tie the knot

by jivenchys (bareJinerals)

Summary

Either stay married to an arrogantly conceited billionaire for one year and get a million dollars in return, or drown in his father’s debt with the risk of ending up on the streets. Signing the prenup suddenly seems harder than it looks.

russian translation

Notes

based and inspired from @ninvatippett's colbalt bay series, a saga of the lives of millionaires. and when i say based, i mean based. and though i recommend reading the original series if you're into this stuff, you're not required to read it to understand this. this can be read as a standalone. i've made my own minor adjustments and alterations along the way to fit into a
more modern, korean setting for this couple. and, you know, left out all the girly stuff. i'm strictly following the plotline she created, and none of it belongs to me, besides whatever modifications. bear with me since i haven't finished assigning character roles, but yeah! i hope this goes well.

edit: i've added a padlet for this story and i recommend going through it while reading each chapter where i'll be adding the visuals to important scenes and characters in this fic. unless it's easier to imagine on your own, this'll help you visualize who's who. :*
Not only is curdled milk revolting, the latest issue of *Cosmopolitan*—or whatever magazine Jimin had curiously picked up from his neighbor’s recycling bin last week—called it a bad omen. And then further added that in some dreams is interpreted as a sign of dirty money.

While that does give him a sense of apprehension to look forward to for the rest of his day, he assures himself that he’s unfortunately not living a dream, but reality. Plus, the only reason why his milk expired was because he hadn’t found the time to clean out his fridge nor the money for groceries yet.

So here Jimin is, finally throwing the milk out and mixes a concoction of leftover peanut butter crackers and cookie crumbs from the pits of his dwindling cookie jar as breakfast. He downs half a bowl and washes it away with a cup of black coffee before grabbing his keys and starting his walk to the Busan bus station for his seven a.m shift at Vene.

Vene is a three star diner at the corner of Gwaeja-ro, Busan’s bustling street. It’s home to both old and new players of the money industry who surprisingly respect and endorse the place. Surprisingly. Its tiny kitchen serves greasy breakfast goodness from seven to twelve, and just as fattening lunch from twelve to four. After all the other shops in the plaza close, Vene’s private lounge opens to a night of politics, soju, and an all-you-can-eat buffet, meat edition.

Jimin started working at Vene when he was fifteen. Back then he could only take the breakfast and lunch shifts since he wasn’t old enough to serve the evening alcohol. As a sophomore, he’d take afternoon shifts and the seven a.m ones on weekends. It made good money—and majority of the customers were white-collared workