, Jaebeom could prove him wrong, maybe all of this would be different.
Youngjae smiled, small but soft and it made Jaebeom relaxed a bit. Jaebeom just looked down, his hand still held Youngjae’s and Youngjae’s hand still placed on his chest. He didn’t want to move. If they could stay like this forever, with maybes and almosts, he would. Because right that second, there was chance and there was a hope. Right that second, Youngjae looked hopeful and right that second Jaebeom looked like he could breathe again.

Youngjae leaned upwards a bit and placed a kiss on Jaebeom’s cheek. He kept his lips attached to Jaebeom’s cheek for a second too long. He could feel Jaebeom’s heart beating faster with the contact and it made Youngjae happy, he smiled and moved back, he saw that Jaebeom had his eyes closed. Youngjae smiled to himself. He wanted to say something but was too scared that it will ruin the moment.

When Jaebeom opened his eyes again, he looked more like himself. Jaebeom dropped his hand and Youngjae retrieved his.

Jaebeom walked backwards till he was near the door and he didn’t have it in him to open his mouth to even say goodnight, he knew he would sound choked up, so he just bowed his head a little and Youngjae did the same.

Jaebeom went to bed straight after. His heart was still beating fast. He played the whole thing in his mind again and again till he could convince himself that everything will be okay because Youngjae kissed his cheek and felt his heartbeat. Jaebeom felt vulnerable and open. Like he gave a part of himself to Youngjae but this time, he wasn’t scared that Youngjae would take advantage of it. Rather, he knew that it was what needed to be done.

Jaebeom’s phone pinged with a message and without even opening it, he knew it would be Youngjae. *It will take time but we’ll be okay, right?*

Jaebeom smiled and replied, *we’ll take it slow, I’ll wait as long as you want me to.*

Youngjae: *But I don’t want you to go old, I don’t wanna date an old man.*

Jaebeom smiled, maybe they would be okay. He replies with a smile, *then hurry up Youngjae, from the wedding I heard I’m in demand but I told them I already have my eyes set on someone else.*

Youngjae: *Jaebeom, thank you for tonight. You have no idea what all of that meant to me. Thank you.*

The sleep was getting to Jaebeom but he still wanted to talk to Youngjae. *I mean it though, I’ll wait if I have to.*

Youngjae replied *Good night, Jaebeom. I’ll see you tomorrow.*

With that being the last of the texts, Jaebeom kept his phone aside and went to bed with a smile and a light heart. The whole day was worth it. Everything was worth it and he was going to prove to Youngjae that Youngjae was more than Jaebeom could have dreamt of.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this, I just realized that it's chapter 7, yikes.

7 FOR 7.
As things have started picking up now, the chapter from now on will be a bit longer (just like this one), hope that's fine with you.

Do let me know which part you like and what do you think of this chapter! That will mean so much to me.

Thank you again for taking some time to read this.
Youngjae woke up to a new text from Jaebeom which informed him that he would be at the shop and Youngjae should drop by. Youngjae smiled while he tried to focus on the screen. It was too late for breakfast and too early for lunch so he decided to have a cup of coffee.

When he sat down with his cup of coffee his mind started running the events of last night. He smiled again. He would be a fool to deny his feelings for Jaebeom. He was sure of how he felt for Jaebeom but he wasn’t too sure of how Jaebeom felt for him.

They haven’t known each other for a long time but the time they have spent together, it was something. Youngjae has felt more himself with Jaebeom than he has with any of the guys he has ever dated. Maybe it was because with Jaebeom he knew he was pretending. There was no reality in it. That was why it was easier for him to be himself because he wasn’t trying for Jaebeom to like him.

Youngjae was not looking for a relationship and he certainly wasn’t looking for a Jaebeom. It all just happened. Now here they were. Youngjae was still a bit confused over how true everything was but last night was the true and real. Last night Jaebeom made him feel his heartbeat and Youngjae would not admit it but it meant the world to Youngjae, to be aware of the effect he has on another person. It felt nice. It felt good and it made him happy. He never planned on kissing Jaebeom either because he thought that it was all just the matter of feeling something at a particular moment. The time when they were at the wedding was different, it was filled with love, they were surrounded by love. Whatever Jaebeom felt at that moment was valid but it doesn’t mean he actually wanted Youngjae to kiss him.

But now Youngjae was sure that he meant it and maybe Youngjae wanted it as well. Maybe this time they both were on the same page.

Youngjae picked up his phone to drop a message to Jaebeom but instead he ended up calling him.

“Hello,” Jaebeom said.

“Are you busy?” Youngjae asked.

“Do you like cheesy lines? Because I can say ‘never for you’ and we can continue,” Jaebeom replied and it made Youngjae laugh.

“That was so bad, Jaebeom. Stop.” He kept on laughing.

“Your laugh says otherwise but I want you to know, I’m not very cheesy and I’m not good with pick-up lines either so you’ll have to deal with simple conversations,” Jaebeom said.

“Conversations are never simple with you.”

“Is this your way of being cheesy,” Jaebeom laughed on the phone and it warmed Youngjae’s chest.

They bickered for another five minutes or so till Youngjae realized that he actually called Jaebeom for a reason.
“Jaebeom, I actually have something to ask you. Are you really free right now?”

“Yeah, I’m at the grocery store, Jinyoung wanted me to pick some stuff up so I’m on duty but what happened? Ask me,” Jaebeom sounded a bit concerned.

“Are you free tonight?” Youngjae asked and walked over to the kitchen to wash his mug.

“Youngjae,” Jaebeom took a while with his reply, “Are you- are y-you asking me out?”

Youngjae stayed stunned, that was not what he planned. Panic rose in his chest.

“No no no, no I’m not. This is not- that’s not what I wanted, it’s not that. No. no.” Youngjae was a mess.

“Hey, hey. Youngjae, it’s okay it’s fine. Maybe I just read too much in it. Yeah, I’m free.”

“Jaebeom, I’m so sorry.” Youngjae genuinely felt bad.

“It’s really fine, now tell me.” Jaebeom laughed it off.

“I was thinking maybe Jackson, Mark and I can drop by the shop and we all can have dinner together. If that’s fine by you and Jinyoung of course.”

“And here I thought you were asking me out,” Jaebeom said and laughed again, “Yeah, that’s perfect. Jinyoung hasn’t met Mark properly and it’ll be a nice getting to know each this way. Just text me the time whenever you’ll be around, I’ll stall Jinyoung. Let it be a surprise for him.”

“Yeah, okay I’ll message you. And I’d never ask you out on a phone call,” Youngjae said and smiled again.

“Really?” There was amusement in Jaebeom’s voice, “Then how would you do it?”

“I guess we’ll have to find out,” Youngjae smirked even though Jaebeom couldn’t see it.

“And what if I asked you out first?” Jaebeom asked.

“Jaebeom, don’t you have groceries to pick?” Youngjae was flustered and Jaebeom started laughing over the phone.

“I’ll see you tonight.” And after they said goodbye, Youngjae hung up. He was screwed. Jaebeom would be the end of him. He knew this for sure.

Jaebeom on the other hand was still sleepy, he woke up at the crack of dawn to a pissed off Jinyoung. Jinyoung has had a habit of losing his temper at least once a day but no one ever expect him to lose it this early in the morning.

Jinyoung was full on yelling over how the kids shouldn’t be trusted with the café anymore and now he was thinking of firing them and when Jaebeom asked what happened all Jinyoung said was, “everything.” Jaebeom knew right then that nothing happened.

Jaebeom told him he would reach soon and when Jaebeom reached the café he met with a sleeping Jinyoung. Jinyoung has had a habit of losing his temper at least once a day but no one ever expect him to lose it this early in the morning.

Jinyoung was full on yelling over how the kids shouldn’t be trusted with the café anymore and now he was thinking of firing them and when Jaebeom asked what happened all Jinyoung said was, “everything.” Jaebeom knew right then that nothing happened.

Jaebeom told him he would reach soon and when Jaebeom reached the café he met with a sleeping Jinyoung. Jinyoung was’t angry anymore. Maybe he was slightly pissed that Jinyoung woke him up and himself was sleeping like a baby but he wasn’t angry. Whatever it was, Jinyoung needed it.

Jaebeom dimmed all the lights and messaged Yugyeom and Bambam to report late to work and he even asked them to be on their best behaviour. Bambam replied with, “you got it J to the B,” and
Jaebeom knew the day was going to be challenging.

As soon as Bambam and Yugyeom entered the café and Jinyoung was awake and less grumpy, Jaebeom excused himself to go get groceries even though Jinyoung said he had everything covered.

The call with Youngjae was what kept Jaebeom from losing his mind. He felt good now, light headed, still sleepy but he would survive the day. He was looking forward to meeting all of them that night. Maybe a dinner and meeting Jackson, was what Jinyoung needed right now.

The day went in a blur, they were back after few days and had some catching up to do with their work. Jinyoung was busy with the customers and for once Yugyeom and Bambam were working without teasing Jinyoung. The shop was busy today, they all took turns to have their lunch so that everything went comfortably.

When it was time to close the shop and to wind up things Jaebeom thought that it was time to tell them that they’ll have company.

He went to where Jinyoung was and waited patiently for Jinyoung to give him attention. Jinyoung kept his eyes on the notes and said, “do you want something?”

“Did something happen?” Jaebeom asked back.

“No,” Jinyoung replied. Jaebeom could feel the nerves in Jinyoung’s tone.

“You can talk to me if there’s something,” Jaebeom said.

“I- I’m ju- I don’t know, Jaebeom. I don’t feel good today.”

Jaebeom understood. Not every day is your day. “Did something happen or it’s just a feeling?” Jaebeom asked instead.

“I guess, just a feeling. Like, there’s this thing on my mind and I wanna tell you but I don’t think it’s my place to say it,” Jinyoung replied and avoided looking at Jaebeom. Jaebeom got a bit concerned over that, they have never hidden anything from each other but they have delayed telling things to each other, maybe it was one of those things.

“Is it about Jackson?” Jaebeom asked and Jinyoung stayed quiet.

“I hope you figure it out,” Jaebeom replied after a pause. He felt guilty for inviting everyone for dinner without consulting Jinyoung. At first, he thought it would be a great surprise that Jinyoung would be around Jackson but now, Jaebeom doubted that.

“Youngjae will joi-” before Jaebeom could finish that Youngjae, Jackson and Mark entered the shop. They were loud. Laughing and talking and pushing each other to see who entered first.

Jackson and Mark got take outs and they placed them on the table where Jackson and Jaebeom first sat. They didn’t even greet anyone, Bambam and Yugyeom rushed to them and all five of them started arranging food on the table. Bambam got the plates from the kitchen and Jackson helped with water.

“You have to make me meet your colleagues, if they think that highly of you. I have to tell them the truth.” Jaebeom watched as Jackson spoke to Youngjae. Youngjae pushed Jackson away and said, “I’m a very nice person and they believe it and you’re never gonna be invited in that office. So, the joke’s on you.”
“Will you be okay? I can ask them to leave,” Jaebeom lowered his voice as he spoke to Jinyoung.

“I’ll be fine.” Jinyoung stood up from his seat and went to the kitchen and when Jinyoung returned he had his signature fake smile plastered on his face. That man is an actor.

“If you both are done romancing, the dinner’s ready,” Mark said and they both made their way to the table.

The table was like the one you have in school cafeterias, a table in the middle and bench kind seats in the opposite directions. Bambam was already sitting with Jackson and Youngjae on one side of the table and just parallel to them sat Yugyeom. Jinyoung went to sit next to him and Jaebeom chose to sit next to Jinyoung. Mark sat as the head of the table, he self-declared it.

Jackson broke the silence, “I believe everyone knows everyone,” and everyone nodded their head in agreement.

They all started eating and small talks filled the table, Jaebeom started noticing that Youngjae was stealing food from Bambam’s plate and he made a mental note to tease him with that later. Jaebeom felt uneasy because he knew Jinyoung wasn’t feeling good but as the night progressed Jinyoung started making fun of Yugyeom and that was an indication that he was doing better.

Even though Jaebeom has never liked having so many people around him but these bunch of people were refreshing. They finished all the food and Jinyoung stood up to clean the table, the rest remained seated and carried on with their conversations.

When Jinyoung came back for the second round, Jackson stood up and said, “I’ll help you.”

Jaebeom watched them work in silence. Jackson picked up the food containers and disposed them in the dustbin while Jinyoung got hold of the utensils and went in the kitchen. Jackson stood near the kitchen for a few seconds, he debated whether he should go back to the table or follow Jinyoung inside.

After a couple of seconds, he went inside the Kitchen. The kitchen in itself was big enough space for all seven of them to fit and work, he saw Jinyoung at the end of the kitchen near the sink with his hands crossed. He just stood there and did nothing. His back was towards Jackson and Jackson knew that it was his last chance to leave the kitchen.

“Are you okay?” Jackson asked and Jinyoung jumped in surprise.

“Ah! You scared me,” Jinyoung said and turned towards Jackson.

Jackson gave him a small smile and asked again, “You okay?”

“Yeah, why would you ask?” Jinyoung played dumb.

“You haven’t looked at me the whole night,” Jackson was blunt honest. Jinyoung wasn’t ready to face Jackson but he looked up towards him, he avoided eye contact the best he could.

“It’s not like that,” Jinyoung said.

“Are we okay?” Jackson’s voice was soft, almost a whisper, as if he was afraid to know the answer.

“I don’t know, you tell me,” Jinyoung really had no idea how to answer that. Were they really okay?

“I want us to be, yes. Is this about last night? Because if I did something wrong, let me know.”
“No—no, it’s. Do you want to talk about last night?” Jinyoung was half hopeful and half curious. He wanted to know what was happening with Jackson but he doesn’t want to invade his personal space.

“I mean, I want to talk about it but I think a room full of five other people is not an ideal place to talk,” Jackson sounded light with that answer.

“Yes, you’re right, we can talk later, only if you want to,” Jinyoung said and struggled with the rest of his sentence, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes. “Jackson, you don’t have to tell me anything you don’t want to. I don’t want you think I’m pressuring you into doing something you don’t want to.”

Jackson just smiled, “I know and I’ll only be telling you things because I want you to know me.”

That was the moment Jinyoung met eyes with Jackson. Jackson held Jinyoung’s gaze a little longer than necessary.

“Does that mean I can go back to flirting with you?” Jackson tried breaking the tension.

Jinyoung almost laughed and walked past Jackson to move out of the kitchen. “You were flirting? You’re so bad, I didn’t even realize it till you pointed it out.” Jinyoung said.

“Oh, is that why you’re always falling over laughing whenever I’m around?” Jackson said and followed behind Jinyoung.

“I don’t.”

“Whatever helps you sleep at night,” Jackson said and walked ahead of Jinyoung and towards the table, he left a laughing Jinyoung behind.

Five of them turned towards Jinyoung and Jaebeom smiled warmly. He was glad that whatever it was between Jackson and Jinyoung, they could sort it out or at least talked it out for now.

“I was expecting you guys to come out with one of you tucking your shirt in and the other fixing his hair,” Bambam mentioned and everyone started laughing. Jinyoung joined the table and sat next to Jaebeom again, he gave Jaebeom a reassuring smile and nodded his head.

“If it was me, Jinyoung would have threatened my life,” Yugyeom said.

“Jinyoung is all bark and no bite,” Bambam said.

“Don’t get too brave, I bite,” Jinyoung tried reaching towards Bambam who saved himself last minute.

“Let’s not get kinky here, shall we?” Jackson said and winked at Jinyoung. A flustered Jinyoung tried hiding his laugh behind Jaebeom.

The banter ran on for a while and then they all started discussing Christmas. Most of them had plans, some were visiting parents and some had parents who were visiting them.

“I wanted to celebrate Christmas with you guys but I think we should do New Year together,” Mark said.

“Yeah, that’ll be fun, we’ll be here by New Year,” Bambam commented.

“I think it’ll be easier to do it at Jaebeom or Youngjae’s place so that we have more room to crash in,” Jinyoung said.
“Let’s do it at Jaebeom’s then, Youngjae will be too tired with the work already,” Mark said and Jaebeom looked at Youngjae, he looked fine and vibrant but he wasn’t saying much. He looked distracted.

“You’re not going home for Christmas?” Jaebeom asked Youngjae.

“My family’s not big on Christmas and it’s the end of financial year, I’ve a lot of work to cover. I’ll be really busy by 31st,” Youngjae replied.

“You’ll still make it for the New Year party, right?” Yugyeom asked.

“Yeah, sure. It’s a door away. I can do that.” Jaebeom wanted to ask more to talk more but this wasn’t the place. They were surrounded by people and he couldn’t get too personal with Youngjae. He kept his eyes fixed on Youngjae, saw the change in expression when everyone else around him started talking. Youngjae lifted his gaze up and met Jaebeom. He smiled and Jaebeom smiled back. ‘Later,’ Youngjae mouthed towards Jaebeom and Jaebeom gave him a nod.

“If the Romeo and Juliet are done with eye-sex can we get back to the point?” Bambam had no chill. Jaebeom pressed his teeth together, he wasn’t going to lose his patience like this.

“Oh my God, Youngjae, you were right about the chin.” Mark started laughing hysterically.

“I told you and you didn’t believe me, see for yourself now,” Youngjae laughed with Mark and pointed towards Jaebeom’s chin.

“It literally comes out, like, it’ll drop down on the ground.” Mark couldn’t hold back his laughter.

“If you can’t tell, they’re laughing at you,” Yugyeom said and ran from his seat to sit next to Mark.

“Can we get back to where we were?” Jaebeom tried being polite.

“Yes sir,” Jackson said. “We need a plan, things everyone will be responsible for.”

“We’ll be responsible for the decorations,” Bambam volunteered himself and Yugyeom.

“I can’t do anything, I’ll be back on the 30th,” Mark said.

“I’m not doing anything, don’t even look at me,” Youngjae said, “But someone needs to get good food otherwise I’m not coming.”

They all looked at Jaebeom, “You guys have my house for the party, I think I’ve done enough.”

“I can get the groceries,” Jinyoung said for a while, “there’s this new departmental store near my place and everything’s on a discount as it’s new.”

“I can help with buying groceries,” Jackson said and Jaebeom tried not to laugh.

“Are you sure? You don’t have to, it’s really near to my place,” Jinyoung wasn’t sure if Jackson was doing it because he felt bad for Jinyoung as he would have to do it alone or he really wanted to do it.

“Yes, I’m sure.” Jackson was certain.

“Okay, that’s all settled then, you both get the groceries and we all rest,” Mark said and everyone started suggesting what Jinyoung and Jackson should buy.
A little while later Youngjae leaned towards Mark and said something in his ear, Jaebeom kept looking.

“We’ve an early day tomorrow, so, we should head home,” Mark said and got up, followed by Youngjae.

“I can take you home,” Jaebeom said to Youngjae but he wasn’t sure Youngjae heard him.

“He’s staying at my place tonight,” Mark said when Youngjae was busy checking his stuff. “My place is close to work and he has an early day tomorrow. So, we thought it’d be better for him to sleep over.”

“Make sense,” Jaebeom said with disappointment. The whole night Youngjae was right in front of him but they didn’t interact. It made him uneasy.

“And before you ask,” Jackson turned towards Jinyoung, “You can’t take me home either because I’ll be staying at Mark’s as well.”

Bambam and Yugyeom started laughing in the background.

“I wasn’t gonna ask,” Jinyoung said and tried controlling his laugh.

“You were tempted though,” Jackson said with a pout.

Jaebeom was so busy watching the conversation between those two he didn’t notice that Youngjae was standing right next to him. He had Mark’s jacket on.

“Can we talk?” Youngjae whispered. “In private?”

Jaebeom smiled, something finally settled right in his chest. He walked towards the kitchen and Youngjae silently followed him.

Once they were finally alone, Jaebeom closed the kitchen’s door and turned towards Youngjae.

“Hi.” Jaebeom felt silly.

“Hi,” Youngjae said and started laughing.

“Why are you laughing?” Jaebeom asked teasingly.

“What? I can’t laugh,” Youngjae said.

“Did you call me here to make fun of me?” Jaebeom crossed his arms and tried looking serious.

Youngjae threw his head back and laughed again, he placed his hand on Jaebeom’s crossed hands and started caressing it.

“You’re so cute,” Youngjae replied.

“Did you call me here to tell me that?”

“Yes, and now you can leave if you want to.” Youngjae was still smiling and his eyes fixed on Jaebeom’s. Youngjae was just a few inches shorter than Jaebeom and Jaebeom found that sweet.

“You’re gonna be really busy now?” Jaebeom found himself asking.
“Yeah, and we might not see each other that much,” Youngjae said and looked down.

“You’ll be doing late hours?” Jaebeom asked and Youngjae nodded.

“If you would have been here in the last few days instead of being with me at the wedding, you think you wouldn’t have to do the late nights?” Jaebeom asked and Youngjae looked at him. Youngjae tried searching for something in Jaebeom’s eyes but Jaebeom knew how to keep a poker face.

“If I had to do it all over again, I’d still go with you,” Youngjae said in a firm voice. He wanted Jaebeom to know that it wasn’t Jaebeom’s fault.

“I’m sorry,” Jaebeom said and dropped his hands to his side.

“Hey, it’s not your fault,” Youngjae said and walked closer to Jaebeom, he took Jaebeom’s face in his hands and made him look up. “Everything’s under control and I’ll keep calling you every night so you’re not sleeping either.” Youngjae squeezed Jaebeom’s cheeks and bopped his nose with his thumb.

“You’ll call?” Jaebeom sounded confused.

“Of course, you thought I wouldn’t?” Youngjae squeezed his cheeks again, made it difficult for Jaebeom to speak.

“Maybe,” Jaebeom replied with a struggle.

“You’re so cute,” Youngjae laughed and pulled Jaebeom’s face towards him. He looked into Jaebeom’s eyes for a fraction of second before planting a kiss on Jaebeom’s nose. He made it quick, just a peck.

“Let’s go,” Youngjae said and pulled his hands away from Jaebeom’s cheeks.

Jaebeom’s body was burning, he felt really hot all of a sudden. Little gestures from Youngjae make him go crazy and he wasn’t sure how to handle them.

The next day, Jinyoung found himself outside of a departmental store. Jackson messaged him that morning and he wanted to buy everything that day because he would be too busy with his family for the rest of the week. Jinyoung just agreed to the whole thing.

Jackson was already half an hour late and Jinyoung’s patience was giving up. He dialled his number one last time, if Jackson won’t be there in next five minutes, Jinyoung would leave.

“Jackson, you said five minutes ten minutes ago,” Jinyoung almost yelled.

“I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry. I can explain when I’m there, I’m so sorry, Jinyoung,” Jackson was practically pleading.

“Is it okay if I bring someone with me?” Jackson asked and Jinyoung was taken off-guard. Jinyoung was kind of looking forward to them spending some time together and now Jackson wanted to involve someone else.

Maybe Jinyoung was reading too much into thing and Jackson just wasn’t into him. Jaebeom’s theories of how Jackson and him are being stupid with feelings was going to turn out stupid.

“Jinyoung, you still with me?” Jackson asked from the other end.

“Yeah, sure bring them,” Jinyoung said in a rush.
“Thank you, because she’s already with me, we’ll see you in two minutes, we’re just around the corner.” And then they hung up.

She, Jackson definitely said ‘She’. Jinyoung’s first thought was that Jackson was bringing a date but that sounded absurd because this looked like a stupid date idea. Why would Jackson involve a girl? Or anyone for that matter.

Jinyoung’s thought of train was interrupted when he saw Jackson walking towards him. He wasn’t with some girl, Jinyoung noticed, he was with a kid. She was in Jackson’s arms and he was making animated faces at her.

“I thought you would never make it,” Jinyoung said as soon as they stood face to face.

“I’m so sorry, I had to pick my daughter from-”

“Your what?” Jinyoung tried controlling his pitch.

“Oh, she’s Aimee, my daughter,” Jackson said and turned towards Aimee, “Say hello to uncle Jinyoung.” She got shy and placed her head on Jackson’s shoulders, she kept looking at Jinyoung who was still in disbelief.

“You have a daughter?” Jinyoung was in shock.

“Yeah, I thought I mentioned before, my bad,” Jackson was beaming from ear to ear but Jinyoung just couldn’t take his eyes off off Aimee.

“Uncle Jackson, is he your friend?” Aimee said and the smile from Jackson’s face dropped. Jinyoung turned towards Jackson with eyes big in shock. He opened his mouth to say something but all he could let out was air.

“Aimee, sweetie, you need to talk less,” Jackson smiled towards Aimee who just giggled.

“Jackson Wang,” Jinyoung said and hit hard on his shoulder, “That was a sick joke.”

“Ouch, it hurts,” Jackson whinnied.

“It was supposed to,” Jinyoung wanted to yell.

“But you should have seen your face, may I add, you looked a bit sad and jealous,” Jackson said and leaned towards Jinyoung.

“You wish I was. Care to explain why you were late?” Jinyoung wanted Jackson to change the topic as he could feel the heat in his cheeks with the proximity.

“My brother called me up, said he was taking my parents out for lunch and asked me if I can take care of Aimee and I already made plans with you, I didn’t want to cancel on you so I thought I’d bring her with me. I hope you like kids,” Jackson explain.

“Well, in that case,” Jinyoung pulled out his hands towards Aimee, who hesitated for a second before going into Jinyoung’s arm, “Aimee and I will supervise and Uncle Jackson, as his punishment, will do all the hard work.” Jinyoung kissed Aimee’s cheeks and she giggled in response.

Before Jackson walked towards where the cart was he leaned towards Jinyoung’s free ear and said, “I like punishments.”
Jinyoung stood there with his mouth hung open. “Are you gonna stand there or help me do some shopping?” Jackson asked from the gate with a smirk on his face. Jinyoung followed him inside.

“So, what’s the plan? What are we gonna get?” Jackson asked once they were inside.

“Aimee, what do you want?” Jinyoung turned towards Aimee and started bouncing her on his arm.

“Chocolates,” she replied.

“See, easy, Aimee and I will have chocolates, the rest you can figure out on your own,” Jinyoung said in a commanding voice.

“Let’s go for something that’s healthy and tasty, too much junk food is just gonna harm the body,” Jackson said.

“What are you? Jaebeom?”

“What is that supposed to mean?” Jackson looked confused.

“Oh, I keep forgetting that we’ve only known you for few weeks. It’s this thing Bambam, Yugyeom and I do, whenever we wanna call someone old, we call them Jaebeom.” Jackson laughed at that.

“Then, you’re gonna have to stop being an Aimee and help me out,” Jackson said and started walking down the first aisle.

“This is not fair,” Jinyoung pouted from behind. With Jackson in front, Jinyoung let his eyes wander. He looked Jackson up and down, Jackson wore a black fitted jean with a leather Jacket and a red shirt underneath it. He looked good. He looked like someone who made an effort today and that made Jinyoung smile.

Jinyoung on the other hand looked simple, he wore a loose pant with a sweater on top of it.

Aimee started pointing at random items and Jinyoung started putting them in the cart. He had to keep the baby happy. Aimee was just too cute for Jinyoung, he tried saying no to one of her items and she looked so hurt that to make it to her, he put two of those items in the cart.

Jackson turned towards them to check if everything was okay and saw the cart was almost full and all they have picked till now are drinks.

“Jinyoung, what is all this?” Jackson looked at the cart in disbelief.


“She’s not coming to the party.”

“Don’t be rude,” Jinyoung protested.

“Drop the pout, you know she’s not coming, why are you putting all this stuff in when no one will eat them?” Jackson was smiling, he tried controlling it but Jinyoung’s pout was making him soft.

“Aimee wanted it,” Jinyoung tried again.

“We have to put it back,” Jackson said and turned the cart around. Aimee hugged Jinyoung’s neck and Jinyoung started rubbing her back.

“You both are making it look like I’m torturing you guys,” Jackson said and shook his head.
“You’re making the baby sad,” Jinyoung said and pouted at Aimee, she hugged him harder.

“You’re perfectly fine, Aimee is the one who’s gonna be sad at the end of this.”

“That’s wha-” and then it hit Jinyoung and he looked down with a blush on his face. Jackson implied he’s the baby. He either called him an infant or used a pet name, Jinyoung was okay with both.

When they were all done putting stuff back, they started looking at some chips. Jackson did most of the work and all Jinyoung did was babying Aimee.

“It’s okay Aimee, we’ll get those stuff the next time and we’ll not bring Jackson with us.” She laughed and hid her face in Jinyoung’s neck.

“Stop making me look like the bad guy,” Jackson said and eyed Jinyoung who just pulled out his tongue at him.

“But Aimee, that wasn’t good for your tum-tum, so maybe, Uncle Jackson wasn’t all wrong,” Jinyoung said and kissed Aimee’s head.

“Wow Park Jinyoung, you’re gonna be such a great dad, I can already feel it,” Jackson said and turned towards Jinyoung.

“What? Why? What have I done?”

“You’re gonna be the good parent, the parent all kids love because you’re gonna be a sweet talking dad who’ll allow everything to their kid and your partner will have to pick up after you and he’ll look like the bad guy.”

“That’s not true,” Jinyoung half-laughed at what Jackson has just said.

“You know, you look like the strict parent, who’ll be all discipline and rules and everything but your partner is in for a surprise.”

Jinyoung started laughing, he pulled up his hand and covered his mouth as he threw his head back and laughed freely. Jackson looked at him in awe. Jinyoung’s laugh was beautiful.

“We’ll divide responsibilities, I’m a good partner,” Jinyoung said and he was still laughing.

“We will?” Jackson said and there was something in Jackson’s voice that Jinyoung couldn’t catch. Hope? Believe? Jinyoung stopped laughing, he looked straight at Jackson and they both locked eyes.

It was hard for Jinyoung to look away, he knew he didn’t mean for those words to sound the way they did but Jinyoung didn’t wanted to take them back. He just kept his eyes on Jackson.

Jackson got too carried away with everything, with Jinyoung’s word, even though he knew they weren’t directed at him. The way Jinyoung was with Aimee, the way all of it felt too domestic, too homely. Jackson liked it, liked all of it and maybe, just maybe, he liked it a little too much.

“Can we have ice-cream?” Aimee’s voice broke them from their bubble. Jinyoung broke the eyes contact and started shifting Aimee from one arm to another and Jackson started rolling the cart forward. They were almost done with grocery shopping.

“If your arm is tried, I can take her,” Jackson offered.

“No, I’m fine, I keep changing the arm. She’s light anyway,” Jinyoung said and nuzzled Aimee, “Aren’t you, little bub.”
They went to the line for the check out and since it was too long, Jinyoung and Aimee started playing around. She kept running between Jackson’s leg and Jinyoung acted like an old man who found it difficult to catch her. The store was over all empty but there were three people before them.

When it was Jackson’s turn, the cashier smiled at him, Jinyoung noticed. Aimee ran towards Jackson and he asked her to be careful or she might hit herself, Jinyoung said he got this and they went back to their game.

“Your daughter is beautiful,” the cashier said. This wasn’t the first time someone has mistaken Aimee as Jackson’s daughter. Most times he would correct them but like other times, he let it slide. Just gave her a smile and a nod. “She’s young and super active, I don’t know what to do with that much energy.”

The cashier laughed as if he said something funny and he just smiled in response.

“Your partner is really handsome as well, you both look good together,” she said with a blush on her cheeks.

Jackson looked back to where Jinyoung and Aimee were playing. Aimee looked comfortable in Jinyoung’s arms and she was laughing. They looked happy and with Jackson, they all looked like a family. Something in Jackson’s heart bloomed and his body went warm all of a sudden.

Jinyoung saw Jackson looking at them and he gave him a smile. “Yeah, I got lucky,” Jackson replied to the cashier with a smile on his face, his eyes still fixed on Jinyoung.

Once they were out, they went to an Ice Cream shop. Jackson made Aimee promise that all three of them will share the ice cream as it’s too cold and they shouldn’t be having an ice cream in the first place.

Aimee insisted that she’ll order, the shop was anyway empty so Jackson gave her the money and told her what to order. Jinyoung and Jackson kept their eyes on her to make sure she was alright.

“She’s a great kid,” Jinyoung said.

“Thanks, I’m a great uncle,” Jackson teased.

Jinyoung smiled and looked at Jackson, “So, you’ll be busy the whole week, with your family?”

“They’re leaving on the 29th, so, yeah. I hardly get to see them and this is one of those rare cases where all of us are together,” Jackson said.

“I might visit my parents as well, my sisters are in town and they’ve been bugging me to come over. Last time I went was because of the wedding and I could hardly stay a night but now I might take a few days.”

“You should, yesterday, you looked like you needed rest,” Jackson mentioned.

“There was a lot going on in my mind at that time,” Jinyoung tried to laugh it off.

“I’m sorry if I worried you, it’s nothing serious, it was just one of those days,” Jackson said and he looked away at Aimee so he didn’t have to look at Jinyoung.

“That’s fine, it happens, if you ever wanna talk about it to someone, you’ve always got me,” Jinyoung said and hoped that he sounded as sincere as he felt.
“I’m grateful for you saying that,” Jackson replied.

“Hmm,” Jinyoung had nothing else to add.

“Wanna eat Ramen?” Jackson asked out of nowhere, his expression sincere with a hint of mischief and Jinyoung started laughing. He covered his face and put his head on the table. Jinyoung couldn’t control himself no matter how hard he tried.

“What? Why? Can’t I say that?” Jackson stuttered to a laughing Jinyoung and when Jinyoung kept on laughing without an answer, Jackson hit his shoulder and asked, “Why?”

They both were laughing now but Jinyoung was on another level. Jinyoung controlled himself enough to sit back up and looked Jackson, “You’re so funny, Jackson.”

“What?” Jackson still couldn’t understand anything. Aimee ran back to them with the ice-cream in her hand and Jinyoung made her sit on his lap. Jackson and Jinyoung praised Aimee for bringing the ice cream on her own. They all ate and talked slowly, Aimee asked Jinyoung to feed her and he did with a proud smile. He was happy.

Then Aimee asked Jinyoung to feed Jackson and Jinyoung hesitated but Jackson’s mouth was open now, Jackson tapped Jinyoung’s arm a few times for Jinyoung to relax and then Jinyoung fed Jackson, they never broke the eyes contact and something about it all felt really domestic and intimate.

Soon, Jackson got a call from his brother and he said he’s there to pick them up. They all went out the shop and greeted Jackson’s brother. Jinyoung introduced himself and his brother took Aimee away from him. They all stood outside for a few minutes and laughed and talked, Jackson’s brother said he’ll wait in the car for Jackson so that Jackson could say bye to his friend.

Once they were gone Jackson turned to Jinyoung and said, “I can help you get the groceries home, you don’t have to go alone and it’s heavy as well.”

“I can manage, thank you, you should be with your family especially when you guys hardly are together.” Jinyoung started lifting the bags.

“I was looking forward to seeing you today,” Jackson said out of nowhere.

“I was too,” Jinyoung replied.

“I was kinda hoping it was just the two of us,” Jackson said and he sounded sincere. He meant every word.

“Maybe next time,” Jinyoung wanted to assure him.

“I hope you had fun today, I know Aimee can be a bit of a brat but thank you for taking care of her,” Jackson said, he wanted to leave but something about Jinyoung made him stay right there.

“She loves me, I’m afraid if we hung out longer, she’d forget about you,” Jinyoung teased.

“Maybe you should drop by often and then we’ll see,” Jackson knew what he implied but he wasn’t sure if Jinyoung caught that.

Jinyoung just smiled with a little blush on his cheeks and looked down, “You should go now, they all must be waiting.”
“Yeah, I enjoyed today, Jinyoung. I’ll see you at the party.” With that they said their byes and Jackson went home with his brother. Jinyoung was looking forward to the New Year’s party now.

Jaebeom never received a call from Youngjae. It was Christmas and in the last two days there was radio silence from Youngjae. After a call with his parents Jaebeom sat down for dinner, he couldn’t eat much. He put the food back in the refrigerator. He debated whether to call Youngjae or just wait for him to get back.

Jaebeom hasn’t messaged him in those days as well, the way Mark made it sound, Youngjae would be too busy. But it was Christmas and Jaebeom was homesick and Youngjae was the closest person who could ground him.

At around ten, he decided to just read a book and call it a night. Within few minutes his phone rang and he picked it up in one call.

“Youngjae?” Jaebeom sounded breathless for no reason.

“Hey, I hope it’s not too late,” Youngjae said and he sounded tired.

“It’s only ten, how are you?” Jaebeom asked and tried to calm himself down. He laid down on his bed and looked up at the ceiling.

“It’s ten? For real? Wow, I have really lost track of time,” Youngjae said.

“Have you had dinner?” Jaebeom asked.

“I mean, not really, I’ll go have something now, I thought it was only six or seven.”

“Is there no window at your workplace?”

“Stop being rude,” Youngjae laughed and Jaebeom has missed it. Missed it so much, that sound.

“When did you have you lunch? Because it’s late and you should eat soon,” Jaebeom was concerned.

“Yeah, well, I had a wrap,” Youngjae said in a low voice.

“Youngjae, don’t tell me you didn’t have lunch and now you’re almost skipping dinner,” Jaebeom said and sat back straight.

“I was gonna have lunch, I even put it in the microwave to heat it but then I started working on something while it got heated up and I forgot,” Youngjae said.

“You can’t be this careless with your health, Youngjae. Eat dinner now, we’ll talk later, okay?” As much as Jaebeom wanted to keep talking he knew Youngjae needed to eat.

“Can you stay on the phone for two more minutes?” Youngjae’s voice sounded so low and unsure it made Jaebeom’s chest pain.

“But you promise to eat right after we hang up?”

“Yes, there’s a store right outside of our office and I’ll go have dinner right after. I promise,” Youngjae’s voice rose up as he said that.

“I was waiting for your call or a message from last two days,” Jaebeom confessed.
“Really?” Youngjae sounded like he was smiling, “You could have called as well.”

“I knew you were busy so I didn’t know at what time to call, I thought of dropping a message but then, I don’t know. I didn’t want to put pressure on you to talk to me,” Jaebeom sulked into his bed.

“Oh god,” Youngjae said and started laughing, “you’re so cute. Last night, I picked my phone to give you a call and turned out my phone had no battery and it was off. I forgot my charger at work and the only three people who stay up with me for work are the shittiest people you’ll ever meet. I bet one of them even tried stealing my charger once. When I got home I wanted to see if you were awake but it was already three in the morning so I went to bed instead.”

“You can always knock at my door, no matter the time,” Jaebeom said.

“Are you trying to flirt, Lim Jaebeom,” Youngjae was full on smiling.

“How weak are your flirting skills?” Jaebeom chuckled.

“They’re better than yours, at least I can make you blush,” Youngjae said.

“Are you implying I can’t make you blush?” Jaebeom quirked his eyebrow.

“Have you ever seen me blush in front of you? I get too close and your cheeks are on fire, I compliment you and your neck is on fire, I look at you for a second too long and you’re a blushing mess.” Youngjae was enjoying himself, “I bet you’re blushing now.”

“Your audacity,” Jaebeom chuckled again.

“You aren’t even denying it,” Youngjae laughed again.

“I like the sound of your laugh,” Jaebeom said all of a sudden and then there was silence on the other end. After a few seconds Jaebeom added, “Who’s blushing now?”

“Asshole,” Youngjae said and this time it was Jaebeom who couldn’t stop laughing.

Jaebeom looked at the time and panicked, “Youngjae, stop sweet talking me, we’ve been on the call from last twenty minutes, go eat now.”

“Please, five more minutes and I’ll go,” Youngjae pleaded.

“No, you have to eat now.”

“If you’re gonna dominate me like this, I’ll start having doubts,” Youngjae complained playfully.

“How else do you want me to dominate you?” Jaebeom smirked on the phone and felt bad that he couldn’t see Youngjae’s face right that second.

“I’m hanging up,” Youngjae’s voice was unsteady.

“Are you a blushing mess now?” Jaebeom laughed.

“Is this a game to you? I shouldn’t have said anything,” Youngjae still sounded out of breath.

They soon hung up and Youngjae promised to call more often. Right that second Jaebeom had an idea.

Back at the office Youngjae went back to work, he promised himself to eat right after this one
account is completed. Because he has missed few days the rest of the accountants started piling their work for him and when he came back he made sure that everyone in the department had to do late night because it wasn’t just his work. The people at his workplace has taken advantage of Youngjae over the years and Youngjae hasn’t said much but now he was tired of their asses. He was in no mood to take shit from anyone anymore.

At around eleven thirty, Jaebeom called him.

“Hard to live without me?” Youngjae teased as soon as he picked up.

“Have you eaten yet?” Jaebeom sounded serious. Youngjae quickly packed all his stuff and started marching downstairs.

“I got caught up but I’m already on my way, I swear,” Youngjae was practically running towards the elevator.

“You promised me,” Jaebeom sounded upset.

“And I’m keeping it, I’m really on my way.” Youngjae was stupid, he forgot his coat at his desk. It was cold, he ran outside the building and when he stepped on the road to cross it a car’s honk startled him.

Youngjae yelled and looked at the car, he couldn’t believe it. He walked towards the driver’s seat and started banging the window and yelled, “You’re a piece of shit.”

Jaebeom laughed and opened the window, “Get in, quick, you’re letting the warm air out.”

Once inside, Youngjae started rubbing his hands furiously, “You scared the shit out of me, never do that.” Jaebeom kept laughing, he leaned forward and Youngjae sat straight, they were way too close.

“I’m just- I’m- just- taking my coat off,” Jaebeom said once he realized that Youngjae looked like a deer caught in a car’s headlight.

Once his coat was off, Jaebeom leaned towards Youngjae to cover him. Youngjae pulled the coat towards himself and shivered as the warmth of it all hit his body.

“Thanks, you sure you don’t need it,” Youngjae asked.

“Nah, I’m good.”

“Wait, what are you doing here? How do you know I work here?” Youngjae was surprised. Youngjae remembered he told him he worked with Mark but he never gave him an address.

“I called Jackson and after fifteen minutes of teasing, he finally gave me the address,” Jaebeom said and that was when Youngjae noticed that there was food placed above the dashboard.

“You got me food? Is this a date?” Youngjae laughed and started grabbing the food containers.

“You think our first date will be under the moonlight and a streetlamp, in a car and with take-out?” Jaebeom snorted.

“If it’s with you, I’ll take it,” Youngjae winked at Jaebeom and pointed at his cheeks as soon as the blush appeared.

“I hate this game, I’ll destroy you,” Jaebeom said and avoided looking at Youngjae.
“Destroy me in what ways, Jaebeom?” It was Youngjae’s turn to smirk. When Jaebeom froze on his seat and looked at Youngjae with his mouth hung open in surprise, Youngjae threw his head back and laughed. He clapped his hands as he laughed harder.

“It’s easy to deliver it but hard to take it,” Youngjae winked and dug in his food.

“Hard to take what, Youngjae?” Jaebeom pressed his lips to contain his laughter.

“Shut up and eat your food.” Youngjae was blushing hard so he hung his head down and started eating.

They mainly ate in silence, with few words exchanged now and then. They talked about their families and their Christmas traditions, about their colleagues, about food, about the cold winters and about the party.

Once they were done, Jaebeom collected everything and put it in the back seat.

“Do you have to go back now?” Jaebeom asked soon after.

“No, I’ve worked non-stop for last two days, I think I deserve a break,” Youngjae said and leaned the seat back so that he could lay down for a while. He turned so that he was facing Jaebeom, who just leaned on his seat but didn’t lean back his seat.

“You do. How long till it’s all over?” Jaebeom asked.

“The financial year ends on the 31st so I’ve to be done by 30th which mean from 31st, I’ll be a free guy.”

Jaebeom looked at Youngjae and his eyelids looked heavy.

“Are you sleepy?” Jaebeom asked. The whole atmosphere was slow and soft, they were talking in low voice even when the whole street was empty.

“Hmm, but promise me you won’t let me sleep. I can’t afford that.”

“Have you gotten any sleep in last two days?” Jaebeom asked.

“I slept for a couple of hours now and then, there’s a sofa at work and it’s comfortable enough.”

“Do you want me to call Mark and beat his ass up?” Jaebeom joked and Youngjae laughed, he slapped his shoulder.

“It’s not his fault, my co-workers wanted a free ride on me but if I’m staying up till three, so, so are they.”

Jaebeom smiled, even though Youngjae looked tired his face still had that glow he always carried. The moonlight made his skin look even softer. Jaebeom sat on his hand so that he wouldn’t reach out and disturb Youngjae.

“I got you something,” Youngjae said.

“You did? What?” Jaebeom was surprised. They had never gifted anything to each other before.

“There’s this store nearby and yesterday I saw something and I thought it’ll look good on you so I bought it, then I panicked,” Youngjae laughed, “So, I went back and got another thing as well. Technically, you have two gifts now.”
Jaebeom just smiled at him.

“Do you have it with you now?” Jaebeom asked.

“Yeah, I carry it. But you don’t have to take it if you feel like it’s too much,” there was nervousness in Youngjae’s voice.

“Is it a ring?” Jaebeom joked.

“It is,” Youngjae sat back. Jaebeom just looked at him. Youngjae took out the box from his jean’s pocket.

“I’ve seen you wearing rings and I saw this one, I thought it’ll look good on you,” Youngjae started speaking in a high pitch, he was nervous. He pushed the small box towards Jaebeom.

“It looks like you’re proposing,” Jaebeom laughed and tried to calm Youngjae down.

“This is a shitty proposal,” Youngjae laughed as well.

When Jaebeom opened the box, it had a gold band. Nothing too fancy, just how Jaebeom liked it. Jaebeom tried it on on his index finger but it won’t fit, then he tried it on his left hand’s ring finger and it was a match. He looked up and smiled at Youngjae.

“If it was your right hand, we would be engaged by now,” Youngjae joked and Jaebeom liked it.

“Don’t you have a similar ring?” Jaebeom said when he looked at his ring carefully.

“I was hoping you wouldn’t notice, mine is a family ring and the design is different but yeah,” Youngjae said and played with his ring.

“I like it, thank you,” Jaebeom said.

“I have something else as well but now that you already agreed to the ring, I’ll keep that for later,” Youngjae smiled. He still loved nervous.

“It’s not too much, I swear.” Jaebeom tried his best to console him.

“It’s a ring, Jaebeom, it’s too much.”

“Do you want it back?” He asked lightly.

“No, it suits you. Do you wanna give it back?” Youngjae looked at with uncertainty.

“No, I like it,” Jaebeom assured him. “Well, now you’re gonna make me look stupid.”

“Why?” Youngjae laid down on the seat again, his heart still wild with what has just happened. Little did he knew, Jaebeom’s heart went wild the second he saw the ring.

“I got you something and now it just looks so small in front of your gift,” Jaebeom said and looked down at his ring again.

“You got me something?” Youngjae was surprised. He was not expecting that.

“Jinyoung and I went out yesterday before he left, he wanted to buy presents for his family and I got you something as well,” Jaebeom explain.
“Do you have it now?” Youngjae asked excitedly.

“Yeah, I thought I’d give it to you today but then you-”

“Show me,” Youngjae interrupted him. “I’ve never received anything on Christmas day, my family gifts arrive late or they give me when I get back home, this is so exciting.”

“It’s really nothing,” Jaebeom said.

“Show me,” Youngjae sat straight and started looking around, he glanced back at the back seat and saw a shopping bag.

“Is this for me?” Youngjae took the bag from the backseat and Jaebeom kept quiet.

“Is it? Oh god!”

“It’s really nothing special,” Jaebeom kept repeating.

Youngjae took out the piece of clothing and hung it in front of him, “It’s a hoodie?” Youngjae said in surprise, the smile on his face still there. The excitement in his voice was still there as well.

“You get cold easily,” Jaebeom tried to explain.

“You noticed,” Youngjae put the hoodie down to look at Jaebeom.

“When you are shivering all the time, it’s hard not to notice,” Jaebeom tried to sound like he had a tone but failed.

“It’s just, I always take off my coat and I always forget it when I’m on the run,” Youngjae said while he kept explaining the hoodie.

“It’s really nothing, it’s just a simple black hoodie, that’s all. I got a larger size than yours,” Jaebeom said.

“At first, I thought you got it for yourself and just gave it to me because you feel bad,” Youngjae joked. “But why the large size?” Youngjae questioned.

“So that you can hear multiple t-shirts underneath it and it’ll still give you enough space to move your arm and you can also wear a coat over it and it’ll all still be comfortable and you’ll be warm,” Jaebeom explain.

“You thought a lot about it.” Youngjae was touched. Youngjae has received expensive gifts in his past, he has had rich boyfriends, friends, who spent money on things Youngjae never used, on things that must be still laying around his house somewhere back in his hometown.

“Just stop shivering,” Jaebeom kept his eyes down.

“Thank you, Jaebeom. This is very thoughtful and I love it, it’s black, it goes with everything. I’ll have to stress less about my outfits now.” Youngjae laughed at that to ease the atmosphere, Jaebeom looked different.

“Is anything wrong?” Youngjae asked.

“I’ll get you something else as well,” Jaebeom said.

“You don’t have to, I love it and we never planned on playing Santa today.” Youngjae extended his
he ran his thumb over Jaebeom’s fingers. Jaebeom looked up and turned his hand over so that Youngjae’s hand was in his, he squeezed it a little to convey that he was okay.

“I was missing home, I hope it’s okay I drove here at this time, I know I should have asked you before coming here,” Jaebeom said after a while.

“I’m really glad you did, I was going crazy here,” Youngjae said and right then, his phone started buzzing. He looked at the caller and made a face. “I guess I have to go now.” He picked up the call and before someone could say anything he said, “I’m on my way.” And then after hearing the response from the other end, he hung up.

“It’s one thirty am, don’t you have to go home?” Jaebeom asked.

“We do when we complete clients or a project but the deadline is near and we have to recheck everything,” Youngjae said and took a deep breath. “I’ll see you around?”

“Drop by whenever you can, okay?”

“Not after midnight, I’ll assume you’re sleeping and now that Jinyoung is not here you have to take care of the shop as well,” Youngjae said.

“Still drop by and please don’t skip meals,” Jaebeom countered.

“It’s cute when you’re concerned,” Youngjae poked Jaebeom’s cheek.

“And it’s cute when you’re taking care of yourself,” Jaebeom poked back and Youngjae laughed.

“I guess I really have to go now,” Youngjae pouted and Jaebeom nodded his head. Youngjae gave out a loud yawn and reached for the handle to open the car door.

“Wait,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae turned to face Jaebeom. With hesitation Jaebeom leaned in, placed a hand on his cheek and pulled his other cheek closer. Jaebeom kissed the cheek he has admired for weeks. Youngjae’s cheeks are the softest things Jaebeom’s lips has ever touched.

Jaebeom leaned back slowly with a smile on his face. Youngjae sat frozen in his seat, his cheeks showed colour and Jaebeom smiled harder.

Then Youngjae smiled, he turned and looked at Jaebeom who was smiling as well. They looked like kids, they felt like teens. “Good night, Jaebeom. Drop me a text when you get home,” Youngjae said and then he was out the door.

Jaebeom watched him walk towards hi building and once he was inside, Jaebeom drove home.

The next few days were exhausting for Jaebeom, with the absence of Jinyoung, Bambam and Yugyeom, he had to deal with all these new people. Jaebeom hated being around so many people. The only highlight of his day used to be his phone calls with Youngjae. At eleven thirty sharp Youngjae would call and they would be on the phone for half an hour or an hour, whatever the days need was.

They talked about all the little things, Youngjae; about the game that just got launched and how much he wanted to play it, Jaebeom; about how much he just wanted Jinyoung to be back so he wouldn’t have to deal with so many people alone. They would talk about things they wanted to do and things they were too afraid to do. The list went on and on. Jaebeom would always ask if Youngjae had eaten and Youngjae would always ask if Jaebeom survived the day without snapping
Jaebeom has missed Youngjae and that was for sure, he could tell Youngjae has missed him as well. He wasn’t sure where they stood but they were going somewhere.

One night, on the 30th, Youngjae didn’t call. Jaebeom waited for half an hour before he decided to call Youngjae himself. Youngjae didn’t pick up, after about half an hour Jaebeom tried again but still no response.

It was the last day of work for Youngjae, Jaebeom was sure he must be busy. So, he just went back to his book, he couldn’t concentrate on a word but he kept reading, kept reading the page again and again. Then at two am Jaebeom received a text from Youngjae, *meeting, lmao. I guess I’m just that hungry.*

Jaebeom thought of something, instead of replying he went straight to his kitchen. He knew it would take Youngjae to about thirty-forty minutes to reach home and that was the time he had to cook something for him.

He had made dinner for himself that night so, he used the leftovers to cook a new dish for Youngjae. Added more pieces of meat, he wanted to make sure that Youngjae was fed well. He was done within twenty minutes.

He opened his door and sat at the doorway, he didn’t want to sit outside the apartment because that would be weird. Even though it was half past two at that time and no one was awake in his building but he just couldn’t take the chances, so he waited for Youngjae at the doorstep.

After ten more minutes he heard footsteps, he knew it was Youngjae, he was lazily humming a song. Ignoring Jaebeom, Youngjae went straight to his door and pulled out his key from his pocket.

“Youngjae,” Jaebeom called out from the doorstep.

Youngjae dropped everything he had and yelled loudly, Jaebeom stood up and ran towards him, pressed his hand on Youngjae’s mouth to control the scream.

“Shh, you’re gonna wake the whole building up, it’s just me,” Jaebeom whispered in his ear with a laugh.

Youngjae pushed Jaebeom asked and smacked his chest, “I could have had a heart attack, I’m weak, oh god, you scared the shit out of me.” Youngjae clenched his chest and then he started laughing.

Jaebeom went to hold Youngjae and started rubbing his back, “I’m sorry,” He said in between on his laughs, “I thought you’d see me.”

“I thought you were sleeping,” Youngjae said in Jaebeom’s shoulder.

“Couldn’t sleep,” Jaebeom said and pulled back, “I made dinner, come.” Jaebeom walked inside his apartment and Youngjae followed.

“You made dinner for me?” Youngjae asked in confusion.
“Yeah, you said you’re hungry and leaving work, so I made dinner,” Jaebeom said as if it was obvious. He went towards the centre table, there were only two chairs and the rest were kept in the kitchen, Jaebeom had arranged the food on the table and stood at the side once he placed the glasses of water.

“You didn’t have to, I would have had something at home,” Youngjae wasn’t sure how to take that. He was overwhelmed, no one has ever done anything like that for him, ever.

“You can hardly cook and I have seen your refrigerator,” Jaebeom said as they took seats.

“This is too much, Jaebeom. I’m really- I don’t know what to say,” Youngjae could hardly mutter any words out. He was still shocked at the effort Jaebeom has put in all of it.

“It’s really nothing, I cook, I made it for you. You mentioned meat and I had it and I cooked. Please, eat now,” Jaebeom said and passed him the bowl of freshly made meat.

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae started but couldn’t finish, he had no idea where he was going with it. He took off his coat and sat down to eat.

“I see you’re wearing the hoodie now,” Jaebeom mentioned and Youngjae looked down at his hoodie.

“It’s so handy, I’ve been wearing it since you gifted it to me,” Youngjae answered.

“At least wash it.”

“It’s not dirty, you wanna smell?”

“Do you just need a reason for me to get close to you?” Jaebeom mentioned and looked at Youngjae, saw him blush, chuckled and then look down at his food.

“What,” Youngjae said really slowly, “What if I said yes?”

“Then, I’d give you what you want,” Jaebeom said in the tone that matched Youngjae’s.

“Shut up and eat your food.” Jaebeom started laughing at Youngjae’s words. Jaebeom has never flirted openly, never in his past relationship, ever. He has complimented a lot but never truly flirted. He enjoyed this, enjoyed the rush the words gave him. How not only Youngjae’s but blood rose to his neck as well when those words are passed. He enjoyed it a lot.

They ate dinner in silence, Jaebeom could just imagine how hungry Youngjae must have been because he ate two servings. Once they were done, Youngjae offered to do the dishes and Jaebeom said he could come tomorrow to do them because they’re not doing the dishes today.

Youngjae stood up and walked in the living room, instead of taking a seat on the sofa, Youngjae sat down on the floor. Once Jaebeom was done with the kitchen, he walked in the living room and seeing Youngjae on the floor he walked towards the light switch and turned the lights off.

“Jaebeom, this isn’t funny, I’m scared of the dark,” Youngjae said. Jaebeom walked towards the window and pushed the curtains to the side. The moonlight mixed with the streetlight gave a glow to Jaebeom’s apartment.

Youngjae smile at the dim light in the room and said, “This is nice, come sit with me.”

Jaebeom sat on the opposite end of the sofa’s leg, just like how they sat in Youngjae’s apartment.
Youngjae put his hand on the sofa and supported his head and Jaebeom just couldn’t take his eyes off Youngjae.

“Are you sleepy?” Jaebeom asked.

“I don’t wanna go,” Youngjae replied. They were talking in low voices.

“We can talk tomorrow, it’s already three in the morning,” Jaebeom mentioned. He was concerned.

“I have too much caffeine in my body and the food is helping it wash off, let me stay here for a while and then I’ll go,” Youngjae said.

“Are you done with work now?” Jaebeom asked and crossed his legs.

“Yeah, finally. We worked our asses off and now I don’t have to go to office for at least two weeks.”

“Are you on a vacation now?”

“Kinda, the company gives us two weeks off after New Year because of how much we work in December,” Youngjae commented and dropped his head on his hand.

“So, what are you plans?” Jaebeom asked.

“Our plans?” Youngjae teased.

“Our plans.”

“Do you wanna play the computer game with me?” Youngjae laughed.

“I’m probably gonna be really shit at that.”

“I’ll teach you.”

“Then, will you go to a museum with me?” Jaebeom asked shyly, he has always loved museums and always wanted to take someone, he and Jinyoung visits museum a lot but he wanted to take Youngjae with him.

“I have never been to a museum,” Youngjae mentioned.

“Maybe it’ll be your first,” Jaebeom smiled.

“I’ll have a lot of firsts with you Jaebeom,” Youngjae smirked and in the dim light Jaebeom hoped Youngjae couldn’t catch the blush on his cheeks.

“I saw that,” Youngjae said and pointed towards his cheeks, he sat a bit too far for him to touch him but he still made sure Jaebeom knew he was talking about his cheeks.

Jaebeom picked the pillow from the sofa and threw it at Youngjae. “You’re so easy, Jaebeom,” Youngjae teased him.

“Not with everyone.”

“I’m supposed to feel special?” Youngjae buried more of his face into his hand.


“You’re beautiful,” Jaebeom said in a breath. His eyes never left Youngjae’s. His expression as
serious as it could be. He wanted Youngjae to know how he felt.

“Stop,” Youngjae closed his eyes but the smile on his face was obvious.

“What?” Jaebeom asked and spread his legs open, they started to pain with all the cross-legs.

“Stop saying that stuff.” Youngjae was beaming now but he tried to be serious.

“Has no one ever told you how beautiful you are?” Jaebeom asked and he himself couldn’t control the smile that was on his face.

“What happens to you during the night? You’re such a different person once the sun goes down, like when we were at my place and whenever we’re on the call and during the day, you’re so different,” Youngjae attempted to change the subject.

“Nights, I know no one will disturb us, it’s more relaxing for me,” Jaebeom said and lowed his upper body so he could reach Youngjae’s knee, he placed both is hands behind Youngjae’s knees and pulled him towards him.

Youngjae was taken back in surprised and that lead out a laugh from him. Jaebeom was face to face with Youngjae now, Youngjae sat in-between his open legs and he was still laughing.

“Are you complaining?” Jaebeom asked. When Youngjae realized what they were talking about he looked straight in Jaebeom’s eyes, gave him a small smile and kissed his nose. “No.”

Jaebeom crossed his hands behind Youngjae’s back and leaned forward, “I like you here with me.”

“I like being here with you,” Youngjae whispered back. “And you act so rough and tough for someone who’s so soft.”

“Take that back,” Jaebeom leaned back and said. Youngjae laughed hard and placed his hands on Jaebeom’s chest.

“I would if it wasn’t true.”

“I don’t act rough and tough,” Jaebeom said in his defence.

“If you wanna call it that, smarty pants.” Youngjae kissed Jaebeom’s nose again, “I’ll give it to you.”

Youngjae noticed one thing then, whenever he would kiss Jaebeom, Jaebeom wouldn’t say anything out of shyness, he would just bow his head down and smile. Youngjae smiled.

“Thank you for making me dinner, no one has ever done that for me,” Youngjae said.

“You liked it?” Jaebeom’s eyes lighted up. Youngjae knew the day he met Jaebeom that because of Jaebeom’s appearance and looks, people hardly ever compliment him on his face. They all have the thing in their head that ‘he’s pretty, he knows it.’ And never said it to his face. Youngjae on the other hand, liked giving compliments and meant each and every one of those.

“The food was fine but at least the chef was hot,” Youngjae winked at Jaebeom. The dim light in the room made Jaebeom’s face glow up in a different kind of way. Youngjae should see his sharp nose and his sharp jaw, his soft cheeks and his soft eyes.

“The food was amazing, I’m very picky when it comes to food but I liked everything you made,” Youngjae said proudly.
“Well, you know the saying ‘they that come too late must kiss the cook.’ And I waited till two thirty,” Jaebeom said and ran his hands up and down Youngjae’s back. Youngjae laughed again, hit Jaebeom’s chest with little force and said, “At least take me out on a date first.”

They played around a little more and Youngjae yawned in between. “You’re getting tired, you should go to bed now,” Jaebeom said and pulled Youngjae close. As much as Jaebeom wanted Youngjae to stay, he had to let him go. Before Youngjae could reply, Jaebeom stood up and offered a hand to Youngjae.

“I’m not tired-tired, I’m just exhausted with work but my brain and body are awake,” Youngjae commented.

“You should still sleep, you’ll be here tomorrow again and no one will let you rest for a minute.”

“You’re right, thank you again for the dinner, it really meant a lot to me,” Youngjae said and he wanted Jaebeom to know just how touched he was.

“Go now,” Jaebeom started to push at Youngjae’s hand, he was just so tempted to pull Youngjae into his bedroom but that would be for another day.

“Just say you don’t want me here and I’ll go,” Youngjae said in a dramatic voice.

“I’ll break down if you don’t leave,” Jaebeom teased. They both said their goodbyes and Youngjae collected all his stuff. He walked out of the apartment and thanked Jaebeom again. It was obvious from Youngjae’s body language that he wanted to stay as well and it made Jaebeom happy.

Once Youngjae was gone Jaebeom looked around his place, he kept the throw pillow back at the sofa. Jaebeom noticed that Youngjae left his coat, he smiled and remembered how, just a few days back, Youngjae told him that he has a habit of leaving his coats behind. Then he heard a knock on the door.

He opened the door without looking, he knew it would Youngjae. “I started doubting your coat story but you just gave me an explain,” Jaebeom said and went to fetch the coat for Youngjae.

When he was picking up the coat he heard the door close behind him. He turned and was confused as to what was happening. Youngjae walked towards him very slowly, he looked different, there was something in Youngjae’s eyes Jaebeom couldn’t pinpoint.

When Youngjae stood face to face with Jaebeom, Jaebeom tried to smile but he was too nervous. He wasn’t sure what was happening. Then Youngjae opened his mouth and said, “Jaebeom, if it’s not what you want or how you want it, just stop me.” Jaebeom gave him a nod.

Jaebeom blinked, once, twice. He could see Youngjae inching closer to him but his body failed to move. Youngjae had his eyes close and he had his right hand on Jaebeom’s neck. Within seconds Youngjae’s lips connected Jaebeom’s and Jaebeom froze.

Youngjae moved his lips, once, twice, thrice but when Jaebeom didn’t move at all, the panic kicked in. Youngjae moved back, his body was still very close to Jaebeom. His eyes were wide open with panic and he wouldn’t find words to speak.

“I’m- so, I’m- I thought- you said- I-” Youngjae was struggling. Jaebeom realized what was happening. He wanted it, he wanted all of it. He froze because this was too good to be real.

Before Youngjae could take another step back, Jaebeom moved his left hand around Youngjae’s waist and pulled him in. He placed his right hand on Youngjae’s cheek and tilted his head. Then he
leaned in to kiss Choi Youngjae.

Youngjae was quick to put his hand on Jaebeom’s neck and to pull him in. Youngjae’s lips were soft on Jaebeom’s. Their lips moved in a messy yet rhythmic movement. Jaebeom’s inside went wild and his heart raced at the speed of light, it was happening. Jaebeom moved his left hand in the middle of Youngjae’s back and pulled him in closer. Their chest were flushed together and Youngjae smiled in the kiss. Youngjae pulled back a little to breathe but Jaebeom cashed his lips and pulled him back in a kiss. At this time, both of them were smiling so hard it was impossible for them to keep kissing.

Jaebeom still had his hands around Youngjae and Youngjae took that as support and leaned back. He put his full body pressure in Jaebeom’s arms who tried his best to balance them both. Jaebeom looked at Youngjae and he couldn’t stop smiling, his neck was all red and his neck was exposed, long and soft skin.

“I hate to say this but can you please stand up?” Jaebeom said shyly, “my knees are little weak and I don’t think I’ll be able to handle both of ours weight together.”

Youngjae laughed loudly, full and so Youngjae. He stood up and took a step back, Jaebeom couldn’t look at him anymore, too shy and flushed.

“I think I’ll go now,” Youngjae said and took another step back. Jaebeom looked up and they both were smiling like crazy. Like kids in love and like teens with their first kiss.

“Oh god, Jaebeom,” Youngjae laughed again and closed the distance between them to kiss Jaebeom one last time before he was out of the door.

Jaebeom couldn’t recall how long he stood there, he touched his lips to make sure it all happened and the sensations in his body were real.

When the day started, Jaebeom couldn’t for the life of him would have imagined anything like Youngjae kissing him would happen but it did. It did and it was everything Jaebeom dreamed of and more.

Jaebeom went to bed with a smile on his face, he still couldn’t cope with reality. He kept repeating the kiss in his head and he kept replaying the whole thing over and over again. Youngjae’s expression, his lips, his skin. Then Jaebeom remembered that after all this Youngjae still left the coat at his place. He laughed in the empty room and closed his eyes with memories of Youngjae running in his mind.

Chapter End Notes

THE END!

i’m just joking but!!

AAAAAAA, okay, first of all, i’ve never written a kiss scene so if it was awkward or bad, just ignore that please.
i hope you enjoyed this chapter as much as i enjoyed writing it.
i'm so sorry for such a late update but i'm trying to make it up by giving you 12.3K words. please, love me.
let me know which part you enjoyed and what are your thoughts on the chapter.
thank you again for reading my work, i really appreciate it and it means a lot to me.
Jackson stood outside Jinyoung’s apartment, debating if he should ring the bell or if he should wait a minute more. But wait for what? It was one in the afternoon and Jaebeom told everyone to be there at their own time.

Jackson thought he should show up early to help Jaebeom out, but then he dropped by Jinyoung’s. He was still outside the door and kept debating if he should knock or not. Would Jinyoung find him desperate? Or annoying? That wasn’t what Jackson wanted.

Then he heard the door unlock. He panicked and as soon as the door was open he pressed the doorbell. Jinyoung stood there stunned.

“You saw me come out,” Jinyoung said.

“I… I- I didn’t… I,” Jackson wasn’t sure where he was going with that. He took a few steps backwards to create some distance between them.

“I was going to Jaebeom’s and you have to as well so I thought maybe we could go together,” Jackson said after a minute of silence.

“You came all the way here to take me to Jaebeom’s?” Jinyoung questioned. He turned around to lock his door.

“Yes.” Jackson wanted it to sound confident.

Jinyoung couldn’t reply, he hung his head down so Jackson wasn’t able to see him and then he smiled. Pressed his lips hard to control the smile.

“Let’s go then,” Jinyoung said when he turned and started marching outside.

Jinyoung had two grocery bags with him, the ones they had to take to Jaebeom’s for the party. Jackson offered to carry one and Jinyoung gave him one of the bags.

“It’s not because I’m not strong enough to carry them,” Jinyoung commented. They were walking side by side and would steal glances every now and then.

“I’m not judging,” Jackson laughed.

“I go to the gym a lot,” Jinyoung said.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Jackson said with big eyes.

“What? You don’t believe me?” Jinyoung turned at a laughing Jackson. His lips were round, like a circle, Jinyoung had his complain mode on.

With Jackson’s free hand, he squeezed Jinyoung’s bicep. Jinyoung winced in pain at the sudden pressure.

“I wasn’t ready,” Jinyoung complained and Jackson started rubbing the bicep in pain.
“I’m so sorry, was that too hard?” Jackson placed the grocery bag on the walkway and started rubbing Jinyoung’s bicep with both his hands. He looked apologetic, Jinyoung noticed.

“It’s nothing, I’m okay,” Jinyoung smiled fondly. They started walking again and talked about random stuff. Like, how the vacation went, how excited they were for the party and how much Jackson enjoyed having his parents over. Jinyoung talked about his sisters, how he missed them whenever he’s back from home. Jinyoung talked about how hard it is for all of the Park siblings to be in one place as they’re all working now.

Then they started talking about Jaebeom and Youngjae, soon about Mark, Yugyeom and Bambam. Somewhere along the line Jinyoung wanted to talk about them. What they’re doing, what they’re feeling. Jinyoung hated being confused. He wanted to clear things with Jackson. Wanted to know why Jackson was at his door this morning, why Jackson wanted to go to grocery shopping with him, why it always felt like there’s something going on?

Is he like that with everyone? Jinyoung would often question it. Jinyoung has seen him with Mark for a brief period of time. They seemed close. Jackson and Youngjae were close as well and Jackson shared a special bond with Bambam and Yugyeom. Jackson and Jaebeom have come a long way since the day they met. Jaebeom was comfortable around Jackson, has had him at his place a couple times as well. That’s unlike Jaebeom.

So, maybe, Jackson was just this good with everyone and Jinyoung was reading too much into all this. Jinyoung hated feeling that way. Hated how he couldn’t figure it out. Hated how he kept having doubts over someone he has no control over. Hated how he couldn’t ask Jackson because he was scared that that would ruin whatever they had. So, he kept on with the flow. Whatever it was, wherever it would take him.

Jackson and Jinyoung heard loud laughter from behind them and Jinyoung could guess that laugh anywhere in the world. Yugyeom needed to shut up or he would catch Jinyoung’s hands.

“It can’t be them,” Jinyoung said to Jackson. They were still facing front, Jinyoung didn’t want to turn. He wanted to walk to Jaebeom’s home alone with Jackson. Didn’t want the company that was behind them.

Jackson turned with the biggest smile on his face, “Double B,” he yelled.

Jinyoung zoned them out, concentrated more on their laughs and the camera Bambam had in his hand. He carries it everywhere.

They were all laughing, were being animated. Jinyoung liked that. Felt light, he smiled and stepped closer to the boys.

“Don’t tell me you got all the baby food because Jinyoung won’t let you buy the adult food?” Yugyeom teased and Jinyoung practically jumped on him.

“You watch your mouth, okay?” Jinyoung yelled. The rest started laughing.

“Or else what?” Yugyeom said and ran to hide behind Bambam.

“Hey, don’t get kinky with my boy,” Jackson said which got Bambam and Yugyeom laughing. Jinyoung couldn’t laugh, couldn’t move, couldn’t show any emotion. He stood there, his eyes fixed on Jackson. He wasn’t sure if Jackson was joking or if he was being serious. He was probably joking, that’s how Jackson was.

Jackson went to stand next to Jinyoung and turned towards Yugyeom, “Take a picture of us,” he
Yugyeom excitedly pulled out his camera and Jackson started laughing, threw his hands in the air for dramatic effects. Jinyoung was even more confused, “What are you doing?”.

“Laugh! We have look like we’re having fun,” Jackson said dramatically.

This got a laugh out of Jinyoung and it wasn’t even pretend. Jinyoung threw back his head and covered his mouth with his free hand and Jackson just kept looking. Jackson had a fond smile on his face, the one plastered on his face every time he makes Jinyoung laugh. When Jinyoung tried controlling himself, he looked at Jackson. Overwhelmed with Jackson’s expression, Jinyoung pointed a finger towards Jackson and looked at Yugyeom, as if he was saying something.

They started walking again and Jinyoung felt light, he was joking with Yugyeom and Bambam and he would laugh whenever Jackson would make a joke or would just say anything in general.

They reached Jaebeom’s house sooner than they anticipated. It was hardly two in the afternoon and they planned on staying over as well.

Jaebeom on the other hand was very quiet. Even when he opened the door he looked disappointed, as if he was waiting for someone else. Yugyeom and Bambam entered as if it was their own home. Started chattering the moment they stepped inside. Started arranging things according to their convenience. Jaebeom went back to the kitchen, pretended like he was doing something.

Jackson just gave Jinyoung a nod and then went to talk with younger ones. Jinyoung took a deep breath and went inside the kitchen.

“So, what’s bothering you?” Jinyoung asked.

Jaebeom stayed quiet for a minute or so and Jinyoung decided not to push him. Jaebeom heard him and he would answer when he was ready.

“We kissed last night,” Jaebeom said. Jinyoung’s mouth hung open. He was happy but Jaebeom’s expression said otherwise. Jinyoung wanted to hoot for Jaebeom and to talk about it but Jaebeom looked like he wanted none of that.

“And that’s a problem? I thought you wanted it.”

“He hasn’t called me or texted me since last night,” Jaebeom sounded off. His chin was out as he spoke but he didn’t seem angry, just frustrated.

“And have you tried calling him?” Jinyoung asked. He wanted to make sure that the problem isn’t caused by only Jaebeom having expectations and not doing anything himself.

“I messaged him first thing in the morning, nothing grand just a smile ‘see you for the party tonight’, I wasn’t sure what else to say. He never replied and a few hours ago I called him as well but his phone is switched off.”

Jinyoung dropped his shoulders, he could feel the uneasiness on Jaebeom. Jaebeom shares stuff, he isn’t the kind to bottle everything up but he takes time dealing with them. A hug wasn’t what Jaebeom needed at that time. Jinyoung placed his hand on Jaebeom’s back and rubbed it slowly.

“So, you think he is ignoring you on purpose?” Jinyoung said and Jaebeom let out a fake laugh.

“I think he regrets it,” Jaebeom said and walked out. Jinyoung could feel the pain in Jaebeom’s
voice. Been through what Jaebeom has, any inconvenience that occurs, Jaebeom always jumped on the worst scenario ever.

Since morning, Jaebeom has tried distracting himself, he cleaned up the whole house, cooked breakfast, prepared lunch, did his laundry, checked his groceries, but every five to ten minutes he would be back at his phone. Checking for any new texts or calls. He would go on Youngjae’s social media pages to see if there’s any activity. He hated being like this.

He kept repeating last night in his head, everything was great and they both were in such good mood. They laughed and the kiss wasn’t even awkward, as far as Jaebeom knew and understood, Youngjae enjoyed it as well. Youngjae even kissed him before leaving. Youngjae entered his house again to kiss Jaebeom. Youngjae initiated the kiss. Youngjae was sober. Youngjae was awake. Youngjae was conscious. He kissed Jaebeom knowing full well what he was doing.

Jaebeom was confused and his heart felt heavy. If there was something wrong, Youngjae would have told him, right? He thought talking it out with Jinyoung would make him feel better but it did the opposite. The reality of it just looked harsh for him. Maybe that's why Jaebeom missed out the part where Jaebeom called Youngjae again and Youngjae didn’t pick up.

Jaebeom went inside his room, sat there for a couple of minutes and then went to wash his face. This wasn’t how he planned New Year’s to be.

When he came out of the room he acted excited for the sake of everyone, participated with them in every shitty idea they offered. Faked a smile here and there and except for Jinyoung, no one questioned it. He was sure that Jackson has started sensing something but he would just keep pretending.

An hour or so later when they were all seated on the sofa talking about different stuff Bambam asked, “Where’s Mark? Shouldn’t he be here?”

“Oh, he’s with Youngjae,” Jackson said and went back to what he was doing. Jaebeom didn’t let his irritation show. He knew Mark and Youngjae were close and if there was any problem, of course Youngjae would call Mark.

Jaebeom stood up to get water for himself, he also wanted to get out for a second.

“And why’s Youngjae not here? I thought his vacation starts from today?”

“Youngjae wasn’t feeling well so Mark dropped by, I think. That’s what Mark told me.” Then Jackson turned towards Jaebeom. “But Jaebeom should know more.”

Jaebeom took a big gulp of water, tried to take it down as slowly as he could so they weren’t looking at him anymore. But they kept looking, Jinyoung even looked sorry.

“I don’t know,” Jaebeom said and took another sip.

“Let me call Mark,” Bambam said as he pulled out his phone. After greeting and a fun banter Bambam asked Mark when’s he coming and then they laughed some more. When Bambam hung up he turned towards Jaebeom and said, “He’s asking for you.”

“Tell him I’m good,” Jaebeom replied.

“That was very lame even for you,” Yugyeom said and laughed. Jaebeom just shrugged his shoulder.
“He said you should go over and he’ll come join us later,” Bambam informed Jaebeom.

“I think you should go, see what he wants,” Jinyoung said when he was sure Jaebeom was going to come up with some bullshit excuse.

Without another word Jaebeom was out the door. He stood outside Youngjae’s door for way too long. Couldn’t gasp what was happening. Youngjae really wanted to do this face to face, huh? In front of Mark?

Those thoughts kept running in Jaebeom’s head. Youngjae wasn’t like that, was he? He wouldn’t deliberately embarrass Jaebeom like that, especially in front of Mark. Soon he realized that there was no point in coming up scenarios of what was going to happen. He just needed to knock on the door and so he did.

Heard footsteps and saw Mark in front of him. Mark looked normal, like he always had. Jaebeom entered the house and it was normal as well, a little dark because of all the curtains being drawn but still normal. Nothing looked out of place.

Jaebeom followed Mark towards the Kitchen counter. Pulled out some tablets from the drawer and placed it on the counter.

“Give him this when he wakes up,” Mark pointed towards a tablet and then towards another, “Make sure he’s eaten before you do.”

“What?” Jaebeom’s heart started racing.

“He’s got a bit of a fever and a sore throat, he’s fine.”

“How’s he fine if-”

“He’s really fine Jaebeom, he overworked and exhausted himself, didn’t take good care of his health, it was bound to happen.” Mark took out a bottle of water from under the counter.

“Here’s his water, I boiled it and cooled it down. His food is by the microwave and he’ll be waking up soon, so yeah. Feed him when you can.”

“Are you leaving?” Jaebeom was confused. He wasn’t expecting all of this.

“Yeah, I came to pick him up but the man was literally burning. His fever is down so, don’t worry about it. But keep checking.” Mark looked at his watch, “it’s four right now, see how he feels and if he wants to come over to your place. Or you can put him to bed and join the party.”

Jaebeom just gave him a nod. He watched Mark walk out and he stayed there for a while. Closed the door and picked up the medicine and water. He walked towards Youngjae’s room. Jaebeom stood at the door and peeked inside. His room was smaller than Jaebeom’s. There wasn’t much, an dresser, a bookshelf stocked with video games, CDs, a supreme rug, a work table which looked more like Youngjae only used for playing games, and a bed.

There was a chair near Youngjae’s bed and Jaebeom assumed that’s where Mark must have been sitting.

Jaebeom placed everything on the bed side table and sat on the chair. He tried making no noise at all. There was hardly any light in Youngjae’s room. It was darker than the living room. Youngjae was tucked in up till his nose so Jaebeom couldn’t see much of his face.
Jaebeom’s phone came to life with a loud ping noise. Alarming him for the new message he received. Bambam.

He put his phone on silent urgently but it was too late, Youngjae was already moving.

“Mark?” Youngjae said in a tiny voice. He sounded sick.

“He left, It’s me. Jaebeom.”

“Jaebeom?” Youngjae sounded confused and he was still trying to adjust to his original position.

“Yes, Jaebeom,” Jaebeom said as softly as possible. Then Youngjae turned all the lights on. The switch was right over his bed and he was now sitting.

“You should be laying down, don’t sit,” Jaebeom rushed towards Youngjae but he wasn’t sure if he could touch him.

“I’ve been down since last night, I can take a break from it,” Youngjae said and adjusted himself on the bed.

Youngjae watched Jaebeom pick up the medicine from the table. “Mark put you up to this?” Youngjae asked.

“He asked me to come over, I hope that’s okay with you?” Jaebeom still felt a bit awkward, this was the first time they were around each other after the kiss and he thought he would be more relaxed but he has been on the edge.

“Why wouldn’t it be? He becomes a grandpa when it comes to illnesses. He’ll hover around and make sure I’m stuffed and asleep. At times, I pretend to be asleep so he’ll stop nagging me.”

“He cares about you,” Jaebeom said and handed the water and medicine to Youngjae. Jaebeom smiled fondly at him. Happy to know that Mark was there to take care of him.

“He does and I’m grateful. Jackson doesn’t know I’m sick, right?” Youngjae asked in between coughs.

“I’m not sure,” Jaebeom replied and gave him more water.

Then they sat in silence. Youngjae eyed Jaebeom a few times and it looked like he was about to say something but he never did. It started to get really awkward for Jaebeom. He stood up and went to the kitchen as an excuse to get water when he just wanted to breathe.

Once he was back in the room Youngjae started laughing. Jaebeom was really confused. He sat back on the chair and asked him what it was.

“What’s bothering you?” Youngjae asked.

“Nothing,” Jaebeom wasn’t sure if he wanted to tell him now or later.

“Come on, you’ve been so quiet since you walked in and you wouldn’t look me in the eye.” Youngjae stayed silent for a few seconds to let Jaebeom speak but he never did. “Was the aftermath of the kiss that bad?” Youngjae wanted it to sound like a joke but it sounded sincerer. Sounded genuine and sad.

“You never picked up my calls and I had no idea that you were sick. So, I let my imagination run wild,” Jaebeom said and looked down. He felt small and stupid. Like, all what he worried about was
irrational.

“Jaebeom.” Youngjae pulled the covers off off his body and faced Jaebeom.

“Youngjae, get in the blanket.” Jaebeom immediately stood up.

“But I want to explain.” Youngjae looked up at him.

“And you can do that from inside the covers, now get in.”

Jaebeom started pushing Youngjae’s body inside the covers when Youngjae said “But I wanna hold your hand,” and pouted, it made Jaebeom smile.

“Your body is really warm, stay inside, it’ll help the fever go down,” Jaebeom said while he tried his best to not let the smile spread.

“You can say I’m hot. I wouldn’t mind,” Youngjae winked at Jaebeom and seeing the way Jaebeom started blushing, Youngjae laughed again. Youngjae’s face and neck were red and it wasn’t because of the blush. Jaebeom went back to the kitchen to get the food mark prepared for him.

When he came back he handed the bowl to Youngjae and said, “Here’s something to keep your hand occupied. If you do something that I don’t approve of or try to force me into it, I’m calling Mark and Jackson.”

“Don’t call Jackson he’ll mother the shit out of me. The last time I had fever he was up all the time and had a whole schedule to when to feed me because the doctor said to feed me every five hours and he woke up at one am to feed me and at five am to feed me.”

Jaebeom smiled again and Youngjae started eating his food. “You have nice people around you. They really care about you. Once I was sick and Jinyoung thought I was just absent from work so he didn’t check up on me so when my mom called me and got to know I was sick she called up Jinyoung. He came to my place and yelled at me for an hour before taking care of me.”

This had Youngjae throwing his head back and laughing. “He really did?”

“He was really so embarrassed and said that I should have called him and I said I wasn’t that sick and he kept yelling and I was laughing. He got angry with me but he did all the work, cleaned my room and made me food even though he can hardly cook.”

They both talked about their sick stories till Youngjae was done eating. They laughed and it felt comfortable. Jaebeom wasn’t awkward anymore. Once Youngjae was done Jaebeom went to put the bowl in the sink and got another medicine for Youngjae.

“My phone’s battery was dead last night,” Youngjae began once they both were seated comfortably.

“And in the morning, I just couldn’t get up, it took Mark twenty minutes to make me open the door. When he entered I got to know that it was noon already and I started freaking out because I didn’t want you to think that I don’t…” Youngjae paused for a few beats. He wasn’t sure what word to pick, how to express what he was feeling. “I didn’t want you to think that it was a trivial thing for me. My phone was dead and Mark didn’t have your number but he was carrying his charger so he plugged it in. You know how slow these phones are. It took ages for it start again and by the time it did I was asleep. I guess he didn’t put it on ringer so even if you called later I couldn’t know.”

“It’s okay, it’s okay,” and then Jaebeom smiled. He didn’t want them to be like this, he wanted to express himself to tell Youngjae what he truly felt. To not sugar-coat the things.
“To be honest, I thought you regretted it,” Jaebeom said and looked at Youngjae who looked dejected.

“How could you even say that when I was the one who kissed you twice last night.” And before Jaebeom could see it he was hit by a pillow on the head.

“Because I thought you’re perfectly fine and you’re just ignoring me,” Jaebeom picked up the pillow and threatened to throw it back.

“I’m sick, you can’t hit me!” Youngjae pointed at the pillow.

“If you actually think about it, I was the one who actually initiated our kiss.”

“Only because you froze when I first kissed you.”

“I wasn’t expecting that, it happened too fast,” Jaebeom said shyly. He could feel his cheek were warming.

“I asked you,” Youngjae pulled out another pillow from behind him and threw it at Jaebeom but this time Jaebeom caught it.

“Stop throwing these at me,” Jaebeom threw them back at Youngjae lightly, made sure it didn’t hit his body. Youngjae was laughing again. Well, laughter is the best medicine should be a true saying and all of it should work on Youngjae.

“Did I ruin the party?” Youngjae asked once Jaebeom forced him to lay down.

“What’s a party without you?” Jaebeom tried flirting, he wanted to yell. He was bad at it.

Youngjae laughed again, “Your sentiments are noted.”

“I would have been too worried to concentrate on those shitheads.”

“Worried about me?” Youngjae teased.

“Mark, to be honest, can’t let him be stuck with you all day.” Youngjae pouted and Jaebeom laughed. Jaebeom wanted to tell Youngjae that he looked adorable but he stayed quiet.

“Good night I’m sleeping,” Youngjae said and turned his back on Jaebeom, who kept on laughing. After a while his phone started buzzing and he went in the living room to pick it up.

“Jinyoung, is everything okay?”

“Are you guys coming over?” Jinyoung asked from the other end. There was music playing, Jaebeom couldn’t figure out the song.

“He just went to bed, I’ll stay a bit longer, you guys should enjoy.”

“It’s almost eight, Jaebeom. We only have four more hours—” Jinyoung was cut mid sentence as his phone was pulled from him.

“Come here Jaebeom and bring the lover boy with you,” Bambam yelled.

“Are you drunk?” Jaebeom asked.

“A little bit maybe or maybe not.”
“Bambam, it’s eight. It’s not even night time yet.”

“Grandpa is angry, you handle him,” Bambam said on the receiver and gave it back to Jinyoung.

“Let me know if we can do anything and drop by whenever you guys can.” They talked another minute and hung up.

Jaebeom went back inside and Youngjae was still in the same position as he left him. A few moments later the doorbell rang. Jaebeom hesitated as he went to open the door. He frowned as soon as he saw the whole gang outside the door.

“Bambam what did—” He couldn’t finish because Bambam and Yugyeom were already inside and were yelling. “Where my party people at?” on top of their lungs.

“Be quiet, Youngjae is—”

“Awake,” came Youngjae’s voice from the bedroom door. He was still in his pyjamas and t-shirt. Jaebeom wanted to wrap him in a blanket but he stood by the front door instead.

“Yo man,” Bambam went to greet Youngjae who asked him to keep a safe distance because of the fever and cough.

They all went to greet Youngjae one by one, asked him how he was feeling. Jackson was the last.

“I can’t believe after all this time, I had to hear it from Mark.” Youngjae was already laughing, Jinyoung stood nearby Jackson and laughed silently.

“I didn’t want to worry you, you already have a lot of your plate,” Youngjae tried to explain but Jackson just dramatically kept shaking his head.

“Friendship with Choi Youngjae cancelled,” Jackson said and it let out a loud laugh from Youngjae. Jackson then turned towards Jinyoung and held his hand, “Now, Park Jinyoung is my new best friend.” Jaebeom couldn’t see much of Jinyoung. He couldn’t figure out if Jinyoung was still laughing or he was already thinking too much.

Bambam, Yugyeom and Mark were already decorating the living room. Jinyoung and Jackson went to help them with the sitting arrangements and this gave Jaebeom time to go check on Youngjae.

“Are you sure this is okay?” Jaebeom asked as he approached Youngjae.

“I messaged them to come over. I don’t want you all sulking and taking care of me when everyone planned so much.”

“I wasn’t sulking,” Jaebeom corrected him.

“Enjoy with them, I’m already feeling way better.” Jaebeom turned Youngjae around and made him walk inside the bedroom.

“It’s rude if we leave them out just because you wanna make out with me.” Youngjae said as Jaebeom collected the blanket from the bed.

“Now,” Jaebeom said and turned towards Youngjae. He took a slow and calculated step towards Youngjae and decreased the distance between them. “Would that be so bad?” They stood face to face now.

“Jaebeom, I’m sick,” Youngjae blushed hard but thanks to his fever it was hard to tell.
“And?” Jaebeom wrapped Youngjae in the blanket and pulled him close. “Sit with me tonight.”

“I’m sick,” Youngjae repeated.

“I’m immune to all this, I already took a precautionary medicine.”

“Jaebeom, they’ll get sick as well,” Youngjae tried to reason with him.

“They won’t be close to you, I’ll make sure of it.” Jaebeom rubbed Youngjae’s back in a comforting manner and Youngjae let out a relaxed sigh. “Okay.”

Jaebeom smiled and pulled Youngjae even closer, placed his hands on Youngjae’s cheeks and kissed his forehead.

When they walked out everyone was already seated. Some had drinks in their hand and some had chips. They were laughing over something Bambam was saying. There wasn’t much space on the sofa so Jinyoung took one corner, left the rest for Youngjae and Jaebeom. Jackson sat between Jinyoung’s legs, Bambam and Yugyeom sat facing Jackson. Mark sat on the one gigantic sofa-chair that was placed near the television.

Jaebeom and Youngjae walked towards the sofa and Jaebeom sat between Jinyoung and Youngjae. Jaebeom hated sitting in the middle.

They all continued talking, no one paid any special attention to the new couple except for Jinyoung, who leaned forward to give a smile to Youngjae.

Bambam was on about a customer who only comes to the shop to see Yugyeom. Jinyoung denied all this and Yugyeom yelled. Mark and Jackson were just laughing. Then Jackson told them a story of a girl who signed up for the dance classes because of Yugyeom and even though she herself is a certified dancer. Bambam wanted to meet that girl.

Jinyoung and Jackson agreed that Yugyeom had gotten them a lot of customers and Yugyeom called Jinyoung a hypocrite for agreeing with Jackson and disagreeing with Bambam. Jinyoung gave Yugyeom a death stare. Jackson said they don’t need anyone to bring in more customers, Jinyoung himself should be enough and that got a laugh out of Bambam and Yugyeom.

This whole mess continued for over an hour or more. Jaebeom would speak out every now and then but Youngjae remained quiet and laughed at the stories.

“Youngjae has one of our interns whipped for him,” Mark said and everyone turned to look at Youngjae.

“It’s nothing like that, please.” Youngjae covered his mouth with the blanket.

“Then why are you turning red?” Mark commented and Bambam and Yugyeom cooed.

“I have fever,” Youngjae said and made sure to not look at anyone.

“Tell us more about the kid,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae fake cried. “What? We’re all sharing stories.” Jaebeom just smiled.

“So, well. We got an intern a few months back and even though he’s in the marketing department he always hangs around in the accounts department. At first I thought he had an interest in the field but later I realized it’s the field master he has an interest in.”
“You’re exaggerating,” Youngjae commented in his defence.

“Would you rather tell the story,” Mark laughed. Jaebeom just kept a smile on his face. There was nothing to be jealous of. He was a kid and Youngjae had no interest in him, right?

“He learned Youngjae’s coffee order and started getting Youngjae coffee every morning.”

Jaebeom turned to Youngjae with a curious expression, “But don’t you get your own coffee every morning before you get to work?”

“I do,” Youngjae said and started explaining, “The first time he got me coffee was his second or third day, I guess. So, I thought he’s getting coffee for everyone as a kind gesture but then he got me coffee the next day as well and I didn’t have the heart to say no to him. He is a kid, Jaebeom. Could you say no?” Youngjae buried himself more into the sofa.

“Every time during lunch, he’d make sure to sit with Youngjae and then Youngjae got worried and he came to me, asked me to change his shift and I said we need him during the morning shift and then he told me about the kid and how he thinks the kid must be feeling like he’s being lead on.” Mark was practically laughing by that time.

“We came up with a plan, every time the kid would be near Youngjae and if I saw him, I’ll call Youngjae and if Youngjae saw him approaching, he would call me and then Youngjae would act like he’s talking to his boyfriend.”

“It needed to be done, he stopped hanging around the department.” Youngjae covered his face again.

“It was just a crush but he still can’t look at Youngjae anymore. During office parties, he tries so hard not to bump into Youngjae. I feel for him.” Bambam laughed at that.

“What a sad story, let me tell you this one-time Jacks-” before Bambam could finish, Jackson punched Bambam’s knee.

“What the hell, man,” Bambam yelled in pain.

Jinyoung started rubbing Jackson’s shoulder. “Bambam, tell me the story or you’re fired.”

“You can’t do that,” Jackson looked up towards Jinyoung.

“Bambam, don’t tell him the story. Protect Jackson’s privacy.” Jaebeom smiled towards Jackson.

“You just want him fired,” Yugyeom answered back.

“Anyway, there was this couple at the dance studio and they didn’t have much interest in dancing but they wanted to find their spark back in their romance life so they tried dancing and Jackson being Jackson, whenever he gets sweaty he takes off his shirt.”

“That was just one time,” Jackson yelled at Bambam.

“Please, you love to flaunt. As I was saying, Jackson did that and Jackson’s caught their attention, then one day, they asked Jackson if he wants to spice it up with them,” Bambam said and started laughing.

“Oh my god, they did? Wow? That was bold,” Mark said and laughed.

“And Jackson said ‘sure, what time suits you?’” Jinyoung heard that and leaned back on the sofa, left his grip on Jackson’s shoulders and crossed his arms. Jackson turned towards Jinyoung and said,
“It’s not what it sounds like.”

“Someone’s getting jealous,” Bambam said in a singalong voice and continued the story, “When the couple heard that they were excited, they asked if Jackson was free on Saturday night and Jackson said the studio is closed on Saturdays and they said that they can do it at their house and Jackson said he don’t give private classes.”

“Wait? Jackson thought they’re talking about dance classes?” Mark jumped up on his seat.

“He did and when they asked what classes, Jackson said dance classes and they bluntly said, ‘we’re talking about a threesome’ and man, you should have been there to see his face. It took me a whole ten seconds to gasp what was being said.” Jinyoung relaxed a little, let go of his crossed armed and just tried not to laugh at the poor man.

“Jackson didn’t say anything for a long time and then walked towards where Yugyeom and I were laughing and asked us to tell the couple to not come anymore. The couple were pretty disappointed. It’s sad.”

“I have not seen Jackson take off his shirt in the class since then,” Yugyeom said. Mark and Jaebeom were laughing loudly and Jinyoung just kept shaking his head in amusement.

Once they all had dinner and were back to their sitting positions, Yugyeom stood up and walked a bit further from the group. No one paid much attention, just thought Yugyeom was getting water or something.

Jinyoung was a bit touchy with Jackson that night. His hands were still on Jackson’s shoulder, he would keep touching Jackson’s ear and his cheek. And would play with Jackson’s hair every now and then. Jinyoung made sure to do it in a subtle way, to not catch eyes on them but Jackson felt every touch. Jackson felt every time Jinyoung’s hand would move from his shoulder to his cheek, from his cheek to his ear and then Jinyoung would brush his cheek with his index figure. Jackson would smile every time and that would leave Jinyoung blushing.

“Ten, nine,” Yugyeom started doing the countdown and it got everyone’s attention.

“Is it almost time?” Mark said and went to stand next to Yugyeom, Bambam followed.

“Three, two, one. Happy New Year.” they all yelled in sync.

Hugs were all around, everyone made sure to go and hug each person in the room. Jackson stood up and gave his hand out for Jinyoung, when they were both standing face to face, they smile and Jinyoung opened his arms. Jackson smiled and pulled Jinyoung closer. It felt warm and they felt happy. Their hearts were beating fast and it made them smile harder.

Youngjae refused every hug that came his way, he wanted everyone to be healthy and hugging him would just expose them to his bacteria. Jaebeom still gave him a back hug, whispers, “I’m not touching, it’s still the blanket.” Youngjae just smiled and rubbed Jaebeom’s hand from inside the blanket.

Everyone, except Jaebeom and Youngjae, took a shot. Jackson said he wanted to be sober for his first day of the year and Jinyoung agreed with it. They both only took a shot and Mark, Yugyeom and Bambam helped them finish the bottle.

“Who’s gonna sleep where?” Mark asked all of a sudden.

“Are you sleepy?” Jackson asked.
“Nah but I soon will be. Alcohol makes me sleepy,” Mark smiled.

“There are two rooms, Jaebeom and Youngjae’s and then we have two huge sofas. We can divide it with seven,” Bambam suggested.

“Youngjae’s room remains his. So, you just have to divide my room and the sofas among the five of you.”

“You know he’s sick, right?” Jinyoung smirked at Jaebeom.

“Make sure Jackson and Jinyoung don’t end on the same bed,” Jaebeom said to Bambam instead and Jinyoung’s mouth hung open.

“Everyone pitch in for why they should get Jaebeom’s bed?” Mark said.

“Because I don’t wanna sleep on a sofa,” Bambam replied and had another sip of his drink.

“Not good enough.”

“I think why Jinyoung and I should get the room because,” Jackson cleared his throat. “Jinyoung is a screamer and living room would be awkward.”

Jaebeom choked on his water, Bambam choked on his drink, Yugyeom and Mark just kept looking at Jinyoung who was struggling with words.

“I… I’m not,” Jinyoung yelled.

“He’s really loud,” Jackson added and crossed his arms.

“I’m not,” Jinyoung yelled again.

Jackson turned to face Jinyoung who was still trying to gasp what was being said, “Maybe we can test it tonight.” Jinyoung’s mouth stayed open and he couldn’t reply.

“Oh my god, get out,” Bambam shouted at them. “This is too much, Yugyeom, Mark and I will sleep here in Youngjae’s house, we don’t wanna be near you guys.”

Jackson just laughed and started walking towards the door. When he realized Jinyoung wasn’t behind him he turned and asked “Are you joining me tonight?”

Yugyeom rushed to Jinyoung and started pushing him out, “Just leave, please.” And closed the door as soon as they were out.

“Jackson, we’re not doing anything,” Jinyoung said in a low murmur as he unlocked Jaebeom’s apartment.

“Yes Sir,” Jackson put his hands up in surrender.

The apartment was quiet now that there were just the two of them. Jackson went to get water to have something to do and Jinyoung followed him in the kitchen.

“I can’t believe you said that,” Jinyoung said as Jackson was busy drinking water.

“You wanted to sleep on the couch?” Jackson asked and Jinyoung stayed quiet for a minute. “That’s what I thought.”
Jackson didn’t plan much for the night, he was exhausted from the day and just wanted to sleep in but having Jinyoung by his side has changed a lot of things for him.

“Jaebeom’s calling me,” Jinyoung informed Jackson as they started entering Jaebeom’s bedroom.

“Do you wanna keep him on speaker and make out moaning noises to scare him?” Jackson suggested and Jinyoung couldn’t help but laugh.

“He would lose his mind and he has been through a lot of emotions today.” Jinyoung picked up Jaebeom’s call and put him of speaker.

“Jaebeom don-”

“Jinyoung, I swear to god, if you and Jackson had sex on my bed-”

“You know we’re not!” Jinyoung yelled. All Jinyoung had done in the last fifteen minutes is yelling. Jackson just laughed at their conversation.

“I know you have the hots for-” and Jinyoung hung up in panic before Jaebeom could finish that horrible sentence.

“Hots for what, Jinyoung?” Jackson teased and Jinyoung talked walking towards the washroom.

“Jaebeom’s drunk.”

“He didn’t even have one sip tonight,” Jackson said and laughed as Jinyoung closed the door of the washroom.

Once they were done cleaning up, they sat together on the bed, made small talks to not let things go awkward. It was already one at the night and Jackson thought they’ll go to bed soon and then Jackson remembered something.

He stood up and went to stand in front of Jinyoung. Jinyoung looked up at him with confusion.

“Move back,” Jackson said.

“What?” Jinyoung understood nothing.

“I said move back on the bed. Shift your body up so your legs are not hanging down.”

Jinyoung followed in the slowest of motions.

“Now lay down.”

“What are we doing?” Jinyoung asked.

“You’ll know soon enough,” Jackson replied and Jinyoung laid down on the bed. His eyes still fixed on Jackson.

“Now, open your legs,” Jackson said and couldn’t hold his smirk.

“Jackson,” Jinyoung said in amusement.

“It’s nothing inappropriate. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, just let me know. I’ll stop.”

Jinyoung took a deep breath and started opening his legs for Jackson.
“This looks weird,” Jinyoung laughed and let his head fall on the bed.

“You look good though,” Jackson teased again and Jinyoung just laughed. Covered his face with one of his hand and laughed.

Before Jinyoung could understand what was happening, Jackson’s head was placed on his chest. Jackson’s body between Jinyoung’s legs on his side. Jackson didn’t move. He let Jinyoung get used to the intimacy and then placed his hands near Jinyoung’s side.

Jinyoung moved his hands from the side of his body to place it on Jackson’s head and then slowly he let his fingers slide in Jackson’s hair. Jackson took a deep breath and they both let out a nervous laugh. Jinyoung was still confused but he was just glad that Jackson’s body weight wasn’t much on his.

“I moved to Korea at a young age, I was still in school and I told my parents that once I get into JYPE I wouldn’t need school, they’d cover for the classes and all. I had no idea to be honest. I just wanted them to say yes. And they did,” Jackson started speaking slowly. Jinyoung kept running his fingers through Jackson’s hair to let him know he was paying attention.

“I wanted to be a rapper, I believed I was decent enough to make it through. I… I gave up a lot of things for that one dream. I was good at fencing, by good I mean gold medal worthy good. I gave it up. When I arrived for the audition, it got delayed by three days and I thought that’s fine. I’ll still make it.” Jinyoung could feel the uneasiness in Jackson’s voice but he didn’t mention it.

“I was living with one of my fencing coach’s friend. He was a fencing coach here. I didn’t realize how different the climate change here is, the temperature wasn’t much of a bother but apparently, I didn’t pack according to the weather and I caught a cold. My throat was worst. I called up the people for the audition and told them I can’t make it because of my bad throat and they gave me another date. I couldn’t recover for over two weeks. Every time I started feeling alright I would strain my throat again and I couldn’t sing. I ended up not making it for the auditions.” Jackson stayed quiet for a while and Jinyoung tried not to breathe too deep. He removed his left hand from Jackson’s hair and started rubbing his back and shoulders.

“I had no place to go, I couldn’t go back home. I lied to my parents and told them there was a mix up with the agency and before of a glitch I never received an email saying they’ve preponed the audition and that’s why I missed it. It was years later I told them what really happened and they were very understanding and I cursed myself for hiding it from them for so long.” Then Jackson took a deep breath.

“I was broke, I told my parents I wanna start living here, that there were many opportunities when there were none. I soon applied for college and because of fencing I got in. I didn’t have any money so I started working part time at cafes and bars. I couldn’t keep living with my coach’s friend forever. There was an opening in the academy he was coaching and he asked me if I wanna help out. I told him I don’t have a teaching license or teaching experience and he told me I know enough to help out kids. I needed money so I said yes. The money they paid was good. The café and bars were paying decent as well and soon I moved out. I rented a place with one bedroom. I didn’t need much space anyway. Then I met Youngjae and Mark,” Jackson said and smiled. Jinyoung could feel the smile on his chest.

“They were nice. My Korean was weak at that time, I knew enough to live by. Having Mark for out of Korea really helped my confidence. They both are more intelligent then they get credit for. They soon realized my living condition but they never said much. We never hung out. As soon as my classes were over I would go to the academy to teach and then I would go to the bar and complete
my night shift and rush to bed, I used to sleep for three hours on weekdays. Mark noticed and he offered me a job at his dad’s company. Youngjae was already working part-time for them and I could, of course, use more money. I said yes.” Jackson’s tone changed right there. Jinyoung tried hard not to let the tension show on his body.

“It wasn’t much, I was a part of the marketing team and they were looking to expand in Hong Kong. The pay was good and everything was working out till they kinda boycotted me. The people there would use words I’ve never heard of, they started looking down on me because they thought I had it easy as I was Mark’s friend. Which was in fact true.” Jackson laughed again.

“I didn’t say much, never wanted to start a fight but Youngjae noticed. He once went to talk to the guys and ask them to stop this behaviour and they refused. Said they worked their asses off and had interviews after interviews to get this job. I planned on leaving, I couldn’t stay in a place where I wasn’t accepted. Mark felt bad. He felt sorry. Youngjae took it on himself to teach me every Korean word there is. He taught me all the swear words, all street languages, everything.” This made Jinyoung laugh and Jackson looked up at him.

“I went back to the way everything was but I had more than enough money to live in a decent house, I didn’t, never found the need to. I only was ever in my house to sleep. Otherwise I was always out working. Soon, I started sending money home. My parents were happy, thought I was finally on my feet. They were proud. Then, I just couldn’t stop. When college finally ended. I had a lot of free time and I couldn’t sit still. I couldn’t do a desk job so I did everything else. I had four to five different jobs in different fields and then my parents said they wanna come see me. I started working extra hard because now I wanted to get a bigger house, I wanted to make sure my parents don’t worry about me.” Jackson took another deep breath and stayed quiet for a while.

“I started neglecting my health, I ate once or twice a day but never had proper meals. I was always on the run. I shifted houses and I could feel my body giving up but I was determined to not let that affect anything. When my parents met me, they complained of how thin I’ve gotten and I thought it’s the parent thing, every parent says the same when they see their kid after a while. Then I started feeling the change in my body, my jeans wouldn’t fit, my vision would blackout. I once fainted but no one was home.” Jinyoung could feel his throat tightening up.

“I realized in the whole making money process I forgot to make friends. I had Youngjae and Mark but I never met up with them anymore. I wouldn’t see them often. I would ignore their messages because I was busy. I kinda pushed them away but they stuck around, Youngjae would drop by my house every once in a while. Mark would bring home cooked meals, mainly omelettes because that’s all he could cook but it was more than enough. They noticed the change and asked me to rest and I just didn’t know how.” Jackson adjusted himself in Jinyoung’s leg.

“The next thing I know I was outside a dance studio, they had application for a freestyle dancer, and I don’t know why I applied. I didn’t know much about the techniques of dancing but I knew I can move my body. I met Yugyeom there. He is just a lively kid. He made me feel at home, he was so loud and talked nonstop and kept apologizing and was so shy.” Then Jackson looked up at Jinyoung and Jinyoung gave him a questioning look.

“Stop giving him a hard time,” Jackson teased and Jinyoung laughed.

“You tell him to stop giving me a hard time,” Jinyoung said in his defence and they both smiled at each other.

“Yugyeom was nice, we got along quick, he was quick with the trends so he taught me a lot of stuff and kept mentioning Bambam in every third sentence. He wanted me to join as a teacher and I said I don’t know how to teach dancing and he taught me how to. He said he was young so people don’t
take him seriously, they don’t apply for the classes. They leave before he even has a chance to show them just what he can offer, basically he wanted me to model for his dancing and he’ll do the teaching,” Jackson said and started laughing. Jinyoung hit his back lightly but laughed with him.

Jinyoung was grateful that Jackson was making the process of sharing easy but making jokes in between. Jackson laid down again.

“My condition went worse. I couldn’t do fencing coaching, bar and dance classes all at once. Yugyeom told me it’s fine if I wanna back out from dancing but dancing gave him such joy,”

Jackson took support of his elbow to support his body and then he looked at Jinyoung, “You should see Yugyeom dance, he is so happy when he’s dancing and I just couldn’t take it away from him. If I left, he would go back to classes with three people and soon he would be replaced with an older teacher. My heart couldn’t take it. I left the bar, I started full time with fencing and dancing.”

Jackson went back to his original position and Jinyoung’s hand went back to theirs. Jackson stayed quiet for another minute before continuing.

“When you saw me at that park,” Jackson started and stopped again. Took another breathe.

“I just wasn’t sure if everything I was doing was… if it was… worth it. I was sending money home and I still had a lot in my account but what was I living for if I go back home alone? If when I get home, there’s no one there. If I’m not sharing a bed with someone. If I’m not laughing with someone. I… I love working hard and pushing myself but, it gets exhausting at times. When I have bad thoughts or when I need to talk to someone, I don’t know who to call. Youngjae and Mark worry too much. I don’t want them to worry because of me. They’ve already done so much for me.”

Then Jackson sat down between Jinyoung’s legs and Jinyoung sat down as well. His legs were still stretched and they were pressed by Jackson’s thighs but it wasn’t hurting.

“When I saw you and Jaebeom, I got Jealous. You guys have a good bond. You understand each other and there’s no guilt or sympathy involved in your actions. Even when Jaebeom was crying over the wedding you suggested an escort. God knows Mark would die laughing if I ever did that. I love Mark and I love Youngjae but I don’t know how much I can share. That night I just didn’t know what to do anymore,” Jackson said and stayed quiet again.

“You need someone to lean on,” Jinyoung said quietly. Jackson looked up at Jinyoung with expression so painful it hurts Jinyoung’s heart.

“You need someone to complain to and compliment. You need someone who’ll listen and laugh and cry but not judge. You need to trust someone.” Jinyoung wanted to suggest that that person could be him but he didn’t want to cross a line.

“You can start with Mark, you both have things in common, try opening your heart to him,” Jinyoung suggested. He also wanted to mention Youngjae but Jackson spoke first.

“I want it to be you.”

Jinyoung stayed quiet, he kept looking at Jackson. He wasn’t sure what expression he was carrying but Jackson looked tensed.

“Me?” Jinyoung said.

Jackson opened his mouth to answer but instead just gave him a nod.

Jinyoung wanted to speak, wanted to assure him with words, with actions but he couldn’t move. His heart was beating fast and loud.
“But if you’re in love with Jaebeom, I understand,” Jackson tried to lighten the mood. He thought he made a mistake.

At first Jinyoung did nothing, sat there quietly and Jackson started realizing that it was all a mistake after all. Maybe he ruined things with Jinyoung or maybe now they’ll act like this night never happened. Then Jackson felt a pillow smack him from his left.

“That shit hurted,” Jackson yelled. It didn’t, it didn’t hurt a bit.

“Do not say Jaebeom and love in the same sentence when you’re in bed with me,” Jinyoung yelled back.

“Is this what you call ‘in bed with you?’ are your expectations that low of being in bed with me?” Jackson yelled again and Jinyoung was suppressing a laugh.

This made Jinyoung feel at ease. This made him relax. He still wanted to talk about what Jackson said but this was required.

Jackson picked up the pillow from his side and smacked Jinyoung, maybe he did it a bit too hard.

Jinyoung covered his face and fell back. The room was quiet again. No voice or sound at all.

“I’m so so so sorry, Jinyoung,” Jackson started pleading and started rubbing Jinyoung’s hands. When he pulled them apart, he saw Jinyoung laughing.

“You are-” Jackson smacked him again and this time the room was filled with Jinyoung’s laughter.

“Laugh without covering your hands,” Jackson yelled and pulled at Jinyoung’s hands. Jinyoung moved them back at his face.

“Stop,” Jackson yelled again and they both were laughing.

Then Jackson took both of Jinyoung’s hand in his and pinned them on the bed.

“Don’t laugh with your hands,” Jackson stopped himself from speaking much because they were too close now. He just realized what their position was. Jinyoung was laid down on the bed with Jackson on top of him, his legs on both sides of Jinyoung’s lap.

Jinyoung swallowed and moved an inch again and Jackson wasted no time in meeting him halfway. Jackson let go of Jinyoung’s hands and they ended up tangled in Jackson’s hair. Even though this was their first kiss, it was intense. Not soft, how Jinyoung first intended it to be. Their lips, even though they started slow, moved fast now.

Jinyoung swallowed and moved an inch again and Jackson wasted no time in meeting him halfway. Jackson let go of Jinyoung’s hands and they ended up tangled in Jackson’s hair. Even though this was their first kiss, it was intense. Not soft, how Jinyoung first intended it to be. Their lips, even though they started slow, moved fast now.

Jackson had his hands on Jinyoung’s neck and he pulled him closer. Jackson wanted every inch he could get. Jinyoung pulled at Jackson’s hair and it let out a moan from Jackson’s mouth and made Jinyoung smile. Jackson pulled Jinyoung even closer and they weren’t sure how that could be possible. Jackson’s hand wasn’t moving much. They just kept positioning Jinyoung’s head to the right angle but his thumb was making circles on Jinyoung’s cheek.
As hot as the kiss was, Jinyoung felt shy.

“Jackson and Jinyoung the superior couple.” They heard that from the living room. Jackson pulled himself apart from Jinyoung and Jinyoung moved towards the end of the bed.

“What are they doing here?” Jackson yelling in a whisper.

“I can’t go outside like this,” Jinyoung said and rested his head in his hands.

“You think I can,” Jackson countered.

“Jackson, come out or we’re coming in,” Mark yelled from the living room and Bambam and Yugyeom laughed in union.

“They called for you,” Jinyoung smiled mischievously.

“I hate this,” Jackson said and walked towards the door.

“Jackson, wait,” Jinyoung said before Jackson could open the door, “Fix your hair,” He said shyly.

Jackson smiled and ran his hands in his hair, he licked his lips while he kept the eye contact with Jinyoung. “This is not over yet,” Jackson said.

“Tell them I’m asleep. I don’t wanna face them tonight,” Jinyoung said instead and laid down on the bed. Jackson just laughed and walked out.

“What took you seventy years?” Bambam teased.

“We were sleeping,” Jackson said, “Why are you guys where? Weren’t you staying over there?”

“Jaebeom kicked us out, apparently we were too loud and he wanted Youngjae to have a good sleep.” Yugyeom made a face.

“Love is annoying, don’t you dare fall in love as well,” Mark said to Jackson.

“I’ll make coffee, you guys stink,” Jackson said instead and walked towards the kitchen.

Jaebeom, on the other hand, was proud to kick them out. Youngjae yelled at him for that and said there was no need but there was. Youngjae was in and out of sleep a lot because of the voices, in the last two hours they were in the bed.

Youngjae even made sure that Jaebeom was sleeping at the other end of the bed and that there was safe distance between them.

“I don’t want you to get sick, this is not a cliché,” Youngjae has said.

Jaebeom has tried few things, he rolled towards Youngjae but Youngjae would stand up and it would physically pain Jaebeom to see Youngjae use all that energy.

“Can I just… can you just sleep with your face towards me?” Jaebeom asked.

“No, I am not breathing in that direction.”

“Nothing will happen, I swear.”

“Jaebeom, just sleep.”
Jaebeom stayed quiet for a minute. Then he just turned towards Youngjae and in a swift movement back-hugged him.

“Jaebeom, I swear if you get sick-”

“Shhh, I’ll only be here for a second,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae stopped protesting.

They stayed like that for a minute or longer, Youngjae had a smile plastered on his face.

“Get well soon, okay,” Jaebeom said and kissed Youngjae’s shoulder. “Goodnight,” He said again and kissed the back of Youngjae’s head.

Jaebeom went back to his end and soon they both drifted into sleep.

The next few days had the same pattern of Jaebeom babysitting Youngjae. It took Youngjae over five days to be fully okay and then they made plans to go out. Youngjae wanted Jaebeom to pick a place first so Jaebeom said they should go to a Museum.

Youngjae called Jackson to get advice on what to wear for the first date and they both ended up whining about how dates are nerve-wracking.

They laughed and when Youngjae was done, with a black jean and a coat, he walked out to get Jaebeom.

The door was already unlocked so he walked in quietly. He wanted to surprise Jaebeom. He could see that Jaebeom was in his balcony with Jinyoung and he walked towards them.

“With Youngjae.” Youngjae could hear Jaebeom say his name so he stopped and smiled. He wanted to know what they’re talking about. He wanted to see how Jaebeom talks of him when he’s not around.

“I don’t know how to say it,” Jaebeom started again and stopped. Youngjae just suppressed his smile. He stood in front of the refrigerator so that they can’t see him.

“I don’t know if I can ever be serious with Youngjae. If he can ever take Nina’s place.” Youngjae heard Jaebeom and he stopped breathing, his heart raced fast and his head was spinning.

“Things started off nice but I kept comparing him with Nina, how she was and how he is. They’re so different and even thought whatever happened with Nina was not right and was never real to begin with but things with Youngjae didn’t start off because we liked each other either.”

Youngjae held the counter which was right in front of him. Gripped it really tight.

“I don’t know if I could ever love Youngjae. Maybe I’ll start liking him but love? I’ve always believed that love takes time, it doesn’t happen overnight. Youngjae and I are so different, our world, our ambitions are so different. Could I ever be over Nina? Will I ever let that past rest? Will Youngjae ever be enough for me?”

Youngjae couldn’t process. He couldn’t get a hold of the situation, he wasn’t even sure what was happening anymore.

Jaebeom started again, “I don’t wanna lead Youngjae into believing we have a future-”

But was cut by, “I’m home,” Jackson yelled from the door and Youngjae looked at him with fear.
Jaebeom and Jinyoung looked from the balcony and they could see Jackson, they couldn’t see Youngjae though.

Youngjae rushed towards Jackson and gave him the warmest smile he could fake. “What are you doing here?” Jinyoung asked as he walked out from the balcony.

“I’m here to take you out on a date,” Jackson replied shyly.

“Now?” Jinyoung’s eyes went wide and he was surprised at that.

“Jaebeom and Youngjae are going out and I thought we should start somewhere as well,” Jackson said.

Jaebeom saw Youngjae and smiled at him but Youngjae acted like he was invested in Jinyoung and Jackson’s conversation.

“Where are we going?” Jinyoung asked.

“To Yugyeom’s dance class because I have a class in an hour but I’ll get you an ice cream beforehand.” Jinyoung laughed and pointed a finger towards Jackson as he looked at Jaebeom.

Jaebeom walked towards Youngjae and hugged him from behind. His arms tight and secure around Youngjae’s waist. “Hey,” Jaebeom whispered in Youngjae’s ear.

Youngjae’s stomach dropped at that. He was on the verge of crying but he couldn’t, couldn’t right now, not in front of them. He took a deep breath and tried finding his voice.

“So, is this a yes?” Jackson asked and Jinyoung kept laughing. He gave him a nod and Jackson jumped in excitement.

“You both are so annoying,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae was still in his arms.

“Says the man who has himself wrapped around Youngjae the minute Youngjae walked in,” Jinyoung said.

“I can’t go out with you,” Youngjae picked his words carefully. He slowly got out of Jaebeom’s hands.


“My mom called about half an hour ago and she asked me to visit. Pulled the whole parent card on me,” Youngjae said and looked at everything except for Jaebeom.

“I was looking forward to our date,” Jaebeom said and pouted, “We can go when you’re back.”

“I don’t wanna go.” Youngjae could feel his throat tightening up, “But I have to go.”

“Let me know when you’ll be back and message me once you get there, okay? Do you need a ride to a station or something? I can drop you off,” Jaebeom offered and Youngjae just shook his head.

Youngjae’s body was too warm, the temperature was rising, he wanted to get out from there.

“Are you okay? You look a little off,” Jaebeom said and moved towards Youngjae and Youngjae shook his head and took a step back. “I’m fine.”

He looked at Jaebeom for the first time then, Jaebeom had a worried expression on his face. Like, he
knew something was wrong but couldn’t figure it out.

How can someone so sweet be so fake, Youngjae thought to himself.

Jaebeom was trying to ask him question by his eyes but Youngjae ignored it. He hugged Jinyoung and Jackson quickly and said his goodbyes. Then he turned towards Jaebeom.

Jaebeom smiled and this time Youngjae’s heart was hurting. It didn’t give him the same warm feeling as before. Now it was like someone was stepping on it.

Youngjae got on his tiptoes and kissed Jaebeom’s cheek. “Goodbye, Jaebeom,” he said and squeezed Jaebeom’s hand. Jaebeom looked at him in confusion but didn’t utter a word.

Youngjae let go of Jaebeom’s hand and started walking. He didn’t know how he ended in his room but he was furiously packing. He loaded his suitcase and he booked a cab.

The silence was making him uncomfortable. It was his own house, he knew no one was in it, but it still made him feel uncomfortable. His chest was tight and so was his throat. He couldn’t sleep. No matter how much water he drank, his throat would remain dry.

Youngjae sat down on the floor, the cab was fifteen minutes away. He had time to kill.

Jaebeom’s word kept ringing in his head. His chest hurts. Jaebeom thought Youngjae wasn’t worth it. That’s what he said to Jinyoung.

Tears started to fall down Youngjae’s ears, “How could you think, someone like him would fall for someone like you?” Youngjae said to the empty room.

He held his chest and cried. Let every tear flow down. He couldn’t fight it anymore. Maybe Jaebeom was right, maybe Jaebeom would never love him, maybe they’re just too different from each other that this could never happen. Maybe Youngjae was just meant to get his heart broken by Jaebeom. Maybe that’s what you deserve when you fall too fast too soon.

Chapter End Notes

I UPDATED BEFORE THE COMEBACK. BE PROUD OF ME.

Writing angst cancelled. I made my heart hurt.
Let me know what you think of the chapter or the story. How you think it's going?

Thank you so much for reading and let's hope the boys have the best comeback EVER.

P.S. the aftermatch of jinson will be there in the next chapter. i had to rush this one because of the ending.
Jinyoung was used to waking up alone, one of the perks of having his own place. But he wasn’t sure why he had to wake up alone in Jaebeom’s bed when Jackson and him had a moment last night.

Jinyoung sat up on the bed and tried to collect his thoughts. He was sure both of them were sober and both of them wanted it. Then why was he feeling like shit, as if he was abandoned.

After he cleaned up he walked out of the room and noticed Mark was there on the sofa. They both greeted each other. Jinyoung was still not used to Mark’s presence. Even though they have interacted a few times they both haven’t had a one on one.

“So, everyone left?” Jinyoung asked as he entered the kitchen to get himself some water. He wanted to ask about Jackson but wasn’t sure how Mark would take that.

“They all left early morning, I don’t recall what happened, I was too drunk to understand what they were saying,” Mark said and Jinyoung offered him some water as well.

“Oh okay,” Jinyoung replied. The conversation died there. From what Jinyoung has noticed about Mark was that he wasn’t talkative but it wasn’t like he was silent as well. He was just selective with the people he talked around. If you were to catch him with Jackson or Youngjae, he would be cracking jokes and would be comfortable but if he was left alone with Jaebeom or Yugyeom, as they aren’t very familiar with each other, he’ll stay quiet.

“Jackson looked happy.” It caught Jinyoung off guard when Mark initiated a conversation.

“He was?”

“Yeah, did something happen last night?” Mark asked and Jinyoung turned around to make his way towards the kitchen.

“Nothing unusual.”

“So, kissing is usual for you?” Jinyoung could hear the smirk in Mark’s words.

“He told you?” Jinyoung asked, still couldn’t look at Mark. Jinyoung was a bit tensed.

“He mentioned it like ten times last night,” Mark smirked again.

“I didn’t say anything because I wasn’t sure if he would wanna tell, we haven’t talked about it yet,” Jinyoung said in his defence. It wasn’t like he never wanted to talk about it but it was just that he wasn’t sure if it was something to talk about. If it was something that will be a constant in life.

“The whole town will know about it before you guys could even talk, he was just happy and babbled all night. He must have thought we all were too drunk to remember but jokes on him.”

Jinyoung felt shy, he tried to contain a smile but it still slipped through his lips.

“What more did he say?” Jinyoung asked.

“If I’m gonna tell you everything, what are you two gonna talk about?” Mark said and laid down on
the sofa again. There were few pillows and blankets thrown in every direction of it. They all must have slept there last night.

“Are you going to stay over? I’m not sure when Jaebeom’s gonna be here and I need to open the shop.”

“Yeah, you can go, I’ll be here. Jaebeom’s probably still babying Youngjae.”

With that Jinyoung was out the door. He wanted to walk to the shop, to clear his head. A lot happened and he needed to talk to Jaebeom. He didn’t want to disturb Youngjae by calling Jaebeom in case they both were still asleep. So, he decided to call the second-best option.

“Try living a day without me,” Yugyeom said the second he picked up.

“I’m gonna kick your ass where are you?” Jinyoung asked.

“I’m going to my mom’s place, didn’t Jaebeom tell you? I told him already, he said it was fine,” Yugyeom’s voice sounded panicky.

“Oh, you did? Nah, he hasn’t mentioned it,” Jinyoung still tried recalling his conversation with Jaebeom and he was sure nowhere was Yugyeom mentioned.

“I can come back—” before Yugyeom could finish a loud Bambam yelled at him, “We’re not going back. Stop. He won’t hit you.”

He felt relaxed already and let out a loud laugh. It was too early in the morning for him to try and suppress his laughter.

“So cute,” a familiar voice said from the other side of the phone and Jinyoung went quiet all of a sudden.

“Yugyeom?” Jinyoung said in confusion.

“Yeah,” Yugyeom was laughing.

“Where are you?” Jinyoung asked.

“In a car,” Yugyeom replied in between of his laugh.

“Yugyeom,” Jinyoung said in a very serious tone.

“I’m with Bambam and Jackson, we’re going to my parents.”

Jinyoung stayed quiet, so it was Jackson. His ears weren’t deceiving him.

“Jinyoung, missed me?” Jackson’s cheerful voice came from the phone and it made Jinyoung’s heart jump.

“Am I on speaker?” Jinyoung asked instead.

“Do you want me to put you off?” Yugyeom asked sincerely.

“When are you coming back?” Jinyoung asked. This question was directed more at Jackson but he was sure they wouldn’t get a hint.

“In a couple of days, we stay the night and then maybe tomorrow’s night as well and then we’ll be
back the next day."

“He’s talking to Jackson,” Bambam yelled at Yugyeom which ended in another round of laughter.

“I left you a note,” Jackson said.

“You messaged me?” Jinyoung took the phone in his other hand to check the messages.

“No no, I left you a note, a hand-written note, on Jaebeom’s bedside table.”

“What made you think I’ll check Jaebeom’s table?” Jinyoung asked in frustration. Not over Jackson but over how there’s a note and Jinyoung couldn’t reach it.

“So, you didn’t see. It’s okay, I’ll write you another one.”

“I’ll go back and get it,” Jinyoung said and turned around to get to Jaebeom’s place.

“Don’t worry, it wasn’t explicit. You go home and get some rest, I’ll call you when I reach Yugyeom’s.”

“How did you get invited?” Jinyoung asked curiously. Yugyeom never asked him or Jaebeom.

“No plans,” Bambam replied instead, “Yugyeom said he was going to his parents and I said I’d go as well. He told Jackson his parents would love him and Jackson said then he should meet them as well so that’s how the three of us ended up going on a road trip.”

“Drive safe,” Jinyoung said shyly. “I’ll see you all later.” Jinyoung emphasised on the word ‘All’ before they could make it about Jackson.

When they hung up, he dropped a message to Jaebeom and asked him to just get the note without reading it or he would be a dead man.

Jackson never called. Jinyoung knew he would be busy but Jinyoung couldn’t stop thinking about it, couldn’t stop looking at his phone every five minutes in hope of seeing Jackson’s name on it.

He was being stupid, he knew it. He needed to get a grip on himself. Jackson mustn’t have called because he was busy, because he was with his friends at his friend’s house.

He ended up calling Jaebeom.

“Still hasn’t called?” Jaebeom asked. Jinyoung moved around his living room, turned off all the lights to make his way towards his bedroom.

“Can we not talk about it?” Jinyoung asked instead. It was more of a statement but he was tired.

“How were things at the shop? Sorry, I couldn’t be there today. Even though Youngjae looked way better today, he’s still weak.”

“We had less people in the morning but by the evening, every hungover person in the area was at the shop,” Jinyoung said and made his way to his bed.

“Wow, that’s good for business but bad for you. Good, you stayed distracted.”

“Yeah, how’s Youngjae though?”

“I literally just told you he’s better but weak,” Jaebeom replied with a laugh.
“I’m sorry, my mind’s caught up. Why wouldn’t he call?” Jinyoung kept recalling the night and everything ended on good terms, then why wouldn’t he?

“You know how busy you get with things and talks whenever you visit my home, it’s the same for Jackson. He must be excited and as they’re meeting for the first time, he must be happy.” Jaebeom tried his best to comfort Jinyoung. “It’s not that you’re a bad kisser.”

“Shut up,” Jinyoung said and Jaebeom just kept laughing on the other end. “Do not speak more, I don’t wanna hear you talk about it.”

“I’m just saying, and even though it’s not from experience—”

“Gross,” Jinyoung interrupted him.

“Mind you, Youngjae said I’m a great kisser,” Jaebeom said in his defence and it lightened Jinyoung’s mood.

“I don’t wanna hear about your kissing or my kissing,” Jinyoung yelled.

“Whatever suits you, I was just letting you know a little trivia.”

“I’ll never need this information in my life.” Then they got on other topics and never touched Youngjae or Jackson.

“I’m really exhausted, I worked all day and I got very little sleep, so I’m heading to bed. You’re coming to work tomorrow?” Jinyoung asked.

“Right before lunch, I’ll make Youngjae lunch and then I’ll head to work, boss.”

“How are you two?” Jinyoung asked, it was the first time since Jaebeom’s panic over how he thought Youngjae doesn’t want to see him anymore. They haven’t been left alone for Jinyoung to ask.

“Good, yeah. We talked. It was nothing, he was sick, phone died, stuff like that,” Jaebeom said and Jinyoung could hear relief in his voice. A sense of calmness. “We have a date a day after tomorrow.”

“Really? That’s good, where are you going?” Jinyoung asked. He was happy for his best friend. Jaebeom has been through tough times and he deserved this, deserved to be out on dates and be happy. Deserved to laugh with another person and deserved to give his heart to someone else as well.

“A museum,” Jaebeom replied proudly.

“Are you forcing him to do it?” Jinyoung laughed.

“We came up with a thing where we go on a date at my favourite place and then at his and then at someplace we both enjoy, that way we have more dates to ourselves.”

Jinyoung laughed loudly, “You both are so cute.”

“Don’t call me cute,” Jaebeom pretended to be disgusted.

“Say that to Youngjae, I dare you.” They went on another banter for a while before they hung up.

There was no call from Jackson the next day as well. Jinyoung thought about dropping a message but wasn’t sure what to write. Jinyoung was already home now, he just wanted a distraction, he
messaged Bambam and Yugyeom but none of them replied so he just assumed Jackson was just as busy as them.

It was already around midnight and he wasn’t planning on staying up for long, he tried reading but couldn’t wrap his head around the text. Then he received a facetime from Jackson.

Jinyoung wasn’t sure what was happening, he stared at his phone for too long, he stood up in a rush and checked himself in the mirror. He sat back and took a deep breath but it was too late, the call died. Now Jinyoung was confused if Jackson accidently called him or it was intentional, should he call back?

*You look great, Jinyoung. Just pick up.* Jackson sent a message to Jinyoung. It instantly made Jinyoung smile. Then within seconds Jackson called again and this time Jinyoung picked up.

The video quality was pretty decent but the lighting around Jackson was low, Jinyoung on the other hand was in his bedroom with the lights on.

“Jinyoung?” Jackson asked in confusion because none of them spoke for few seconds.

“Hi, yeah, where are you?” Jinyoung asked, the screen was still pretty dark and Jinyoung couldn’t understand anything.

“I just got home and I’m opening the door.” And then Jinyoung heard the click of the door and Jackson turned on the light as soon as he was inside. Jackson still moved around a lot, putting things here and there and went to get water for himself and in the middle of it all, he took off his hoodie and was now in his tank top.

“I’m so sorry I couldn’t call,” Jackson said when he finally sat down on his bed. Jackson looked handsome, the lighting was perfect and he looked good, really good. Jinyoung wanted to tell him.

“It’s okay,” Jinyoung replied short.

“I had too many people around me all the time, Yugyeom’s parents are super nice and his brother is amazing. Bambam, Yugyeom and I shared a room. I was just never alone to call. I wanted to drop a text but—”

“It’s okay it’s okay, we’re talking now,” Jinyoung said and smiled. Jinyoung was worried just a few minutes ago but he wasn’t anymore. Hearing Jackson’s voice was nice.

“Yeah, so, let’s start with addressing the kiss,” Jackson said very innocently and Jinyoung pressed his lips. Tried his best not to laugh out loud but at the end, he did. He laughed loudly and Jackson just kept looking.

“What? Why are you laughing like this?” Jackson asked with half a smile and confusion.

“Oh God, Jackson. You’re so funny,” Jinyoung composed himself and said. He took another deep breath and looked at Jackson. “Let’s talk about it then.”

“It wasn’t a one-time thing for you, right?” Jackson asked sincerely. With Jackson’s expression, Jinyoung could tell that he has been thinking about it for long.

“It wasn’t. Was it for you?”

“No, never.” Jackson smiled, the full smile he always does when he’s genuinely happy.
“So, why did you kiss me?” Jackson asked and Jinyoung gasped, choked and coughed.

“I kissed you? You kissed me,” Jinyoung was still choking.

“I was too nervous to do it, I’ve been wanting to do it for a long time so I’m sure, you kissed me,” Jackson said with a smile. Jinyoung could see Jackson was blushing and Jinyoung wasn’t any better. Jinyoung kept running his hands through his hair to calm himself down, this was all too overwhelming.

“You wanted to do it for a long time?” Jinyoung smiled. He didn’t intend for it to be a question but it sounded like one.

“I guess everyone knew I had a crush on you,” Jackson confession and he was jumpy, couldn’t sit still. Energy too high and all of this just made Jackson more nervous.

“Jackson wang, are you confessing?” Jinyoung laughed. Jinyoung’s heart was racing, he was nervous. It has been so long since someone, anyone for that matter, just made him feel special.

“My kiss was a confession!” and then Jackson yelled. His face towards the ceiling and it was more of a squeal than a shout. Jinyoung laughed louder. Covered his face with his free hand and just kept laughing.

“I wanna kiss you more!” Jackson yelled again and was beaming from ear to ear. “Stop laughing and say something, you’re making me nervous.”

Jinyoung looked at Jackson again for a second, he wished they weren’t facetiming, for a second, he wished Jackson was right in front of him, for a second, he wished he could touch Jackson, so they both could calm down.

“Go out on a date with me, Jackson,” Jinyoung hoped and prayed that he sounded confident. His heart was beating too fast he couldn’t even hear himself.

Jackson smiled, Jinyoung could swear he could just watch Jackson laugh and smile all day.

“Yes, yes, when?”

“Tomorrow evening, if you’re free?” Jinyoung said and Jackson opened his mouth to say something but instead he tilted his head in confusion.

“I have a class,” Jackson said in the lowest voice possible.

“Oh, okay, no problem. We can make it some other day.” Jinyoung still kept smiling. He just wanted to go on a date with Jackson. Anywhere, any time would be fine with him.

“I’ll think of something, I promise,” Jackson said.

“We can go some other day, that’s not an issue-”

“I wanna see you,” Jackson said innocently and it made Jinyoung’s heart skip a beat. Jackson has this power of saying what’s on his mind and he made it sound so intimate and it warms Jinyoung.

“You look good, like, really good,” Jinyoung said instead. Jackson looked confused, he tilted his head sideways and then opened his mouth slowly.

“I… look good?” Jackson said in confusion.
“Yeah, I wanted to say it when you I saw you but I got nervous and, you look good. I wanted to tell you that,” Jinyoung said and looked everywhere except for Jackson’s face.

“Thank you,” Jackson said shyly and then he laughed. Jackson’s laugh relaxed Jinyoung and then soon enough they were both laughing.

“I wanna see you too.”

“What are you doing tomorrow??” Jackson asked.

“I’m going to Jaebeom’s in the morning,” Jinyoung said happily. “And you should sleep now,” Jinyoung added. He has noticed Jackson yawn at least seven times since they started talking.

“No no, I’m good. I can talk more.”

“You should though, you must have been driving all day, just get some rest and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“But I don’t wanna sleep right now,” Jackson said with another yawn.

“I’m hanging up, good night,” Jinyoung said and Jackson made a sad pout. Jinyoung started laughing. He has realized that being around Jackson just made him happy in a way that he was always laughing or smiling. They both fought till Jackson yawned again and this time they said goodnights and hung up.

Jinyoung was at Jaebeom’s place early, they had breakfast together and were in his balcony. Jaebeom has seem relaxed and happy. Youngjae and him were going on a date at an art museum. Jinyoung told Jaebeom about his call with Jackson last night and Jaebeom just teased him for the rest of the day. They both were happy.

“I’m thinking of taking Youngjae back to my parent’s house this weekend,” Jaebeom said suddenly.

“Really? That soon? You guys were just there a few weeks ago,” Jinyoung said and sipped his coffee.

“Yeah but that time we were fake dating, I mean, we still haven’t talked about what we are but I guess we both are clear what we’re even when we haven’t said it. So, I kinda wanna introduce him properly. Of course, my parents won’t know but at least it’ll be real from my side.”

“I’m really happy for you Jaebeom,” Jinyoung said and smiled to himself. “I don’t wanna bring up the past but, after Nina I just, you were just so hard on yourself and I hated seeing you like that. You kept blaming yourself for so long. You isolated yourself and you got this wall around you and now I’m just happy that Youngjae could break past that wall.”

“Yeah, well, it wasn’t the same when it all started. I was so nervous at first and I would constantly debate the next step but after a point it just all started happening so naturally.”

“What do you mean?” Jinyoung asked.

“You know, like, when we met before, I would run hundred scenarios of how our meeting will go. I have his dialogues ready and mine ready. I’ll come up with different topics we could talk about. Like, when that road trip happened, to my parents. I had it all planned, of what we’ll talk about. But it just never happened, he took charge, his answers were so different of how I imagined them to be. He genuinely seemed interested. There was never that awkward air between us and I didn’t have to constantly think of things to say to fill the silence.”
“You sound so sappy, I’m so happy for you,” Jinyoung said and pushed Jaebeom’s shoulder.

“But in the very start of when I started actually feeling things for Youngjae, it was so different, I was just so sacred.”

“Do you wanna talk about it?” Jinyoung asked calmly.

“Well, when it all started, I just was in different state of mind, I just was so stupid and I tried thinking of every negative thing there ever was,” Jaebeom said and took a deep breath.

“Well, in the starting I just kept on thinking the same thing over and over, like, with Youngjae.” Jaebeom stopped to collect his thoughts, he wanted it to sound sincere. He wanted to express how he was feeling back then.

“I don’t know how to say it,” Jaebeom started again and stopped. He rubbed his face because he knew what he was going to say now would sound bad.

“I thought things like...I don’t know if I can ever be serious with Youngjae. If he can ever take Nina’s place. Things started off nice but I kept comparing him with Nina, how she was and how he is. They’re so different and even thought whatever happened with Nina was not right and was never real to begin with but things with Youngjae didn’t start off because we liked each other either.”

Jinyoung stayed quiet in the whole of it. He just wanted Jaebeom to let out all the things he has trapped inside him. If those were the things he once felt, he should let it out of his system.

“I don’t know if I could ever love Youngjae. Maybe I’ll start liking him but love? I’ve always believed that love takes time, it doesn’t happen overnight. Youngjae and I are so different, our world, our ambitions are so different. Could I ever be over Nina? Will I ever let that past rest? Will Youngjae ever be enough for me?” The more Jaebeom spoke, the more he realized how stupid his thoughts were back then and how much things have changed. If someone were to say these same things to him now, he would have laughed at them.

Jaebeom started again, “I don’t wanna lead Youngjae into believing we have a future-” Jackson loud “I’m home” interrupted them all.

Jinyoung saw Jackson near the kitchen with Youngjae. They both must have entered now. They all greeted each other and Youngjae told them he would be leaving home to see his parents. There was something off about Youngjae at that moment but Jinyoung wasn’t sure what it was. Maybe Youngjae was still recovering from his sickness.

Jinyoung and Jackson left soon enough after Youngjae was gone.

“Youngjae seemed different,” Jinyoung mentioned to Jackson on their way to the studio.

“He did, right? I’ll give him a call after the classes, maybe he just really wanted to go out but now has to go home,” Jackson said and bumped his shoulder with Jinyoung. Who laughed softly.

“What are you doing?” Jinyoung asked in between his laugh.

“What? I just wanted to do it,” Jackson said and pushed Jinyoung again and this time Jinyoung overreacted and acted like he was trembling.

“You’re so strong,” Jinyoung said and rubbed his shoulder.

“You like it, right?” Jackson said and winked at Jinyoung.
Once inside the dance studio, Jinyoung went to sit in a corner. It was a professional class and he didn’t want to act unprofessional.

Yugyeom arrived with Bambam soon enough. Yugyeom joined Jackson in the front and Bambam joined Jinyoung in the corner.

“What are you doing here?” Bambam asked when he sat down next to Jinyoung.

“I’m on a date,” Jinyoung said shyly.

“With twenty other people, you’re really open with this relationship, man,” Bambam said and Jinyoung hit his hand.

“Jackson was busy and he said he wanted me to see the studio, so, I’m here,” Jinyoung whispered. He was afraid of being too loud, louder than the music and louder than Jackson and Yugyeom’s instructions. Bambam and Jinyoung talked softly in whispered for another hour till the class was over.

Some people left as soon as the class was over and some just laid down on the floor to catch their breath. Yugyeom and Jackson thanked everyone for coming and then Yugyeom made his way towards Bambam and Jinyoung with a bottle of water in his hand. Jinyoung’s attention was captured by Jackson instead.

The sweat was shining on his arms. He was in his tank top and after having a bottle of water, he took the tank top off. Jinyoung tried hard not to stare, tried to take his eyes off off Jackson’s chest and torso but he failed. Bambam and Yugyeom just laughed in the background. Jackson didn’t even look at them and Jinyoung was thankful. Jinyoung was very aware that his mouth was a little open but he didn’t close it.

A person approached Jackson and Jinyoung’s attention shifted. The girl was laughing, her hands hovering around Jackson’s but not touching. Her body language said she was flirting, Jackson’s laugh said she was flirting and her eyes said she was flirting. Jinyoung thought of getting up and to stand next to Jackson but he also wanted to see how Jackson would react now.

Bambam, Yugyeom and Jinyoung all watched Jackson in fascination. Then the girl’s expression changed, Jinyoung couldn’t hear what they were talking about but he could clearly see their faces. From flirty, her expression changed to bitter and guarded. Jackson then turned and pointed towards where Jinyoung was sitting. She looked at Jinyoung with bitterness but bowed to him to say hello, Jackson waved towards Jinyoung and Jinyoung bowed and waved back. A sense of pride and happiness started building up in Jinyoung’s chest.

Once the girl left and everyone from the class left, it was just the four of them.

“You’re trying too hard to impress Jinyoung,” Yugyeom laughed.

“What? What do you mean?” Jackson said and sat face to face with Jinyoung, just like how Yugyeom sat with Bambam. They all looked like were sitting in a roughly drawn circle.

“You never take your top off and as soon as Jinyoung was here, you started stripping,” Bambam commented and high fived Yugyeom.

“You guys are too dramatic, leave,” Jinyoung laughed.

“We’re not going anywhere,” Yugyeom replied.
“Actually, you are. It’s supposed to be our date,” he moved his hand between him and Jinyoung. “And we don’t want an audience.”

“Wow, I see how this is, Jack. This is what our friendship has come down to.” Bambam stood up and so did Yugyeom and they started collecting their stuff.

“Bambam, you knew I have a date today and you purposely came just to ruin it.”

“And what about it?” Bambam said sarcastically and they both started walking towards the door.

“Just go to the shop or I’ll listen to what Jaebeom always says and will fire you both.” Jinyoung playfully threatened them.

Yugyeom threw a loose t-shirt in Jinyoung’s direction and started walking out. Bambam turned to Yugyeom and said, “Unlike Jaebeom and Youngjae, I believe they’ll be all over each other as soon as we step out of the door.”

Jinyoung ran towards the door but Yugyeom and Bambam ran faster.

“I swear these kids,” Jinyoung said as he closed the door. He wasn’t sure if he was supposed to lock it so he left it as it is.

Jackson stood at the end of the room, this covered in sweat. His muscles defined, his track pants hung low. Jinyoung’s blood rushed towards his neck and cheeks. The fact that they were alone made him more nervous.

“You like what you see?” Jackson teased and crossed his arms, it gave his biceps more definition. Jinyoung threw the t-shirt Yugyeom gave him.

“Wear something, you’ll catch a cold.”

“There are other ways I can warm my body,” Jackson winked and laughed. He was nervous as well. Jackson and Jinyoung has always flirted but this time it was different. This time it was purposeful. To rile each other up.

“What were you talking to the girl about?” Jinyoung asked instead. He was a curious man.

“You really wanna talk about her?” Jackson said and wore the t-shirt Jinyoung gave him. They both sat down, face to face, keens touching.

“Tell me, I wanna know,” Jinyoung said softly. The room was big with huge mirrors everywhere, from ceiling to the floor. Talking in the normal tone just made his voice echo so he started whispering. There was some music playing in the background, something Yugyeom played and left and they didn’t change it.

“She asked me where I work out because she is looking for a good gym,” Jackson started.

“Wow, typical,” Jinyoung said bitterly.

“Are you jealous,” Jackson laughed.

“Just continue.”

“I told her there’s a gym near my place and then she asked me where I live and I told her and she said she lives nearby and maybe we can hang out someday,” Jackson said and kept his eyes on Jinyoung, he knew Jinyoung didn’t like the way the girl acted but it wasn’t her fault. Jackson
playfully took one of Jinyoung’s hand in his and started playing with his fingers.

“I told her I’m here on a date and then I pointed towards you,” Jackson said and pressed his hand firmly.

Jinyoung looked up at him and pressed his lips hard. He didn’t want to smile. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Jackson said and leaned slowly, “And I told her that he gives the best kisses as well.”

Jinyoung just pushed Jackson’s chest softly and threw his head back and laughed. His laughed echoed the room. Jackson still didn’t let go of his hand so Jinyoung couldn’t cover his face, “You’re so cheesy,” he said.

“I can stop,” Jackson replied. Jinyoung leaned forwards towards Jackson. “Never,” he said before softly pressing his lips with Jackson’s.

“You’re birthday is tomorrow, what’s your plan?” Jinyoung asked Jaebeom. Jinyoung, Jackson and Jaebeom were all gathered at Jaebeom’s house for no other reason than it’s the shortest distance for Jinyoung and Jackson to meet up.

“I don’t wanna be bugged.”

“Bambam thinks otherwise,” Jackson informed. Jackson sat down on the floor, in between Jinyoung’s legs and Jaebeom was on the extreme end of the same sofa.

“Tell him to stop then, I’m not in the mood,” Jaebeom said firmly. He hasn’t been in a mood for anything from last few days. To be honest with himself, since the day Youngjae left for his mom’s.

“Why? Because you don’t think Youngjae will be able to make it? I’ll ask him the next time he calls,” Jackson said and for no reason squeezed one of Jinyoung’s leg. Jinyoung hit him as a response to that.

“You’ve been in touch with him?” Jaebeom asked, he didn’t want to raise people’s eyebrow so he just flipped the page of the book in his hand.

“Yeah, he calls me every day, haven’t you guys been talking?” Jackson asked and this time there was confusion and concern in his voice.

“When is he coming back?” Jaebeom asked instead and he could feel Jinyoung’s eyes on him.

“Jaebeom, what’s happening?” Jinyoung asked and sat up straight. Jaebeom could sense the concern in Jinyoung’s voice but he just didn’t want Jinyoung to worry, especially when he wasn’t sure what even was happening.

“I honestly don’t know,” Jaebeom answered honestly and closed the book he was pretending to read.

“Do you want me to call and ask Youngjae?” Jackson suggested. He was still on the floor but his posture looked stiff. Jaebeom hated how he made the mood of the room so serious and dull.

“It hardly matters, I’ll talk to him when he’s here,” Jaebeom said.

“It’s really fine, I’ll call and will casually ask.”

Jackson dialled Youngjae’s number and put it on speaker. Everyone waited silently as they heard the phone ring.
“Jackson, thank God you called,” Youngjae sounded excited, his tone was high and seemed like he was just in a conversation.

“What’s happening?” Jackson laughed with confusion.

“So, my parents are dragging me to this get-together kinda thing and I would rather not,” Youngjae said.

“Don’t tell me you’ve just been playing games since you went home?” Jackson asked. Jaebeom felt a little uneasy with the whole conversation. Maybe it was just that Youngjae had been dodging his calls and messages a lot lately.

“If playing with Coco count-”

“It doesn’t,” Jackson yelled in the speaker.

“Did you call me to scold? And I was anyway about to call you.”

“Yeah, why?”

“Because I was bored. My friends here still have office during the day so, I just can’t drop by to see them. All my plans are night plans.” While Youngjae spoke, Jackson stole a glance at Jaebeom.

“Have you spoken to Jaebeom since you got there?” Jackson asked straight out and received a smack on the shoulder for both, Jaebeom and Jinyoung. He aggressively mouthed ‘What?’ while Youngjae answered.

“Not really, he called a several times but I haven’t picked up,” Youngjae said and paused. Jackson stayed quiet as well. He wasn’t sure if this was the right time to inform Youngjae that Jaebeom was right there with them. “I just don’t think it’s working out, you know.”

Before Jackson could utter a word, Jaebeom put the call on mute and off speaker. “I don’t think it’s a conversation I should listen,” he said and stood from the sofa, he debated going into his bedroom but went to the balcony instead.

Jaebeom could still hear Jackson in the background but he tried to block him out.

“You okay?” Jinyoung asked. Jaebeom wasn’t sure how long Jinyoung had been standing there.

Jaebeom wasn’t sure, so, he stayed quiet.

“Did something happen?” Jinyoung asked another question and Jaebeom just shook his head. Nothing happened, Jaebeom was sure of that. Nothing truly happened. They were good. They truly were. Jaebeom kept going back to the last few days, the days he spent with Youngjae. He was fine after the sickness. He was fine when they planned on the date. Youngjae hadn’t shown any discomfort towards their relationship, if this was to call one. But then something did happen and Jaebeom just isn’t sure about it.

They stayed there for a while, just two boys out on the balcony looking at the traffic. Jackson was off the phone, Jaebeom was sure, there was no voice coming from the living room.

After a while Jackson peeked in the balcony and announced that his classes start soon and he would have to leave. Jaebeom and him said their goodbyes but none of them asked or told the other one what happened.
Jaebeom tried reading Jackson’s body language, his hug, his smile. Just to see if there was any pity or sympathy in it. If, whatever him and Youngjae talked about, was that bad or not. But there was none, Jackson treated Jaebeom just the way he has always treated him.

“Do you want me to send Yugyeom and Bambam over?” Jinyoung asked from the door, he was supposed to help out at the shop as well.


Jinyoung was out the door as well.

Jaebeom wasn’t huge on birthdays. It was just another day for him. As he stayed in his bed and stared at the ceiling, he started looking back at when birthday just became another day. Maybe it all started when Nina got him that shitty cake two times in a row. Or Maybe it started when his parents told him that, as a birthday present, he should come back home when he was still with Nina. Or maybe it started when he moved here, when he altogether stopped looking at the calendar.

A call from his parents interrupted his thoughts. They did call at midnight to wish him but as they’re getting old, it gets harder and harder for them to stay till late. They always call in the morning to wish him properly. They talked for about half an hour and his mom asked him what his plan for the day is, when he told them he just wanted to stay in, she asked if he wanted to come home and he said maybe next time. She asked him about Youngjae and Jaebeom lied.

The whole day went by pretty fast. The phone calls end early. Everyone called in the morning and by the afternoon he received everyone’s wishes. Except Youngjae. He hasn’t heard from him.

Or maybe if you count a small, ‘Happy Birthday, Jaebeom. Have a great time.’ a birthday message then, he heard from everyone that day. Even Mark called but not Youngjae.

Jinyoung dropped by at around seven. He made Jaebeom change into something that’s more suited for an outdoor activity.

“If we’re just going to a club and you’re gonna throw drinks on me, I would rather wear something meh,” Jaebeom said as he sorted out his clothes from his wardrobe.

“I’m sorry, it wasn’t my idea. I asked them to stop but everyone was just too excited. Bambam, Mark and Jackson planned the whole thing.”

“It’s okay, how long do I have to be there?” Jaebeom asked as he took out hoodie. Jinyoung walked from behind and took the hoodie from Jaebeom’s hand.

“The whole night, well, till they decide it’s the end of the night.”

“I hate it,” Jaebeom cried.

“I’m so sorry,” Jinyoung smiled.

They both left the apartment soon enough, Jaebeom in a leather jacket with a white t-shirt and a ripped jean. Jinyoung just called him basic.

Once inside the club, Jaebeom made sure to sit between Bambam and Yugyeom. He just wanted this to be a relaxed evening. Jinyoung and Jackson sat together, which was obvious. They all found a round table in a corner and made it their own little place. It started getting a little hot and humid so Jaebeom took off his jacket.
The place wasn’t far from Jaebeom’s place and it was closer to where Bambam and Yugyeom were staying, so they all walked here. They all had plans to drink heavy and no one wanted to be the designated driver. They all started drinking but somehow Jaebeom wasn’t sure if he wanted to be drunk tonight.

He ordered himself a soft drink and just listened to the rest of the group talk about different stuff. Majority of it Jaebeom understood but when Yugyeom and Bambam started talking about classes then it was just a fictional story with no faces.

“We’re here.” Was yelled towards the group, it took Jaebeom a minute to register that the voice was of Mark. Jackson already informed them that Mark would be late for the party, if this was to call one.

The whole group greeted Mark, high fives and air hugs all around the table. Mark moved towards Jaebeom and then Jaebeom saw him. Youngjae. Standing awkwardly with no place to hide.

“I’ve even got a present for you,” Mark said to Jaebeom as he smiled towards Youngjae. “Happy birthday.”

Jaebeom stayed silent and it felt like the whole group was silent for a second. Mark moved a little to make way for Youngjae to sit and he asked Yugyeom to swap places with Jaebeom so that Youngjae could sit with him.

“Let’s separate all the couples,” a very actor-like Jinyoung said.


“And that’s exactly why,” Jinyoung said as he stood up from his seat and shifted towards Bambam, so that Bambam was next to Jackson and Jinyoung was next to Jaebeom. Which meant Yugyeom would be next to Youngjae. “If we let them sit together, they’ll forget all about us.”

“My man has got a point,” Jackson sounded nervous as he said that. To anyone else, it would seem like the purpose of it all was to make Jaebeom and Youngjae interact with the group, but Jaebeom knew what Jackson and Jinyoung were doing.

Jinyoung just blushed to Jackson’s word and then squeezed Jaebeom’s thigh, as if to convey that things will be okay. Jaebeom truly hoped so.

No one noticed but Youngjae avoided Jaebeom throughout the night, never looked at him but he did laugh at everything everyone said. If Bambam was to asked, he would say that he thought everything was okay. Jaebeom tried hard not to dwell on it for long.

Jaebeom hated birthdays.

“I have an announcement, now that y’all are here, I guess this is the best time to tell you guys,” Yugyeom cleared his throat and spoke a little too loudly.

“So, Bambam recorded a video of Jackson and I a few weeks ago. It was kind of a stage performance. Jackson and I just got too much into ‘we can make music’ and ended up with a rough draft and just performed it as if we’re on stage.” Yugyeom had everyone’s attention. Even Jaebeom’s.

“I posted it on my instagram and twitter, just the random dance covers I post now and then. But a few days ago, I received a message from a label.” This had the whole group’s jaw dropped.

“Yugyeom, oh my god, tell me you accepted it,” Jinyoung yelled.
“I haven’t even told you guys anything,” Yugyeom laughed.

“Just spoil me,” Jinyoung was drunk.

“They liked Jackson’s voice, asked me if he was interested in an audition for the label.” Yugyeom smiled shyly. Everyone turned towards Jackson.

“Me?” Jackson almost yelled. “They wanna audition me?” Jackson yelled this time. He was drunk but maybe this sobered him up a little.

“Yeah, the label is called TeamWang and they’re new and upcoming in China, I looked them and everything. I guess you’ll be their first batch of trainees or something, I told them that you’re a friend and I’ll have to ask you first and then they gave me a producer’s number and asked me to give it to you so that you can give them a call whenever you’re ready with your answer.” Yugyeom practically threw himself at Jackson to hug him.

“TeamWang? They named a label after Jackson?” Jinyoung said and everyone laughed. Jinyoung truly was drunk. Yugyeom realized that maybe the conversation should have happened when they all were sober.

Youngjae and Mark offered to get the drinks. Jackson and Jinyoung yelled their orders and Bambam ordered for him and Yugyeom. Jaebeom said he didn’t want anything.

Jaebeom kept looking at Youngjae but Youngjae never turned back. When they got back from the bar, Mark placed all the drinks on the table. Jaebeom noticed that Youngjae was talking to two girls. They both looked younger than him, had a pretty face and they dressed up to party. They both were laughing and one of them was just throwing herself on Youngjae. She would slightly touch his hand and would stand a little too close.

Jaebeom wanted to look away but he couldn’t. Youngjae was laughing and talking to them. If things would have been okay between the two of them, Jaebeom wouldn’t have been this bothered or jealous.

Jaebeom just kept looking, he blocked out the music and he could hear what they were talking.

“Maybe we could catch up someday, you can give me your number and I can hit you up?” The blonde one said with hope in her voice.

Jaebeom couldn’t hear right because Yugyeom asked him to pass a glass but when Jaebeom turned back on their conversation the girl said, “oh, are you here with someone?”

Jaebeom was on alert because Youngjae laughed lightly. Jaebeom wanted to know what Youngjae was going to say to that. How Youngjae would react on being approach because the situation between them was different now.

Youngjae turned his head towards the group and his eyes locked with Jaebeom’s. Jaebeom’s heart started beating fast. There has always been a way Youngjae would look at Jaebeom, with admiration, love, warmth, innocence, mischief but this time it was sorrow, guilt and confusion.

“I’m here with friends,” Youngjae replied. His eyes still fixed on Jaebeom’s.

Jaebeom already tuned out the world. He wanted to escape. Wanted to be out of this club and in his apartment. He wanted to me anywhere where he couldn’t see Youngjae or maybe where he was only left alone with Youngjae, he couldn’t decide.
The next thing Jaebeom knew was that Youngjae was introducing the girls to the group, Jaebeom couldn’t concentrate on the words. His mind a little hazy even though he hadn’t had a drink that night.

The girls stood near the table and none of the boys made a move to invite them to sit, clear with the intention that this was strictly for the seven of them.

One of the girls scanned the boys, her eyes landed on Jinyoung, a very tipsy Jinyoung and Jackson noticed. With Bambam in between Jackson reached out for Jinyoung’s hand in a rush and held it tight. Jinyoung laughed and tried to pull back, a little embarrassed with the sudden PDA. The girls took a hint and soon said their goodbyes and left.

The rest of the night was a blur. All Jaebeom could recall was that they left the club at around four in the morning. Jackson, Jinyoung and Yugyeom were drunk and even though Mark and Bambam drank as well, they weren’t that drunk. Bambam said he would take all of them to his place as it’s near.

Mark offered to drop Youngjae off and Youngjae said he would walk and that Mark should go with Bambam.

Jaebeom was surprised that Youngjae wanted to walk home with him even with how he treated him tonight.

They walked in silence but not awkwardness. Jaebeom was painfully aware that if he opened his mouth, he might break down. They maintained distance between themselves. Jaebeom would every now and then steal a glance but wouldn’t do much. Not sure what was needed to be done. Then he saw Youngjae shiver.

Even though Jaebeom himself wasn’t wearing much he put his jacket around Youngjae.

“No, no I’m alright,” Youngjae protested the second the jacket touched his shoulder.

“Take it, you’ll catch a cold, you just recovered from the last time,” Jaebeom said softly. His voice sounded foreign to him.

“Thanks,” Youngjae said and wrapped the jacket around him tightly.

Once they entered their building, Jaebeom stood outside his apartment, not sure what to do next. Youngjae opened the door to his apartment and Jaebeom just kept looking at him. Jaebeom’s heart felt heavy. His body felt warm with nerves.

“Come in,” Youngjae said as he entered his apartment. His voice sounded more like a command then a request or an offer. Jaebeom debated but he wanted to talk to him. Wanted to know what was happening. So, he entered.

As Jaebeom closed the door behind him Youngjae went to keep the jacket on the chair. Jaebeom just stood by the door silently.

“Do you want something?” Youngjae asked as he opened the fridge.

“Honesty and a conversation,” Jaebeom replied truthfully and Youngjae laughed. This was a true genuine laugh Jaebeom heard from Youngjae since the whole night. Mouth open, head thrown backwards, eyes closed. He looked beautiful. Jaebeom pained to touch him.

“Don’t you think we’ll get there eventually,” Youngjae said and then moved towards the sofa.
“So, are we gonna beat around the bush for the time being?” Jaebeom asked and he felt himself relaxing. This wasn’t how he thought the conversation would go. He thought there would be some yelling and confrontations and confessions but all it was, was Youngjae trying to run from the topic.

“Do you mind?” Youngjae asked. Then he patted the sofa seat for Jaebeom to come and sit with him. Jaebeom did.

Jaebeom still felt heavy, still felt like there were rocks kept on his lungs and heart. Hard to breathe.

“How were your parents?” Jaebeom asked once he was seated. They kept the distance they kept before. Safe. Not too close.

“Good, I had homemade food by my mom after so long. We even went out. Jackson called and asked if I’m coming for your birthday, why didn’t you tell me it was your birthday?” Youngjae asked and that was when Jaebeom realized that even though they have talked they hardly know each other personally.

Apart from the compulsory things that Youngjae had to learn about Jaebeom because of the wedding. They don’t know much. Jaebeom had no idea what Youngjae’s parents are like, what their names are, how many siblings Youngjae has, if he has a pet or not, if he ever had a pet or not, what his childhood was like. Jaebeom knew nothing.

“You wouldn’t pick up my calls,” Jaebeom replied truthfully. It wasn’t like Jaebeom called him to talk about his birthday but it sure would have come up.

Youngjae laughed again. Loud and beautiful. It pained Jaebeom that he could just laugh as casually as Youngjae just did.

“I was a jerk, I’m sorry. I guess I just needed some space but I realized it too late that you were kept in the dark. I’m truly sorry.” Youngjae looked down at his hand. His voice was low and soft but there was still something in his voice that Jaebeom couldn’t pinpoint.

“Why don’t you like birthdays?” Youngjae asked before Jaebeom could even reply to what he spoke before.

“Birthdays are disappointing,” Jaebeom replied and it made Youngjae smile. Youngjae smiled easy. Smiled beautifully.

“And why is that?”

“Too much expectations, I guess. Everyone calls up and asks ‘so, what’s the plan today?’ and it’s like you have to have a plan on your birthday. You have to enjoy. It’s compulsory. You have to have fun. And if it’s just passes as an ordinary day, then you’re disappointed because it was supposed to be your birthday. And if you reply with ‘I don’t have any plans,’ then the person sound disappointed as if you just told them you’re throwing a party and they’re not invited. There’s just too much that people expect from the birthdays and I just hate having to think today will be different and then end up living the same day as the rest of my days,” Jaebeom went on a rant. He realized he talked so fast that he felt breathless.

“You really do hate birthdays a lot,” Youngjae said and laughed. Jaebeom wanted to know what Youngjae’s thoughts were on birthdays but he stopped himself. Because truly at this moment, he just wanted to know what was happening.

“You never picked up my calls, never replied to any of my messages,” Jaebeom said again.
This time he hoped he would get somewhere with this topic. Youngjae sat up straight, he opened and closed his mouth but didn’t utter a word. Jaebeom waited.

“*I heard your conversation with Jinyoung.*” Youngjae said. His voice sounded painful, like, it took everything in Youngjae to just say that. But, Jaebeom was confused. He wasn’t sure which conversation Youngjae was referring to.

“The day we were supposed to go on a date, I came to pick you up and the door was already open. I saw you were in the balcony and I wanted to surprise you but then you started talking and I realized you were talking about me,” Youngjae said and suddenly it snapped in Jaebeom’s memory. He realized just what Youngjae was talking about.

“I stayed quiet because I was curious to know how you talk about me but then,” Youngjae stopped himself from speaking more. He looked up at Jaebeom and his eyes were moist. Jaebeom felt like he couldn’t move. He couldn’t talk, couldn’t breathe.

“You said things I wasn’t expecting, I didn’t mean to eavesdrop but it was like, I was glued to the floor. I couldn’t move. Then Jackson came and I just didn’t know what to do, I knew I couldn’t spend the day with you, so, I made up an excuse and left. Maybe I should have talked to you about it but I just wasn’t in that state of mind,” Youngjae confessed and his voice sounded broken. His voice sounded like he didn’t want to trust his own words.

“I thought, I thought I meant something to you,” Youngjae said and that was when Jaebeom saw the first tear roll down Youngjae’s eyes. Jaebeom involuntarily moved forwards, to wipe the tear off but Youngjae held up his hand to stop him from coming any near.

Youngjae shifted backwards. “Youngjae, please, I can explain,” Jaebeom begged. His heart was aching. He couldn’t see Youngjae like this, he hated seeing Youngjae like this. He hated the fact that he was the reason Youngjae was like this.

“E-explain,” Youngjae said in a low shaky voice. “I wanna know.”

Jaebeom on the other hand didn’t knew from where to start. How to truly explain it in a way it that doesn’t break Youngjae’s heart.

“Jinyoung and I were talking about us, about how we met and how things started and I told him that it wasn’t always like this from my end, that I was scared at first. I was insecure and I had stupid thoughts and we were just talking about those stupid thoughts.” Jaebeom still wanted to reach out towards Youngjae. Wanted for them to hold hands and to hug, to console and to comfort.

Youngjae stayed quiet, as if registering what Jaebeom has just said. He kept nodding and then he looked up again, his eyes a little puffier and a little redder, “Have things changed now?” he asked.

“Yes, yes. Of course, everything has changed. Youngjae, you have to believe me when I say that Nina means nothing to me, I am not into her, I do not want her.” Jaebeom rubbed his face furiously. He hated talking about her, he never wanted to talk about her again.

“I like you, Youngjae. I like you a hell of a lot. I like you so much, it-” hurts, he wanted to add but didn’t. Youngjae kept his head down. He looked up again after a while and there was a small smile on his face. The smile was sad. Sorrowful smile. Smile with pain plastered on it. The kind of smile which makes you wonder what kind of battle a person fought with their own imagination.

“I want to believe you,” Youngjae said. His voice sounded low and sad. Like, he was just uttering words and not registering them. Youngjae looked small.
“Youngjae, please, don’t cry, please,” Jaebeom begged.

“I’m not crying because I feel helpless,” Youngjae laughed through the tears, it made Jaebeom’s whole chest ache. “I’m crying because I’m emotional. Not weak, but sad. Not helpless but it hurts, Jaebeom.” The way Youngjae said Jaebeom’s name made Jaebeom’s whole body go weak. His whole body was hot, like it would explode. His eyes were burning as if he would cry, his throat was dry and closing up.

“Believe me then, I’ll make you believe me. Just give me, give us some time,” Jaebeom pleaded. He wasn’t sure how his voice sounded because to him, it seemed like he could hardly get words out of his mouth.

Youngjae just gave him a nod and for a fraction of a second Jaebeom thought maybe they’ll get past this.

“Nina called you,” Youngjae said. His voice firm, Jaebeom saw a tear roll down as soon as he said that. For a second Jaebeom’s mind went black, he couldn’t register a word, he couldn’t register where he was or what was happening. For a second his vision was gone. His heartbeat was fast, like a child caught with candy when he was forbidden. Like a teenager trying to escape their house when they’re grounded just to find their father outside the front door. Like a man never mentioning a call from the person he was falling for.

Jaebeom couldn’t process.

“When you were here, taking care of me, you left your phone in my bedroom as you were making lunch. Your phone rang and my throat was hurting too much so I didn’t want to yell for you to come pick up your call, I reached for your phone and saw her name,” Youngjae said and waited for a second. He collected himself.

“Her name was on the screen and for a second I truly thought I was hallucinating, imagining things. I kept it on the side and pretended like I didn’t see anything. But when the call died, it still said you have a missed call from her. You came back. We ate lunch together.” Youngjae went quiet again and Jaebeom just couldn’t utter a word. Couldn’t make himself to speak. His throat was extremely dry, his heart was really fast.

“Maybe you messaged her, I don’t know because then when you were showering your phone buzzed and Jaebeom, I hate myself. I am not the kind of person to snoop into someone’s phone. I trusted you, I trusted you so much, so so much that when I saw the ‘it’s fine, tell me when you leave his house and call me tonight if you’re home’, it broke me.” Tears wouldn’t stop flowing from Youngjae’s eyes no matter how much he wiped them away.

“Every day, every single day, Jaebeom, I waited and waited for you to mention her to me, for you to tell me why she called or why she messaged. For you to just say something. Anything. I waited and waited for you to make me not go insane—”

“Young-youngjae,” Jaebeom tried but Youngjae raised a hand to stop him. “Let me speak,” Youngjae said firmly.

“I know you’re not cheating on me, I know that. I know you’re not seeing her and you don’t want to be with her either, I know that. But my brain keeps asking ‘then why wouldn’t he tell you?’ and I have no answer. My heart has no answer. I keep making excuses for you to myself. I keep telling myself how you’re the best thing that has happened to me in so long, how truly happy you make me but Jaebeom maybe, it’s not the same for you,” Youngjae sobbed hard, he said half of it in between of sobs.
“Youngjae, I don’t want to be your second option. I’m in my life now where I know what I want and I’m ready to ask for it. I wanted you to give me your everything and I was ready to bear my soul.”

“Jaebeom, maybe you need time. Maybe you should take a step back. We started all of this so soon. We hardly know anything about each other. We both need time and space.” Youngjae stopped sobbing, he stopped crying. The moisture was still there on his face because of the tears but he couldn’t care about it now.

“Don’t count on it.” Youngjae said firmly and he stood up. Maybe this was the end of the conversation. The end of the discussion if there was any.

“Jaebeom, you don’t mean that” Jaebeom had no idea why he said that, maybe he just wanted Youngjae to lessen the pain, to fake it. To pretend that all of it was just a joke and they’re okay.

“I’m… I’m so… sorry, Jaebeom.” Youngjae said in between of his sobs. At that time, Jaebeom was aware that his eyes burned, his throat burned. There was burning sensation in his chest as well. His whole body felt so heavy and so light at the same point. He wasn’t sure if he was sitting or standing, moving or talking. Or if all of it was an illusion and he was just there. Existing.

“My heart couldn’t take it anymore. He thought he would throw up or would faint. He wanted the throbbing in his head to stop. He wanted the throbbing in his chest to stop.

“Maybe you should think about what you want in life.” Youngjae said silently. Jaebeom didn’t need time. He needed Youngjae. The words wouldn’t escape.

“Maybe you should take a step back. We started all of this so soon. We hardly know anything about each other. We both need time and space.” Youngjae stopped sobbing, he stopped crying. The moisture was still there on his face because of the tears but he couldn’t care about it now.

“So, there’s a chance in the future?” Jaebeom finally spoke. He was still hopeful. Still wanted things between him and Youngjae to work out. Still wanted Youngjae as much as he did yesterday or the day before that. Or the day they shared a bed. Or the day Youngjae kissed him. Or the day Youngjae first smiled at him. Or the day when Jaebeom first made Youngjae laugh, truly laugh.

“Don’t count on it.” Youngjae said firmly and he stood up. Maybe this was the end of the conversation. The end of the discussion if there was any.

“Jaebeom,” Jaebeom said and reach out for Youngjae’s hand. Jaebeom still sat on the sofa, his head
hung low, his head heavy. He squeezed Youngjae’s hand but Youngjae didn’t retaliate. It pained Jaebeom.

Youngjae’s hand were warm and still soft. A little wet with the tears but that didn’t bother Jaebeom. Jaebeom squeezed at Youngjae’s hand again and this time he could feel Youngjae’s heartbeat in his hands. The beats were fast, faster than Jaebeom’s. They weren’t in sync.

Jaebeom realized if it pained Jaebeom so much he never thought about how much it must have pained Youngjae. How Youngjae have been in pain from last few days. Maybe from the day he saw the call, the second he saw the text. The text in itself could mean a hundred things and Jaebeom wanted to explain. Wanted to clear everything up but he couldn’t form a sentence. He didn’t know how to approach the topic or from where to start.

Youngjae had been in pain even when Jaebeom touched him after, even when Jaebeom kissed him, even when they hugged and even when they planned their date. Youngjae had been in pain for so long that it seems like he somehow got used to it, that it consumed him. The thought of Youngjae crying because he didn’t know what was happening was tearing Jaebeom apart. He wanted to fix things, he wanted to make things right.

“This can’t be the end of us.” Jaebeom said in a broken voice. His hands still held Youngjae’s. Youngjae hadn’t moved since. He stood there as still as he could.

Jaebeom looked up, pleaded with his eyes, begged with his face and prayed with heart that Youngjae would just give them a chance.

Youngjae looked down at Jaebeom, his eyes looked hollow. Like, he had zoned out, like he was looking but wasn’t looking at the same time. “Then why does it seem like it is?” Youngjae said.

Jaebeom’s hands dropped to his side at those words and Youngjae walked towards his bedroom. This time Jaebeom knew it wasn’t an invitation for him to join.

The house looked dark, as if Jaebeom couldn’t see. His vision was blurring but maybe it was because of the tears forming in his eyes. With all the courage that was left in his body, he stood up and walked towards his apartment.

He laid down on his bed and switched off his phone. The world can wait.

Youngjae’s words kept echoing in his head. He wanted to find a reason for him to believe that there was a fix, that they could make it work. That they could still come back stronger but Youngjae’s eyes haunt him.

The expression on Youngjae’s face when he looked at Jaebeom in those last minutes kept Jaebeom up all night. There was pain, there was sorrow, there was guilt, there was heartache, there was heartbreak, there was grief, there was misery, there was betrayal but most of all there was trauma.

It made Jaebeom believe that maybe he not only broke Youngjae’s trust but also broke Youngjae. That maybe Jaebeom wasn’t the best thing that happened to Youngjae but the worst. That maybe all the suffering and pain would end if Jaebeom would just disappear from Youngjae’s life.

That maybe Youngjae made the right decision for the both of them.

But then why does it feel so wrong. But then why were they both suffering. Why weren’t they both in each other’s embrace comforting each other. Whispering sweet nothings in each other’s ears.

Then why does their heart ache so much? Is that what love was? Pain and sorrow?
Youngjae gave himself to Jaebeom just for Jaebeom to not be there to catch and collect it all. Did they dive too deep into this? Could Jaebeom fix this? Was there still a fix?

Maybe Jaebeom shouldn’t have started this, maybe he shouldn’t have looked at Youngjae like that. And that night as he started at the ceiling it was the first time when Jaebeom just wanted to forget.

Chapter End Notes

Jaebeom just dropped another volume on soundcloud and his mixtape had me crying so here i’m blessing you on the same day as Jaebeom. ksjdjgdsd please consider it a gift.

I hope you enjoyed the chapter. the angst is finally here hehehe.

Do let me know what you think of the chapter and how you think the story is going. i LOVE hearing from you, it really motivates me a lot.

p.s. i am so sorry for all the mistakes in the chapter, i just didn't have the time to proof read.
Jaebeom heard the front door open and saw Youngjae enter.

“I thought adulthood would be fun, but this isn’t what I signed up for,” Youngjae said and took off his coat, dropped it on the chair and went straight to the kitchen to get some water.

“Do I need to beat someone up?” Jaebeom asked from his couch. He got home a bit earlier than usual as Jinyoung asked him to leave early that day.

“You can’t even hurt a fly but I’m touched by your sentiments,” Youngjae said from the kitchen. Jaebeom watched as Youngjae walked towards him, it all felt so right. Lately instead of heading to his own apartment, Youngjae started dropping by Jaebeom’s first.

Youngjae smiled at Jaebeom before he straddled Jaebeom’s lap. Jaebeom truly was taken by surprise. His mouth open with no wording coming out of it.

“I missed you today,” Youngjae said. Jaebeom just kept looking. The room was fully lit, Jaebeom could see the genuine smile on Youngjae’s face and he was pretty sure Youngjae could see the blush on Jaebeom’s face as well. Jaebeom would always be starstruck by Youngjae like, he still couldn’t believe Youngjae willingly said what he said and willingly sat where he sat.

Then Jaebeom made a mistake, he lifted his hand and caressed Youngjae’s face. The smile from Youngjae’s face dropped in less than a second. Youngjae jumped from Jaebeom’s lap and sat on the other side of it. Jaebeom’s could feel Youngjae’s body heat leaving his body.

“How did this happen?” Youngjae asked as he lifted Jaebeom’s hand to examine.

“It’s nothing, just come back to where you were,” Jaebeom said and slightly pulled at Youngjae’s hand. Youngjae smiled from ear to ear and pushed Jaebeom’s shoulder.

“Do you want a redressing? How did it happen? Don’t make me call Jinyoung,” Youngjae said again and Jaebeom lost all hope of Youngjae ever being back on his lap.

“Jinyoung was teaching Yugyeom and Bambam how to hold and balance multiple plates and cup on one hand and during that practice Yugyeom dropped a plate and I was picking up the pieces and cut my finger,” Jaebeom explained.

“Are you sure you don’t need a shot for it?” Youngjae asked and Jaebeom panicked.

“It’s just a small cut, it’ll heal in a few days. I’m not going to a doctor for it,” Jaebeom replied.

“Let me kiss it better,” Youngjae smiled and kissed Jaebeom’s finger. These little gestures might not be anything to someone, but to him they were everything. The way Youngjae would treat Jaebeom would just make his heart so warm with happiness. Pure happiness.

“I might have accidently cut my lip as well, sooooo yeah.” Jaebeom tried his luck, he still sucked at flirting or whatever it was that they were doing. He just shyly pouted towards Youngjae.

Youngjae looked him straight in the eyes, this always got Jaebeom’s heart racing. Youngjae leaned
in and Jaebeom could practically hear his heartbeat in his ears. Youngjae got on his knees on the couch and leaned over Jaebeom. Jaebeom looked up at Youngjae and saw his face inching closer.

Their lips were an inch apart when Youngjae whispers, “I don’t want an infection, now do I?” and moved back.

“Aaahh, then why go through all the trouble,” Jaebeom yelled as Youngjae dropped back laughing.

“To tease you,” Youngjae said and threw a cushion at Jaebeom.

Jaebeom remembered it like it just happened. Jaebeom remembered it because at that time they both were so oblivious as to what was next for them. Jaebeom remembered it because at that time they both were truly really happy.

The only thing Jaebeom was sure of was, that he has lost the track of time.

He wasn’t sure what time it was, morning or afternoon or if it was the same night. He just knew that he was been in the same position since he entered his room. The lights were off and the blinds were in, he laid on his bed and stared at the ceiling. Zoned out a couple of times and cried a bit. His emotions were so out of his own control that even when the tears dried down his heart wouldn’t stop hurting, his chest was still tight, his lungs still fought to get proper oxygen and his head was still light.

He couldn’t think about anything but Youngjae, anything but the look of sadness on Youngjae’s face. He couldn’t stop making the whole thing run over and over again in his head. None of it felt real, none of it registered. It still felt like a nightmare that Jaebeom just couldn’t get up from. But the pain in his chest said otherwise.

He stared at the ceiling for too long, thought of nothing but Youngjae. Thought of nothing but how he felt for Youngjae and how much of a mess the situation was. Thought of nothing but love, because Youngjae and Love went hand in hand for him.

Jaebeom thought what love truly was? What was the meaning of love? What does it meant when people said that they were in love, what does that imply? Because he was certain, what Nina and him had was not mutual love, was him wasting his life over a person he thought he was in love with. But that's another story, another chapter he wouldn’t want to think of now.

At that time, he just wanted to know what love was. If people were to google for the meaning of love, the first definition that would come up would be ‘a strong feeling of affection,’ but was that it? Just a strong feeling of affection? Was that love? Could love be described in just five words? It felt small, it felt wrong. Was what he had towards Youngjae just some strong affection? How to measure strong or weak? Jaebeom had questions.

His phone rang and broke his thought of chain. It must be the morning, or could be the afternoon as Jinyoung never called him early after his birthday.

Jaebeom looked over at the phone’s screen and it was Yugyeom. Jaebeom smiled for a second. It was always the kids Jaebeom thought of whenever he was in misery, whenever he just wanted to relieve his stress and not wanted to talk about it. But he was confident even Yugyeom couldn’t fix it.

He wanted to let the phone be, ring till it drains out but he knew Yugyeom would keep calling. He would make Bambam call and then Jinyoung would call eventually and then they would be at his house if Jaebeom just wouldn’t pick their calls.

“Hmm,” Jaebeom was confident words would just do him damage.
“How was the birthday sex?” Bambam yelled and Jaebeom winced with pain. Maybe his ear was too sensitive because of the silence.

Jaebeom stayed quiet, there was no answer for that.

“It left you speechless, huh?” Bambam teased again and Yugyeom yelled, “Give me the phone back, he’ll yell at me.”

“Jaebeom, Bambam is crazy, ignore him,” Yugyeom said on the phone. “I just wanted to know if you’re coming to work or not? Jinyoung had to leave early because of the machine’s delivery, they messed up the order and now Jinyoung is at their office. So, are you coming?” Yugyeom asked.

“Cover for me.” Was all that Jaebeom could let out and maybe Yugyeom understood, maybe it was Jaebeom’s voice that gave it away.

“Oh, okay. I understand,” Yugyeom said and Bambam went silent in the background as well.

“Don’t tell Jinyoung,” Jaebeom said. He wasn’t sure how his voice sounded but the panic in Yugyeom’s voice, he was sure it wasn’t that great or happy.

“I’ll make sure he doesn’t end up at your place,” Yugyeom said what Jaebeom wanted to hear, “Take care and you can always call. Bye.”

Yugyeom waited for a few seconds before he hung up. Jaebeom just turned off his phone and threw it in the corner of the bed.

Jaebeom thought that it wasn’t hard to write about love. All the love songs and the movies and the drama, it was never hard to write about love. He never thought about the people who wrote about it, whether they have experienced love or not.

But heartbreak. That was intense. Jaebeom thought if people who write about heartbreaks have ever experienced it? If people who sing about heartbreaks have ever felt what it was like to have one? Jaebeom remembered he once read an article which said that heartbreak, extreme heartbreak weakens the muscles. Heartbreak does what it says, it breaks your heart in literal sense.

Jaebeom thought how could people write about it? If Jaebeom were to get up now and try to write what was happening, he wouldn’t be able to do so. He would just cry more and then some more. Maybe it heals with time, that’s what people say. But what was supposed to be done while you wait for it to heal?

Maybe Jaebeom could write a song in next five years on his heartbreak or maybe it would trigger his memory and he would lose control. Maybe people who write about heartbreaks just work with their imaginations of ‘how would it feel?’, but then isn’t that a scam? Cheating? But it could be named as art as well, art of writing something you’ve never experienced. Art of ‘how would it feel?’.

Jaebeom woke up, he wasn’t sure when he slept but his brain must have been exhausted. He still laid right where he was. Stared at the same ceiling and running around the same questions.

Jaebeom woke up again in few hours, or so he believed. But it wasn’t because his body woke up on its own, it was because someone was at his door.

Jaebeom stayed still. Stayed on his bed and the bell ring. It rung every few minutes. Jinyoung was always determined. For a fraction of second, he thought what if it was Youngjae at the door. It’s unrealistic but still not out of question.
He wanted to yell at Yugyeom, Yugyeom said he wouldn’t let Jinyoung be at his place but there Jaebeom was opening his front door for Jinyoung.

“Jackson?”

“ Took you exactly twenty-two minutes to open the door,” Jackson said and made his way in.

“What are you doing here?” Jaebeom was still at the door.

“I’m here to see you, hello,” Jackson said and went straight to the table.

“Why?” Jaebeom was confused. He expected Jinyoung or even Yugyeom but not Jackson.

“Do I always need a reason to drop by? I got food for Jinyoung but Jinyoung already ate and I was near your building so,” He showed Jaebeom the food in his hand, “Time for lunch, I guess.”

“What time is it?” Jaebeom asked. His stomach was going wild, he hadn’t had anything since last night. Maybe the human body is not that well connected after all, his stomach had no idea he was going through a heartbreak.

“It’s almost five, come sit, the food will go cold,” Jackson said and started putting up bowls and glasses.

“You wanted to have lunch with Jinyoung at five?”

“Are you interrogating me? Jinyoung was at someone’s office today and he got at the shop by four, I called him and told him I’ll bring food but Yugyeom and Bambam already ordered for him and I was already at the restaurant so I just got the food for us.”

Jaebeom remembered Yugyeom mentioned something about the delivery. Jaebeom just gave Jackson a nod. Told him he would be back in a minute and that Jackson could start his food already.

Jaebeom went to freshen up, he looked at himself in the mirror and was surprised at how Jackson didn’t make any comments. Jaebeom’s form was a mess. Clothes still from yesterday, his face looked pale as if the blood has been sucked out of it. The dark circles on his face visible with the lack of colour on his face.

He splashed some water on his face, rubbed it vigorously. He felt numb. Jaebeom thought this was all meaningless, he hated it.

He walked out with the same form and sat opposite to Jackson.

“I told you to start without me,” Jaebeom said when he saw that Jackson has covered all the food with plates on top of them so they won’t go cold easily.

“And I preferred waiting for you,” Jackson said enthusiastically and took off the plates. He then bombarded Jaebeom with food, like his mother would have done. Jaebeom wanted to complain but he had no energy.

“Were you sleeping?” Jackson asked.

“No,” Jaebeom wasn’t in the mood for a conversation.

“So, just ignoring everything?” and Jaebeom just gave him a nod.

Jackson talked, talked and talked and talked some more. Nothing particular, majority of the things
Jaebeom wouldn’t know of. Jackson made sure Jaebeom participated in his conversations, that it wasn’t a one-sided conversation. He talked about dance, he talked about Yugyeom, he talked about Mark and he talked about Bambam. Jaebeom noticed how he wouldn’t touch the topic of Jinyoung or Youngjae.

Jaebeom grew suspicious.

“Did you meet Youngjae?” Jaebeom asked and interrupted Jackson.

“I saw him at your party yesterday, yeah?”

“Today?” Jaebeom just kept his eyes on Jackson.

“He’s at work today.” Jackson said and took a sip of his water.

“He’s on a vacation till the fourteenth...” Jaebeom said.

“Mark called him up, I was just outside your door when I saw him leave. The final year’s sheet was sent and I guess some audit thing needs to be done. Too technical for me to remember.” Jaebeom just gave Jackson a nod.

“How’s Jinyoung?” Jaebeom asked.

“You literally saw him less than twenty-four hours ago, why are you asking about people as if you haven’t seen them in month?” Jackson laughed.

“I meant how are you two?” Jaebeom asked again.

“Oh, us,” Jackson said and leaned back on his chair. “We’re okay.”

“That’s all? With the way you both act, I thought you would have something else to say,” Jaebeom said. He wasn’t sure if his face gave any expressions but he sure wished it did.

“How do we even act? Like normal people. I’m just worried, that’s all,” Jackson confessed. He wasn’t planning on telling Jaebeom but it just got out.

“Worried? Why?”

“The whole TeamWang thing. I mean, I know he’s happy for me and I’m happy as well but I just think we haven’t talked about it and I don’t know what Jinyoung thinks of it,” Jackson said.

“Talk to Jinyoung, I wish I could be of more help than this but just talk to him. He’ll understand whatever it is.” Jaebeom truly wished he could be of more help but he wasn’t even sure what the real issue here was.

“Yeah, I’m heading to his place from here, I guess I have a long time ahead of me.” Jackson laughed.

“How’s he though? Like, with you? I’ve never seen Jinyoung with someone, as much as I’m happy for him, I’ve never seen this side of Jinyoung.”

“What side?” Jackson asked curiously.

“You know, he laughed even when your jokes are not funny-”

“My jokes are always funny, how dare you?” Jackson yelled and Jaebeom laughed.
“As I was saying, he checks his phone often, smiles at stupid stuff now. Jinyoung has always been a happy person but he has not always been a positive one. I feel like I’m showing my concern more than I’m complimenting him...” Jaebeom laughed.

“Go on. I wanna hear. Maybe it’ll help me understand Jinyoung more.”

“He doesn’t adjust to change well. He has always acted ahead of his age, matured faster, you know, grew up faster. He was always so dedicated to his work that he never had a youth, never had many friends. He always just hung out with people who were around. I’ve been with him for almost a decade now, so I became his safe place. There are a few more who were in our class, he’s only touch with them because they live next to his parent’s house. Jinyoung... he has a caring heart, he gives and gives and gives without asking for anything but that doesn’t mean he doesn’t want.” Jaebeom said and looked at Jackson. Jackson was listening to be thoroughly.

“He wants love, he needs love. He wants someone to shower him with affection, attention, praises. Jackson, there will be times when you guys will fight. Jinyoung tends to take things to heart, even if you meant it in a playful way, if it hurts him, it hurts him. Even when you have a fall out with him, just listen to him. Make him talk. Make him say it out loud. Don’t make him hold back or bottle it up and don’t do it with him either. Jinyoung is... he is... it’s hard to explain but that man can bear pain like no other. If he complains, don’t find it irritating. He never complains to anyone, he only does it to people he thinks cares about him.” Jaebeom wanted to add few more words. But he stopped himself.

Jinyoung was special to him, he always had been and he would do everything in his power to keep things that way. Jaebeom has fought with Jinyoung so many times that he has lost count of it. They have fought the most stupid stuff and over the most serious but they have never left each other’s side. Jaebeom truly believed that his life wouldn’t be this fortunate without Jinyoung.

They talked some more, time passed and then Jackson left. Jackson asked Jaebeom to give Jinyoung a call but he decided he would call him tomorrow.

He looked over at the watch and saw it was already eight at night. They have talked for three hours and at first, he felt annoyed and irritated at Jackson but now that Jackson has left, he felt grateful that Jackson was there. In those last few hours, Jaebeom hasn’t thought of Youngjae once. Jackson was the distraction Jaebeom needed for his lungs to breathe again. Jackson not only provided with food but also with comfort without even a word. Jaebeom was more than thankful for Jackson.

Jackson quickly made his way towards Jinyoung’s place. He was already late. They planned on meeting at eight and he left Jaebeom’s place at eight. He was sure Jinyoung would understand but he hated making Jinyoung wait for him.

Today of all the days, Jackson got lost, he circled the same building twice before he realized he was going in circles. He looked around and everything looked strange. After a few more turns he was at Jinyoung’s doorstep at nine.

“I’m so sorry, you’ll not believe the day I’ve had.” Jackson said as soon as Jinyoung opened the front door.

Jinyoung acted pissed, he turned around with his hands crossed and didn’t bother looking back.

“I swear, I’ll tell you the details and you’ll be like ‘Jackson, it’s crazy, wow, how can that happen to you?’” Jackson mimicked Jinyoung’s voice and Jinyoung laughed. Turned towards Jackson, arms uncrossed and just laughed.
Jinyoung would try and not hide his mouth anymore whenever he was alone with Jackson. He would laugh freely like he would with Jaebeom or Yugyeom or Bambam. The rest were new. He was cautious.

“Don’t exaggerate,” Jinyoung warned Jackson and poked his chest.

“I’m not, I swear, wild day,” Jackson said pulled Jinyoung by his elbow.

“What are you doing?” Jinyoung laughed when they were face to face. Jackson’s arms around Jinyoung’s waist and Jinyoung’s hands on Jackson’s chest.

“Trying to get my man to kiss me,” Jackson said and pouted. Lips pulled out with puppy eyes. Jinyoung just laughed, his laughter loud in the otherwise silent house.

Jinyoung pecked Jackson’s lips fast and tried to get out of Jackson’s hold. “I didn’t mean a peck when I asked,” Jackson complained with a smile.

“Dinner’s ready, you should join me,” Jinyoung said and went towards the kitchen. He wasn’t a great cook, he knew that but lately he has started trying harder. He would make different things just because he wanted to, or maybe because he knew how less Jackson ate when he was alone. Since Jinyoung knew how Jackson only ever ate when he had company, Jinyoung made a point to always call Jackson for lunch or dinner or both.

“No no no no, babe, no no, Jinyoung,” Jackson said and ran towards Jinyoung. “I love your food, I love it. You make it with so much care, I love it. Please, no,” Jackson said and hugged Jinyoung from behind. Jinyoung was still making his plate.

“I ate too much today, I had lunch twice and I had heavy breakfast as well and I just don’t think I can even look at food anymore,” Jackson said with his head buried in Jinyoung’s neck.

“You’ve already ate?” Jinyoung asked. As far as Jinyoung knew, Jackson was supposed to have lunch with him, which he cancelled last minute, apologized a thousand times for it as well. They planned on having dinner together but the way things were then, it seemed like dinner was out of the picture as well.

“Okay, I can eat later, you tell me how your day went.” Jinyoung said and moved out of the kitchen.

“What? No! have dinner, please.”

“But you said you can’t even look at food right now,” Jinyoung mentioned, “and I’m not even that hungry.”

“Jinyoung, you’re- just eat, I’ll tell you about my day while you have dinner. You haven’t had anything since what? Three? Just have dinner now,” Jackson started putting food for Jinyoung on a plate.

“But what about you?” Jinyoung was still concerned, he wouldn’t want to make Jackson
uncomfortable.

“I can watch you eat all day long,” Jackson said with a wink and went to get some water for himself.

They both sat down in the living room, Jackson just looked at Jinyoung for a second, Jinyoung was struggling to keep his hair from falling on his face. Before he started eating, he stood up and when he returned from his room, he was wearing a black beanie. Jackson laughed softly at the ears poking out of the beanie.

“What?” Jinyoung said when he heard Jackson’s laugh.

“Nothing, how was your day anyway?” Jackson asked. He was relaxed now, calmer than he was the rest of the day. An automatic smile on his face.

“You said you’d let me eat and tell me about your day first.”

“Yeah, okay. Well, all I know is that tonight’s gonna be a long night,” Jackson said. They both sat face to face, a low table between them for Jinyoung to have his dinner.

“You look cute,” Jackson said out of the blue and it made Jinyoung laugh. Food filled in his mouth, he covered it with his hand as he laughed soundly.

“Tell me about your day, Jackson.”

“I went to see Youngjae today,” Jackson said. He wasn’t sure how to start on that. Jinyoung already knew Jackson had a free day, Jinyoung specifically asked him not to spend the whole day at the shop and instead go see him friends. It had been long since Jackson and Youngjae hung out together so he paid him a visit.

“Are you gonna leave me in suspense?” Jinyoung asked after he finished his bite.

“Are you aware of what’s happening between Jaebeom and Youngjae?” Jackson asked.

“They haven’t talked about it, is all I know. I think Youngjae is bothered with something and I just hope they talked last night. Jaebeom has been really low lately and it’s affecting everything. It’s really sad as well, I hate seeing Jaebeom like this.”

“I guess things between them aren’t going that great,” Jackson said and Jinyoung stopped eating.

“What do you mean? I’m sure they’ll talk it out, whatever it is, they’ll handle it.”

“I saw Youngjae today, when he opened the door... Jinyoung,” Jackson stopped and looked straight at Jinyoung, “It was like someone punched him in the heart. He looked like he cried all night, I don’t know what’s happening between them.”

“Did you ask him?” Jinyoung couldn’t concentrate on his food.

“Of course, I did. He just said he didn’t wanna talk about it right then so I didn’t push it. He’ll tell me when he feel like talking, whatever it is, is still very fresh and I don’t want him to relive it while telling me. I went there at around noon and turns out he hadn’t had lunch. So, I had to cancel on us, and then I cooked for him and fed him because he just wouldn’t eat. He asked me if I’ve seen Jaebeom and I told him I came to him first.”

“Jaebeom’s phone was off when I called him, I thought he was with Youngjae so I didn’t call twice. Yugyeom called him as well but Yugyeom said he was resting today so, I thought he was with
“Youngjae. I didn’t even second guess.”

“Jaebeom isn’t doing any better, he’s just better at hiding it with his grumpy face,” Jackson said.

“You saw him?”

“Yeah, I went to him next. Youngjae and I talked about games and stupid stuff, I just wanted him to be out of the place for a moment and at around four, when I was about to leave and see you again, he asked me for a favour and said that he’s sure Jaebeom hasn’t had lunch either and he wanted me to go have lunch with him as well.”

“Youngjae said that?” Jinyoung was truly surprised. Jinyoung tends to become a little selfish when he’s angry, he knew of it. As much guilt as it would bring him later, he couldn’t change it right that moment.

“Yeah, Youngjae is… it’s hard to describe but, Youngjae is strong and brave. He is stronger than he looks or shows. He is so selfless but he’s also very driven, I don’t know if it makes any sense. I’ve never met anyone like Youngjae. Jinyoung, he will endure the pain if he knows it’ll be good for him in the future.”

Jinyoung just looked at Jackson, he wanted to say something but no words suited the situation.

“Well, we only had the left over from what we made for lunch and I didn’t wanted to take that for Jaebeom because then was sure that Youngjae wouldn’t have dinner. I made him promise that he’d have dinner and only then I’ll go see Jaebeom. We ordered food and when it arrived I went to check on Jaebeom. Youngjae did make me promise that I wouldn’t tell Jaebeom that I saw him.”

“How is he? If I knew about all of this I would have called or visited him myself.”

“I think he just needs time, you can go yell at him tomorrow. He looked pissed, I won’t lie. When he opened the door, he looked like he wanted to close it on my face, I just barged in before he had the time. He looked exactly like Youngjae, last night’s clothes, heavy swollen eyes, pale skin. He didn’t refuse to eat though. He ate, asked million questions regarding how I got there and why I was there, but he ate. He asked me about Youngjae as well.”

“I… I feel like I should have been there for him. Even if only for lunch,” Jinyoung said. He felt like he failed as a friend. Jaebeom has always been there for him and not being there for Jaebeom made him frustrated.

“Jinyoung, it’s okay. By the looks of him, he wouldn’t have talked to you either, he needs the time to think. You can drop by tomorrow before the over-thinking starts. He zoned out a few times when he talked. I can tell he’s thinking a lot. I just feel like we need to give them space before we go stand by them. He also asked me about us,” Jackson said, hesitant at those last words.

“Us? He asked about us?” Jinyoung was confused. Even though it wasn’t unlikely of Jaebeom to ask of others when he runs out of topic but Jinyoung and him had talked about Jackson.

“I told him you’re head over heels for me,” Jackson replied with a smirk, trying to lighten the mood.

“Jackson, you’re too much,” Jinyoung laughed. By then he was done with dinner, Jackson helped him with the dished. Then they both stood in the middle of the living room.

“So, well... now,” Jinyoung wasn’t sure what was needed to be said or done, they stood close, he could feel Jackson’s body heat near him.
“Now…” Jackson just imitated Jinyoung, they looked at each other and then said nothing. Jinyoung was smiling. Lips pressed tight and eyes all warm at Jackson.

“What now?” Jinyoung just smiled. His hands awkwardly hung down whereas Jackson’s were behind his back.

“What now? This is your house,” Jackson said. They both were shy, both were uncertain of what or where the boundaries were, or if there were any.

“And what does that mean?” Jinyoung tilted his head.

“That mean I’ll stay if you ask me to and leave if you ask me to,” Jackson leaned in a little and smiled.

“Really?” Jinyoung arched his eyebrows.

“Really.”

They both kept quiet again, smiled at each other nonstop.

“Say something already,” Jackson said impatiently.

“I’m taller than you,” Jinyoung said.

“Nice observation, Einstein.”

“Are you nervous?” Jinyoung asked, he was nervous, he was so nervous he couldn’t form a long sentence in his mind.

“Not as visibly nervous as you are,” Jackson said and stepped forward. His chest close to Jinyoung’s and there faces just few inches apart.

“You have big eyes,” Jinyoung said. He was really nervous, he wanted Jackson to stay but he wasn’t sure if that implied something more as well or not.

“Do you wanna see what else is big?” Jackson wanted Jinyoung to loosen up and he knew exactly how to make that happen. Jinyoung laughed and pushed Jackson.

“Oh my God, Jackson,” Jinyoung yelled in between of his laugher.

“I’m just asking,” Jackson said and raised his hand up in surrender.

Jinyoung laughed some more and watching him like that made Jackson smile brighter. He liked it. He felt relaxed and calmer. It has been so long since he felt like this.

“Stay the night here,” Jinyoung asked and it caught Jackson off-guard. He expected Jinyoung to ask him to say but not the night, he thought he would be there for a while and then he would leave.

“The whole night?” Jackson asked just to make sure.

“Yes, if you want to, of course.”

“Are cuddles on the table?” Jackson asked and he looked really serious.

Jinyoung laughed again and led Jackson towards his room. Jinyoung was already in his pyjama, he gave an extra pair to Jackson.
They sat face to face on the bed as well. Not side to side, how Jinyoung imagined. He liked it this way better. He liked it when he could look at Jackson clearly. He liked it when Jackson was looking at him, as shy as he felt, he liked the attention Jackson gave him.

“Thank you,” Jinyoung said before he was too late.

“For what?” Jackson reached out to hold Jinyoung’s hand, he started playing with his fingers.

“For being there for Jaebeom, I mean, you could have easily left after Youngjae but you still went to see him. And you ate with him even when you were already full. Thank you for distracting Jaebeom even if it was for a few hours,” Jinyoung said and kept looking at their hands. He couldn’t look at Jackson.

“Hey, Jaebeom is my friend as well. I would have visited him even if Youngjae didn’t ask me, I would have cooked for him as well just like I did for Youngjae.” Jackson smiled and made Jinyoung look at him.

“I had a surprise for you but I was too occupied today and… I don’t wanna delay it but I guess tomorrow will be too late,” Jinyoung said, he felt embarrassed. He prepared this whole thing for Jackson and he just couldn’t execute it because he was busy.

“What? And why?” Jackson lit up, eyes big, smile wide.

“I wanted to congratulate you properly for the call you received from TeamWang but I just got home two hours before you got here and I wasn’t planning on staying out so late-”

“Hey hey hey, you wanted to surprise me, Jinyoung, that in itself makes me so happy. I’ve never received surprises before,” Jackson was smiling from ear to ear. He just that happy.

“But I couldn’t finish it, you still haven’t received your congratulatory surprise,” Jinyoung sounded sad.

“You can just kiss me to congratulate me and I’ll take it as a surprise gift,” Jackson joked to lift Jinyoung’s mood.

Jinyoung held Jackson’s face with both of his hands and in a swift moment he leaned forward and kissed Jackson. Not for long though, just short but sweet, so the lingering feeling remains.

Jackson’s mouth hung open, he wasn’t expecting that. When he said that Jinyoung should kiss him, he thought Jinyoung would say no or just change the topic. But he wasn’t expecting the kiss.

He smiled after though, Jinyoung was still a blushing mess and it made Jackson even happier.

“You’re so cute,” Jackson said and pinched Jinyoung’s cheeks, which just made Jinyoung laugh out louder.

“I hope you feel special because I never let anyone get in my room,” Jinyoung said later and Jackson smiled. Knew it was just an attempt to keep the conversation going.

“I wanted to talk to you about something,” Jackson said afterwards.

“I’m listening,” Jinyoung just smiled.

“I called the number Yugyeom gave of the agency and I had a word with one of the staff members. And I just wanted to talk to you about it,” Jackson said and Jinyoung just gave him a nod.
“They want me to go down for the audition this week, like, a proper audition. I told them I’m working and I just can’t cancel on everything last minute, so, we figured out that if I fly down on Friday and audition for them on Saturday, I’ll be able to be back on Sunday.”

Jinyoung was listening, the whole thing was still so huge for Jinyoung that he had to breathe harder. Jackson was selected for audition for an entertainment agency, they think Jackson is talented and they wanted to work on his talent with him. It just made Jinyoung proud and happy.

“So, you’ll be going on Friday?” Jinyoung asked.

“Yeah, I mean, all of it just happened too fast and I… I really wanna give this a go. This was something why I came to Korea for and now this opportunity is presenting itself and I have to give it a go even if I fail.”

“You’ll do amazing Jackson. I’ve seen that video, if you can do that well as practice then imagine how well you’ll be when you actually get proper guidance,” Jinyoung said and pulled Jackson’s head closer to his. Bumped them together and ruffled Jackson’s hair.

“You think so?” Jackson still sounded unsure, it was a dream he dreamt for too long and a dream he stopped chasing after a while.

“I know so, you’ll do so well they’ll debut you within a month,” Jinyoung said.

“Now you’re just exaggerating...” Jackson said and pulled back.

“I’m so happy for you, Jackson. I really am.”

“I’m scared for us,” Jackson said. He was scared and nervous. As much as he liked Jinyoung, he was scared of how much they can handle.

“What do you mean?” Jinyoung asked.

“If I get selected, I’ll be a trainee with them. I’ll have to move to Hong Kong and I don’t even know for how long,” Jackson said and that’s when it registered to Jinyoung.

He had been so busy with the thought of Jackson finally getting what he deserved that he completely forgot what else it implied. Jackson would have to leave if he got selected, they wouldn’t even be in the same country. Whatever they have between them was so new and fresh that it was almost fragile.

“Oh, oh that, yeah… I guess I forgot,” Jinyoung said and he almost looked disappointed but then he felt guilty. He was thinking only about himself.

“Hit me up when you’re a big thing,” Jinyoung teased Jackson and pushed his shoulder slightly. Jackson gave him a weak smile. “And what if I don’t make it big?” Jackson asked.

“Then, less competition for me, hit me up regardless of those things,” Jinyoung smiled again.

“No one stands a chance in front of you,” Jackson said, he felt lighter now, his heart wasn’t as heavy as before even though he was still worried.

“You promise that?”

“I do,” Jackson said. They both kept looking at each other. Jinyoung remember his conversation with Jackson from a while back, when Jackson said he was so focused on making a living that he just stopped living his life. He was so overworked by his schedules that he just never had the time for
himself.

“If you want, I won’t go,” Jackson said with caution.

“What? Why?” Jinyoung was surprised by Jackson’s words, it was so unlike Jackson to give up on something like that.

“I… because… I mean… you, because of you. I’m scared of what this will do to us. I’ve never had this, I’ve never had what we have and I guess, I’m just scared of what will happen,” Jackson sounded low. Like he has thought of this for a long time.

“Then, don’t go,” Jinyoung said.

“Don’t go?” Jackson asked back. He was sure he heard Jinyoung but he wanted to make sure he heard him right.

“I’m joking, oh God,” Jinyoung said and laughed, he felt bad when he saw the panic on Jackson’s face.

“You have to go, Jackson. Go for the audition and we’ll take it day by day. We’ll see how it goes. We can phone, we can text and video call each other. It’s hardly a… wait, what time is it in Hong Kong?” Jinyoung picked up his phone and searched.

“It’s only an hour’s difference, that’s not much. And I’ve been saving a lot lately, I don’t go out much, I can easily come to visit you when you become their trainee.”

“You’re so sure that I’ll get in,” Jackson said and smiled again.

“I’m your biggest fan, I’ll always root for you and even if you don’t get in, I’ll still be your biggest fan,” Jinyoung smiled and kissed Jackson’s forehead.

“When I open up a fan club, I’ll make sure you’ll be the first member,” Jackson teased.

“I’ll make sure to run that fan club diligently.” They both laughed at that.

“You don’t have to worry about us, but you have to promise me certain things,” Jinyoung said and squeezed Jackson’s hand.

“What promises?”

“You’ll talk to me, you’ll tell me about your worries and not think about how it’ll make me feel. You need to talk about your stress. You’ll eat well and proper, also you need to sleep well. You won’t overwork your body. You have to promise me, Jackson.”

Jackson just smiled, words like these just made him realize how much Jinyoung cared about him, how much they’ve grown closer in such a short period of time. Jackson leaned forward to peck Jinyoung’s lips.

“You do that too, don’t keep things to yourself thinking I already have a lot on my plate. We’ll talk, okay? You’ll tell me how Yugyeom and Bambam tried to burn your shop down and you’ll tell me how Jaebeom is getting another cat because Youngjae won’t talk to him.” This made Jinyoung laugh.

“Jaebeom will start getting cats, it’s not even a joke. As much as the man hates company, he loves the unbothered company. I just hope things work out between the two of them. Jaebeom hasn’t been
this happy with someone in such a long time and I…” Jinyoung wasn’t sure how to end that.

They sat in silence again and then Jackson yawned. “Just say you’re sleepy,” Jinyoung said and nuzzled Jackson’s nose. Just as Jinyoung stood up to get some more blankets, Jackson held Jinyoung’s wrist to stop him. Jinyoung looked down at Jackson, puppy eyes looking up at him with worry.

“As much as it hurts to see Youngjae and Jaebeom like this, I won’t be able to take it if it were us. Just talk to me whatever it is, if any one of us messes something up, I don’t want us to bottle it up. I want us to talk. We’ll have distance between us and it’ll be easy for us to push things for worse, but please, let’s never do it. Let’s always talk and be truthful. Please,” Jackson said desperately.

Jinyoung and Jackson both were very aware of how things between Jaebeom and Youngjae got to that point because of how they both keep the things to themselves. They both don’t want to hurt the other person and ended up hurting the one they truly cared about. Secrets do that, as much as Jinyoung wanted Jaebeom to just speak to Youngjae about everything, he knew that Jaebeom would only do it at his pace.

Jinyoung softly placed his hands on both side of Jackson’s cheeks, creased it with his thumb and planted a lingering kiss on his temple.

“I promise.”

They were in bed soon, face to face. The lights were all out and it was pitch black in Jinyoung’s room, Jackson could still hear Jinyoung’s breathing.

“I won’t be able to kiss you,” Jackson said after a while.

“What?” Jinyoung sounded confused.

“When I’m away, I won’t be able to do it.”

“That’ll make our meeting even more passionate, like how they are in fictions,” Jinyoung said and Jackson could feel Jinyoung’s breath on his face, they were close.

“I’ll miss you,” Jackson said honestly.

“You haven’t even gone yet and you’re acting like today’s your last day here,” Jinyoung laughed and stopped when he felt a hand around his waist.

They both stayed quiet and then Jackson pulled him close. Jackson was powerful, he did it in such a swift motion that Jinyoung didn’t even had to move.

The closeness let out a nervous laugh from Jinyoung. Which made Jackson smile as well. Jinyoung was very aware that their faces are close, really close. Jinyoung’s hands were between their chests, slightly brushing against Jackson.

“I wouldn’t have not gone,” Jackson said in a whisper. They just couldn’t talk in their normal tone, that would have sounded too loud.

“What?” Jinyoung was still so focused on the closeness he wasn’t sure what Jackson implied.

“When I said that I wouldn’t go if you asked me to, I would still have gone if you tried to stop me,” Jackson said honestly and Jinyoung laughed.
“Then why did you say that?” Jinyoung asked.

“I guess I just wanted to see how you would react. It would have been the end of us if you would have asked me to stay,” Jackson said lightly in Jinyoung’s hair.

“Oh, I am hurt now,” Jinyoung laughed. He would have never asked Jackson to stay. As selfish as people would think Jinyoung was, he wasn’t that selfish or self-centred. He would never ask Jackson to give up on things he was passionate about, just so they could be under the same roof. All Jinyoung knew was that they could do it all living in different countries as well.

“I would have been hurt if I would have to give up on us, I kinda like your ass,” Jackson tried to confess. Wriggled his nose with Jinyoung’s and Jinyoung laughed, loud, his head thrown back and he just laugh.

“You like my ass,” Jinyoung repeated.

“Yeah, it’s cute,” Jackson said. He wanted to say that he liked him but the courage just wasn’t there.

“Goodnight, Jackson,” Jinyoung said and nuzzled closer to him. Smile on both of their faces. Jinyoung has seen drama and has even acted in school plays and he never understood how people acted so confident in front of the people they like. How are they not a blushing mess?

They both slept soon after, exhausted by the long day.

The only good part of living alone was that Youngjae doesn’t have to answer to anyone every time he cries or sulks, or does anything that’s not laughing or smiling. Youngjae hates to show his vulnerable emotion, he always felt like that by doing so he was worrying others. He still shared, when and where required. He would never go into details of what happened or was happening but he’d let the other person know that he wasn’t okay.

That’s what a human should do, building up everything inside would just make a person explode someday and Youngjae never wanted to be those people.

Living alone was fun for Youngjae but when he saw Mark at the door refusing to leave, he understood how families would never change, no matter where he would go.

“Do I need to go beat Jaebeom up?” Mark said as soon as he took a look at Youngjae.

“Hello, Mark,” Youngjae said instead.

“You say the word and I’m on it,” Mark said.

“I’m fine,” Youngjae said.

That was when Mark understood it was more serious than he anticipated. He got the message from Jackson that morning, Jackson has asked him to drop by Youngjae’s. Deep down he knew Jackson was concerned that Youngjae wouldn’t open up to him as much as before because now Jackson had Jinyoung, Jaebeom’s best friend.

“You know what Jackson and I used to do when we would get our feelings hurt?” Mark doesn’t wait for Youngjae’s answer, he just replied to his own, “We would make up stories. Of how this one boy did this and the other did that. We would never name ourselves, we made it sound fictional so that the burden of the whole thing is lifted from us but we still only gave out a fictional story.”

“Yeah and where did that get you?” Youngjae sounded way bitter that me meant it. He shut his eyes
hard, “I’m… I’m sorry, I didn’t… I didn’t-”

“It’s okay,” Mark said as he laughed, “It got us nowhere but look at us, we aren’t super stressed and bottling things up.”

“It’s more complicated than that, I just don’t know,” Youngjae said.

The whole night after Jaebeom’s birthday was so vivid that it felt like someone showed him a recording of it but on the other hand, if you would ask him to write down what happened and what was said, he would leave the page blank as nothing would come to his mind.

Youngjae could still feel the pain in his chest. People who wanted to talk as soon as they got broke up with someone are brave because Youngjae couldn’t come up with a word or a sentence.

And were they that? Broken up? Was that it? Was Jaebeom his past now? There were times in the last thirty-six hours that he wanted to call Jaebeom, wanted to drop a text. Maybe just wanted to go next door and ask him what was happening because he was confused.

But Youngjae was the one who said it’s over, wasn’t he? When Jaebeom said that, this couldn’t be the end of them, Youngjae was the one who said, then why does it seem like it is. Then does Youngjae has the right to be this sad and upset and broken hearted about it? Isn’t that what he wanted? Isn’t this what he wanted?

“You can choose to not talk and we can just go make dinner...” Mark said as he stepped in the kitchen. Youngjae was aware that they are just checking up on him, Jackson was here yesterday and Mark was here now.

Youngjae wondered if someone was there for Jaebeom as well, he hated how well he thought he knew Jaebeom. Maybe Jaebeom was the kind who would lock himself up for few days, block all social life. Youngjae asked Jackson to meet him yesterday and he was sure Jackson did, neither Jackson nor Youngjae called after to tell or ask what happened. And maybe that was for the best.

Youngjae wondered if Jinyoung was there at Jaebeom’s house at that minute as well? Cooking for him, making sure he was eating? Or has Jaebeom made sure no one visited him, has Jaebeom just asked someone to make sure that Jinyoung wouldn’t hear of it for as long as it was required.

“Why aren’t you at work?” Youngjae asked instead. It was Youngjae’s vacation for a week and not Mark’s.

“I took a half day,” Mark replied.

“You don’t have to babysit me,” Youngjae said. He still stood in the living room, watched as Mark moved around the kitchen.

“And I’m not, I’m here to eat with you,” Mark said and that’s exactly what Jackson had said. Youngjae wasn’t a kid and he hated being treated as one.

“Don’t act like I don’t understand what’s happening? Yesterday Jackson was here and now you’re here, who are you guys gonna send tomorrow? Bambam? Yugyeom? Jinyoung? They’re all close to him so you wouldn’t? Are you gonna send someone from work? Or is it gonna be just a rotation between you and Jackson?” Youngjae’s pitch and tone was higher than normal. He wasn’t angry, just frustrated but his tone made him sound angry.

“Just Jackson and I, we know you don’t trust anyone else,” Mark replied honestly and went on to preparing the rice.
“I’m sorry,” Youngjae felt low, why are they doing this to him? He had no control over his words or action, he was exhausted, exhausted of crying, exhausted of thinking, exhausted of the silence, exhausted of missing Jaebeom. He wondered if Jaebeom was going through the same thing or was it just him?

“You don’t have to say sorry.” Mark said politely and offered Youngjae some warm water, Youngjae took it. “You have nothing to apologize for, I understand that you’re angry and frustrated, but if you can’t be real with your feelings with me or Jackson then what even is the point of this close friendship we all say we have?” Mark said and drank some water himself.

“I miss him,” Youngjae said in a trembling voice. His lips shivered as he said that. His body felt week, he had said the same thing in his mind over and over again but he just hasn’t said it out loud to anyone. Having said those words out in the open, made them real.

Before he knew it, he was in Mark’s embrace. Mark’s hand ran up and down Youngjae’s back to sooth him down and Youngjae’s head rested on Mark’s chest. Youngjae thought by last night his tears has ran dry, that even when he cried, he couldn’t moist his eyes but they were running again.

They sat down on the soft and Mark waited for Youngjae to say something, anything and then Youngjae did.

“I don’t know what happened.” Youngjae was confused, he knew how it happened but why? He wasn’t sure of that why.

“I guess we were just not working out,” Youngjae said.

“Youngjae, you and I, we both know that’s a lie,” Mark said. They both were sitting face to face, just like how Youngjae and Jaebeom were a night back.

“I asked him to leave,” Youngjae said and stayed quiet for a while, Mark stayed quiet as well. Mark knew Youngjae would only speak up when he was ready.

“He said some things to Jinyoung that I thought were about me, they weren’t in the same context as I understood and we cleared that up but I guess… we… we just weren’t right for each other.”

“I’m sorry,” Mark said and Youngjae gave him a weak sympathetic smile.

“I guess, we just didn’t trust each other too much,” Youngjae lied. He trusted Jaebeom, he trusted Jaebeom so much that he was ready to share every details of his life with him but he wasn’t sure if Jaebeom trusted him. He also would never want Mark to have a wrong or bad impression of Jaebeom. So, he lied. To protect Jaebeom.

“We weren’t talking about certain things, maybe because those things weren’t relevant to us but we couldn’t understand just how relevant that might be for the other. We… we…. We just… we weren’t what people thought we were.”

“You guys talked about it?” Mark asked.

“Yeah, we did, after his birthday when we got home, we talked.”

“Did you guys clear up anything?” Mark asked and Youngjae couldn’t lie.

“I… I asked… but maybe the moment wasn’t there and he just couldn’t say it,” Youngjae said.

“Don’t try to protect him, Youngjae. He’s just a human, if he messed up, he messed up.”
“He never explained. I asked and maybe when he was ready, it was too late or maybe he just wasn’t ready.”

“I think you both just need time to think,” Mark said.

“But, but I already closed that door. I told him there’s no scope in the future,” Youngjae said in panic and Mark went to hug Youngjae. Youngjae’s head on Mark’s chest and his hands around him.

The thing with Mark and Jackson was that they never asked anyone to stop crying, they knew how at times it just wasn’t in your control and especially at times like these.

“Maybe I pushed him too far, Mark,” Youngjae said and tried to take a deep breath. The crying now just made his head hurt.

“I said some things which must have hurt him, I told him that we should just think of what we want in life and what if…” Youngjae couldn’t complete the sentence, his head bopped on Mark’s chest because of how he couldn’t control his cries.

“What if he come to terms that whatever he wants in life… isn’t… me,” Youngjae completed. He sounded as broken as he was when he was with Jaebeom that night.

“Hey hey, no, don’t think that and even if that happens, we’ll find a way, okay? We’ll get through this,” Mark said and hugged him tightly.

“I wanted to call him, I wanted to apologize,” Youngjae muffled in Mark’s chest.

“And I’m glad you never did. You have nothing to be apologetic of,” Mark said over Youngjae’s head.

“Mark,” Youngjae said in a wrecked voice. “I miss him.”

Mark stayed quiet, there was nothing that he could have done that would have been right or acceptable. At that time Youngjae wasn’t even looking for an answer, at that time Youngjae just wanted to let our few things from his system.

“I miss him,” Youngjae said again, “When I went to my parents, I missed him then as well, but, then I knew I’d see him again, we’d meet again, I’d talk to him again.” Youngjae paused for a while.

“I just don’t know if I’ll ever see him again, if he would ever wanna look at me, if we would talk ever again, if he would ever call? He called every day, Mark. When I was at my parents, he called every day, once a day and dropped a message as well. He made me feel wanted,” Youngjae said. His voice was so low and broken that it made Mark’s chest tight.

“He made me feel loved, he made me feel good about myself, he made me want to be home from work early, he made me want to wake up early so that we would have breakfast together right before he leaves, he made me wanted to go to museums with him, he made me get excited over stuff,” Youngjae cried.

“Was I not enough?” Youngjae asked silently.

“Hey, what we’re gonna do is, talk and yell and cry about feelings but what we’re not gonna do is, question ourselves. What we’re not doing is asking self-deprecating questions because we’re down,” Mark said and Youngjae breathed again.

“Youngjae, you did what was needed to be done, you weren’t happy about something and you
wanted to be happy, so, you asked about it, you asked what happened? Sometimes it happens instantly, you get the answer right away but sometimes it takes time, you both have to be mentally there to make a decision, just don’t make something in the flow of the moment.”

“He lives across the hall, I—”

“I’ll block his door when you wanna go out, and I’ll make sure you don’t awkwardly see him outside of his house, Jackson and I have this big plan.” Mark was interrupted by Youngjae’s laugh.

“What? You think I’m lying?” Mark pulled out his phone and called someone, Youngjae just laughed lightly.

“Jackson, you tell Youngjae we have a plan,” Mark yelled on the phone as soon as Jackson picked up.

“Plan?” Jackson sounded confused and Youngjae knew they had nothing. “We have a plan, bubbly, you wait and watch. When we lay out that plan in action everyone will be talking about it, it’s mind blowing. Our minds are great. Youngjae, you’ll be so proud.”

Youngjae laughed harder, he had the craziest people in his life.

“Jackson, Youngjae doesn’t sound convinced,” Mark said.

“I’m sending him the blueprints; how dare he question our intellect like this. I hear you laughing, you otter,” Jackson said and Youngjae could hear the smile in that.

They hung up soon after, Mark on the door and was ready to leave.

“You sure you don’t want me to stay?” Mark asked.

“You’re not going to run over to his place, I promise,” Youngjae teased.

They hugged and Mark left. The apartment sounded empty again, his chest heavy again but there was a different lightness to his head. Maybe talking does help.

He went to bed with Jaebeom on his mind, with Nina still in question. He wasn’t sure what was happening and he wasn’t sure if he would get those answers. He wasn’t sure if Jaebeom missed him as much as he did but he wanted Jaebeom to, he wanted Jaebeom to miss him. He would never want Jaebeom to be in this much pain but he wanted Jaebeom to miss him.

Youngjae wanted to see Jaebeom, wanted to talk to him, to hold him, to kiss him. Youngjae wanted to hear ‘we’re okay’ from Jaebeom even when he was the one who told Jaebeom to go.

Youngjae didn’t cry that night as he slept, his chest still in pain, his heart still dilemma but he didn’t cry. As he drifted to sleep, he just hoped that, someday him and Jaebeom could work it out and maybe in the next life they would be together as well.

Youngjae wished that he could dream of Jaebeom, that maybe if not in his reality but in his subconscious mind, he could still be with Jaebeom. He could still hold him and touch him, still smile at him and laugh with him, still kiss and they could still be together.

Chapter End Notes
Hello, I'm here again. 2jae are breathing so good in Japan, i cried.

Also, this chapter might have felt a little slow and long but that was needed, everyone need to collect their thoughts.

Do let me know what you think of the chapter and how's the story line going? I would LOVE to hear from you.

Thank you again for reading it, it means a lot to me.

I've been asked if it's the end and it's NOT THE END. The fic will have 14 chapters.
As much as Jaebeom wanted to be alone, he knew how that was a bad idea. If he was left alone, he would overthink, he would make up scenarios of what would happen next. He would drive himself crazy.

And as much as Jaebeom wanted to be alone, Jinyoung always had another plan. It started with the four of them, Jaebeom, Jinyoung, Bambam and Yugyeom, having breakfast at Jaebeom’s. They all insisted on staying for lunch but Jaebeom begged them to leave.

They all had lunch together.

By seven in the evening Jaebeom had to force Bambam and Yugyeom out of his apartment, when all they wanted to do was check if all these microwave proof bowls in Jaebeom’s house were actually microwave proof or not.

“You asked me to bring them along,” Jinyoung said as soon as Jaebeom closed the door.

“Yeah, because I didn’t want to see you alone, I wasn’t ready but having them here just made me wish otherwise,” Jaebeom replied with half a lie. It was true that Jaebeom asked Jinyoung to bring the kids with him because he wasn’t ready to face Jinyoung alone, because it meant intervention.

The lie was that he actually enjoyed their company, which he would never confess to. Having the younger ones at his place made him lose his temper at the situation, made him take a breath. Having Bambam and Yugyeom under the same roof would just give people energy and Jaebeom was sure of that fact. It wasn’t like they both were naive to the whole situation or that they weren’t aware that something was off. It was just that they knew not to ask the same question everyone will be asking.

Yugyeom and Bambam knew that Jaebeom wanted an escape and not another person worrying if he was eating alright or not. They both knew that Jaebeom wanted someone to steal the spotlight from him and they both offered to do just that and Jaebeom was more than thankful.

Now, he knew he had to talk to Jinyoung without filters. They both sat down on their respective ends of the couch and Jaebeom told Jinyoung what has happened that night.

Jinyoung heard Jaebeom and made sure to not interrupt. He sat down and just listened to Jaebeom because that was what Jaebeom needed at that time, he wanted to be heard and Jinyoung was there for him for that.

Once Jaebeom was done Jinyoung still stayed quiet, when the silence increased Jaebeom shook his head and gave out a weak laugh. Like, he was pitying himself.

“I’m so sorry, Jaebeom,” Jinyoung said and looked straight at Jaebeom.

“Well, yeah, I’m sorry too,” Jaebeom said it just to say it.

“How are you holding up?” Jinyoung asked. He has observed Jaebeom since the morning, he has noticed how soon his moods would change or how he would zoon out of a conversation. He had noticed how in a split second it would look like Jaebeom was about to cry but then Jaebeom would just laugh instead. Jinyoung has Jaebeom enough to know that he would not let history repeat itself.
“I wanna say I’m fine but I’m a mess, Jinyoung,” Jaebeom said honestly. He wanted to lie, he wanted to just say he was okay and soon Jinyoung would leave and then he would turn into his miserable self. But he has learned one thing a long time back, bottling up things inside you would only hurt you more in the future. And, he was tired of getting hurt.

“Have you… I don’t know how to ask this but… have you-”

“No, I haven’t,” Jaebeom interrupted with his reply. He knew well enough where Jinyoung was going with that question, he wanted to know if Jaebeom has had any contact with Youngjae since then and the answer was no.

“Have you tried though?” Jinyoung asked. His voice really low, he wanted Jaebeom to open up and saw scared that in the process he might hurt his feelings.

“Why should I? He made it really clear that he doesn’t wanna see me,” Jaebeom said with venom in his voice.

“So, you don’t wanna see him either?” Jinyoung asked.

“Wouldn’t that mean that I’m disobeying what he wants? I don’t wanna force myself on him,” Jaebeom said and made sure he wouldn’t let out Youngjae’s name in the conversation. The name alone made him weak.

“Jaebeom, I think… I think you’re upset and you have every right to be, but I just don’t think you’re thinking it through.”

“Oh, so, you’re saying this is my fault? Great.” Jaebeom was defensive and he was guarded, his arms folded on his chest. Jinyoung took a deep breath before he started again.

“No, I’m not blaming you, all I’m saying-”

“You’re not? Are you not gonna side with your boyfriend and his friend?” Jaebeom said offensively and that’s when Jinyoung understood what he was trying to do.

Jaebeom has already opened up enough that now he felt vulnerable, weak, helpless and all he was trying with Jinyoung was to pick a fight so Jinyoung would leave sooner. But Jinyoung was smarter than that. Jinyoung has played this game once too many times to know the rules already.

“Jackson has not said anything to me,” Jinyoung replied polity.

“Oh, so you’re only siding with him just because he’s best friends with your boyfriend?” Jaebeom said and threw another remark.

“Jackson has nothing to do with it and I’m not siding with anyone here, I’m saying what’s on my mind and I’m here to make you see the whole story instead of just your own,” Jinyoung answered.

“Also,” Jinyoung said before Jaebeom could reply, “Youngjae isn’t just Jackson’s friend, Youngjae is my friend as well. Just because you two are having difficulties right now doesn’t mean that the friendship, I have with Youngjae, is over,” Jinyoung answered patiently.

“My own best friend is friendlier with him than me, are you gonna go comfort him or having this
same intervention with him as well?” Jaebeom’s voice was a little shaky but they both pretended to ignore it.

“I’m not gonna see Youngjae over this for the same reason you wouldn’t want to see Jackson for this. I’m close to you and Jackson is close to Youngjae. No matter how straight we think we’re talking, we both will be coming from a bias perspective. We both know you and Youngjae enough to actually try and justify what and why something was being said or done.”

They both went quiet for a while again. Jaebeom knew it well, knew that at times his anger got the best of him. That at times he would intentionally say things to hurt people but he always made sure he never crossed a line but today, that jab at Jackson felt personal. Jackson was his friend as well. Jackson was the person who introduced him to Youngjae, Jackson was the one who made sure Jaebeom was comfortable with the whole scenario. Jackson was the one who came to have lunch with Jaebeom and Jackson was the one his best friend showed his trust in. Jinyoung never trusted people easily and him being this open with Jackson made Jaebeom even more comfortable around Jackson.

“I’m sorry,” Jaebeom said quietly.

“What?” Jinyoung wasn’t sure he heard him right.

“I didn’t mean to say that about Jackson, I was just… I was just… I don’t know. I just-”

“It’s okay, I understand,” Jinyoung replied because he truly understood.

“You know, there’s this phrase ‘If you love something let it go. If it comes back to you, it’s yours forever. If it doesn’t, it was never yours to begin with.’?” Jaebeom asked and looked at Jinyoung. They both were back on the topic now.

“And that is the stupidest phrase I’ve ever heard,” Jinyoung smiled and Jaebeom looked at him in confusion.

“Jaebeom, have you ever thought that, let’s say, you and Youngjae, if you both think like this. If you both are letting go of each other to wait for the other one to come back so that you can know it’s real, then you both are playing a long waiting game. It never ends. If you and him both keeping waiting for each other, then who’s actually making a move? Who’s actually coming back to the other person? Even now, you both are waiting for each other to do something, anything, instead of actually doing something,” Jinyoung explained his theory.

Jaebeom stayed quiet.

“If you look at it the other way, it just means that you don’t have to stop someone’s freedom and you have let the person be and if they stick around, then you know, they’re with you,” Jinyoung said softly.

“You should stop reading all those books,” Jaebeom said and Jinyoung laughed. Jinyoung smiled back at Jaebeom again because Jaebeom was finally understanding the situation.

“I don’t know what to do, he wouldn’t talk to me,” Jaebeom said.

“Have you tried?” Jinyoung asked and Jaebeom rubbed his face with both his hands.

“How am I supposed to try? What am I even supposed to say? He asked me to leave, I never wanted to go. I understand, I am not blaming him, yeah, he did what he did. At first he misunderstood the whole conversation and I cleared it up and then with… the whole… Nina… It’s just so stupid and he
Jaebeom was frustrated, he has played the night in his head hundred different times, things he could have said or thing he should have said, things that might would change the past but all of those scenarios ended with the same result as that night’s.

“Jaebeom, there’s always three ways of seeing a story,” Jinyoung said and Jaebeom looked at him again.

“You have only thought of your way, you have already thought of what happened to you and what you did and how you felt. Now, I just want you to see it from two different views as well,” Jinyoung said.

“Jinyoung, in last two days I have lost all my brain rethinking and overthinking everything. I don’t think I can do it anymore,” Jaebeom replied and he put his head on his hands and his elbow on his knees for support.

“Then do it for me, if you still don’t want to, we can see what else can be done, okay?” Jinyoung said when no reply came from Jaebeom, he continued.

“Just put yourself in Youngjae’s position. Just think that it’s actually you who saw a message on Youngjae’s phone from his ex. How would you feel about that? And that Youngjae never mentioned it to you even after days went by. And you know that Youngjae is in constant touch with his ex but he’s just not telling you. Now, you don’t know what the reason is, all you know is that he’s talking to his ex. And that when you confronted Youngjae about it, he never explained anything. He never told you why he was in touch with his ex or why he hid it from you. He never said a word, how would you feel? How would you react?” Jinyoung hoped that Jaebeom understood what he was saying.

The tensed way Jaebeom moved his shoulders and looked up made Jinyoung believe that Jaebeom was giving it a thought.

“It’s just… the whole Nina thing… it’s just stupid and… it’s… there’s not much,” Jaebeom said slowly, he was still registering what Jinyoung has said.

“But does Youngjae knows that? All Youngjae knows is that you’re talking to Nina. You never told him why you’re in touch with her. And I’m really glad that he doesn’t think you’re cheating but Jaebeom that doesn’t mean that his trust in you wasn’t shaken by it. You hid something from him and never explained when confronted.”

Jaebeom looked down. He wasn’t sure if anything was needed to be said now.

“And there’s one last thing you need to see, from an outsider’s perspective. Because you’re living it, us, your friends, we don’t fully understand your emotions but we care for them neither less,” Jinyoung said and Jaebeom gave him a weak nod.

“Jaebeom, just imagine it this way, if I came to you and told you that Jackson was talking to his ex and that I saw a message or a call on his phone from his ex, and not just any ex, an ex he had a bad and toxic relationship with. And, Jackson’s not telling me anything about it. How would you see the situation? What will be your thoughts towards Jackson and towards me? Who here needs to do an explaining and who here needs to confronting? Who here should be the one going to the other person?” Jinyoung tried to explain as softly as he could. He moved a little in Jaebeom’s direction and when Jaebeom made no move of backing out, he held out his hand and took Jaebeom’s in his.
Jinyoung squeezed Jaebeom’s hand softly and slightly, he wasn’t here to lecture Jaebeom, nor was he here to make decisions on behalf of Jaebeom, what he was here for was to make sure that his friend wouldn’t end up making a stupid decision. That Jaebeom actually understood the whole situation, that Jaebeom actually understood the mindset of everyone involved.

“You’ve became a lot more talkative, is this Jackson’s doing?” Jaebeom tried his way with humour when they sat there in silence for too long.

Jinyoung laughed, he wanted his friend to be okay and he knew that he would be okay. He smiled at Jaebeom and then gave Jaebeom a side hug.

“Anyway, enough about me, how are things with you and Jackson? From what I heard from the kids today, seems like he’s going to Hong Kong soon,” Jaebeom said moreover to change the topic. He was exhausted from talking about a heartbreak.

“He is, yeah, it’s exciting and new and I’m so happy for him,” Jinyoung said and smiled. He looked happy as well but there was something in Jinyoung’s expression that Jaebeom couldn’t put a finger to.

“It’s a great opportunity, I’ve heard that it’s gonna be major if they play their cards right,” Jaebeom said.

“Isn’t it with every new label? If you play it right, you go far?”

“Then what’s the matter in the paradise?” Jaebeom asked. Now the tables have turned, now, Jaebeom was the one asking questions.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, that you’re showing me just how perfect you two are with no problems but then what’s the problem?”

Jinyoung gave out a weak nervous laugh. “I’m just… I’m… I’m just scared, I guess,” Jinyoung said and hung his head low.

“Scared? Why?” Jaebeom felt a little guilty as he asked that. In the last few days he hasn’t spoken to Jinyoung at all, or asked him how he was, he was so caught up with his own problem that he stopped thinking about the others and he hated that.

“Jaebeom, be very honest, how many artists do you know who have been dating since they debuted?” Jinyoung asked and Jaebeom understood.

“Your silence speaks for itself,” Jinyoung added a while later. He took a deep breath and tried to calm his mind, “I don’t know what to expect anymore, like, the culture we have here is so different and I don’t know how it is with the Chinese culture. I was searching a lot and reading a lot and I just, I just wished it was different. That a person’s talent had nothing to do with what their relationship status is, I wished that people weren’t defined by who they love rather what they bring to the table but it’s a world I imagine to live in and not the actual world that we live in.”

Jaebeom understood Jinyoung’s concern. Jaebeom understood what Jinyoung was talking about but he had nothing to add to that, he would be lying to the both of them if he said that Jackson and Jinyoung would be okay even after Jackson’s debut, because he knew that wasn’t the case.

He wanted to be supportive of his friend but all he could do now was offer his shoulder to Jinyoung because the end of it would just be tears and nothing else.
“Have you spoken to Jackson about it?” Jaebeom asked.

“And say what to him? That, ‘oh, Jackson, by the way, we might not be together when you sign with the label but let’s just act like that’s too far away and act normal for the time being.’ Is that what I should say?” Jinyoung looked up at Jaebeom. He looked scared and he looked lost.

“You guys need to have a talk,” Jaebeom said.

“You and Youngjae had a talk, where did that lead you?” Jinyoung tried to joke because he knew he could and Jaebeom just smirked and hit his shoulder.

“I hate you,” Jaebeom yelled as he walked to get some water for himself.

“Anyway, you already have a lot on your plate, I don’t want to burden you with my problems as well,” Jinyoung said and followed Jaebeom to the kitchen.

“Then, who are you gonna talk to?” Jaebeom asked and Jinyoung just smiled. They both have always had each other. They both have and will always have each other.

They talked for a bit more but not about Youngjae or Jackson but about their parents and the shop, about what was needed to be done and if there were people needed to be hired.

Jinyoung left soon after and made Jaebeom promise that he would think about what they talked about and Jaebeom said he would and Jaebeom did.

He thought about it enough to know that something was needed to be done but he still was as unsure of what the first step of it should be.

The next morning, Jinyoung woke up with a phone call from Jackson. He looked at the time and it was only four in the morning.

“Jackson? Is everything okay?” as much as Jinyoung’s voice was heavy with sleep, he still sounded concerned, his voice on the verge of panic. Jackson has never called this early, he generally would drop a message to make sure that Jinyoung wasn’t asleep.

“You’re so cute,” Jackson replied with an over excited voice for someone on a call at four in the morning.

“Did you call me… this early… to say that?” Jinyoung wasn’t having it. He was asleep, deep in his sleep.

“No, in fact, I have some news you’re gonna hate but yeah,” Jackson sounded like he was roaming around his house, Jinyoung could heard a lot in his surroundings.

“Jackson, it’s four in the morning,” Jinyoung said and yawned loudly.

“I’m going to Hong Kong,” Jackson said and Jinyoung wanted to hang up, all of it could wait, he needed sleep.

“Yes, and I’m very proud of you and I’m happy for you but can we talk when I wake up,” Jinyoung was already on the verge of losing his sleep. He was already half awake by then.

“Jinyoung, you’re so cute when you’re asleep and half angry, I wish I could kiss you right now, but I’m on my way to the airport, I’m going to Hong Kong today,” Jackson laughed on the call and Jinyoung sat up, eyes wide in the dark room.
“What?” Jinyoung practically yelled on the phone. He was sure he heard Jackson right but he wasn’t sure.

“It’s a long story and I’ll tell you when I reach the airport, I just called because I just got the news and I thought I’d let you know.” Jackson sounded a bit nervous and it made Jinyoung smile that at those of these Jackson thought of calling him.

“Where are you now?” Jinyoung asked and he was already out the bed.

“Home and I’m leaving in next ten minutes, the flight is at seven thirty and it’ll take me around twenty to thirty minutes to reach the airport. I thought I would rather get there early than be late,” Jackson said.

“Stay at home, I’m coming,” Jinyoung said and looked around for his clothes.

“What? No, no no no, you sleep, please, I only called you to inform you, just call me when you wake up or I’ll call you when I land, Jinyoung you don’t have to come,” Jackson felt guilty all of sudden.

“I’m coming, I don’t care, I’m not letting you leave alone,” Jinyoung said and rushed outside of his house.

“That’s not why I called, I feel bad now and it’s so cold,” Jackson said on the call.

“Well, you can hug me tight to warm me up,” Jinyoung said instead of mentioning how he wore a sweatshirt and a coat over three additional layers of clothes.

The first thing Jackson did when he saw Jinyoung was kiss him. Held him tight and kissed him warm and slow, unlike how they’re shared their first kiss. Jinyoung smiled throughout the kiss and let him go loose in Jackson’s hold.

“I’ll miss this,” Jackson said and hugged Jinyoung just liked Jinyoung has asked him to. Jinyoung just smiled and pressed his ice-cold nose into Jackson’s neck and Jackson hugged Jinyoung tighter whereas Jinyoung thought Jackson would push him away. Jinyoung smiled again.

On their way to the airport Jackson told Jinyoung how the company has called, they told him that the CEO was to go overseas for few meetings and that they’d have to cancel of the audition, Jackson asked what’s the rescheduled date was and they couldn’t confirm anything before the end of February. They told him that if he was willing to fly down the same day, they could make it work and Jackson confirmed.

“When did they even call you? At what time?” Jinyoung asked.

“Ten minutes before I called you, and then I called my mom and she started crying on the phone,” Jackson said and smiled. Jinyoung was really proud of Jackson.

“This is really Happening, huh?” Jinyoung wanted to sound proud but he sounded nervous.

“It is, yeah,” Jackson said comfortably and took Jinyoung’s hand in his and kissed it.

When they arrived at the airport, what Jackson never expected was to see five other familiar faces all lined up and waving their hands enthusiastically.

“What the hell? How did they get here?” Jackson was smiling from ear to ear, he just thought it would only be him and Jinyoung because of how early it was.
Yugyeom bounced around and jumped to hug Jackson, “We rushed as soon as Jinyoung gave us a call,” he said.

“When did you do that?” Jackson was still in Yugyeom’s grip but he turned to Jinyoung to ask that.

“When I was on my way to your place, they should get the chance to see you off as well,” Jinyoung said.

“You really expected you would leave without even saying bye to us,” Mark said and was next in line for the hug.

“I just thought you guys would be sleeping,” Jackson replied. His heart was happy, he was happy, he felt loved, he felt like he belonged.

“You have no idea how much of a struggle it was to get Youngjae out of that bed,” Mark said and Youngjae walked lazily towards Jackson to hug him. He was still sleepy.

“You should know, I only did it for you,” Youngjae said as he hugged Jackson.

“I’m flattered,” Jackson replied and hug back.

“Yeah man, we going big now,” Bambam yelled and jumped on Jackson, Jackson struggled to keep his posture but he just laughed with Bambam.

Then, once Bambam was back on the group, Jackson looked at Jaebeom and Jaebeom smiled proudly, he walked and just gave him a hug without any words.

When he pulled, he said to Jackson, “Don’t call me every day but call me every now and then.” And that made Jackson smile.

Jackson then turned towards Jinyoung, “Aren’t I gonna get a hug from you?” he said and opened his arms in invitation.

Jinyoung laughed and walked in to hug Jackson, Jackson lifted Jinyoung off the ground and twirled.

“Jackson, stop,” Jinyoung said and laughed loudly.

“You guys are so disgusting,” Yugyeom said and the rest laughed.

Jackson then kissed Jinyoung on the cheeks and Jinyoung blushes visibly and smacked Jackson’s shoulder.

“Ewwww,” Bambam said at the kissing and made a face. The rest laughed again. Jackson looked around and he would miss them. All of them, he would miss the comfort and the jokes. He was glad that Jaebeom and Youngjae were there for him as well, no matter what they both were going through with each other, they both showed up for Jackson.

“You’re gonna be late for your flight if you stayed here romancing,” Mark commented and Jackson smiled at Jinyoung.

“I’m just really happy that all of you came to see me off,” Jackson said again, he truly was grateful, he was happy.

“Yeah man, we had to, no one wants a scolding from Jinyoung,” Bambam commented jokingly, everyone knew they were there for Jackson.

“I’ll get going then, thank you again,” Jackson said and grabbed his luggage from the side, he wasn’t
carrying much, he was only going to be there for a few days and then he would be back, so, he packed light.

“Make us proud, Jack,” Bambam yelled from behind him and Jackson was going to miss them.

“I’m gonna miss you guys,” Jackson said and turned towards his people again.

“It’s only for a couple of days,” Jinyoung said to calm him down, “also, remember that even though Hong Kong is a little warmer than here doesn’t mean you’ll stop wearing warm clothes, you can show off your body another time, just take care of yourself. And I’ve written down some medicines that will help if you fall sick because of the climate change, okay?”

“It’s only for a couple of days,” Jackson mocked Jinyoung and received a look from Jinyoung instead. “I’m sorry, yes, I’ll wear warm clothes, my body is only yours,” Jackson said and winked.

“Ewww,” Bambam made a face and laughed.

“I’ll miss you,” Jinyoung said softly and Jackson smiled brightly, God, how he wished the time would slow down.

“I’ll call you to annoy your whenever I’m free,” Jackson said softly as well, almost a whisper so the conversation felt private to them.

“I’ll wait for those calls,” Jinyoung replied.

“Guys, cover us,” Jackson said and everyone looked puzzled, then, Jackson motioned with his hands for them to circle around him and they did.

Jackson was in the centre with the six of them circling around him, Jinyoung truly was stupid, he thought. He looked at Jinyoung and pulled him inside the circle, held his face and kissed him. Jinyoung understood without being spoken to. Jinyoung tried not to smile in the kiss and pressed Jackson’s lower lip in between of his and kissed back passionately, his hand on both sides of Jackson’s neck and then he pulled him close for better exposure.

“You both are so disgusting,” Mark laughed and everyone joined, Jackson and Jinyoung pulled back. Jinyoung was a little shy but Jackson was all confident and smiley.

“I really should go, I’ll give you all a call later, thank you, I love you guys,” Jackson said and after one final round of hugs, he walked inside the airport.

They all stood there for a good minute before Bambam said he was hungry. They all planned to go to Jinyoung and Jaebeom’s café but Mark and Youngjae bailed, Jaebeom expected nothing less. That was bound to happen, just because Jaebeom and Youngjae were around each other for Jackson doesn’t mean they had to be together anymore.

Jaebeom gave his keys to Yugyeom and asked him to drive, when they left, Jaebeom’s mind went back to Youngjae.

When he got a call from Jinyoung he knew that Youngjae would be at the airport as well, there was no surprise in that. Jackson and Youngjae had been friends way before Jaebeom and Jackson. Jaebeom also knew that Youngjae was a heavy sleeper, he was hesitant to ask Jinyoung who would wake Youngjae up but Jinyoung seemed to get the hesitation, he informed him that Youngjae had been at Mark’s and that Mark and Youngjae would come together.

When he arrived at the airport, Youngjae was already there with Mark. He hasn’t seen him in over
three days now, none of them have talked to each other in that time as well. Jaebeom sat in the car and just looked at Youngjae, he was laughing at something Mark was saying, his hands at his chest and his head thrown back in the air.

Jaebeom smiled, Youngjae has always made him smile, no matter what the circumstances were. Youngjae’s laugh had always made him feel warm and that time was no exception.

He knew that the mood would change as soon as he would join them but he also knew that as soon as he was out of the car, he wouldn’t be able to look at Youngjae. It still pains him, still made his heart ache that things had went south between them and that Jaebeom just couldn’t get himself to talk to him. He knows what he had to do but he doesn’t know if he had the strength to do it.

He stayed in the car for about five to ten minutes before he decided that he couldn’t sit in the car anymore, he took a deep breath and shut his eyes hard, he had to do it for Jackson. He walked out of the car.

The conversations died down pretty soon, Mark, Yugyeom and Bambam did most of the talking and Youngjae and Jaebeom talked whenever they were addressed. They did greet each other, a smile ‘Hi’ before the conversation shifted to Jackson, which he was thankful for.

When he reached the shop with Jinyoung, Bambam and Yugyeom, they all decided to have breakfast together. Jaebeom refused to cook so Bambam and Yugyeom did majority of the work. They all sat and had breakfast and talked about Jackson just to cheer Jinyoung up.

“So, are you guys dating? I don’t know, I guess, I never asked,” Bambam questioned.

“I… I mean-” Jinyoung wasn’t sure how to answer that, they both never actually talked about what they were, it was just something they knew deep down. Like, it was a commitment without it being verbal.

“They both have their tongues down each other’s throat, I hope they are,” Yugyeom said and that got Jinyoung to smack the back of his head.

“What? I am just looking out for the both of you,” Yugyeom pouted.

Jinyoung knew they both weren’t seeing other people and he knew for himself that he wasn’t interested in anyone else either and he was, to a certain point, sure that he could say the same for Jackson. Otherwise, whatever they both were doing, just wasn’t justified.

“Yes, we’re dating, happy?” Jinyoung kept his head low and acted like he was busy choosing what to eat next so that no one could see his blush.

“Does Jackson know you guys are?” Bambam asked and Jinyoung looked up. Jaebeom stayed quiet, he wasn’t sure if his input was required and neither was, he in a mood to talk.

“How are you guys gonna do this long distance thingie?” Yugyeom asked next.

“Don’t tell me phone sex is your only hope,” Bambam made a face as he said it.

“Leave him alone,” Jaebeom said this time and Yugyeom mocked him.

“Anyway, compliment Jackson whenever you can,” Yugyeom said and kept eating.

“What do you mean?” Jinyoung almost felt offended, he wasn’t going to sit and hear what needed to be done in his own relationship.
“No, I mean like, Jackson loves compliments. He lives on them. I mean, I know you already know all this, but I just thought I’d say it out loud. Just in case, you know,” Yugyeom said in a panicky voice.

“He’s right though,” Bambam jumped in to side with his best friend.

“I mean, he’s gonna be away for a while and we don’t know how they’ll treat him, but you gotta be there for him. And I know you know it but still. Just like, tell him he’s good and stuff, which is a fact so it’s not like you’ll be lying,” Bambam said.

“He’s gonna be back in two days,” Jinyoung said.

“Then compliment him for two days,” Yugyeom said. Jinyoung knew what he meant, he has seen the way Jackson’s expression would change as soon as someone would compliment him or say something nice about him. He has noticed the change in Jackson’s body language and the change in the confidence but he has also noticed how it’s different when Jinyoung is the one giving it to him. Jinyoung has noticed how Jackson would go speechless for a few seconds and then would blush before asking Jinyoung to ‘don’t say stupid stuff,’ when he just couldn’t take a compliment. He would get all shy and would look down to hide his smile when Jinyoung would tell Jackson just how amazing Jackson is.

It’s only been an hour or so but Jinyoung already missed Jackson. He wouldn’t say it out loud but he already missed that goof.

Soon it was nine and the customers started entering, Yugyeom and Bambam moved behind the counter and the rest of the employees took their positions. Jinyoung and Jaebeom stayed seated, they changed their tables to a table for two but they remained there and watched everyone.

“Maybe we should just open up a pub or something, we’ll have more customers that way,” Jaebeom said as he looked around. Majority of people they got at the shop were student or youngsters. Some here for dates and some here just to kill the time. Jaebeom remembered how some people even came in just to see Jinyoung and Jinyoung was very well aware of that but he never treated anyone differently.

“What if a fight broke out? I can’t handle violence,” Jinyoung said and took a sip of his coffee. “I would rather us have low customers than have people throwing up everywhere and treat our place like a hook-up centre.”

“What if a fight broke out? I can’t handle violence,” Jinyoung said and took a sip of his coffee. “I would rather us have low customers than have people throwing up everywhere and treat our place like a hook-up centre.”

“Do people still come to see you?” Jaebeom asked and Jinyoung laughed.

“Stop it.”

“So, they do. I just wanna be here the day Jackson drops by and those people are around just to see everyone’s reactions,” Jaebeom said.

“We’re not that obvious,” Jinyoung replied.

“Are you kidding me? You guys act like you both are alone whenever you’re together, we don’t exist for you two. You are so lost in each other, it’s crazy,” Jaebeom tried it without a smile but a smile slipped out.

“Shut up,” Jinyoung said and took another sip of his coffee to cover his smile.

“Are you staying here today?” Jinyoung asked to change the topic.
“Yeah, I thought it’d be a good distraction, so yeah,” Jaebeom replied and Jinyoung smiled. Jinyoung has missed Jaebeom at work and he was happy that he was here either way.

The day got pretty busy, it was cold and people always seem to found shelter in warm cafes.

Jinyoung got a call from Jackson when he landed, they couldn’t talk for long because Jinyoung was busy with customers and no one was there to cover for him, Jackson understood. They ended the call with a promise to talk at night. Which never worked out because Jackson went home after his audition and slept like a baby as soon as he finished dinner. Jinyoung got home after midnight that day. Him and Jaebeom were the last two who left even when Jaebeom kept pushing him to leave first.

Jinyoung was at work and all he wanted to do was be over with it and get home.

When Jinyoung got home he dropped a message to Jackson instead of calling him straight. He waited for an hour and when no reply came, he knew Jackson was asleep. The day’s exhaustion caught up with Jinyoung fast and soon after he was asleep as well.

Jaebeom, on the other hand, took the longest route home. He was up since four thirty in the morning but he wasn’t sleepy, he hasn’t been sleepy in last few days. It was freezing outside but he had no will to go back to his apartment. He hasn’t seen any movements outside of Youngjae’s apartment so it was safe for him to assume that Youngjae was still over at Mark’s place. Which made a lot of sense.

He walked around for a while and at around one a.m., he decided to head home, he wasn’t in any mood to get sick because of the cold. He always made himself think of others just so he could stop thinking of Youngjae. He thought of the message he received from Jinyoung where he said how he couldn’t talk to Jackson and how he would try again tomorrow.

The elevator opened at his floor and before he would walk out, he heard a voice, Youngjae’s voice.

He stayed inside the elevator, his legs fixed at their place and he just couldn’t move. If he walked out, he would be able to see Youngjae, they would be face to face and he wasn’t sure if he was ready for it, he wasn’t running but he just wasn’t sure how to approach him.

The apartments were on the right side of the elevator, the elevator opened to a narrow hallway which leads to those apartments, there was no way Youngjae could know that Jaebeom was here but, of course, because of the noise the elevator made, Youngjae knew someone was here.

“God, I told Mark this place is haunted, shit,” Youngjae mumbled when he saw that no one came out from the side of the elevator. Jaebeom never wanted to scare Youngjae, but it made him smile neither less.

When Jaebeom heard Youngjae’s door being shut was when he made way towards his own apartment. Youngjae must have been back for good.

“We have such bad timing, it’s not even a joke,” Jinyoung said as Jaebeom sat down with him for coffee. They were at the shop early today, mostly because Jinyoung couldn’t sleep. But they were there now.

“He called and I was taking a shower, I called and he was having breakfast with his parents, then he called and I was making breakfast so I couldn’t hear my phone and then I called and he was at the company’s building and then he called when I was on my way here and I didn’t hear the phone in my coat’s pocket and now I dropped him a message that he can call me when he’s free and he hasn’t
replied yet,” Jinyoung pouted.

“You guys suck,” Jaebeom commented and sipped on his coffee.

“That’s for your valuable input, means a lot to me and my emotions,” Jinyoung said sarcastically and Jaebeom put his hands up in surrender.

“Don’t get angry at me, I’m here because you called me to be here,” Jaebeom said and Jinyoung rolled his eyes.

“He’s gonna be back tomorrow anyway so I just hope this whole mess is behind us now.” Jinyoung said and crossed his arms, he wasn’t interested in the coffee anymore.

“And what about when he gets selected?” Jaebeom asked.

“Don’t make me worry about that, stop,” Jinyoung said sharply and Jaebeom laughed.

“You can go to him to see him,” Jaebeom said and Jinyoung rolled his eyes again.

“If I wanted suggestions like that, I would have talked to Bambam. He even said that I should audition as well so we both stay in the same company.”

“That’s actually not a bad idea, you like to sing anyway. And you should look up if they have auditions for actors because you can fool the whole world.”

“Jaebeom, I’m not in a mood for joke, I haven’t spoken to him in over a day and I don’t know how his audition went, I asked him to tell me via text but he said it’s such a long story that he would rather say it on a call,” Jinyoung pouted again.

“It’s only been a day, you’ll be okay, take half a day off and just sit by your phone the rest of the day,” Jaebeom said jokingly but Jinyoung seemed interested.

“You know what? This might be the only good advice you have given me today,” Jinyoung stood up abruptly and made his way towards Yugyeom.

“I’m gonna be taking a half day today, you’re in charge when I leave,” Jinyoung said to Yugyeom. Jaebeom made his way towards the both of them.

“I can take care of it, anyway, I was just joking but whatever suits you,” Jaebeom said.

“You’re taking a half day as well,” Jinyoung turned towards Jaebeom and Jaebeom looked at him with an eyebrow raised.

“You look like you haven’t slept in a decade, just go get some rest,” Jinyoung explained and Jaebeom looked down, people have noticed.

“Bambam and I are going to our dance classes right after work, you can join us, it’ll exhaust you so much that you’ll sleep like a baby,” Yugyeom said and Jaebeom might as well just give that a go.

They planned to leave to the class after five but Jinyoung just kept looking at his watch every few minutes.

Jinyoung counted down the minutes till the clock struck one and he ran home. He dropped a message to Jackson and told him that he would be free the whole day and that Jackson could call whenever he was free. Jinyoung sat by his bed and pretended to read a book to pass the time, it all went in vain because he was stuck on the same page since last hour.
Soon, his phone rang. As he saw Jackson’s name flashed on the screen, he couldn’t help but smile. Jackson was requesting a video call and who was Jinyoung to deny that.

“Jackson?” Jinyoung still sounded so confused. His smile brighter than ever.

“Park Jinyoung,” Jackson said excitedly, he was walking around so Jinyoung couldn’t see his face properly but he saw the shoulder and the bicep.

“Jackson, are you not wearing a sweater? Jackson, I told you to keep wearing warmer clothes no matter what,” Jinyoung said and frowned with concern.

“Babe, the heater is on, it’s really hot here,” Jackson said in his defence and he finally laid down on his bed.

“Jackson, no, go and wear a long sleeve t-shirt at least,” Jinyoung said but Jackson stayed quiet and just smiled.

“Hi,” Jackson said softly and it made Jinyoung’s heart race. He had seen Jackson like this before, he had seen a softer side of Jackson before but it still made him warm every time.

“Hi-hi,” Jinyoung stuttered and smiled out of embarrassment, Jackson laughed.

“Jinyoung, turn on all the lights in your room, I can’t even see you properly, it’s so dark,” Jackson said and Jinyoung moved around to turn on the rest of the lights.

“You look beautiful,” Jackson said and smiled wider.

“Shut up,” Jinyoung said shyly.

“Make me,” Jackson said in a slow seductive voice and Jinyoung looked straight at Jackson with his eyes opened wide. Jackson laughed again.

“God, I’ve missed you, so much, so so much,” Jackson said. They both smiled like new people in love and maybe that’s because they were those people.

“Tell me about the audition. I have already waited a whole day for you to tell me something but you won’t say a word,” Jinyoung got on topic.

“Are you not gonna say you missed me?” Jackson pouted and Jinyoung smiled.

“You tell me about the audition first and then we’ll talk about how much I’ve missed you,” Jinyoung’s heart raced as he said that. He still got extremely shy whenever he was to talk about his feeling for Jackson.

“Well, I had the audition at two and I reached and they asked me to sing and rap and dance and asked me to do all different things, they even asked me to act, which was crazy, I’ve never done it before. They asked me if I have any prior experience and it all felt more like an interview than an audition but they asked and I answered and then they told me about the label and what they’re for and what they wanna do in the industry and how they wanna change and revamp it and all that things and I just kept nodding along and then they asked me if I had any questions for them,”

Jackson stopped to take a breathe as he spoke all of it really fast, Jinyoung smiled. He has always loved whenever Jackson talked about his work or something related.

“I jokingly asked them ‘when can I join?’ and they said ‘how about next week?’ and so, yeah, that happened,” Jackson said proudly. A smile on his face because he knew Jinyoung was surprised and
confused.


“You’re looking at a trainee Jackson, tell me if you need an autograph or something,” Jackson said with pride and Jinyoung was still confused.

“How? What? You’re a trainee now? Jackson, I’m so confused? Didn’t you audition less than twenty-four hours ago? Do they even… I’m… isn’t all of it happening a little too fast? I’m… I don’t get it.”

“I was confused as well, I asked them if they’re sure and how can I be selected so fast and all that and they said they already have seen a lot of stuff from me, thanks to that sneaky Yugyeom. They said that they’re planning to debut some of the artists by the end of this year, one batch in June and the second batch in November and that if I want, I can train with them and whenever my time is right, they’ll see what can be done,” Jackson said excitedly.

“Jackson, that’s wow… that’s… crazy… wow. I’m so happy for you. I’m… this is… so…”

“Jinyoung?! Are you crying?” Jackson put his face close to the screen to look at Jinyoung but Jinyoung change the angel of the screen so his face couldn’t be seen.

“Jinyoung? Oh my God, babe, Jinyoung. Look at me, talk to me,” Jackson said happily, his heart was racing wild with how Jinyoung was reacting to the news.

“You… you… you’ve always wanted it,” Jinyoung said through his tears, he was so happy and proud of Jackson. He recalled the time they both were in Jaebeom’s room, Jackson’s head on Jinyoung’s stomach and when Jackson told him about his dreams, about how much he has struggled with no good results, about how much he has sacrificed with nothing turning out in his favour and about how much he has always dreamt of being on the stage.

“Hey, hey. Jinyoung, God, I…” Jackson stopped himself and in those unspoken words, a lot was said. Jinyoung looked at the screen again, at Jackson’s face and smiled. He was really proud and he just wanted Jackson to know that.

“I can’t wait to see you tomorrow, we’re all gonna be celebrating all night, we’ll go to all your favourite places and we’ll eat and drink and dance and do all of it all over again,” Jinyoung said proudly and Jackson’s expression changed.

“Yeah, about that… I… I can’t come back tomorrow,” Jackson said and looked down, he couldn’t face Jinyoung.

“What why? You’re joining is next week, right? You still have four days in between.”

“Yeah but there’s a lot of moving to do, stuff to take and it’ll take time and my parents asked to do it from here, I hardly have anything there except for clothes and they won’t let me carry a lot of stuff anyway,” Jackson tried to reason. The whole thing felt like he had talked about it before, maybe with his parents. All Jinyoung could do right now was to show support, he would hate for Jackson to be upset over anything.

“That’s okay, we can do it another time, right? Whenever you’re coming down, that’ll be good, we all can celebrate then,” Jinyoung said and tried to smile.

“I wanted to see you and the guys, I wanted to be there as well. I am sorry,” Jackson said.
“Hey, hey now, no, you don’t have to be sorry, how is it any of your fault? We’re all really proud of you, they’ll be so happy when I’ll tell them this good news, you take care of yourself, okay.”

“All of this is happening so fast, I just, I don’t even know if I deserve all of it.”

“Jackson, you deserve the universe, you deserve so much more and this is your time now, you’ll get everything that you’ve worked so hard for, you’ve been such a strong person and the universe said, ‘it’s payback time.’” Jinyoung tried to make Jackson laugh and it worked.

“Will long distance be this hard? It took us years to get on the call,” Jackson tried to change the topic.

“It’s only been a day and we’ll coordinate better,” Jinyoung said.

“Yeah and how about coordinating those kisses and cuddles? What you gonna do about that?” Jackson asked and he put his hand below his chin. Jinyoung had never seen a man so beautiful.

“I wish I could fly to you and help you out with moving and everything,” Jinyoung replied and looked at him with so much love in his eyes, Bambam would barf.

“Then come here,” Jackson said as if that’s the simplest thing to do.

“Where will I stay? How long will I stay? I was just joking, we’ll see each other again, anyway,” Jinyoung said but Jackson sat down. Jinyoung panicked.

“Jinyoung, I have the best idea,” Jackson said and started doing something on his phone, Jinyoung couldn’t tell.

“Jackson, I don’t like this.”

“Because you’ll love it, hold on a second,” Jackson said and it hit Jinyoung.

“Jackson, I swear to God, if you’re calling your parents. Jackson, listen to me, oh my god, Jackson,” Jinyoung sat down, hyper, he kept looking at the screen.

“Mom Dad, hi, I have Jinyoung with me,” Jackson said as soon as the call connected and Jackson’s parents appeared on the screen. Jinyoung suddenly hated technology. Video calling for two people was enough, no need to make it a conference call.

Jinyoung has met Jackson’s parents once but that was a while back, they haven’t spoken since and it wasn’t like Jinyoung was in constant touch with them.

“Jinyoung? Hello, sweetheart, how are you? Jackson has been talking about you nonstop since he got here,” Jackson’s mom said and Jinyoung bowed with a very nervous smile. He greeted everyone and refused to look at Jackson, who kept pouting every now and then.

“Can Jinyoung stay with us for a few days?” Jackson asked out of nowhere.

“Jackson!” Jinyoung said. Jinyoung wouldn’t lie, he wanted to see Jackson, now more than ever because he knew that Jackson would be away for a long time now and that there are things that they should talk about and figure out. But staying at Jackson’s house with his parents was a little too much.

“Of course, he can. But have you asked Jinyoung if he wants to stay?” Mama Wang asked.

“We can’t let him stay at a hotel, please mom,” Jackson pouted, yet again.
“Jackson, that’s his choice. Jinyoung, I would like you to know that we would love to have you over, if you want to stay or just rest for a while, you can always drop by at our place, we’ll treat you like family,” Mama Wang smiled and her smile reminds him of Jackson.

“Wow mom, thanks for confusing and intimidating him, now he would wanna break up with me, watch it,” Jackson said jokingly and his mother laughed. So, Jackson has told his parents about them.

“If you decide to come by, we’ll have lunch together and make Jackson cook it,” Jackson father spoke and it made Jinyoung happy just how accepting his parents were of Jinyoung. It almost made Jinyoung cry.

“Okay, mom, come home soon, I love you, bye,” Jackson ended the call with his parents soon and explained how he was left home alone because his parents decided to go on a date, Jinyoung thought if twenty years from now, that would be their future as well or would they have different homes?

“I hate you so much, why would you put me in that position?!” Jinyoung yelled on the phone and Jackson laughed.

“I just wanted to let you know that my parents are okay with you coming over and that you can do it tomorrow,” Jackson said.

“There’s just too much to do here, I can’t come tomorrow, I’m sorry. The shop and the employees, Jaebeom and I’ll have to figure out how long I can be gone and what can be covered, we have been thinking of renovating lately and we were looking at some vendors-”

“Hey hey hey, it’s okay it’s okay, if not tomorrow then maybe next week, but you’ll have to come, okay, if you can’t help me move, that’s fine, I just had free time till next week because after that I’ll be running on schedules but I want you to come, whenever you can,” Jackson interrupted.

“I’ll try for sooner, I can’t promise anything though,” Jinyoung said and Jackson understood.

“You come and kiss me, okay? You never kiss me first, I’ll act surprise when you’ll do it, like I never expected for it to happen,” Jackson said and Jinyoung laughed.

They talked a little longer before Jackson told him he had to go out to get some documents ready, they hung up soon after and all Jinyoung did was smile for the rest of the day.

Yugyeom was right, the dancing would exhaust him. He just wanted to get home and sleep. His body was in pain, he should start exercising maybe. Move a little.

He got a call from Jinyoung as he walked to his house, “Jaebeom, I think…I mean… I don’t know how to say it,” Jinyoung said on the call.

“If you’re gonna say, you’re in love, then, as Bambam likes to say, ‘we been knew’.”

“Jaebeom, is it too early?” Jinyoung asked and it might be stupid, what even was too early?

“Don’t overthink it, have you told him yet?”

“Am I crazy? What if he isn’t there yet? What if he won’t say it back? I’m so scared, since the whole realization hit me, I just haven’t been able to think well. I don’t know what to do,” Jinyoung sounded like he was in pain but Jaebeom laughed.

“Don’t overthink it, he’ll be there tomorrow, see where it takes you and how you two are,” Jaebeom said, he was already down his building and signals in the elevator was always a problem, so he
waited outside before he had to go up.

“Oh, about that, yeah, he isn’t coming back tomorrow but that’s a long story, I’ll tell you when we meet,” Jinyoung said and soon they hung up.

Jaebeom made his way up, it was hardly eight at night but he was sure he would be knocked out once he finishes off his dinner.

Jaebeom froze as he walked out the elevator, “What the hell,” he said unaware of how his voice sounded.

“Jaebeom, hey,” Nina greeted.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Jaebeom looked disgusted. He was at loss of words.

“I came to see you,” Nina smiled and Jaebeom wanted to just ask her to leave, she had done enough damage.

“I never asked you to come, how do you even know where I live? Why are you here?” Jaebeom crossed his arms defensively.

“Let’s go inside and talk,” She smiled and Jaebeom hated all parts of it.

“No, you’re not entering my apartment, what the hell do you want?” Jaebeom asked again, losing patience.

“Fine. I heard you and your boy broke up,” Nina said with a smirk.

“What are you even talking about?” Jaebeom played dumb.

“Yeah and why haven’t you been returning my calls or messages?” Nina asked and took a step towards Jaebeom, Jaebeom took three steps backwards.

“Don’t play this stupid ass game with me, I don’t have time for it, I already told you never to contact me, which part of it is hard to understand?”

“Jaebeom, honey, you-”

“Hey Meera, right?” Youngjae appeared out of nowhere, Jaebeom could swore that he wasn’t there a few seconds ago and now he stood just behind Nina, towards Jaebeom’s front door.

“Nina,” she corrected and Youngjae just gave her his signature smile.

“How come you’re here?” Youngjae said walked to stand beside Jaebeom.

“What are you doing here?” Nina looked at Youngjae with confusion.

“Funny, but I asked first,” Youngjae smiled again.

“Are you guys together?” Nina asked instead, she looked as confused as Jaebeom but Jaebeom wasn’t stupid to show it.

Youngjae turned to look at Jaebeom and Jaebeom could just stare. He couldn’t recall the last time he stood so close to Youngjae.

“You’re funny, Nina. Are you here for something?” Youngjae changed the topic.
“He talks to me, your boyfriend, he talks to me,” Nina said and crossed her arms, she only wanted drama.

“Okay, and?” Youngjae sounded confused. “You want him to block you? I’ll ask him to do it then, thanks for dropping by,” Youngjae said and moved towards Jaebom’s front door and Jaebom followed.

“I hope you have a safe drive home,” Youngjae turned to Nina as Jaebom struggled to open the door.

“I don’t get it, you guys aren’t supposed to be together,” Nina spoke to herself loud enough for everyone to hear.

Youngjae and Jaebom stayed quiet, Youngjae waved her goodbye as he closed the door on Nina’s face. The old fashioned Jaebom still had a peephole on his door. Youngjae slammed his body lightly at the door and then looked out from the peephole. Nina was still there.

Jaebom stood just a few feet away from Youngjae and Youngjae turned to him and motioned him to stay quiet.

“Ahhh, Jaebom,” Youngjae moaned lightly but loud enough for it to be heard outside. A smirk on Youngjae’s face when he saw that Nina’s jaw dropped open.

Youngjae pressed his lips and moaned in his mouth, made sure that Nina heard it and she did. She looked more astonished than before.

“Jae…Jaebom… aahhh,” Youngjae sounded breathless. He wanted to laugh, the look on Nina’s face was all worth it.

Then Nina took a step closer to the door and tried to look inside through the peephole. Now, if it was someone who was using all their brain, they would know that anyone from outside couldn’t see inside just like that, but it was Youngjae who had all his attention at Nina and forgot about the facts. As soon as Nina tried to look inside, Youngjae panicked and turned around and pulled Jaebom towards him.

Youngjae wanted that the image he was giving Nina should look realistic if she could see it.

She turned and left after her failed attempt and Youngjae took a deep breath.

He turned around and froze, he just realized the position they were in. Jaebom had both his hands on each side of Youngjae’s head, a little closer to his shoulders.

They stood really close, their faces just inches apart and Jaebom’s eyes were fixed on Youngjae’s lips. Youngjae’s heartbeat was fast and his breathing was irregular.

“Jaebom?” Youngjae said softly, there was little to no space between their bodies but their bodies weren’t touching.

“Huh?” Jaebom seemed zoned out and then he moved his eyes towards Youngjae’s. Jaebom panicked and he took several steps back.

“I’m… I’m… I… sorry,” Jaebom said and rubbed his face furiously.

“No no, no, it’s… I… I shouldn’t have pulled you like that… I wasn’t thinking,” Youngjae looked down and said. Now that they both were alone, they both weren’t aware what to say.
“I should get going, I just, I’ll leave now,” Youngjae said and turned around to open the door.

“Stay,” Jaebeom said softly, there was so much weight in his words that Youngjae froze for a second. “Please.”

Youngjae turned around and just looked at Jaebeom.

“I think we should talk,” Jaebeom said slowly. The lights in his house weren’t light up entirely expect for the one right above Youngjae’s head.

Youngjae just gave Jaebeom a nod and Jaebeom made his way towards the living room.

“Do you want anything to eat or drink?” Jaebeom asked just to fill the silence and Youngjae declined but then asked for some water.

“I should explain myself,” Youngjae said and caught Jaebeom off guard. Jaebeom was mentally preparing what to say but Youngjae spoke first.

“I didn’t mean to intrude with Nina, it was just,” Youngjae took a breath and pushed back his hair from his face. “It was that, you sounded angry and I could hear you loud and clear and I just thought you didn’t want Nina there and I… I know I shouldn’t have but I just thought you wanted her to leave, I’m sorry if I interrupted something,” Youngjae said and sounded apologetic. It pained Jaebeom’s heart.

“I’m glad you did, I didn’t know she would be here, I have no idea how she got my address or how she got to know about us,” Jaebeom said the last part with a heavy heart, “I’m thankful that you were there, she wouldn’t have left easily otherwise.”

They both stayed quiet again.

“How have you been?” Youngjae asked when the silence grew.

“I’ve seen better days,” Jaebeom tried to be witty. “How have you been?” Jaebeom asked.

“We’re so bad at these small talks,” Youngjae said it killed all the awkwardness between them. Youngjae laughed nervously and pressed his lips.

“I think I have a lot of explaining to do,” Jaebeom said, he knew he should have done it earlier but he just wasn’t sure how to start the whole thing.

“I’m all ears, I’ve been ready to hear it for a long time,” Youngjae smiled at Jaebeom and for a second Jaebeom forgot all about the pain, all about the ache that he felt during the nights he cried. All he could remember was Youngjae’s smile that he has missed so much. Youngjae.

“But I don’t know where this will lead us,” Jaebeom said. He was still nervous.

“We’ll figure that out.” saying Jaebeom has missed Youngjae was an understatement.

“It started the day after the wedding,” Jaebeom started, he already hated himself for keeping it from Youngjae but at that time he just thought it wasn’t that big of a deal and that he could handle it.

“Nina must have asked my number from any of my cousins and old friends and that’s how she contacted me, it was right before we came back, when we were still at my parent’s house. The morning I woke up to a text from her and she asked me if we can meet, I never replied,” Jaebeom continued. Youngjae could sense the hesitation but he said nothing.
“You and I, we were… we were still figuring out things, what was happening and I wasn’t sure how you felt for me and I wasn’t sure if I should even speak of Nina. I didn’t tell you or Jinyoung because I thought it would never happen but she messaged me again and when I didn’t reply she called.”

Youngjae kept his eyes fixed on Jaebeom. He paid attention, he listened.

“I wasn’t sure what she wanted but then my mom called and told me she called them as well and I just couldn’t take it anymore. I called her as soon as I could and then…” Jaebeom went quiet. He remembered the day, it was the night Jaebeom went to see Youngjae at his office, the night where Jaebeom gifted Youngjae the hoodie he had bought for him. The night they exchanged gifts.

“Then, at first, she did all the ‘I miss you, I still love you’ drama, none of it was true, I knew it. You don’t change overnight, I’ve learned that a long time ago. She kept recalling the time we spent together and I kept asking her what she wants and why she’s bothering me. I wanted to tell you, Youngjae, you have to believe me,” Jaebeom looked up at Youngjae as he said the last line. Desperation clear in his voice.

“I just wasn’t sure how and I wasn’t sure if we were there yet, I enjoyed every minute I spent with you but I… I hated everything when I was alone, because her words, her messages would keep ringing in my head. And when I decided to finally tell you, I understood that it was too late, that there was no point of it, so I never did,” Jaebeom tried to explain and Youngjae just gave him a small nod.

“She later told me she needed money, that she wanted a better life for her kid but she wasn’t financially stable, I asked about her family and the guy and his family but they all abandoned her. She said she was all alone and she couldn’t afford day care for the kid, she had to take the kid everywhere with her, wherever she worked.”

Youngjae got concerned over that, as much as Youngjae wanted to feel sorry for Nina, he knew she was a wicked woman.

“I asked her what she needed money for?”

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae said with concern and something in Jaebeom felt warm, he still cared.

“She said for the normal stuff, kids diapers, clothes and all the kid stuff. She said she wasn’t asking money for herself and that it was all for the kid. That she would never drop so low to ask money on behalf of her child. So, I delivered a bag of diapers at her place.”

Youngjae pressed his lips so the laugh couldn’t come out but he saw the way Jaebeom looked at him. Youngjae hit Jaebeom’s shoulder with his hand and shook his head in disbelief.

“I wasn’t gonna send money, I’m stupid, but I’m not that stupid. I told her I have no idea what the kid’s size. She started calling me names and all that stuff and then somewhere down the line she started drunk calling me randomly,” Jaebeom recalled the exact day it started. The day right after when Jaebeom and Youngjae have kissed for the first time. The next morning, instead of waking up to a text from Youngjae he got up on a call with Nina.

“I wanted to tell you but I just thought you’d question me of why I hadn’t told you all this time and then we were actually heading somewhere and I told her that I don’t see myself with her, that I have stopped having any kind of feelings for her a really long time ago. She threatened to come down and she threatened to contact you and I was scared. I didn’t have the guts to tell you but I would have hated myself if you found out through her and I started building up courage to tell you. I never wanted to start something with you where we keep secrets from each other,” Jaebeom looked down.
He was ashamed and embarrassed. He let a stupid stupid mistake, if one may call it that, ruin what he had with Youngjae.

“I told her I didn’t have money and that Jinyoung handles all the finances so she would stop asking me for money. Then she started saying we should meet up and I kept refusing, she started blackmailing me and started telling me that she’d tell you and I got so tired of it and I was so out of it but moreover I was scared to lose you but I guess I did. In the end, it all worked out in her favour.”

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae said softly this time. Jaebeom remembered the last conversation they had in Youngjae’s apartment, where Youngjae was the one who did most of the talking and this time, it was Jaebeom.

“I know, I’m to blame for it as much as she is. I thought once we came back from the date, I’d sit down with you and tell you everything but I guess I was too late, you already saw the messages and calls from her. I wanted to tell you the night you asked me, the night you confronted me, but I just couldn’t. I was finding it difficult, I just, I knew it was stupid that there wasn’t anything but the fact that she had to do with my past and it just felt… wrong. Coming out of your mouth, all of it felt wrong. I felt guilty. You have every right to yell at me, to hate me.”

“I don’t hate you, Jaebeom,” Youngjae’s voice was still soft. Jaebeom couldn’t look up at him. He couldn’t look at Youngjae.

“Well, you should, I would have,” Jaebeom wanted to sound sarcastic but it sounded sad. All these past days, all Jaebeom has thought of was how much things would have changed if he actually told Youngjae the minute Youngjae asked him what was happening.

“I… I don’t want… I think… I li-” Jaebeom froze mid sentence as Youngjae’s phone started ringing.

“God,” Youngjae jumped and held his chest. The whole atmosphere was so low and Youngjae’s ringtone was so loud.

“It’s Jackson,” Youngjae said as he looked at his phone. “I can call him back,” Youngjae said and put his phone on silent.

Jaebeom lost the rhythm of his words. He wanted to say something but he no longer found the atmosphere suitable. He stayed quiet.

“Say something,” Jaebeom said to Youngjae after a while.

“What do you want me to say?” Youngjae asked softly.

“Anything, yell at me, scold me, just… just… just talk to me, Youngjae,” Jaebeom’s voice was on the verge of pleading. The last few days had been so hard on him and he couldn’t even imagine what it would have been like on Youngjae, who was blindsided by everything that has happened.

Youngjae’s head was down, he started at his lap, out of words. He looked up at Jaebeom and when Jaebeom met his eyes, there wasn’t any guilt or anger, there wasn’t any regret. Youngjae looked like Youngjae with no filter, Youngjae looked like the Youngjae he had met for the first time when Jackson introduced them. Youngjae looked like the Youngjae who agreed to be a fake date.

Youngjae’s phone rang again before he could answer to Jaebeom.

“It’s Jackson again,” Youngjae said and was flooded with messages from Mark.

“Oh shit,” Youngjae said and shut his eyes closed. He furiously typed into his phone.
“I was supposed to have this conference call with Jackson and Mark because he was gonna tell us what happened with his audition,” Youngjae said and then looked at the time. He was supposed to start the call ten minutes ago, the last time Jackson called.

Jaebeom recalled the conversation he had with Jinyoung and with the turns of it, the call was important. As much as he wanted Youngjae there with him, he wanted Youngjae to be there for Jackson as well.

Youngjae put his phone on silent again.

“Don’t you have to go?” Jaebeom asked in confusion.

“I told them I’m with you,” Youngjae said with a smile and Jaebeom couldn’t hide his. His heart raced faster at that.

“They said I have five minutes, ten at max,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom laughed. Pure Jackson and Mark behaviour.

“Are… are we okay?” Jaebeom asked. He wanted to use all of these five to ten minutes he had left.

“I… I just think it’ll be too abrupt if we suddenly went back to the way we were.”

“Makes sense,” Jaebeom lied. He hated the idea. All he wanted to do was hold Youngjae and to be held by Youngjae.

“I just… maybe… I mean… maybe, we can try being friends and see what happens, where it goes,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom could sense the hesitation in his words.

Jaebeom just gave him a nod. Youngjae stood up and Jaebeom knew it was time.

“Jaebeom, I just wanted to ask you one thing and I want you to be honest with me, hundred percent honest,” Youngjae said. Jaebeom nodded.

“Do you have any kind of feelings for Nina, even if it’s little, anything?” Youngjae asked and Jaebeom could sense that Youngjae had been meaning to ask this for the longest time.

“No,” Jaebeom replied in a heartbeat. “I feel nothing for her.” It’s only you, Jaebeom wanted to add but he never did.

“I’ll take you for your word,” Youngjae said.

Youngjae walked towards the door and he turned to face Jaebeom just before he opened the door.

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae said slowly. Jaebeom walked over to him.

Youngjae took Jaebeom’s hand in his own and caressed his fingers with his thumb, “Let’s not hide things from each other, no matter how big or small. We’ll be okay, okay?” Youngjae’s words weren’t a question but rather a statement.

Jaebeom’s whole body was on fire. He wanted to never let go of that hand. He wanted the time to stop and for them to be stuck there. He wanted to kiss Youngjae.

Jaebeom nodded, his throat too dry for him to say words out loud.

When Youngjae walked out the door, the heaviness in Jaebeom’s heart was weighed down. The sensation on Youngjae’s hand was still on Jaebeom’s and as he saw his door closed in front of him,
he remembered how him and Youngjae were just there about an hour ago. Jaebeom remembered how Youngjae moaned out his names but not with the intentions he would have wanted him to. How Jaebeom was so close to Youngjae that he could kiss him without having to lean too much into it. How he wished Youngjae wanted the same thing.

Maybe they would go back to the way they were before or maybe this could be a start or something new. Maybe it was too late for them or maybe they would be back stronger.

That night, Jaebeom went to bed with Youngjae’s moans in his head and Youngjae’s name on his lips.

Chapter End Notes

HELLO!

I'm so sorry for such little 2jae but people need time to heal, okay! aaaaaa but next chapter will have so much 2jae, i hope so.

Do let me know what you think of the story and how you're liking it (or not). Every comment is highly appreciated, i cry over each one. please.

thank you so much for taking time to read my fic, it really means so much to me.
“I’m scared.”

“Of course, you are.”

“You’re not helping!!” Jinyoung practically yelled on the phone.

“It’s not even sunrise, how more awake do you expect me to be?” Jaebeom groaned.

“You’re sure this isn’t a mistake, right?”

“Hmm.”

“Jaebeom, show a little more support,” Jinyoung was nervous. Not practically scared but very nervous.

“Jinyoung, we’ve debated this the whole day, you’re not making a mistake. It’s for the best.”

“Is it moving too fast? I don’t even know his favourite colour. Except for that he doesn’t eat spicy food, I don’t know what his favourite food is. I don’t know if I know him.” Jinyoung was overthinking everything and he knew it but there wasn’t much he could do to help himself.

“Jinyoung, first, you take a deep breath,” Jaebeom said softly and waited for Jinyoung to do as he was being told. “It doesn’t matter if you don’t know his favourite colour, what matters is that you know how to make him happy and how to be there for him. Jackson isn’t gonna look back and be like ‘Jinyoung didn’t know my favourite colour, I should break up with him.’ but he’ll see how you knew just what was needed to be done for his good.”

“You think he’d break up with me over his favourite colours?”

“That’s not what I said,” Jaebeom groaned loudly.

“You’re half asleep, you’re making no sense.”

“That’s exactly what I said.”

“Anyway, I have to go, this is stressful.”

“Jinyoung, listen, Jackson will be happy, okay. He wanted to see you, he even called you to ask you if you could come down. He needs you there and he has been very verbal about it.” Weirdly those words worked on Jinyoung. He calmed down a little. Then they hung up soon after.

Jinyoung took a deep breathe again. He thought back to what Jaebeom has said and how in the long run, knowing Jackson’s favourite colour wouldn’t matter but knowing what Jackson wants without him having to say it, will matter.

Maybe that’s how he made himself believe that him being there, in Hong Kong, with Jackson was the right thing. It was what Jackson wanted and he has even asked for it.

As Jinyoung stood at the airport he let the cold breeze hit his face, let the shiver run down his spine.
Hong Kong was much warmer than South Korea but it was still cold. He let himself relax, recalled his last conversation with Jackson and how excited Jackson was over the idea that Jinyoung could join.

“You’re here.” Jinyoung’s train of thoughts were broken by Mama Wang’s voice.

“Hello,” Jinyoung said politely and bowed, he wasn’t sure how to address her.

“Oh! Come here,” Mama Wang said and opened her arms for a hug. Jinyoung was starving for hugs. They sat in the car and made small talks about travels, how the flight was? If he reached okay? Had any trouble? Jinyoung answered every question nicely.

“You should have told Jackson,” Mama Wang mentioned.

“I want to surprise him, but I’m not sure how he’ll react,” Jinyoung said honestly.

“He’ll be over the moon. After your call last time, he called me and he was upset. Stupid child,” Mama Wang laughed. “I’m glad you called me. I wasn’t expecting you to call but I’m glad you did.”

“I got your number from Bambam, I hope that was okay. After I decided to come here, I just wasn’t sure who else I could call. I only know Jackson here.”

“You did right, it was so hard for me to not mention you in front of him the whole night. He’s just a little nervous, with the moving and all, it’s all happening so fast.”

They talked about Jackson for a little while. Papa Wang hardly spoke, he drove and smiled every now and then.

Soon they were just outside their house. Papa Wang parked the car and it all rushed to Jinyoung, how he was truly there. Standing on Jackson’s property. He stayed still for a while and Mama Wang came around to rub his back. He had his luggage with him. Nothing much, just a small suitcase with a bunch of clothes and pants. He packed light.

“Come,” Papa Wang said as he rang the bell. Jinyoung’s heartbeat was loud, he could hear it. He was sure his face has gone all red, he was sure he wasn’t moving at all.

“Do you want me to cook or are-” Jackson froze at the door. Mama Wang laughed softly. But all Jinyoung could look at was Jackson. Jackson in his pyjama pants, Jackson in his soft black hoodie, Jackson in his beanie. Jackson.

“Ji-Jinyoung?” Jackson spoke hesitantly. As if he couldn’t trust his eyes. He looked at his mom and then at his dad, they smiled and just gave him a nod and walked inside the house.

Jinyoung opened his mouth to say something but the words never left, he just smiled nervously and Jackson rushed towards him. At first, Jinyoung thought that Jackson would kiss him but then, Jackson just wrapped his hands around Jinyoung and pulled him in for a hug. A big warm comforting hug. Jackson rubbed his nose in the crook of Jinyoung’s neck. Jinyoung wrapped his hands around Jackson and hugged him back.

They stayed like that for a while, Jackson had his whole-body weight in Jinyoung’s arms and Jinyoung had no complains. Then they pulled back, a small smile on Jinyoung’s lips but Jackson’s expressions were unreadable.

“You’re here?” Jackson just couldn’t believe it.
“I’m here.” Were the first words that came out of Jinyoung’s mouth. Jackson took a step back, looked Jinyoung up and down in nervousness.

“Jackson,” Jinyoung began and then stopped. His name was statement enough. Jinyoung hoped it gave away everything Jinyoung had been holding back.

“I love you,” Jackson said. His words very calculated. His words very soft. His words very loud. Jinyoung wasn’t sure if he heard him right, his heartbeat was louder.

“Are you boys gonna join us now? It’s cold outside,” Mama Wang yelled from inside the house.

“I’ll get your bags, you go in,” Jackson said and reached for Jinyoung’s luggage. Jinyoung’s mind was still on what Jackson said and he just couldn’t absorb anything else. He wasn’t sure what tone Jackson used when he said he’d get the bags. He wasn’t sure of anything anymore.

Once they were inside, Jackson wouldn’t look at Jinyoung. Jackson kept himself distracted, kept roaming around the house doing different stuff. There was way too much going on in his head. His primary concern was, he messed up. He messed up big big time. He messed up everything he and Jinyoung had.

They all sat down for an early lunch, Mama Wang concerned over how Jinyoung might not have eaten well. There was a rectangular table and they all sat down to eat. Mana Wang next to Jinyoung and Papa Wang next to Jackson. Jinyoung wasn’t sure if he was staring at Jackson or if he wasn’t looking at him at all. Jinyoung wasn’t sure if he poured his own meal or if someone else did that for him. Jinyoung wasn’t sure if Mama Wang asked him a question or if she was talking to someone else.

The only thing Jinyoung was sure of that he was too late. That he should have said something, anything when he had the time. That he was hurting Jackson with his silence.

Soon after the lunch, Mama asked Jackson to show Jinyoung the room he would be staying in. Jackson said he promised to meet a friend and that he would be back in an hour and left. Jinyoung’s primary concern was, he messed up.

Mama Wang showed him the house, three room, one of Jackson’s and one for the parents. The third room was Jackson’s childhood room. The bed was small but enough to fit Jinyoung. Mama Wang apologized, said if she knew better, they would have arranged something else for Jinyoung but the bed wasn’t even on Jinyoung’s mind. He told them not to worry. He said he needed to rest a little and that he would clean up and come out soon.

Jackson wasn’t home.

Jinyoung called Jaebeom, the only person that came to his mind.

“How are they?” Jaebeom asked as soon he picked up.

“I messed up, Jaebeom. I messed up. I hate it,” Jinyoung pleaded.

“Hey, where are you? Jinyoung?” Jaebeom panicked as well but he kept his voice normal, he didn’t want to give Jinyoung more stress.

“Jackson, he… he said… he said he loves me,” Jinyoung heard himself as the words got out of his mouth.
“He did what?” Jaebeom’s lips pulled up in a smile.
“I know, he did. I’m just. And then he left.”
“What did you say?”
“Nothing.”
“Nothing?”
“Nothing.”

“Jinyoung, how do you feel about him?” Jaebeom asked softly. It wasn’t like Jaebeom wasn’t aware of Jinyoung’s feelings, it was just that Jinyoung himself has never accepted his feelings.

“Jaebeom,” Jinyoung begged.
“Talk to him, whatever it is.”
“And you don’t think I know that,” Jinyoung said nervously.
“I know you know that but I just wanted you to hear it, he’ll understand whatever it is,” Jaebeom said.
“I’m scared,” Jinyoung confessed.
“Of what?”
“Disappointing him. Messing this whole thing up.” The overthinking has always gotten the best of Jinyoung. The over analysis of the situation has always gotten the worst of him.

“Jinyoung, he loves you. He said it himself.”
“You know, he has said such things out of the blue a lot of times but they’ve all always had been very friendly. Like, how he has said the said to Youngjae or Mark or Bambam or Yugyeom, but this time, when he said it. It felt different, he said it differently, he meant it differently. I just… I don’t know, Jaebeom.”

“Why do you think you’ll mess it up?” Jaebeom asked softly.
“Because he’s Jackson. He’s… he’s always everyone’s best friend. He’s always the life of a party, he’s always catching everyone’s attention. He’s loved, he’s appreciated, he’s so so so nice. I…”

Jinyoung had to stop himself otherwise he would cry. The heaviness in his chest was making it difficult for him to breathe.

“Jinyoung, don’t do this to yourself.” Jaebeom wanted to be there for Jinyoung, to be next to him, to sit by him and to talk to him in person.
“I’m just me,” Jinyoung said in a broken voice, hardly audible.
“And that’s enough for Jackson.”
“You don’t know that.”
“I hate talking all this mushy nonsense with you but I do know this,” Jaebeom said and Jinyoung let out the breath he was holding. “I’m not gonna sound like a cliche and go all ‘oh, I’ve seen the way
he looks at you’ but I have. I’ve seen the way he lights up whenever you smile. I’ve seen the way he’ll keep looking at you just to steal a glance because he couldn't have enough. I have heard him talk about you. I have heard the way he speaks of you, with so much respect and love and Jinyoung, you deserve it. You deserve all of it.” Jaebeom hoped and prayed that Jinyoung would just give himself a chance, that Jinyoung would just talk to Jackson.

Jinyoung stayed quiet. Jaebeom wasn’t sure if Jinyoung was just upset or if he was crying but whatever it was, Jaebeom would stay by his side through the silence.

“Where is he?” Jaebeom asked after a while.

“Out. He made up an excuse and left.”

“Talk to him when he comes back, don’t delay it, okay? It’s not good for the either of you.”

“Thank you,” Jinyoung said after a while.

“I’ll kick your ass, now just hang up,” Jaebeom said and smiled when he heard Jinyoung laugh. They would be alright.

As soon as Jaebeom hung up, he went outside the door. Everyone was supposed to meet for lunch at the shop and Jaebeom was already running late.

Since his talk with Youngjae last night, he hadn’t been able to stop thinking of Youngjae. Of Youngjae and his hands, of Youngjae and his skin. Of Youngjae.

He hoped to run into Youngjae as he made his way for the shop but that never happened.

Once he entered the shop, everyone was already there. Mark spread out all the food cartons he has brought with him. Bambam and Yugyeom behind the counter attending a customer and Youngjae was by Mark’s side, laughing and teasing. Jaebeom smiled.

“Hi,” Jaebeom said more to Youngjae than to Mark but only Mark replied. Youngjae just looked up at him and gave him a soft smile.

Maybe the awkwardness was gone, he felt like how he had felt when he started developing feelings for Youngjae. The only thing that was different was that Jaebeom was aware of Youngjae’s touch on his skin. Aware of the feeling, aware of how his heart would react with such touches. Jaebeom’s lips were aware of Youngjae’s. Aware of the want and need. Aware of how his stomach would flip just with a certain look from the younger.

“Jinyoung got there fine?” Mark asked when they all sat down for lunch. Fortunately, Jaebeom was seated next to Youngjae. More like Youngjae came over to sit just next to Jaebeom, which Jaebeom never expected.

“Yeah, he called, he’s tired. Was so nervous, he hardly slept last night.” Jaebeom informed them and left out the whole part where Jackson confessed and Jinyoung lost his voice.

“Jackson hasn’t messaged but maybe he’s too busy getting it,” Bambam said and Mark choked on his drink.


They all were seated in Jaebeom’s office. Yes, Jaebeom had an office which he shared with Jinyoung. The room wasn’t huge but it was enough for everyone. The shop was filled with
customers and if they ate outside it would have looked bad, so Bambam and Yugyeom took their lunch break and that’s how they all ended in the office.

Jaebeom had a huge square low-table on one side of the room, when Jinyoung had asked him what he would use that for, Jaebeom has informed him that he would put plants and books on the table but the table turned into a food table soon after. Technically it started with when Bambam said that they should sit down and eat by the table as it’s of the right height and Jaebeom cursed at how he couldn’t come up with that.

With just the five of them there Bambam, Yugyeom and Mark took one side of each square and Jaebeom and Youngjae sat together.

“When is he coming back anyway?” Yugyeom asked.

“You miss him already?” Jaebeom asked instead.

“I just wanna know how long my freedom will last.”

They settled on small talks and teasing. Somewhere along the way, where Bambam was teased on how he would judge every customer’s fashion sense as soon as they walk in, Youngjae laughed and dropped his hand to the side. Just where Jaebeom already had his hand. Their hands brushed. Jaebeom’s little finger brushed with Youngjae’s and Youngjae settled his hand right there. Their fingers pressed together but with no force. Jaebeom wasn’t sure if that was intentional or if that happened accidently.

Jaebeom froze. Back straight. He wasn’t sure where to look, to look down just to make sure that Youngjae’s hand was still right beside his or to just act as cool as Youngjae was acting.

“Don’t tell me you judged me as well,” Youngjae said to Bambam and his voice was normal. Jaebeom was sure he wouldn’t be able to speak for a while but Youngjae was okay. Maybe it was an accident.

Then Youngjae stood up to get himself a glass of water. Jaebeom did his best to not look at the younger. He kept his eyes fixed on the chips in front of him, untouched. When Youngjae came back he sat closer to Jaebeom. Jaebeom wasn’t sure if anyone noticed but he sure as hell did. Maybe that wasn’t Youngjae’s intention but when their thighs got pressed together, Jaebeom lost all his senses.

That touch was intentional, he could bet his life it was. Was Youngjae playing a game? Was that a test? Was Youngjae waiting for Jaebeom’s reaction?

Jaebeom froze, again. Held his breath and let it out slowly. He waited a few seconds and turned to looked at Youngjae. Youngjae was busy in talks with Yugyeom. They were laughing over something Jaebeom just couldn’t hear. Jaebeom looked in front, his eyes met Bambam’s and Bambam raised his eyebrow, asking as if everything was okay. Jaebeom gave him a nod.

Jaebeom placed his hand on his thigh, made sure not to touch Youngjae’s. His body was burning. He slid his finger slightly so they brushed with Youngjae’s thigh and Jaebeom observed as Youngjae sat straight. He noticed. Youngjae noticed.

Jaebeom was about to pull his hand back but then he felt the light brush of a finger on his. Jaebeom looked down on his hand and noticed Youngjae’s right next to his.

What was happening? What was Youngjae doing? What was all of this? Jaebeom squeezed his eyes shut and used his free hand to grab his glass of water and he drank it all in one go.
“That was mine.” Came Youngjae’s soft voice in Jaebeom’s ear. Jaebeom turned his head to look at him and Youngjae was close, really close. Leaned over just to whisper those words. Youngjae had a soft smile on his face and Jaebeom just couldn’t stop looking at his lips. He swallowed.

“Do you want more?” Youngjae asked, voice still a whisper so no one could hear them.

Jaebeom was sure Youngjae wasn’t referring to the water. He was sure of it, but Jaebeom just wasn’t sure of how to react to the question.

“Do you?” Youngjae asked again and Jaebeom felt Youngjae’s finger put pressure on Jaebeom’s.

“I.”

“Can you two stop being disgusting for two seconds? Ew,” Jaebeom made a face at Yugyeom and hit him. Jaebeom snapped his face forward, his face was visibly red.

“Are you okay?” Mark said with concern.

“Hmm?” Jaebeom looked at him. “Yeah yeah yeah.”

“What even is happening under the table? You look so red,” Yugyeom said and laughed. Bambam and Mark exchanged a look and laid down to see under the table. Youngjae, the only one who wasn’t shell-shocked, moved his hand and repositioned himself.

“You guys are so stupid,” Youngjae said and shoved a dumpling in his mouth.

“I need it,” Jaebeom said and looked straight at Youngjae, the room went silent for just a second because Mark asked what he was referring to.

“More, I need more,” Jaebeom said in a heartbeat, as if he was on a deadline.

Youngjae stayed quiet, eyes fixed on Jaebeom, then he handed him the glass of water.

“I’m so confused,” Mark said and threw a napkin at Jaebeom.

“They’re having eye-sex guys, chill,” Bambam said and Jaebeom threw himself on him. Bambam survived.

Once the lunch was over, Mark and Youngjae said they’d head to work. Youngjae’s shift starts from Monday and there were some work Mark wanted Youngjae to clean up.

Bambam and Yugyeom went back behind the counter.

Jaebeom watched as Youngjae and Mark left without many words. His mind kept going back to Youngjae’s hands and his thigh. To Youngjae.

Jaebeom wanted to hold that man and to be held by him but Jaebeom needed to know if that was okay. Jaebeom wanted a lot of things, majority of it involved Youngjae, but he needed to know if Youngjae was on the same page as well or not. Jaebeom waited.

Jinyoung was scared but now he was just annoyed. It’s been over an hour and Jackson hasn’t returned. He should have been here long time back, Jinyoung can’t go on with the small talks with parents when he knew there was other things that needed to be discussed.

Jackson’s parents looked worried, they apologized to Jinyoung a few times and Jinyoung felt embarrassed.
“He should be back anytime now,” Mama Wang said and Jinyoung asked them not to worry.

Papa Wang’s phone rang again, this was the fourth time in less than an hour.

“You have to be somewhere else?” Jinyoung asked and Mama Wang looked apologetic.

“We have to go for lunch at one of my friend’s house. Her son just got engaged and it’s a small gathering,” Mama Wang said softly.

“You should go, please, Jackson will be back any time now,” Jinyoung stood up which made the parents stand up.

“What kind of hosts will we be, if we just leave like this?”

“A good one, because i’m asking. Please don’t treat me differently. I’ll be here when Jackson will be back and I have you number, I’d be feeling so guilty throughout the day if you don’t attend the lunch.” Jinyoung wasn’t joking, he would feel guilty but he wasn’t sure why he told them that.

“We feel really bad.”

“I’ll give you a call, I promise.”

The parents left soon after. Jinyoung stayed in the living room, wondering what could be done next. Should he drop Jackson a message? Should he give him a call? Jinyoung was getting worried now.

He picked up his phone and stared at Jackson’s number for a while. He should call, ideally he should. But he just couldn’t find it in him to hit the call button.

“Jackson, just come home,” Jinyoung said in the universe. His voice a mixture of frustration and anxiety. Was it his fault?

Jinyoung wasn’t sure where to look for Jackson even if he decided he wanted to go look for him. He grabbed his jacket and opened the door and there was Jackson, by the stairs. Jinyoung was startled. Jinyoung stood there with his hand on his chest.

The way Jackson froze, made it obvious that he had noticed Jinyoung’s presence.

Jinyoung wanted to say how it was cold and how they should get inside, Jinyoung wanted to mention how Jackson only had a hoodie on and that he would fall sick. Instead, Jinyoung took off his coat and hung it around Jackson. Pressed his hands in Jackson’s shoulders because he wanted that touch, something solid. Something Jackson.

“Let’s get inside,” Jackson said as he stood up, Jinyoung followed as he made his way inside.

“Jinyoung, I’m so—” Before Jackson could let out an apology Jinyoung interrupted.

“I love you, Jackson Wang. I love you.”

The words were heavy in the air, Jinyoung used all his strength to say them out loud. He has practiced, practiced saying it out loud but saying it to Jackson was different.

Jinyoung realized how Jackson must have felt when Jackson was on the receiving end of it all.

Jackson kept his eyes fixed on Jinyoung, it made Jinyoung nervous. Then, before Jinyoung could know has happened, Jackson’s lips were on his. Soft and warm. Jackson’s arm around Jinyoung’s neck and he pulled him in. They kissed like a promise. Like, they were praying. Like, they were
speaking. Jinyoung held Jackson’s arm and prayed that the grip indicated just how desperately Jinyoung wanted Jackson. Jackson angled Jinyoung’s head and kissed him deeper. His hand ran over Jinyoung’s back in the softest of motion and he slid his hand underneath.

Jackson was cautious, his hand on Jinyoung’s lower back was so light that it too Jinyoung a second to register.

Jinyoung hissed in the kiss, his teeth pressing Jackson’s lower lip. Jackson pulled back from the kiss but stood right there, right in front of Jinyoung.

“Your hand is cold,” Jinyoung mentioned once he caught his breath. Jackson was dumbfounded. His eyes bigs and in confusion. Then he realized what Jinyoung was referring to, he laughed and pulled back his hand but Jinyoung caught it. Place it right where it was, on his back.

They stood in silence. Jinyoung was less nervous now, his eyes on Jackson’s lips and how when jackson pulled back, his pupils were blown wide.

“I was worried,” Jinyoung said softly, in a whisper. He couldn’t stop looking at Jackson.

“I thought I read too much in the situation,” Jackson answered instead.

“You just… you caught me by surprise. I wasn’t expecting it,” Jinyoung said.

“Is it too much?” Jackson asked, both his hands were on Jinyoung’s back and he pulled him in a little.


“In a nice way?” Jackson asked, his puppy eyes looked straight into Jinyoung’s.

“In a nice way.” Jinyoung kissed Jackson’s nose and Jackson gave him a smile.

Jackson’s phone broke their moment. Jackson whined before he went to pick his phone up.

Jinyoung couldn’t hear much, he took that time to catch his breath. This was happening, all of it was happening.

Jackson came back after a while and mentioned that his parents called to check up on him.

He said that they would be here by the evening and that they should have lunch without them.

“Do you wanna eat now?” Jackson asked.

“Only if you’re hungry,” Jinyoung said.

“I had late and heavy breakfast,” Jackson said. Then he walked over to Jinyoung, took his hand and lead him to his bedroom.

“Your room is so much like how it is in Korea,” Jinyoung noticed.

“Yeah, I changed that one according to this one, it started getting lonely for me back there, so I changed the setting of the room and it made me feel like I’m getting back home at night.”

Jinyoung smiled, he walked around Jackson’s room.
Jinyoung’s eyes landed on the table right next to Jackson’s bed, just like it was in his home back in Korea, the table had different set of photographs.

One was a picture of Jackson with his parents and what Jinyoung is assuming, his elder brother. Another one was a bit candid picture of Jackson’s family without him. The next picture was a group shot of Jackson with Bambam, Yugyeom, Mark and Youngjae and the picture next to that was a candid picture of them four without Jackson. Then there was an addition, there was a picture of Jackson with Jinyoung, it was the picture Jackson has asked Bambam to take when they were on their way towards Jaebeom just a month back. Jinyoung was laughing, his head thrown back and his hand covered his face and Jackson was smiling brightly, his eyes fixed on Jinyoung.

Jinyoung remembered that day a little too well, it was right when Jinyoung realized he was developing a crush on Jackson.

“I told you that your picture could be here as well,” Jackson mentioned when he noticed Jinyoung’s gaze on the picture.

“How long?”

“What?”

“How long?” Jinyoung repeated.

“I mean, do you wanna see it for yourself? Or?” Jackson teased and smirked and Jinyoung just laughed.

“I meant to ask, how long have you known?” Jinyoung asked and Jackson seemed to get that.

“The day I saw you for the first time at the store, I’m not saying it was love at first sight but I’ll not lie and say that I didn’t pray a little that you were the one asking for a fake date,” Jackson admitted.

“Really?” Jinyoung sounded unsure.

“Don’t act like you don’t know you’re the most beautiful human being ever,” Jackson’s cheeks burned as he let out that compliment. It wasn’t like Jackson has never complimented him, it wasn’t like Jackson has never called Jinyoung beautiful or handsome or pretty or hot. He has, a hell lot of times but this time, it was different, it was different because this time Jinyoung knew how Jackson felt.

“Stop it,” Jinyoung said and went to sit on the bed. He was a little tired with all the sitting on a plane seat.

“I wasn’t expecting you to come visit,” Jackson changed the topic and sat in front of Jinyoung, he placed Jinyoung’s leg on top of his own and adjusted himself so they were close, face to face.

“I wasn’t sure when I could see you next and you asked and you sounded like you were desperate and I just… I wanted to see you,” Jinyoung said shyly. It was hard, admitting your true motives and your true feelings.

“No wonder my parents have been so giggly since yesterday,” Jackson said and took Jinyoung’s hand in his own and Jinyoung pressed his lips together as to not let out a smile.

“I thought you’re never gonna say it back,” Jackson said and looked down at Jinyoung’s hand. He would squeeze his fingers around Jinyoung’s and then release them, he repeated the action for a while.
They jumped from topic to topic, never talked about anything for more than a few sentences.

“I thought you didn’t like me like that,” Jinyoung confessed. Jinyoung came from his own share of insecurities, it had nothing to do with the past, it had nothing to do with how he has been treated, it was just the constant fear of ‘Am I enough?’.

Jackson Wang, the name in itself was so heavy, he was the boy with charms, with the positive aura. Jackson was the kind who would make the whole room fall in love with him in a matter of few seconds. Jackson was the kind who would greet everyone in the room, who would make everyone feel special about themselves. Jackson was likeable and Jackson was loveable.

Jackson Wang being in love with Park Jinyoung. The information in itself was too much for Jinyoung.

“I thought you knew but you weren’t interested. But then, seeing you today, in my hometown, outside my house, it was all just too powerful. And I just had to say it,” Jackson whispered. Sitting on Jackson’s bed, whispering softly, it made Jackson happy. Truly Happy. Jinyoung made Jackson happy. Truly happy.

“Say what?” Jinyoung said with a small smirk and Jackson smiled back.

“Say what you said the second I entered the house.” This got Jackson a look and Jackson leaned forward to kiss Jinyoung.

“I love you,” Jackson said softly and Jinyoung laughed lightly. Jackson held Jinyoung’s hand tightly and Jinyoung let him. He laughed without covering his face.

“Say it back,” Jackson leaned in and Jinyoung shook his head.

“Make me feel good, Jinyoung,” Jackson pouted and Jinyoung laughed again.

Jinyoung leaned in and whispered the words in Jackson’s ears. Jackson blushed and held Jinyoung’s face in his hands and kissed his forehead.

“You have my picture on the bedside table,” Jinyoung said and pointed at the picture.

“Because you give me strength,” Jackson said honestly and Jinyoung was at loss of words.

“By the end of the year, I’ll have a solo image of you and I need a picture of the whole group.” Jackson added and Jinyoung smiled up at him.

“I never thought this would happen, it just felt so easy,” Jackson said and leaned in towards Jinyoung and then leaned back.

“What do you mean by that?” Jinyoung looked at him in confusion.

“Everything in my life… I have had to work so hard, work my ass of for everything just to get it, to achieve it. To be worthy of having it. I’ve worked for hours and hours, I’ve practiced for weeks and months. Nothing has been easy for me. And then with you,” Jackson stopped and just kept his eyes on Jinyoung, just looked at him because he could.

“With you, it all just fell perfectly. I thought I would have to impress you, go out of my way to do things for you, be a different version but you liked every part of what you saw in me. You were there when I was happy, you were there when I cried, you were there when I was angry. You were there when I needed someone, you listened and you talked. You cared and at first I thought maybe I was
falling for the feeling I get when I’m with you.”

Jinyoung looked hesitant and Jackson rubbed his hand to reassure him.

“I have worked so hard for everything in my life and then when everything with you started falling into place so easily, I started worrying. I thought I was doing something wrong because how could things just be so easy. I thought I would have to earn having you.”

Jackson stayed quiet for a second and he seemed to be struggling with his words and thoughts.

“I-” Jinyoung started but was interrupted by Jackson.

“You don’t have to counter of defend my thoughts, I guess, it was after this one talk I had with Jaebeom. I started relaxing, I started realizing that maybe it’s not all in my head and it’s all not just a dream.”

Jinyoung let out a laugh and Jackson almost looked offended, Jinyoung shook his hand and laughed again.

“I’m not laughing at you, it’s just… this whole situation in itself is so funny. We both have been so insecure of each other, not knowing we both feel the same way. Like, I’ve stayed up all night at times just thinking about your actions and how and why you said certain things and what they meant. I was driving myself crazy. If I was in a good mood, I’d let myself believe you like me and if I was in a bad mood, I made myself believe that you’d never like someone like me.”

“You’re a privilege, Park Jinyoung.”

“The world is gonna love you, so so so much. They’ll love you,” Jinyoung said fondly but Jackson could sense the nerves in the tone.

“Does that scare you?”

Jinyoung thought of lying, of just denying and making things up. But today was the day of truths, the day they confess and not lie.

“Not for you,” Jinyoung replied. It wasn’t a lie.

“For yourself?”

“You’ll meet so many amazing people, Jackson. You’ll befriend so many talented and good looking and hardworking people.”

“None of them will be you.”

Jinyoung took a deep breath, if they were being honest, it was his last chance to mention all his fears.

“You can’t tell anyone we’re together, because of the industry, you can’t come out with a boyfriend and expect the same love and support a single male artist would receive. You’re gonna be so busy, you’re gonna be surrounded by people who’re in the industry for ages, you’re gonna be away from me.”

“Jinyoung,” Jackson said and leaned close, bumped his nose with Jinyoung in an attempt to make the man smile. “You know we can always text, videocall, phone call, you can always come and visit me and I’ll always come down to visit you whenever I get the time off.”

“You can’t be so sure. You’ll have to meet your parents as well, you have other friends you’ve
known since you were a kid, you’ll have to see them as well. You’ll hardly ever get vacations and
the restrictions of an agency… it’s too much.”

“They showed me the contract, I like their vision. They don’t want me as their slave but rather as
their artist. I have vacations and holidays and I get to travel as well. I can have my friends and family
over as well but I can’t let them stay overnight. All of this as long as I deliver as an artist.”

“I don’t want you to be distracted, you’ve achieved so much, you’ve worked so hard and things are
finally looking up for you and I don’t want to be a liability or a burden.”

“Jinyoung,” Jackson said softly, the concern was clear in his voice. “You’re my strength, I thought it
was too late for me to do it, that I was just a little too old to start a career but you pushed me. You
believed in me even when you thought that it’ll break us apart.”

“You’re just saying that because I feel low,” Jinyoung said. It wasn’t like he didn’t believe Jackson,
it was just that it was too much to process. No one has ever made him feel so important or special.
No one has made him their priority.

“I’m just saying it because it’s the truth. Because I know I need you. Because I know how hard days
are for me when I don’t, at least, receive a text from you. Because of how much your words mean to
me. Because I know even in silence, you’re speaking the loudest.”

“But… You’re Jackson Wang.”

“And you’re Park Jinyoung,” Jackson said and smiled. “And I think we go well together.”

Jinyoung stayed quiet, let the words sink in, let himself get lost in what Jackson has said about him.

“You’ll meet people who’re better than me,” Jinyoung’s insecurities spoke.

“Maybe,” Jackson replied. “But that doesn’t change anything for me. Because I’m already with
someone who’s smart and beautiful and breathtaking and intelligent. Who knows what I want and
who never lies just to comfort me, who claims to love me but I’ll only believe it after I’ve heard it a
thousand times.” That made Jinyoung laugh and he pushed Jackson’s shoulder playfully.

“I’m in love with a man who’s kind and stupid, who gets angry when I speak low of myself. Who
laughs so easily that I always wanna make him laugh, who cares about his friends like they’re his
own family. Who’s so passionate about his work that he loses track of time and who goes to bed at
nine because he’s a baby.”

Jinyoung laughed and laughed and laughed. Jackson looked and looked and looked.

“Oh, Jackson.” Jinyoung couldn’t come up with words, too overwhelmed with everything. He felt
good, amazing even. Jinyoung was at loss of words and he just hoped that the day will come soon
when he would be able to express himself to Jackson.

“Do you wanna sleep or you wanna eat?” Jackson asked and they both decided to have lunch.
Jinyoung was only staying over for two days, once Jackson has shifted, he would be on his way
back home.

There are still fears that won’t go away but Jinyoung wouldn’t let them make decisions for him.

Jackson was going to make the world fall in love with him and Jinyoung was going to be proud of
the man.
"I can’t wait to show you Hong Kong, you’ll love it," Jackson said excitedly. Jinyoung just had two days of this and he wanted to use them by Jackson’s side.

They still talked in whispers, words thrown at each other with care and warmth. They teased and bickered and laughed. Jinyoung thought he could get used to it.

Jaebeom, on the other hand, struggled. It was already a little after ten and he just wanted the day to end. Not only frustrated, Jaebeom was getting impatient. He was tired of the waiting, tired of not knowing what was happening.

‘Friends’, they decided to be friends but Jaebeom hated all part of the said friendship. It just always seems like Youngjae was just too close and yet so far. He could touch but it was forbidden.

Jaebeom made a list, a list of things he needed to buy, he decided to just utilize his energy into getting the groceries. He walked out of his apartment and stared at Youngjae’s door. He waited for a few seconds, he knew Youngjae wouldn’t magically appear in front of him but a boy could hope.

With a deep audible sigh, he entered the elevator. When the elevator stopped at the ground floor, Jaebeom stayed in. Youngjae stood out.

“Hi,” Youngjae said shyly with a soft smile.

“Are you just coming back?” Jaebeom asked instead as Youngjae got inside the elevator.

“I got stuck at work, yeah,” Youngjae said and pressed the button for the seventh floor.

“You’re going out?” Youngjae asked and waited for Jaebeom to leave.

“Oh, no, I just came back from a run,” Jaebeom lied. Jaebeom would say that he was the worst liar on the face of the earth but also prayed that Youngjae bought it.

“Ahhh, makes sense because you were already in the elevator when it reaches the ground floor,” Youngjae teased and Jaebeom rubbed the back of his neck with his hand.

“Enough about me,” Jaebeom said and coughed just to cover his smile. He felt good, around Youngjae, he has always felt good. “Have you had dinner?” Jaebeom tried his luck.

“Yeah, Mark treated me to dinner,” Youngjae said and they fell back in silence. “Have you?” Youngjae asked when they crossed two more floors.

“Oh, yeah, totally,” Jaebeom lied. The elevator opened on their floor.

“I’ll get going then,” Youngjae said as he walked out of the elevator. He had his round glasses on, his hair a little longer than how he used to keep it and Jaebeom truly liked the look. He wasn’t sure if Youngjae would feel comfortable hearing that but he still said it.

“You look good, the hair,” he said and ran his own hand through his hair, “it’s a good look on you.”

“Oh that,” Youngjae said and laughed, Jaebeom has missed Youngjae’s laugh and ran his hand through his hair to push them back, it did things to Jaebeom. “Thank you, I haven’t had the time for a haircut.”

“You should keep it like this,” Jaebeom said softly. “I mean, if you want to.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Youngjae replied. Their silence wasn’t awkward but it felt forced. Like, they both wanted to say more but weren’t sure how to.
“You must be tired,” Jaebeom said.

“Just say you want me to leave,” Youngjae laughed.

“No, no, it’s not… it’s definitely not that,” Jaebeom said hurriedly. He wanted him to stay, he wanted them to talk more. But how?

“I’m joking, you seem like you’re on edge lately,” Youngjae said based on his observation.

Jaebeom waited a while before he answered, “A friend of mine is just… exhausting me.”

Youngjae threw his head back and laughed. Jaebeom has always loved that song.

“I hope he’s not giving you a hard time.”

“Oh, I’m glad you don’t know him, he’s… he’s,” Jaebeom thought of words to describe and Youngjae crossed his arms and looked at Jaebeom.

“He’s defensive lately. Has his guards up.”

“Ah, really? And does that bother you?” Youngjae asked. There was a vulnerability in his voice. Like the question had million answers but Youngjae only wanted to hear one.

“Can I be honest? And you promise not to tell him?” Jaebeom asked sincerely and Youngjae gave a nod with a laugh.

“I want him to let his guard down for me again, like he has done before, but I guess… I guess, it’ll take time and I’m willing to wait.” Jaebeom could feel his heartbeat faster with his own honesty. He looked straight at Youngjae, wanted to notice any kind of change in his expression but that never happened.

“You should go now, we look stupid standing just outside of our apartments,” Jaebeom said nervously and gave a fake laugh. “I’m still need to make dinner.”

“But you said you already ate,” Youngjae said and tried to smile.

“Well… I’m hungry again. Good night, Youngjae.” They both said their byes and went inside their apartments. Maybe Jaebeom messed up again, spoke too much too soon. Jaebeom was used to messing up now.

The next day was pretty dull for Jaebeom. With Jinyoung out of the country and enjoying his honeymoon and Youngjae and him being ‘friends’ and Youngjae hanging out only with Mark, it was boring for Jaebeom. Yugyeom and Bambam were stuck completing their projects for their classes and they couldn’t make it work.

He debated if he should drop a call to Jinyoung but he never did. He wanted Jinyoung to enjoy his time. He would anyway be back in two days, Jaebeom could wait. The day was pretty dull for Jaebeom.

The next day, when Jaebeom entered the shop, he was met with a familiar face.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

“Jackson got sick.” Jinyoung said and carried on with his work.

“Is he okay?”
“Yeah, just flu, stupid ass went out on a walk for over two hours in a thin sweatshirt.”

“Why?” Jaebeom asked and walked towards Jinyoung. He wasn’t expecting him back till another day.

“Because he’s stupid, that’s why,” Jinyoung said and smiled.

“Why do you look so happy?” Jaebeom asked and clicked a picture of Jinyoung before he could change his expression.

“I’m not happy, I’m sad for Jackson, he was so excited to show me Hong Kong and to shift to his new dorm,” Jinyoung replied and didn’t flinch when Jaebeom clicked a picture.

“I’m sending this to Jackson and telling him you’re happy to be back and you laughed because he’s sick,” Jaebeom said and occupied the seat closest to Jinyoung.

Jinyoung just smiled. The day went by quickly, with customers to attend and maintenance to be done, Jaebeom was occupied. Jaebeom asked Jinyoung how his trip was and mentioned just how happy Jinyoung looks since he had been back. Jinyoung mentioned Jackson’s parents and how nice they were to him. He just kept saying how amazing his day went.

“Jackson practically begged me to leave, he was scared I would catch a cold as well and his parents started forcing me as well and I know they’re all concerned but I wanted to stay by him.”

“I bet he knows.”

“Of course, he does, I yelled at him millions of times and asked him to let me stay.” Jinyoung turned and greeted a customer with a smile and their conversation died soon after.

Jaebeom saw Youngjae once throughout the day and that was when he was about to enter his apartment and Youngjae was leaving his. They talked for about few minutes before Youngjae had to leave because Mark was waiting downstairs for him. They were going out for dinner.

The whole friend thing was hard on Jaebeom, what was allowed and what wasn’t? These questions remained. He wasn’t sure if he could just drop a text to Youngjae, he knew he could drop a text to a friend but with Youngjae, even the definition of friendship was different.

If he were to drop a message to Youngjae, what was he supposed to say? And Youngjae himself hasn’t messaged him since last few days, does he not miss him?

In the last few days, they’ve interacted a lot, they all have done group video call to Jackson which, at times, has left just the two on them alone on the call because the rest had to leave.

Majority of their time would go by smiling at each other, Jaebeom wasn’t sure why he was being so shy. But all of it just made him feel like he was a kid again.

Even when Jaebeom and Youngjae have interacted, it had never been on a one on one level. It would either be with the whole group or with just a few of them. They would meet at places like, the shop, Yugeyeom’s dance class, the restaurant just outside of Youngjae’s workplace. They would always somehow sit together. Bodies pressed with each other in such a causal way, it would make a shiver run down Jaebeom’s spine.

Weeks went by and no progress. The smiles and the casual touches just grew. Jaebeom would notice how Youngjae would look at him a second too long, he would smile just because he could and it made Jaebeom’s heart warm. It gave Jaebeom hope and he wasn’t sure what needed to be done.
“Man, I’m exhausted, I just wanna go home and sleep,” Bambam said during one of their hangouts, they were closing the shop and Mark had to leave an hour ago. It left the rest of the group.

“Jinyoung will close up, I’m leaving now,” Yugyeom said and started walking out of the shop with Bambam.

“You didn’t say anything?” Youngjae said and turned to Jinyoung.

“It’s fine, they need rest and I can handle this, I already have a long night ahead. Jackson leaves practice soon and he said he would call,” Jinyoung mentioned.

“Love truly changes a person and makes them softer,” Jaebeom joked and got a look from Jinyoung.

“I’ve always been nice,” Jinyoung almost yelled.

“You had a death wish on Yugyeom,” Jaebeom replied.

“Leave me alone.”

A little later Youngjae said he would get going and Jaebeom asked him if he could give him some company.

“Sure, I thought you’d never ask,” Youngjae smiled and they both stepped out of the shop.

They remained silent for a while, it wasn’t awkward, it was nice. They haven’t been alone around each other and Jaebeom liked it this way.

“Work keeping you busy?” Jaebeom finally asked.

“Kind of, it’s hectic, and they’ve started hiring interns so I’m working with some. It’s good overall.” Youngjae replied. Their eyes still in front of them.

“Jinyoung had been in good mood lately, work’s good?” Youngjae asked next and Jaebeom practically laughed.

“Him and Jackson are being all lovey-dovey,” Jaebeom said and made a face. Youngjae laughed.

“I’m so happy for them,” Youngjae said softly.

“At least someone’s getting a happy ending,” Jaebeom joked and Youngjae looked down.

“Mark was concerned, he has never seen Jackson this happy and he was scared that Jackson might overthink it all and just ruin it for himself.” Youngjae’s voice was almost a whisper.

“Well, I guess their communication skills are better.”

“Can you stop joking about it?” Youngjae laughed and smacked Jaebeom’s hand playfully.

“It’s been almost a month, I thought we could do it now,” Jaebeom said and smiled.

“I don’t know if time slowed down or moved fast. I guess I lost a track of it all.”

Jaebeom just gave him a nod. He wanted to ask something and maybe it was time.

“Are you seeing someone?” Jaebeom asked. He wasn’t sure if Youngjae heard him because Youngjae stayed silence for a while.
“Mark is begging me to go to few blind dates,” Youngjae answered.

“And how have they been?” Jaebeom asked. He wasn’t sure if he liked the idea of Youngjae with someone else, mostly because he had feeling for Youngjae, he had strong, passionate feelings for Youngjae.

“I never went” Youngjae said and Jaebeom smiled. He relaxed a little.

“Are you?” Youngjae asked Jaebeom.

“What?”

“Are you seeing someone?” Youngjae asked and Jaebeom wanted to laugh. How was he supposed to say there hasn’t been anyone but Youngjae in his heart?

“I’d get rejected so I don’t ask,” Jaebeom confessed. It wasn’t a lie.

“Oh, interesting,” Youngjae looked up at Jaebeom as he said it.

“Maybe you should, you know, ask them out,” Youngjae said softly and they entered their building. Jaebeom remained silent as they entered the elevator.

“What if I ended up ruining things? I don’t even know if he wants me like that,” Jaebeom said, he was being honest. He wasn’t sure what Youngjae wanted anymore, he wasn’t sure if he was what Youngjae wanted anymore.

Youngjae’s expression turned into confusion. “Do… do I know him?” he sounded hesitant and Jaebeom wanted to hold him.

The elevator stopped and they got out.

“I’m gonna be making dinner now, do you wanna… if you’re free… do you wanna have dinner with me?” Jaebeom asked, this was the closest he could get to in asking Youngjae out.

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae said with a sigh and Jaebeom started shaking his hand.

“It’s completely fine, I just… it’s just… you haven’t had dinner and I haven’t either, so I just asked. It’s okay.”

“No, it’s just, Mark is coming over for dinner tonight,” Youngjae said. He looked different all of a sudden. His expression was different as well. “He messaged me when we were about to leave the shop and I had no idea you would wanna have dinner with me....”

“It’s fine, really, it’s fine.” Jaebeom started unlocking his door and Youngjae just kept looking at him.

“I’m really sorry,” Youngjae said softly.

“It’s really fine, maybe next time?” Jaebeom said hopefully and Youngjae gave him a smile and a nod.

Jaebeom cursed himself, he shouldn’t have asked Youngjae that. That must have made him uncomfortable, a reasonable part of him tried to defend it over how Youngjae was already having Mark over and that it wasn’t because of Jaebeom.

Jaebeom looked at his watch and it was just over seven in the evening. He felt a lot of things right at
that moment. For a second, he actually thought that Youngjae was hinting that he asks him out, for a
second Jaebeom even thought that maybe Youngjae saw him more than just a friend as well.

He took several deep breaths. He called Jinyoung and his phone was busy, probably on a call with
Jackson.

He called Yugyeom and he picked up in three calls. “Yeah man,” Yugyeom said in a sing-song
voice.

“If I do something and mess it up, can I blame it on you?” Jaebeom said it in one breath.

“Are you okay?” Yugyeom’s voice went serious.

“Just answer me.”

“I mean, as long as it’s not illegal and you’re not hurting anyone, yeah man, tell everyone I told you
to do it,” Yugyeom said excitedly and for some reason Jaebeom relaxed.

“What if I mess up?” Jaebeom asked and clenched his phone tighter.

“Then you mess up, it’s like that sometimes. At least you tried. I’m also assuming it’s about the lover
boy, if I’m wrong, please don’t do anything stupid and no, you can’t blame it on me.”

“I’m nervous.”

“I’m here for you, Beom. Always. And so is Bambam and Jinyoung and Jackson and maybe Mark
but he will side with Youngjae over you. And Youngjae is nice, we like him. All of us. He’s part of
us now.”

“Are you drunk?” Jaebeom asked lightly and laughed.

“Never call me again,” Yugyeom yelled.

“Do you wanna fix a date? For when I should mess up?” Jaebeom asked.

“Just don’t do it around Jackson’s birthday, do at least a week before it. And to be on a safer side,
have at least two weeks. So, maybe like next week. Or this coming Sunday. Whichever suits you.”

“How is it so easy for you?” Jaebeom asked.

“Because I’m great,” Yugyeom said and Jaebeom felt a lot better than he did when he entered his
apartment.

“I’m hanging up.”

“No wait,” Yugyeom yelled and Jaebeom winced, he had the phone pressed to his ears and that was
a bad idea. “I mean, just, just take a breath okay, you two have just been so busy lately. And
whatever it is that you wanna do, just think it through, with Jinyoung if you have to. And we’re
always here for you.”

Jaebeom closed his eyes and let the words sink in.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, bye.”

Jaebeom debated again, what should and shouldn’t be done. But Yugyeom was right, he had to take
a step back and think. They both just have been so busy but then why was Jaebeom outside of
Youngjae’s door pressing the doorbell.

Jaebeom stared at the door and made a bet, if it opened till he finished counting three, he would do it and if it didn’t then this door was closed.

He started counting but the door opened at one.

“Jaebeom?” Youngjae said in confusion, he must be changing to his night clothes. He was in his pyjama and the hoodie Jaebeom had gifted him. He was wearing Jaebeom’s hoodie. Jaebeom’s.

Maybe that was the trigger for him and he rushed inside. He waited till Youngjae closed the door in confusion and said, “I am in love with you.”

Jaebeom let the words hang in the air, his eyes fixed on Youngjae. Youngjae parted his lips as to say something but no words came out.

“I am in love with you, Choi Youngjae,” Jaebeom repeated. More for himself than for Youngjae. He wasn’t sure if he was heard. His heartbeat was fast, the adrenaline was kicking in. His body was heating up and he was sure no one could hear him. He wanted to be heard.

“I have been for a while now,” Jaebeom said and pressed his lips tightly together. He had to say it out loud before it was too late. “I thought that I was being irrational, that it was just the feeling and that it’ll go away but it never did. Youngjae, I… I… I wanna make you happy and I want you to be happy. And I want you with me, and maybe that’s selfish of me because you make me happy.”

“I fell for you so strongly that I never realized it till we had to stop talking, till I couldn’t touch you anymore, till I couldn’t kiss you anymore, till I couldn’t hold you anymore. Maybe I’m rushing it but I’m at least not regretting it. I know we’ve only known each other, for what, a couple months now. And that maybe a short while but… I guess what I’m trying to say is that, I’m not rushing into it. I have thought about it. In the last whole month all I’ve thought about is you. You, Youngjae and no one else. What you like and why you like it? I kept thinking about you.”

Jaebeom couldn’t read Youngjae’s expression but he was assuming it was part shock. Of course, Youngjae wasn’t expecting a confession and maybe all if it was just too much for him as well.

“Youngjae, what I’ve learned in my life is that love is selfish and selfless, that it’s a mix of both. You can’t love someone just for them, you love someone for yourself as well. It’s selfless because I watch you play your games because it makes you happy and it’s selfish because watching you happy makes me happy. Loving you makes me happy, you being happy makes me happy. It’s not dependant. But… I don’t know if I’m making sense but-”

Jaebeom stopped himself, ran his hands through his hair vigorously and took a deep breath to calm himself down. Jaebeom was all over the place, he said one thing after another with no continuity.

“Youngjae, the last whole month just had been so hard for me, knowing you’re hurting and there’s nothing I could do about it. I thought that after our last talk things would be different but I know it takes time, that you suddenly can’t just forget or sort out your feelings but Youngjae, I want this and I need to know if you want it too? I’ve waited and waited so long.”

Jaebeom took a step towards Youngjae but they were still far apart.

“These subtle touches that you’re doing now a days, I don’t know if they’re friendly or if I’m reading too much into them. I’m losing my mind. I keep thinking about your skin, your hands on me, your skin on mine. I know it sounds cliche but I’ve never felt this way before. I was used to being alone, I was used to being with just my friends and my family but then I was with you and now I just can’t
forget that. I can’t forget the feeling of home in my chest when I would see you on my couch, I can’t forget the feeling in my heart when I would make dinner for the two of us. I can’t forget the feeling in my head when you would whisper sweet nothing in my ear in your bedroom. I don’t wanna forget. I wanna live them. I don’t want them to just be a memory in the past. I wanna keep making those memories with you.”

Jaebeom’s vision was getting hazy but for the first time he could see things clearly.

“Youngjae, we are so close, always so close but you’re always untouchable. It… it scares me. And I am okay with it. I know I’m gonna mess things up again, I’m stupid and you’ll mess things one day too because you’re just as stupid as I am,” Jaebeom stopped because Youngjae’s lips lifted up in a small soft smile and Jaebeom’s heart went faster. “We’re stupid people and we’ll make mistakes but I want us to work on them, not push each other out of our lives. I want us to learn from them, not see it as a mistake unfixable. I want us to grow from it and not just keep it in our memories as something that just happened in the past.”

Youngjae looked down and Jaebeom’s heart sank again. Maybe he crossed a line and maybe he misread everything ever. Maybe Youngjae truly just wanted them to be friends because he couldn’t see a future with Jaebeom and maybe Jaebeom would have to be okay with it.

“I… Youngjae, if I’m not what you need or what you want, then I want you to tell me. I don’t wanna keep living on hope that we might happen someday, because I’ve given myself to you and I don’t know if you wanna take it because you wanna take it or because you feel obliged. I see a future with you and if you don’t, I want you to tell me.” Jaebeom’s gut felt tight, just as tight as his throat.

“I’m not saying I’ll stop loving you if you don’t want me but I’ll learn, I guess I’ll have to... I’ll learn to let these feelings go. It’ll take time but if ‘us’ is not what you need then I can respect that. I’ll learn to be a friend to you. I just… I want to know so I can prepare myself.”

Jaebeom kept his eyes on Youngjae because part of him wasn’t sure what to look at. He wasn’t sure how much time passed before Youngjae finally looked up, maybe it was just few seconds or maybe it was an hour, Jaebeom lost track because when Youngjae looked at him, his eyes were moist. Like he has just cried or let out few tears, but Jaebeom wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or bad.

“Jaebeom,” Youngjae said in a shaky voice and Jaebeom could breathe again.

“I… I just-”

“We have to fix-” Mark stood at the door. He read the emotion of the room well and looked between the two of them.

“Am I… interrupting something?” Mark asked and Jaebeom looked at Youngjae and when no one replied, Jaebeom said, “No.” and he was out the door.

Jaebeom’s thoughts were running wild, he shouldn’t have done that but not even a single part of him regrets it. He should have just listened to Yugyeom and should have had a plan but Youngjae was just next door and when he reached there, he was wearing the hoodie Jaebeom gifted him.

It took Jaebeom few desperate attempts to get his passcode right, he opened the door and before he could shut it there was a hand on the door. Jaebeom turned to find Youngjae in front of them.

“Young-” and Jaebeom’s lips were silenced by Youngjae’s. Youngjae’s hands were tight and secure around Jaebeom’s neck and he had to get on his tiptoes to pull Jaebeom down a little. Youngjae
wrapped his arms around Jaebeom’s neck and pressed their bodies together and when Youngjae’s chest pressed against Jaebeom’s was when Jaebeom realized that all of it was real. That, it wasn’t just his imagination.

Jaebeom placed his hands delicately on Youngjae’s waist, putting light pressure on him to keep him close.

What Jaebeom found funny in the situation was that if someone who just knew them but weren’t friends with them were to see them now, they wouldn’t believe their eyes. They would have seen a man: who looked so delicate, who looked like he hung the stars, sun and the whole galaxy in his eyes and smile, kissing with such burning passion, with such determination and confidence. The man who could bend the world if he sets his mind to it. The man: Choi Youngjae. That was the kind of man he was and the world could never appreciate it.

Then stood a man who has always looked like he knows his way around the world, who looked like he had every answer, who looked like he couldn’t care less, who looked like no one could touch him, kissing as if he was afraid to touch too much, afraid to ruin it all, kissing like he was asking if it was okay? Kissing like he just wanted to be held, kissing like he was tired of the suffering. The man who would never show the world just how much he tried. The man: Lim Jaebeom. That was the kind of man he was the world could never understand it.

There stood two men in the hallway, kissing like a promise, kissing like they were talking, kissing like their life depend upon it. There stood two men who were never good with words, one kept all to himself and one just wasn’t sure how much to share. There stood two men who were ready to let go of the mistakes of the past, who were ready for a second chance. There stood two men who brought out the best in each other, who made each other so happy that they made the love stories looks a little bland. Two men who never rubbed it on the world’s face just what happens behind four walls. Two men who were ready to love.

Youngjae pulled back and Jaebeom chased his lips. “I have to go back, Mark’s waiting.”

Jaebeom couldn’t register the words, he looked at Youngjae with such surreal expression that it made Youngjae smile. Jaebeom’s eyes were wandering all over Youngjae’s face and Youngjae placed his hand on Jaebeom’s cheeks. Caressed the skin very softly with his thumb and said, “hey, focus on me.”

Jaebeom snapped. He leaned a little into Youngjae’s touch and gave him a nod.

“I’ll give you a call tomorrow,” Youngjae said and took a step back. He had to be back, Mark must be waiting.

“Come back to my apartment, I miss you,” Jaebeom had no emotion filter on. He decided to not hold back anymore.

Youngjae gave him a smile and a small nod and then he left. Jaebeom couldn’t focus on anything anymore. He knew he had to have dinner but he was willing to skip it. He just couldn’t focus on anything. He opened his phone and closed it again. He opened and a book and placed it back. He went to his room and laid on the bed, just like how he did when Youngjae said that they couldn’t be together. Jaebeom’s heart rate was high back then and it was high now, but it was a good high. It made him feel alive. He smiled, he put on some music and just did nothing. Just kept running his mind over what has just happened.

Jaebeom thought nothing could go wrong that day, that his happiness was untouchable. But then his phone buzzed, he looked over and it was a message from Jinyoung. Jaebeom remembered how he
had called Jinyoung just before he called Yugyeom so, maybe Jinyoung just message to let him know that if it wasn’t too urgent, they could talk tomorrow and that he was going to bed. But the message was different.

*Hey Jaebeom, I tried calling you but you wouldn’t pick up, so I’m just assuming you’re a little busy. Anyway, let me just get to the point. Oh wait, I noticed you called and that I missed it, yeah, I was on a call with Jackson, he was thinking of taking few days off, his health hasn’t been up to the mark as well. anyway, yeah, so if it’s something urgent or important, do call me. Otherwise, I’m just going to bed now. It has been a long day. Oh, and yeah, I’ve been thinking a lot and I think I should break up with Jackson. It’s for the best. I’ll see you tomorrow.*

Chapter End Notes

Hello, yes it's happening and it's real. I don't know how to feel. and also, wow, only 1 chapter to go and then all of it is over.

YELL YOUR THOUGHTS AT ME. I wanna know, tell me what you think of the chapters and the characters. I’ve been so nervous before posting this, idk why but like, yeah. I hope you enjoyed this.

Honestly, your words will truly be so appreciated, I would love to know what you think.

also, focus on me is a so ty and focus is gonna be aoty.
“What are you doing here?” Jinyoung moved from the door. Had no energy to hear out an actual reply.

“You sent me a message saying how you wanna break up with Jackson and you think I would just sit at home and let you?” Jaebeom said as he entered the house and closed the door.

“I don’t want your counseling,” Jinyoung muttered and went directly into his bedroom.

“I’m not even in the mood,” Jaebeom said and followed.

They stayed quiet, Jinyoung got into his bed and pulled the cover over him.

“Are you not gonna say anything?” Jaebeom said and laid down on the other side of the bed.

“Why do you look so happy?” Jinyoung asked instead.

“What do you mean?” Jaebeom pressed his lips to suppress his smile but he couldn’t. He was happy, he has not been this happy since for a long time now.

“You know exactly what I mean.”

“You kinda stole my thunder, so, well, let’s just talk about you.” Jinyoung turned towards Jaebeom at those words. The lights were still turned on and Jaebeom could see the bags under Jinyoung’s eyes.

“Come on, tell me, lift my mood up,” Jinyoung said.

“Youngjae kissed me and I thought my day couldn’t get any better and nothing can overshadow that but then you messaged with… you know what.”

“Jaebeom. Shut up,” Jinyoung’s mouth was wide open, his eyes wide in surprise.


“What do you mean why? I’m sexy. I’m irresistible. I’m a great kisser, I can go on and on, you know.”

“You know that’s not what I meant.” Jinyoung made a face and Jaebeom laughed.

“I confessed and Mark walked in, I swear his timing is the worst, and then I went back home and Youngjae… he just… you know, he came and kissed me.”

“You’re so disgusting, you can’t even say it without a smile on your face,” Jinyoung said and smacked Jaebeom with a spare pillow.

“What? You’re acting like you’re any different. Remember when you flushed down to your neck just because I said Jackson was shirtless,” Jaebeom said and laughed.

“During your cousin’s wedding?”
“Yeah and you were pissed that I wouldn’t let you see him when I was facetiming”

“If Jackson and I wouldn’t have ended up together, I would have blamed you, I was so convinced that you don’t want us together and you’re being a dick about it,” Jinyoung rolled his eyes.

“Hey, I was rooting for you, but what’s stopping you now?” Jaebeom asked lightly and Jinyoung looked at him in confusion.

“Who’re you gonna be blaming now? Now, that you don’t wanna be with Jackson.”

“Don’t say it like that,” Jinyoung said and laid down straight, looking at the ceiling. Different shadows forming.

“How else do you want me to say it? You message was clear, you don’t want him.”

“Jaebeom, don’t play this game on me, I’m not a child.”

“But you sure are acting like one.” Jaebeom said. Jinyoung stayed quiet.

“What are happy endings? How do you know you’re a step closer or further away from yours?” Jinyoung said with a heavy voice. Jaebeom wasn’t sure if it was because he was holding back and his throat hurts or if it was just how the words sounded.

“Are you not happy?”

“I am. I… I truly am so happy, I’ve never been this happy. But it’s just. You know, how when you watch a movie, or read a book, or listen to a song about relationship, they all end as soon as the couples get together. But what happens next?” Jinyoung was talking slowly and softly. Too afraid to be heard. Jaebeom rolled and gave him all his attention. Jinyoung has always liked attention.

“No one tells you what happens next? What happens when you get into a relationship and when romance isn’t the only thing that drives a relationship? Every movie that is about a married couple or a couple who have been together. They all break up. They all fall apart. They all find new people.”

“You’re reading all the wrong books and watching all the wrong movies,” Jaebeom said to lighten the mood, because he has noticed the way Jinyoung’s lips shook when he was finishing his sentence. Then just to make Jinyoung laugh he said, in Bambam’s voice, “Man.”

And Jinyoung laughed. Smacked Jaebeom’s chest with the back of his hand.

“Youngjae does plenty of that, you don’t have to add on to it.” Jaebeom rubbed his chest.

“Your life is not a movie, Jinyoung. This is not a book. The author isn’t writing more characters for you. You have to add and subtract the characters for yourself. I always thought happy endings couldn’t be achieved. Because for it to be an ending, it has to be the ending of your life and it’s not the time. To see if it actually is a happy ending, you have to live through the movie and read through the whole book and get to the end of it to see if it was happy or not.” Jaebeom paused and looked at Jinyoung. Jinyoung was just blinking softly. His face still up. His hands in between his chest and stomach.

“See it this way, when you go back to bed at night, are you happy? If yes, it’s a happy ending. A day is done and you were happy. When you go back to bed at night are you happy? If no, it’s not a happy ending. A day is done and you weren’t happy. Life is all about happy and sad endings. And some days Jackson will be your happy ending of the day and some days I will. Someday Jackson will be your sad ending of the day and someday I will. Some days it’ll be Bambam or Yugyeom, or
Youngjae, or Mark. But that doesn’t close the chapter. That doesn’t mean you have to get rid of someone you love. As much as I always want you to be happy, it’s only normal to not be.”

“Youngjae kissed some sense into you.” Jinyoung grumbled

And it was Jaebeom’s turn to laugh.

“Why are you thinking that way towards Jackson?” Jaebeom finally addressed it.

“I… it’s hard. I feel like I’m pulling him down,” Jinyoung said with pure honestly and it stings.

“He said that to you?” Jaebeom asked.

“No, I mean, even if it’s true, he’d never say that to me.”

“Why do you think that way then?”

“He… he’s hardly getting any rest, you know how trainings are, they’re brutal. Then he spends all the little free time he gets on the call with me. Jaebeom, for the first week, I would be up with him till two am or something and then I asked him to send me his schedule so I can see when else I can call and he did. It’s packed. I don’t know how and why he talks to me that late. He gets up at four thirty and is at the gym by five. That means he’s only getting a couple of hours of sleep and that’s not healthy. He is exhausting himself, he’s giving his hundred percent in the training, like he should, but then when is he sleeping? When is he resting?”

Jaebeom understood where Jinyoung was coming from. Jaebeom understood his worries and there were no words he could offer. They both are adults.

“I’ve been feeling absolute shit. Whenever he’s free, he calls me or his parents. His mind is always working working working. I just… I don’t want to take his time. I don’t want to be a reason for his fall. I would rather be away from him if it’s for his own good.”

“And do you really want that?”

“I love him, Jaebeom,” Jinyoung said and a tear rolled down the corner of his eye.

“Then think of him. Think of how he would feel if you would just give up on what you guys have? Think of how his mind couldn’t be present at the training. Pain is a… great emotion. And as much as you want to blame yourself, you can’t undo the things you have and haven’t done.”

“I don’t know what to do, I don’t know.”

“Get a schedule for yourself, whatever works with the two of you. Talk before he goes to gym or once he’s out. Talk before training starts. I’ll cover for you at the shop. You can work till late to make it up to everyone, because otherwise the guilt will eat you up and I don’t want that for you either. Just, don’t give on it.”

“I don’t know if it’ll make us happy.”

“Jinyoung,” Jaebeom said softly, slowly, let the name hang in the air. “The man is head over heels for you. He makes you happy and you make him happy and I know, I know you want this reassurance every now and then, and I’m always here to remind you but you have to believe in yourself a little. You make him happy, so happy, that he would just randomly drop me a message saying just how happy he is. Just a simple ‘Your friend is crazy, I’m so happy’. I’ve never seen you this happy and free. You laugh and you smile and you day dream. The amount of time I’ve caught
you just smiling at nothing. Jinyoung, don’t take your happiness away from yourself.”

Jinyoung stayed quiet, another tear rolled down. His heartbeat a little faster and his chest a little heavy.

“He messaged you?” Jinyoung asked softly.

“Yeah, and it makes me happy.”

“But what about when he debuts? His interviews and media tours will start, his work will be twice as hectic, he’ll be twice as busy and I don’t want to be a burden. To be someone he needs to call or things will fall apart. What if… what if he stops missing me? What if I stop making him happy?”

“I hate it… he will literally sue me. He will make sure I’ll never see Youngjae.” Jaebeom mumbled to himself.

“What are you talking about?” that was the first time Jinyoung turned to face Jaebeom.

“Jackson is coming, the day after tomorrow.”

“What?” Jinyoung sat up. He looked down at Jaebeom as if he was lying.

“He… I don’t know, okay. I think it’s a tic-for-tat game for him. He said you surprised him and now it’s his time.”

“Jaebeom, is this a joke to you?” Jinyoung now just looked pissed.

“You don’t believe me?”

“Of course, I don’t. He said his evaluations are gonna start soon and he can’t miss a day. He can’t come.”

“Wow, I can’t believe you trust Jackson over me,” Jaebeom said and fished his phone out of his pocket.

“Here, look,” he waved his phone Jinyoung’s face.

“He said pretty disgusting, lovey-dovey shit that I’ll repeat now. He messaged me three days back and asked if you’re free and I told him that you were. And he said he wouldn’t get a break during his birthday, so he asked if he can get few days off this week and they his agency approved.”

“Jaebeom,” was all Jinyoung said. His eyes wide, his mouth hung open, his eyes fixed on Jaebeom, as if he was sure it was all a joke.

“So, I joked and said that maybe he’s just homesick and he said and I quote, ‘yeah, maybe I’m just Jinyoung-sick’. Disgusting, right?”

Jinyoung smiled, just smiled, bright and happy.

“He practically called you home and you act like I’m the mushy one.”

Jinyoung held his face and Jaebeom let him be. Jaebeom let him cry out his happy and sad tears, his frustrated and self-deprecating tears. Jaebeom loves Jinyoung, he might never say it out loud, but he was sure Jinyoung knows. He has watched Jinyoung always filled with self doubt, always putting himself down. It has always made Jaebeom’s heart hurt knowing Jinyoung just doesn’t believe in himself as much as the rest of them.
Jaebeom wouldn’t say Jinyoung hated himself, or that he wasn’t confident. But with Jinyoung, it was always like he needed reassurance. He needed people to remind him how good he was, he needed people to remind him that he was doing well, he needed people to remind him that things would pass, and that they were all there for him, always.

“Do you want me to stay over?” Jaebeom asked softly after a while.

“Will you?” Jinyoung asked.

Jaebeom laid down again and smiled. Jinyoung turned the lights off and laid down next to him. The curtains were open for the night light to enter.

Jinyoung stared at the ceiling and smiled. Memories rushed back to him. He remembered how Jackson was with him, and they stared at the ceiling like they were looking at stars and Jackson would randomly point at nothing and would make fictitious star-name and Jinyoung would laugh. He found it so ridiculous and funny at that time but now he remembered why Jackson did that.

Jinyoung was having a practically shit day and Jackson just wanted to distract him, even if it was just for the night. And Jackson succeeded, he always had. Jackson in himself, is a good healthy distraction to Jinyoung. Jackson around him has always helped in reducing Jinyoung’s stress.

“What’s your plan for tomorrow?” Jaebeom asked.

“Work and home,” Jinyoung said.

“Let’s go out to get breakfast, okay?”

“You don’t have to see Youngjae?” Jinyoung asked carefully.

“I’ll see him later that day, I’ll treat you to breakfast first, then?” Jaebeom suggested and Jinyoung said yes.

Youngjae was hyper. In all sense the word can be described. Youngjae had this energy that he just wanted to let go off. He went for a run with Mark in the morning and Mark cursed him. Youngjae wasn’t sure what to share with Mark. Mark already knew enough.

“Calm your lips down,” was how Mark greeted when Youngjae came back last night.

It was already eight in the morning and Youngjae has never felt this awake. He just wanted to use all of energy, to exhaust himself. With all that, his mind would always run to Jaebeom and how they could exhaust their energies together. Youngjae would start singing whenever that happened. His body would go hot just thinking about it.

“You will make breakfast because this early morning nonsense was your idea,” Mark said as they entered the elevator.

“Sure,” Youngjae just smiled.

“Did Jaebeom message?” Mark asked.

“Nah, but Jinyoung did, last night, he said that Jaebeom is with him. So, I think he stayed over. Why are you asking?”

“I just want you to calm down, you’ve been so… I don’t know how to say it… so giddy since last
night. Like, I don’t know, just slam him into a wall or just let him slam you in one. Whichever way you guys like your business,” Mark said and walked out of the elevator.

“Do I have to get used to this?” Youngjae laughed from behind.

“Just keep it in your pants or in his... don’t show it to me,” Mark said and Youngjae hit his shoulder from the back.

Mark stopped midway and Youngjae hit Mark’s back. “Move,” Youngjae said and laughed. When he turned around he saw someone at Jaebeom’s door and Youngjae just wanted to go back in the elevator.

“I’m here to see Jaebeom, it’ll only take a minute.”

“He’s not home,” Youngjae replied.

“Is he at yours?”

“If there’s something you wanted to tell him, I can pass on your message,” Youngjae said and Mark looked between them, confused and a little surprised.

“Do you want to grab a cup of coffee?” Youngjae asked politely.

“Are you... are you sure?”

“Yeah, oh and this is Mark,” Youngjae said and started the introduction. “Mark, this is Nina.”

“Nina!” Mark said and stayed quiet. They bowed respectfully. “If you guys are going, I’ll get going as well,” Mark said politely.

“Youngjae, give me a call when you’re free.” Mark entered Youngjae’s apartment and left Nina and Youngjae alone.

“Do you wanna change?” Nina asked.

“I’m good, I didn’t sweat much anyway,” Youngjae said and they made their way to the nearest coffee shop.

It was awkward, Youngjae wasn’t going to lie. They hardly spoke except for how they both have been. Once they were inside the cafe, Youngjae ordered their respective drinks.

“I was just here to see Jaebeom,” Nina said, her voice lower than Youngjae has ever heard.

Youngjae just smiled, he wasn’t sure what to say and he wasn’t sure why he asked Nina to join him here.

“I don’t wanna be a mistress,” Nina said and Youngjae looked up.

“Jaebeom wouldn’t do that.” Youngjae said softly. If he wanted he could have gone with the rough and defensive tone. But that just wasn’t Youngjae.

“How are you so sure?” Nina said, she wanted to sound a little rough and sarcastic and Youngjae stayed silent for a second.

“He never did that to you even after everything that happened, it’s just not him.” This made Nina go silent. She looked down at her coffee before she took a sip.
“Why are you here?” Youngjae asked and Nina remained silent for another minute. Youngjae wasn’t in a mood to push her to answer. He waited.

“I… He was nice to me, when we spoke again. He was angry for sure, but he was nice as well.” Youngjae understood.

“You want him back?” Youngjae asked.

“I heard you two broke up, I thought that was my chance... I was his first love,” she said with a little authority.

“And you’ll always be his first love, no matter how you treated him, he couldn’t change the past and neither can you. I’m not here to replace you or fill that space you left him.”

Nina looked at Youngjae this time, Youngjae just wondered what was going through her mind. She’s a mother, a single mother, and he was here, chasing after a man she let go off.

“I didn’t mean to do what I did. He was… even in the past and when it all started, he was different. He wasn’t the kind of person he is now. Maybe he changed for good or something. In school, he thought he was the king, he had that confidence, he had that smirk, and an ‘I’ll mess with you’ kind of an aura around him. But, that was just how he portrayed himself to the world. He wasn’t that person when we got together. And maybe I was just chasing that bad boy that when I realized he isn’t all that, it just wasn’t enough for me.”

Youngjae listened. He made a mental note to tease Jaebeom about his bad-boy vibe he had during school life, but it wasn’t the time for that.

“I am not making excuses for myself, I just… I’m not a bad person. I just messed up when I didn’t know what else to do. I never realized how serious he got. When he started slipping away, I started making excuses. I apologized. A thousand times but he… he never forgave me.”

“Nina, I don’t want you to take it the wrong way, but what you did was more than a silly mistake. It was wrong and it was abusive for him. You saw it all from your point of view, but look at it from his, you mentally abused him over and over. You made him insecure, you made him feel like he wasn’t good enough for you. You make him doubt himself, you made him question what he could have done to stop it from happening. That… wasn’t healthy for him.” Youngjae stayed quiet and watched as Nina registered his words.

He wanted her to know just what she did to Jaebeom and not what she thought she did.

“Nina, you cheated, multiple times. But it’s good to know that you’ve realized what you did was wrong. Maybe you don’t understand the impact or density of your actions on him, but at least you understand you did wrong. But you shouldn’t be asking for forgiveness with the mindset of being forgiven. You should be apologizing because you did wrong and you’re owning up to it, it doesn’t give you an upper hand on anything. He’s not bound to forgive you. He has the right not to forgive if he doesn’t want to. Because that’s his call. You did more damage than you can imagine. He will move on but forgiveness is something he needs to feel on his own.”

Youngjae could tell that Nina wanted to speak more, wanted to say something else but then she just pressed her lips and looked down.

“You know, I thought you guys were going strong and then I heard about how you guys aren’t on speaking terms and I was surprised. It never seemed that way, that you two would have a fall out,” Nina said and looked up at him, Youngjae couldn’t read her expression, couldn’t tell where she was
“Well, we’re humans,” Youngjae said and smiled. They are stupid humans, just how Jaebeom has called them, but Nina doesn’t need to know that.

“You know there’s this thing Jaebeom once said, we were out one day and we went across this building. Lit up beautifully, you know how night life at posh areas can be. He said that their world looks beautiful, so pretty that it’s almost breathtaking. But you don’t know what goes on behind those four walls, behind those pretty lights. Maybe a couple is fighting, maybe a father is beating his child, maybe a person is cheating on their partner,” Youngjae said and noticed the change in Nina’s expression.

“From the outside, from far away, it all looks beautiful. But if you close up on them, it may not be as good as the whole picture is. Just like how someone from space looks at the earth and goes how beautiful he thinks the world is. But when you start closing up, is when you notice that it’s not all a bed of roses. Same way, sometimes a person need to take a step back, just to look at their lives and to appreciate it.”

Nina stayed quiet and Youngjae continued.

“Because you live the life, no one gets a closer look in your life than you do, and that’s why you know of all the struggle and wrongdoing and bad decisions. But, just take a step back and look at it from afar, to appreciate your own life. To see just how beautiful it is, see it on a bigger scale because at the end of the day, you go back to living the close up version. It’ll do you more good if you just appreciate the beauty. Nina, you have a beautiful child, you have friends, you have the people around you. I’ve seen you with people at the wedding. Just because Jaebeom doesn’t love you doesn’t mean no one will.”

Nina stayed quiet, just like usual. Her posture started closing up and Youngjae prayed that she wasn’t crying. Youngjae wasn’t the best when it comes to handling people who’re crying. But if Nina wanted him there, he would be.

“I’m just… so sorry, so so sorry,” Nina said with a broken voice.

“I think I moved on, because I got occupied with my child, and then there was financial difficulty. I took on job after job, anything I could do from home. My parents practically disowned me, I apologized, and I guess we started becoming a family again. I forgot about Jaebeom. I was angry at him. I thought he was selfish of leaving me in a condition like this. I was pissed at him. I blamed him for everything, that is maybe how I survived.”

She grabbed the tissue and crumbled it in her hand. Just something to hold on to.

“When I saw him at the wedding, I was angry. He looked happy. I thought he was still in love with me and I thought he just asked you to attend so he wouldn’t have to face me alone. Seeing him just made me remember the time we have had and I thought maybe there’s still a chance. Seeing him with you reminded me of how he was with me, at least initially.”

Youngjae stayed quiet.

“I thought he would take me back, with the kid and everything. I just…, there was this guilt in me. It always made me think in the way that if I don’t make things right with him, this will affect my child or the upbringing. And I—”

“You asked him for money, you tried blackmailing him. That’s not how you ask for forgiveness.
That’s not kind or moral. Whatever your motive of it was, your actions weren’t great. I understand what you’re trying to say but the path that you choose… that was ungraceful,” Youngjae said kindly and Nina looked down.

Youngjae wasn’t going to let Nina play the victim. That’s what the problem always is, people think too much from their point of view that they forget that someone else suffered because of them. They think too much about their own emotions that they forget that others are suffering as well.

She messed up and even when she realises it, she’s still blaming the circumstances and not her actions.

“Maybe I got a little selfish,” Nina dry laughed, it looked painful.

“You know, someone told me that being selfish is a good thing. Not that you make someone else suffer because of you, but in the sense that it helps you. What you did was selfish but it affected another person. And there’s nothing good about it. Be selfish for your own good, for your happiness and health, not at the sake of someone else’s.”

Nina stayed silent. Youngjae’s phone buzzed and Nina saw it as an excuse to part ways.

“I hope you live a good, happy and healthy life,” Youngjae said and smiled.

“I thought you would hate me,” Nina commented and Youngjae smiled.

“Hate is a strong emotion, I just didn’t like how you handled things but I hope that now, if we ever see each other, we greet each other with smiles,” Youngjae said and Nina looked hopeful. She smiled.

“Visit Jaebeom’s parents every now and then, they like it. It makes them feel involved,” Nina said and Youngjae laughed. They said final goodbyes before Youngjae made way to his apartment.

Once he was done cleaning up he checked his phone and there was a message from Jaebeom.

_I’m so sorry, I can’t see you today. But Bambam and Yugeoom are coming over at my place at around fiveish, bring Mark with you, if you guys are free. I really do wanna see you. Let me know, I love you. Bye._

Youngjae smiled through the whole message. He felt like a teenager with a crush. It was a good feeling. Hearing such words and reading such words directed towards him. Before he got carried away with his thoughts he dropped a message to Mark and asked him to come by.

He went to his room and let himself think. Think of how it felt when he heard Jaebeom say those words for the first time, how he was so unsure if he was dreaming or hallucinating. Because in his dreams, Jaebeom has whispered the same words, told him he loves him. The dream has always felt real.

Maybe that was why he couldn’t tell at first. It sounded like a prank, sounded like something that was sacred. But when Jaebeom repeated himself, every cell in Youngjae’s body was awake and active. Every cell in Youngjae’s body heard what was being said. Youngjae looked and looked and looked. He wasn’t panicking at that moment but he wasn’t calm either. He wasn’t nervous but his heart was beating fast and he knew the reason why.

Youngjae has never spoken about how he felt for Jaebeom, maybe he was too shy or maybe he just never had the courage. It wasn’t much about the rejection, but moreover how he was scared that he would mess things up. Maybe he should let Jaebeom know, for once and for the rest of his life.
“Stop,” Jinyoung whined.

“What?” Jaebeom asked.

“You’re checking the time every five seconds, just say we should go and we will.”

“It’s not like that,” Jaebeom lied and Jinyoung rolled his eyes.

“I feel like a mother who’s keeping an eye on her kid because they keep wanting to run off.” Jinyoung said and stood up.

“You’re just being dramatic,” Jaebeom said and they both walked out.

“Bambam’s already at the apartment,” Jaebeom mentioned and showed Jinyoung the selfie he received from Bambam and Yugyeom.

“We should get there fast before they ruin my house,” Jaebeom said and started walking faster.

“It’s only four you know? Youngjae won’t be there by five.”

Once they reached and Jaebeom entered his apartment, it was dark, curtains drawn, lights turned off.

“Bam? Gyeom?” Jaebeom said slowly and Jinyoung stayed by the door.

“I don’t like this,” Jinyoung yelled into the darkness. His voice a little threatening. And then they heard laughter, more like little giggled and Jinyoung froze.

He took a step into the darkness, leaving Jaebeom behind.

“Jackson?” Jinyoung said in almost a whisper. The laughter continued and then Jinyoung felt a hand slide on his waist and wrap around his torso.

“I’ve missed you,” Jackson’s voice so soft in Jinyoung’s ear.

He doesn’t know who turned the lights on, he doesn’t know who did what next, all he knew for sure was that it took him less than a second to wrap his arms around Jackson’s neck and to pull his close so they’re lips were doing the talking. Jinyoung doesn’t care if the rest of them were watching or laughing, he cared that Jackson was here. He cared that Jackson’s hand slipped into his shirt and was placed on his lower back, that as passionate as it was, Jackson was smiling into the kiss, and that Jackson was pulling him close. He cared that he could feel Jackson’s heartbeat with the way their chests were crushed together.

“Guys, it’s getting disgusting now, stop,” Bambam said from behind them and now was when Jinyoung felt a little embarrassed. He pulled back and looked at Jackson, wondering if he looked just as wrecked as Jackson.

Jinyoung stood next to Jackson and held his hand, he took a step back and hid half of his body behind Jackson.

The rest just ignored them.

“I thought you would be here tomorrow?” Jaebeom asked in confusion.

“Did you tell Jinyoung I was coming?” Jackson asked and Jinyoung looked at Jackson.

“I… No-”
“He did,” Jinyoung said and Jaebeom glared at him.

“That’s why I didn’t tell you I’m coming today, I told Bam and Yug and they’re the only two people I trust.” Jackson yelled at Jaebeom happily.

Jinyoung tugged at Jackson’s hand.

“After you babe,” Jackson said and turned towards Jinyoung, cupped his cheeks in his hands, “You’re on the top of the priority list.”

Jinyoung just laughed and leaned in to drop a small kiss on Jackson’s nose.

“Disgusting, well, as per the deal, I’m taking the old man and Yugyeom,” Bambam said and started pushing the two out the door.

“It is my house,” Jaebeom complained but no one cared.

“Also, kids, use protection. I’ve left some in Jaebeom’s drawer,” Bambam said and Jinyoung wanted to say something but he just laughed because Jackson was laughing.

“Do not do it in my house, especially in my room. Just, I’m begging you guys. I swear Jackson, if you did that, I swear-” and Bambam closed the door.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were coming?” Jinyoung asked as they both just sat down on the floor.

“I wanted it to be a surprise,” Jackson said. “Also, your messages were concerning, it looked like you’re trying to break up with me.”

“Do you want that?” Jinyoung asked seriously, the playful in his voice was now gone.

“I want you, Jinyoung. I will always want you. I’ll never stop wanting you,” Jackson said softly and squeezed his hands.

“When I first met you, I thought you were only trying to get laid,” Jinyoung confessed.

“Really?” Jackson said and laughed. “I was so nervous when I saw you, after the first meeting I thought I killed my chances.”

Jinyoung laughed in amusement. “Then I just wanted to see you,” Jinyoung confessed and Jackson smiled.

“You know, when I first saw you, I thought you were legit out of my league. Like, an uptight, high maintenance man with high expectations.” Jinyoung shook his head. “I thought you were kind of interested in Jaebeom.” Jackson slyly admitted.

Jinyoung laughed, loud and happy “Why?”

“You looked so protective of him and I thought that you just didn’t want him to be with someone else.”

“I was just concerned, even when Youngjae came, I was just more worried for you guys than I was for Jaebeom.”

Jackson just kept smiling.

“I told Bambam I’d ask you out one day,” Jackson smiled.
“Is that why you dropped by the shop every now and then?” Jinyoung asked.

“I was being so obvious but you just laughed it off.”

“For the longest time, I wasn’t sure if that was just your personality or you were being special to me,” Jinyoung said.

“What do you think now?” Jackson asked.

“That you treat me special but it’s also a part of your personality.”

They both stayed silent for a few seconds and Jackson leaned in to steal a kiss, Jinyoung just pulled him closer.

“Now what are we gonna do?” Jinyoung asked, insecurities always got the best of him.

“We’re gonna love each other and ourselves and the people around us,” Jackson said as if it was the easiest answer in the world.

“I can’t promise to love Yugyeom,” Jinyoung said and they laughed. Jinyoung liked this, having Jackson in his arms, here, with him. But he knew that it wouldn’t be easy, they’ll have to work hard, really hard. Especially Jinyoung, who would need to find a way to be okay with being separated from Jackson.

“When can I come to see you?” Jinyoung asked.

“Whenever you can, my parents are so fond of you and you can always live in my house. They even asked if you’ll be visiting soon.”

“They did?” Jinyoung asked, really confused.

“You leave a good impression, always. Everyone you meet gets so smitten by you.”

“Really?” Jinyoung asked hesitantly.

“You didn’t know? You have this aura which is just so… I don’t know the word… royal. Like, we can only see you but no one is allowed to talk to you or be near you.”

“That gets lonely,” Jinyoung said and gave a dry laugh. Jackson just kept looking.

“God, Jinyoung! I am so in love with you, it’s crazy.” Jackson squeezed Jinyoung’s cheeks and bumped their heads together.

“Let’s play a game,” Jackson said and pulled himself back.

“What?”

“Let's point out five things we love about each other,” Jackson suggested and Jinyoung laughed.

“Okay, I’ll go first. I love your smile, like, I know you hide it a lot but I love it. And the noise of your laugh. It gives me joy,” Jackson said so softly Jinyoung’s chest felt heavy. But it was a good heavy, the heaviness of happiness. The good feeling in your chest when things are getting too good to be true, too nice to be real.

“What are you waiting for? Your turn,” Jackson said and Jinyoung smiled. It took him a while to get back in the zone.
“I lik- love when you pout a little, unknowingly, when you’re a little confused or when you’re concentrating,” Jinyoung said and smiled.

“I don’t pout.”

“You do, it’s so cute,” Jinyoung laughed.

“Second, I love… it’s less about you, but more how you live- I guess it’s you….anyway, I love your friendship with Jaebeom. Like, I don’t know why, but it always makes me feel so good, like there’s always someone out there for you even when I can’t reach you” Jackson said the last line with a little pain in his voice and Jinyoung rubbed his hands.

“I love how you always know what to say to people, like, you make people feel so special, so loved and so good. You always bring out the best in people, you make them laugh and you make them feel at ease. You make it look like loving is so easy,” Jinyoung said softly and they stayed quiet for a while.

“Third, I love listening to you sing, your voice is so good, it’s so so so good. I love it, when I’ll release an album, I will ask them if I can have a collab with you. I love when you’re singing and not paying attention to anything in particular.” They laughed. Jinyoung never knew that Jackson has paid that much attention.

“My turn, third. I love the passion you have for your work. Like, there are hardly many people I know who gets as excited about their work as you do. Who enjoy their work as much as you do. They see it as learning, something that’s valuable and not just something that’s work. It really inspires me, especially on those low days when I just can’t leave my bed. I push myself because of you,” Jinyoung said honestly. There was times when all Jinyoung wanted to do was stay home, stay in his bed. No motivation for anything, he still went to work, hung out with his friends but it just wasn’t the same how it was now.

Now he gets excited for the day, not only because he would get to talk with Jackson again but also for work, for meeting his friends, for being around his people.

Jackson smiled, he looked shy and then proud. And Jinyoung wanted him to know just how Jinyoung was of him. Just how much he wanted to see Jackson achieving all his dreams.

“Fourth, I like how you’re always taking care of everyone. Not in… not in a bad way or parental way but more in a… more in a you way. Because you’re observant. Because you noticed how Youngjae doesn’t have a chopstick, so you gave him yours. Because you noticed how Mark’s busy with work and tried to take a sip of water from his empty glass and then you refill it without him asking. Because you do and never expect things or recognition in return.”

Jackson started noticing such things within a month, how things were different. How Jinyoung always went out of his way to help others. How small things like those attracted Jackson. When Jaebeom would just fall asleep on the couch and Jinyoung would cover him up and would ask everyone to hangout at Youngjae’s instead. Small things.

Jinyoung looked like he wanted to speak up but he stayed quiet. Then he looked at Jackson.

“Fourth, I love how everyone you meet falls in love with you. How people in general always have such good things to say about you even if they’ve only met you for fifteen minutes. How you always greet people with so much love and such a bright smile. How you always make sure everyone’s heard and spoken to. How everyone’s involved in everything. You fit so well with people of every age, and it’s like you become one of their own and it’s just you, still you.”
Jinyoung’s voice was filled with so much fondness and admiration that it made Jackson’s throat burn. Jackson is a believer of treating people how you would want to be treated. He went to remember how he met Jinyoung for the first time and just how nervous Jinyoung’s gaze made him.

“Fifth, I love you because you don’t want to control me, don’t want to change me, don’t want to stop me, don’t want me to pick between you and my career. I love you because you give so much of yourself to me that it’s overwhelming and I’m so grateful. Park Jinyoung, I love you because you loved me right. True and honest.” Jinyoung just started at him.

There was this thing, when you are speak of how you feel, it made blood rush to Jinyoung’s head. It made him feel like he was part of a cliche movie, it made him feel stupid, because he has always believed that people around him knew that he loves them. But maybe that was just not enough. Jinyoung liked hearing good things from Jackson and he wanted Jackson to feel just as good.

“Fifth, I love you, Jackson Wang. Maybe not from the first day,” Jinyoung said and Jackson playfully frowned. Jinyoung laughed. “You made loving look so easy, you made trusting seem so easy, giving yourself to someone else look so easy. I was so nervous at first. Everything was going good, going so well and I would always keep thinking that something is gonna go wrong. I would overthink and it all just made my head so negative. But you, you loved me, for me and with my insecurities. You loved me even when I wasn’t right, even when I thought us being together wasn’t the right thing, even with the distance. You made love look less complicated each day.”

Jinyoung had to stop otherwise he would have choked up on his own words. He remembered something he had said to Youngjae during the wedding, how vulnerability in front of someone else is just powerful in itself. It just shows you’re showing them all your colours, the good and the bad.

“I’ve missed you,” Jackson said and exhaled like a burden was lifted off of his shoulders.

Jinyoung gave him a hug, their body angles weird and Jinyoung’s leg almost going numb, but love truly is dumb.

“Guys, are y’all done? And not naked?” Bambam’s voice came from the outside. Loud and clear.

Jackson laughed and went to get the door. They turned the lights on as everyone walked inside.

“It’s been so long since it has been the seven of us,” Mark said as he made his way to the couch. Jinyoung stood up and sat next to Mark. Youngjae went to the kitchen to get water for everyone. Yugyeom helped Bambam with the snacks, Jackson went to help Youngjae. Jaebeom stood by the door and just looked at them.

How they all have turned Jaebeom’s space from an apartment to a house. How they all move around Jaebeom’s house like it was their own. How Jaebeom just doesn’t care about it now.

“I have a little surprise for you guys,” Bambam said and Yugyeom started jumping.

“Please, not another rap battle,” Jinyoung shook his head.

“I love rap battles,” Youngjae said excitedly. Jackson went to sit between Youngjae and Mark. Jaebeom doesn’t know how, but they all sat down on one couch. Jaebeom just went to sit by Youngjae’s legs. Hand slightly running up and down Youngjae’s calf muscle.

They all faced the television when Bambam started plugging his USB into the socket.

“Not another one of Yugyeom’s dance practice videos either,” Jinyoung signed loudly.
“I made a movie,” Bambam said shyly and everyone went silent for a second.

“You did what?” Jaebeom asked.

“He said he made a movie, old man,” Yugyeom yelled and everyone bust in laughter. Jaebeom’s chin came out and he almost got up to attack Yugyeom when Youngjae held him back.

“Pay attention, Jaebeom,” Bambam joined his best friend and Youngjae hugged Jaebeom from behind so he couldn’t get up.

“Youngjae legit just got together with Jaebeom to do the whole human race a favour,” Yugyeom said and took a step back and stood next to Bambam, as if for protection.

“True, it has nothing to do with love,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom’s heart went up over the last word. They haven’t talked about it, haven’t discussed it.

“Back to me, so, yes, I made a movie. It’s less like a movie but more like a short project. So, lately, I don’t know if you guys have noticed, but I’m very invested in video making.” Bambam explained.

“You mean the camera you keep shoving in our faces? It’s very hard to miss,” Mark mentioned.

“Well, so I’ve been recording for a while now and I thought why not just show you guys how annoying you all are,” Bambam said and played the video.

The first scene was of Jackson and Yugyeom running in the studio. “Delete this,” Jackson yelled because he remembered. Yugyeom and Bambam laughed, the rest just looked confused.

“Well, I understand that I’ll have to pause and explain the stories as well, so, you’ll have to watch the thing twice. Once, with intervals and second time, in one go.” Bambam took the remote and paused the video.

“Basically Yugyeom wrote down Jinyoung’s number on a piece of paper and Jackson was chasing Yugyeom to get the number,” Bambam said and Jinyoung laughed, Jackson leaned over to look at Jinyoung and winked.

Bambam played and that’s how things went, they talked about different things, from different perspectives. Bambam took everyone’s happy moments and turned it into a seven minute long video.

The video had small things like Jaebeom just looking at Youngjae, smiling at Youngjae. Jinyoung rolling his eyes at Yugyeom, giving death stares at the camera. Youngjae playing video games and Jaebeom sitting next to him reading a book. Jaebeom and Jinyoung having coffee together at the cafe, laughing at something. Jackson and Jinyoung on a walk, Jackson making Jinyoung laugh, Jinyoung making Jackson yell in between laughter. Jackson and Jaebeom looking over at Jinyoung and laughing. Mark and Jaebeom having lunch together, Mark and Jackson in the same room on the phone with each other because Jackson secretly wanted to tell Mark something. Yugyeom sitting on Jaebeom’s lap and Jaebeom letting him. Yugyeom with Bambam’s cats. Yugyeom with Youngjae, ordering food. Jinyoung with Mark as they try pranking Jaebeom by running his coffee. Jaebeom stealing a kiss from Youngjae, Jinyoung fondly kissing Jackson’s head as he fell asleep on his lap.

The scene ended with a sleepy Yugyeom blinking at the camera or at Bambam, no one could tell. A soft smile on his face and the screen goes blank right when Yugyeom’s eyes goes down and sleep took over.

They sat there for over an hour, discussed every scene. The room was filled with laughter and hooting. If someone was to look from outside, they would see a big family. And they aren’t wrong,
the seven of them, from different cultures, countries, came together under different circumstances and they all became one.

Jaebeom remembered how Bambam once said that they seem like they’re soulmates, in the purest way possible. That no matter what they were doing, they all were bound to be together. Yugyeom always used to joke around how, maybe in some alternative universe, they’re a boy group, Jaebeom refused to participate in that conversation if he was not called the leader.

Even when Jaebeom lived away from his parents, he never felt like he was living away from his family.

“Bambam, I need a copy of it,” Jackson said once everyone calmed down.

“I’ll charge you for it,” Bambam said jokingly.

“I’ll feature you in one of my songs,” Jackson said suggestively and Bambam looked interested.

“Is this a real offer?” Bambam asked.

“Well, to be honest, I can’t make promises right now. But the other trainees there told me that the agency lets you have control over your project. So, as long as it’s approved, anyone can be featured in the album. I’ve been thinking of asking Jinyoung to be in my music video as an actor but he keeps refusing.”

“You do know Jinyoung took drama classes during high school right?” Jaebeom mentioned.

“Anyone want food?” Jinyoung tried changing the subject.

“We are not done here, Park Jinyoung,” Jackson said threateningly and Jinyoung laughed.

They all sat down for dinner now. Talked about how they first met and their first perception of everyone.

“I wanna say something,” Yugyeom stood up as if he was making a toast.

“The kid wants to speak, everyone,” Jaebeom yelled and everyone smiled.

“Thank you, old man,” Yugyeom replied and everyone started laughing. Jaebeom jumped forward but Youngjae was there to control the old man.

“You started it,” Yugyeom yelled at Jaebeom.

“Well, I guess, I just wanna thank you guys,” Yugyeom started and everyone started yelling loudly. No one was used to this, nice words.

“I know I’m the youngest, but, I wanna thank you that how you guys never made me feel left out. I never felt like I didn’t belong, I was never treated differently, and I have never been treated like I was less than any of you. Life has been a little rough for everyone but it’s good people who make it worth it. When I met Bambam, I thought he was all I needed. My only friend. He understood me and we got along well, but then I started meeting the rest of you guys and it just, it felt right. Good. I… I guess the point is that, I think I speak on behalf of everyone, that I’m glad we’re all here, with each other. Together. That it’s a support system that’ll keep grounding us and loving us even when we’re not together physically.” Yugyeom went silent then. Everyone waited if he was going to continue but Bambam understood.
“Kim Yugyeom for leader,” Bambam yelled and everyone started laughing. They all looked at each other fondly, lovingly.

The night continued and soon some started feeling sleepy.

“Leave my house before I kick you out,” Jaebeom said when Mark tried to sleep on the couch.

They all stood up, hugged each other and started making their way out.

“Guys, please try and not call us till we message or call you,” Jackson said as he wrapped his hands around Jinyoung.

“Disgusting, I don’t need to know...” Bambam said.

Jackson went to the door and turned, “Jinyoung, come on baby.”

“I’ll see you guys tomorrow,” Jinyoung said and smiled. He walked over to Jackson and they left together.

“Mark, do you wanna hang out with us?” Yugyeom asked and the three of them soon said their goodbyes.

This left Jaebeom and Youngjae alone for the first time since last night.

“Are you… leaving?” Jaebeom asked hesitantly, his eyes roaming around Youngjae’s face.

“I’m staying,” Youngjae said softly.

“You’ve been really quiet today.”

“I thought I wasn’t being obvious,” Youngjae said shyly, a soft smile on his lips.

“I notice… you, always.” Jaebeom said and smiled as well.

They stayed quiet, it wasn’t awkward but it was obvious that they both felt nervous.

“I… I wanna apol-” Jaebeom started.

“No,” Youngjae said firmly. “I’m just… nervous, it’s not you. I mean, it is you but it’s not… it’s not in the wrong way. The good nervous, I guess.”

Jaebeom gave a nod, his eyes down, he wasn’t sure what else could be said or were to be said. Youngjae walked slowly towards Jaebeom and Jaebeom froze.

Youngjae stood face to face with Jaebeom and as Youngjae took Jaebeom’s hand in his, it hit him again just how much he cares about Youngjae. Just how much he was in love with Youngjae.

Youngjae looked up at Jaebeom, his hand still holding Jaebeom’s. His eyes soft, his expressions soft and Youngjae looked young, way too young. He looked happy.

Youngjae leaned up, got on his tiptoes for a better angle and pressed his lips softly at Jaebeom’s. Jaebeom smiled.

“I’ve missed us,” Jaebeom said honestly. It has been long, so long since he held Youngjae’s hand, had Youngjae be this close to him, had Youngjae’s lips on his own.
Youngjae smiled again and that was Jaebeom’s favourite thing in the world.

“Are you tired?” Jaebeom asked when Youngjae blinked slowly in a drag.

“A little, couldn’t get any sleep last night.”

“Why?”

“You’re one to ask after what you said last night.” Jaebeom looked down, his body going warm.

“Say it again,” Youngjae asked shyly and Jaebeom felt shy.

“What?” Jaebeom decided to play dumb but wrapped his hands around Youngjae’s waist.

“What you said last night,” Youngjae leaned in and whispered on Jaebeom’s lips and Jaebeom smiled.

Jaebeom leaned closer, just an inch away from Youngjae’s lips and whispered, “I love you,” as he kissed his man.

It felt different for the first time, both of them aware of their feelings, aware of what they want. Both in the right state of mind.

“Let’s rest a little,” Jaebeom said as he pulled away, because he could never have enough of Youngjae or his lips.

Jaebeom took Youngjae’s hand and led him to his bedroom.

“You can sleep, if you want to, I’ll be back,” Jaebeom said and went to the washroom. He splashed some water on his face. His heart was ringing in his ear. Youngjae was in his room.

Jaebeom got out and saw that Youngjae was laid on the left side of the bed, Jaebeom’s side of the bed. His head on the pillow and his eyes fixed on Jaebeom.

Jaebeom took off the t-shirt he was wearing and Youngjae looked alarmed. “Jaebeom?” he said as his head lifted off of the pillow.

“No no, no, we… we’re not doing anything you don’t want to. I’m just… my body is warm, I had to take it off,” Jaebeom said and started wearing his t-shirt back in a hurried manner. Panicked because what Youngjae must have thought, wasn’t his intention.

“Take it off,” Youngjae said. Voice firm. Jaebeom froze mid-action and kept his eyes on Youngjae. “I don’t want you to get uncomfortably warm, take it off if you feel like it,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom gave him a nod.

Jaebeom stood near the bed for a minute too long and Youngjae smiled, it eased Jaebeom’s nerves and he got under the sheets.

Jaebeom left a little too much space between them, turned his head towards Youngjae and smiled. Youngjae moved so that they were a little closer. Just enough for them to breathe without mixing each other’s breaths.

Youngjae’s eyes roamed around Jaebeom’s exposed neck and down to his shoulder. Youngjae lifted his hand slowly and caressed Jaebeom’s hand. Jaebeom shivered and they both laughed.

“I don’t know what to say,” Youngjae started, it was partly true.
“Let me start then, Nina messaged me today,” Jaebeom said in a breath.

“She did? What did she say?” Youngjae asked.

“It seemed like thousand things were running through her mind when she sent me the message, it was long, mostly about our past and well she said she wants to apologize properly and how regretful she has been through the last few years. I don’t know what she was trying to say, the bottom line is she wanted forgiveness,” Jaebeom said slowly.

“And?” Youngjae asked.

“And what?”

“Did you reply?”

“I did, I told her I forgive her, I’ve been thinking about it for a while now and I mean, she did what she did and there’s no going back or her and I in the future. I don’t even want that, so living with the feeling of heaviness like we both own each other something, it’ll just keep bringing us back and I don’t want any part of it. It took me a long while but, when you and I weren’t us, it got me thinking over a lot of things,” Jaebeom said. His voice low in the darkness.

“I met her today,” Youngjae mentioned.

“Nina?”

“Yeah,” Youngjae said and saw how Jaebeom’s expressions changed. How he looked a little unsettled.

“She was outside your apartment this morning and I asked her to grab coffee with me,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom stayed quiet.

“We didn’t talk about anything that you don’t already know, I guess I just wanted to understand why she kept dragging her life back into yours. I guess I understood a few things but that doesn’t make it right. Also, heard that you were a bit of a bad boy back in the days.”

Jaebeom froze and Youngjae laughed, head thrown back and hands on his chest. “She said that?” Jaebeom asked but Youngjae was busy laughing.

“That bitch, I swear I knew she was trouble,” Jaebeom joined the joke and they laughed together.

“So what were you like? In school days?” Youngjae asked.

“The worst, I thought I was it, no one could ever top me, I made the rules, you know.”

“You think we would have gotten along back then?” Youngjae asked and caressed Jaebeom’s cheeks, lightly with his index finger.

Jaebeom just gave a dry laugh, he wasn’t sure himself, he stayed quiet.

“When I met, I had a very different opinion of you,” Youngjae started.

“Really? How?” Jaebeom asked, took Youngjae’s hand in his and kissed it softly.

“I just… when I saw you, you seemed intimidating. Like, you would not talk to me at all and as soon as we’re done with the wedding, we’d never see each other again.”
“Why?” Jaebeom asked and laughed.

“Because, I don’t know, I couldn’t figure it out back then as well. But maybe it was just because of the way you kept frowning, you looked angry and frustrated.”

“It was only because I was desperate, Jackson cancelled when he found out the date because he already had plans. And I was frustrated, I thought my parents were gonna find out that I lied to them. I was in pain,” Jaebeom laughed.

“What was your perspective of me?” Youngjae asked.

“I mean… I don’t know. Like, I don’t wanna lie and say I was smitten the first day. But you have an aura. You’re… distracting. Like, even when I was having a conversation with Jackson, I still couldn’t stop looking at you. You were just being you, doing your own thing. Being you. But then all my attention gets shifted towards you.”

Youngjae laughed, the day they met was clear in his head.

“Why did you come back? The first day, I thought I would have to go alone or beg Bambam or Yugyeom to go with me. You came back when I actually thought I’d have to do it all alone.”

“I can’t even remember it right, it just… I don’t know, Jackson and I were talking and he felt bad for you, told me you seemed desperate for it to work. And I felt bad and Jackson said you seem like a decent guy and I was anyway really bored in life. Like, I hardly get the time to get out of my place, I thought this way I’d help you and will get to be out of house for a while. A win-win for me,” Youngjae smiled as he explained.

“So, is it still a win-win situation for you?” Jaebeom asked.

“I won more than I expected,” Youngjae smiled sheepishly and Jaebeom laughed.

“You remember when you asked me to kiss you? Back in your childhood room?” Youngjae asked and Jaebeom rubbed his face.

“It’s so embarrassing, please don’t mention it.”

“No, no, I was glad, thankful. It made me feel good. I don’t know, it was a good. I liked it. It made me feel like, we’re not rushing things, that we’re doing it on our comfort levels. When we’re ready. Our own pace,” Youngjae said softly and Jaebeom smiled.

Jaebeom has liked it, he always had liked being with Youngjae. There was a time when he was scared, that they might run out of topics to talk about, the conversation might run dry. That they just wouldn’t have anything to talk about. But that wasn’t the case. When he calmed down with all the nerves, he actually started enjoying his time with Youngjae.

The small talks, the silence, the reading and playing video games, the tv series and movie nights. They’ve talked about the most absolute shit to politics, environment to conspiracy theories. From people at work to their own friends, from clients to customers. They’ve talked and laughed and have gotten frustrated. Jaebeom always felt relaxed with Youngjae. Always felt like he was home.

“You ever thought that this would happen?” Jaebeom asked. He still wasn’t sure if Youngjae thought of him the same way he did, but they were getting there.

“If I’m being very honest, I thought you were out of my league. Like, the max anything that would happen between us would be a makeout session, maybe we’ll end up being friends with benefits but
I just wasn’t into that. But you… have you ever seen yourself? Met yourself? God, Jaebeom.” Youngjae laughed shyly and Jaebeom blushed.

“You would always get so shy around me and it made me feel so good about myself, always. Like, you being nervous around me, it made me feel more confident than I actually am,” Youngjae said and laughed. Jaebeom just dug his head more into his pillow.

“You’re kind, you’re so kind. The way you’re with Yugyeom and Bambam, the way you’re like their friend but also their brother and will be their guardian if and when needed. You sacrifice so much for the people around you and you never show it. You and Jinyoung have done so much for Bambam and Yugyeom. It’s like you guys have a small little family of yours.”

“And then we introduced our families to each other,” Jaebeom said and it took Youngjae a second to realize he was referring to Jackson and Mark.

“Now we’re a one big family,” Youngjae laughed.

“I’m not taking responsibility of any of them,” Jaebeom commented and Youngjae pushed his hand, Jaebeom held it.

“Don’t be a child,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom pouted, Youngjae laughed harder.

“I love you,” Jaebeom said all of a sudden and Youngjae froze. His eyes went down because of shyness and he smiled softly.

“You know, I always thought when I’d say those words to someone, I would wanna hear them back. Like, if we both are not on the same page, then what’s the point,” Jaebeom started and Youngjae looked at him in panic.

“No no, hear me out,” Jaebeom rubbed his back to calm him down.

“I said I used to think that way but not anymore. Like, when I said that to you, I wasn’t expecting you to say it. I don’t know, maybe I’m explaining it wrong. More of like, I just didn’t expect you to say it because of how unplanned all of it was. Like, maybe if the situation was different, your reaction would have been different but last night, you just looked confused.”

“Would you have wanted to do it at some other time?” Youngjae asked.

“No, I wouldn’t have changed a thing,” Jaebeom said honestly.

“You really did catch me off guard though,” Youngjae confessed and Jaebeom smiled.

“I guess I went with the flow, I could have done it all planned out and all but that would have just made me more nervous, knowing that I would do it eventually.”

Youngjae shifted a little to get close to Jaebeom, their bodies weren’t touching but Youngjae could feel Jaebeom’s body heat.

“I never thought we could work or even after what happened that we would be back here again,” Youngjae said.

“Why?” Jaebeom’s voice sounded a little shaky and Youngjae smiled.

“I thought I blew it. I started believing that maybe I overreacted but I just couldn’t be near you. My feeling and emotions towards you were really strong back then and I just… I just wanted you so bad
that it wasn’t healthy anymore. I tried making myself believe that whatever happened was fine but a part of me knew we aren’t supposed to keep secrets, no matter how big or small. I’ll be honest, at first I thought that maybe you’re just weren’t over Nina and I’m just a rebound,” Youngjae said and laughed.

Jaebeom has noticed it a lot, Youngjae would say something that makes him upset or is bugging him and then he would laugh at the end of it. He wasn’t sure if it was for others or for himself to make him be like it’s not a big deal.

“You’re feelings were valid. I spoke with Jinyoung and he said something that I couldn’t get out of my mind. I put myself in your shoes, how if it was me, how would I have felt. Maybe I would have reacted differently than you but the feelings were same. Anger, betrayal and lost hope. I would have thought that you’re just taking things for granted.” Jaebeom moved a little closer, very cautiously. His body with inches away from Youngjae’s but close enough for Youngjae’s hand to brush Jaebeom’s chest.

“I am over Nina, I have been for a long time. This… between us, is not a rebound. I know I can’t make you believe me just like that, but I just hope you give me a chance to show you. I’m… I make dumb decisions in life but I would never play around with someone’s feelings, especially not yours.”

“I believe you,” Youngjae said softly and Jaebeom looked him in the eyes.

“I love you, Jaebeom,” Youngjae said in almost a whisper and Jaebeom froze. A wide smile on Youngjae’s face, he was nervous, so so so nervous he had to hold something or be held.

Youngjae placed his hands delicately on Jaebeom’s arm, just enough to feel his skin.

“I love you, Lim Jaebeom, so much,” Youngjae repeated and that was when it hit Jaebeom that it was real and it was happening. He smiled. His expression relaxed, his eyes looked happy.

Jaebeom held Youngjae and when their lips met, it was more than it ever was. It wasn’t like they had never kissed before, but this time it was just different. The way Youngjae’s hands travelled from Jaebeom’s arm to his neck and the way Jaebeom’s hand travelled from Youngjae’s back to his lower back and they held each other close, spoke volumes for them.

It was a promise to keep each other close and to keep each other safe. To be honest and to be true to each other. A promise of togetherness and space. A promise to be there and also to let the other one breathe. A promise to do their most and nothing less.

Lim Jaebeom, a man of deep words, a man of less emotions, a man of worry and a man of emotion. Jaebeom, a man who thinks about others selflessly, who looks at the bigger picture and let the sacrifices speak for itself. A man who let the criticism get to him but acts like he never heard a word. A man who would stay up overthinking but will never let it show. A man who wasn’t broken and didn’t need to be fixed, but was just in need to be understood.

Lim Jaebeom gave his heart to Choi Youngjae.

Choi Youngjae, a man who shines the brightest during the night. Who would rather be compared to the moon than to the sun. Who lights up the world in the most darkest times. But the thing with moon is it shines because of the light of the sun and maybe that’s exactly where Youngjae was different. For the longest time, he relied on people, shined because of them and now he doesn’t. His relationship with Jaebeom doesn’t define him. Doesn’t make him just someone’s partner. Youngjae, a man with ambition, a man who wanted to do things and never stop, learn more and more each day. Youngjae, a man who would sacrifice himself for the others but was starting to love himself, to take
Jaebeom remembered how at the wedding someone compared love and sacrifice, as the Sun and Moon. How the Sun loved the Moon so much, the Sun died every night to let the Moon breathe. And Jaebeom remembered how those words stuck with him. He also thought of how at times you could see the Sun and Moon together in the sky and maybe that was just how little time they spend together. How he was ready to sacrifice his own self for Youngjae. How even if they would not end up together, Youngjae would still have the biggest part of his heart. Jaebeom also believed in alternative universes. Another galaxy, where the Sun and Moon both shine together and that was the universe Jaebeom dreamed for them.

Jaebeom pulled back, Youngjae’s hand burning Jaebeom’s skin but in the most pleasurable way. Jaebeom couldn’t take his eyes off of Youngjae. Couldn’t stop looking. His blinks were long and dragged on.

“What? Stop looking at me like that,” Youngjae blushed and playfully pushed his face away.

“Like what?” Jaebeom asked, his voice a little rough.

“Like I’m your everything,” Youngjae said with courage. His words almost playful.

“You are,” Jaebeom said.

Youngjae pulled out his tongue at Jaebeom and he laughed. Jaebeom could just stay in that moment for forever.

They talked in whispers and low voices. The whole house to themselves and they still only wanted their souls to hear things.

They talked and talked, hands roaming here and there, eyes going places and lips touching skin. They laughed and smiled, they talked and whispered sweet nothings. Made promised they both knew were far fetched. Talked about future and past, talked about themselves and them as individuals.

“Oh, I wanna tell you something but you have to promise me you’ll never tell a soul,” Youngjae got excited, way too excited.

“Depends on who you consider as soul,” Jaebeom said and kissed Youngjae softly.

“Jinyoung and your children,” Youngjae said and laughed.

“Well… you had me there. So, no Jinyoung. Noted.”

“Oh God, I’m so nervous. But I’m so excited.”

“Youngjae just tell me now,” Jaebeom said and laughed.

“Jackson has been sending me a lot of rings lately,” Youngjae said in one go and Jaebeom’s mouth hung open.

“No… no no, engagement rings?” Jaebeom whispered, as if he was scared someone might hear.

Youngjae nodded enthusiastically.

“You’re not being serious,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae got scared for a second. Jaebeom’s expression was unreadable. Was it a good shock or a bad one?
“Is it too early for them? I mean… I know it’s too early but like… are they not on the same page?” Youngjae asked in worry.

“No no no no,” Jaebeom said and laughed, “You’re taking it the wrong way.”

“God, you can’t tell anyone either…. So, Jinyoung and I were walking and there’s this jewelry shop that we always pass by. Two days back he stopped there and looked at the ring from outside of the shop and pointed and said that Jackson would like that. So, I asked if he was planning on proposing and it was a joke from my end but Jinyoung went quiet for a while. He said that he’s not planning a wedding or anything but he doesn’t mind if they get engaged. Like, it’s a commitment that will make him feel more at ease.”

“For real?” Youngjae was smiling ear to ear.

“Yes, like… I am not sure if they both have talked or discussed it among themselves but wow, they’re both on the same page. How?” Jaebeom seemed excited over it.

“It’ll be so crazy, Jackson was a little worried and he even said that he is scared that Jinyoung might think he is rushing.”

“Imagine if they both propose at the same time,” Jaebeom said.

“They both will be a crying mess.”

“Jinyoung would probably laugh, to be honest,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae laughed.

“So, will that be a wedding we could also attend?” Youngjae asked and moved closer to Jaebeom. There wasn’t much space between them but he managed it anyway.

“Maybe I’ll start looking for a boyfriend a week before so no one thinks that I lied about having one,” Jaebeom teased and Youngjae laughed.

“And what kind of a person would you want?” Youngjae asked.

“Youngjae, you would not believe! The last guy I went to a wedding with… weird. Like, he clung to me like crazy, laughed at everyone’s jokes and made everyone fall in love with him. He had such perfect manners that everyone started hating me, asked me how I got such a catch. Now, I would want some loser who’ll make me look good so people will pity me and love me.”

“You’re such a drama queen!” Youngjae laughed and hit him. “Also, the last guy I went with-”

“He was perfect, I’ve heard. The sexiest man alive,” Jaebeom finished for Youngjae and Youngjae laughed harder.

“He wishes,” Youngjae said and Jaebeom smiled. “He was… wild, just wanted to get into my pants. Kept looking at me, asked me to kiss him. Made me meet his friends so they can vouch for his good behaviour. Played with kids at the wedding so he can prove just how great he is. A whole show off.”

“Now you’re making me feel sad,” Jaebeom said and pouted and Youngjae laughed and kissed him.

“So, how are gonna do this? Are we attending the wedding for real this time?” Youngjae asked softly.

“They’re not getting married any time soon, Jackson’s whole career is ahead of him. They might just stay engaged for a decade.”
“But still?” Youngjae seemed eager to know the answer.

“Well, then maybe at their wedding we won’t have to pretend anymore,” Jaebeom said softly and Youngjae smiled. Jaebeom took Youngjae’s hand in his and kissed it lightly.

Jaebeom pulled Youngjae close and kissed his forehead.

“You look sleepy,” Youngjae said.

“I couldn’t sleep last night.”

“Why?”

“Because I confessed to the love of my life and then he kissed me and it felt like paradise,” Jaebeom said and Youngjae laughed, hit him lightly.

“You’re so cheesy,” Youngjae said.

“Get used to it,” Jaebeom said and winked.

They talked some more but with sleep heavy in Jaebeom’s voice. Youngjae changed his voice tone in a more lullaby tone and soon Jaebeom was asleep. Tired for the lack of sleep and the exhaustion of the day.

Youngjae looked at him, features so soft it made Youngjae smile.

Maybe universe has a plan for them or maybe they’ll have to submit their plan to the universe. Because the plan is to stay together. Because the plan is to stay happy and be there for each other. And Youngjae liked planned things, Jaebeom liked a system.

Maybe they’ll fight in the process but they will work it through, because they understand each other, and because the other one understood their own self as well. Maybe there’s a little exploring that needed to be done between the two of them and maybe everyday they’ll learn something new.

But, the only thing they know for sure is that they will love each other, respect each other. They’ll take care of each other without suffocating the other. They’ll wait for the day to end so that they could see each other again but will never force the other to change their plans.

They’ll have each other and maybe that’ll be enough. They’ll have their own little family, their own people and maybe that'll be enough.

As the night washes in and their breathing evens out, their darkness stopped feeling dark.

Chapter End Notes

It's the end. T H E E N D.

I don't know how I feel, I was so nervous right before I was posting this. The story started more than a year ago and I'm so glad i got to finish it. I don't know how you'll like it but well... it was a simple story with not that many suspense so I hope it was a good read for you.
I started writing this fic with a very different mindset, I wanted to show a version of Jaebeom and Youngjae i see them as and I wanted to show a story where the drama isn't... that dramatic. i also wanted to talk a lot about feelings.

Before i forget, i wanna thank Des, she helped me so much with proofreading my stuff. MAN, I DON'T KNOW HOW I COULD HAVE MANAGED IT WITHOUT HER. I NEVER HAD THE TIEM TO PROOFREAD SHIT.

Weeping Gotbang has been my backbone through it all even though 70% of them haven't read my fic but it's the support that matters.

well, by the end of it all, i hope it was a good ride. that you enjoyed it as much as i enjoyed writing it.
if you wanna yell at me, come at me. if you wanna talk about it with me, i'll love it.

Thank you for taking out your time reading the fic, it truly means so much to me.

thank you again!
i might never write another fic hahaha but i hope this one was worth it.

End Notes

This is my first time writing a fic here. So, please do let me know what y'all think of this. Kudos and comments are welcomed. Any type of feedback will help.
I'll try and update every 2 weeks. I'm sorry, I'm just busy with work.
Find me on Twitter LimJaebeomie and on tumblr limsjaebeom and on curiouscat limjaebeomie drop by to talk or something.

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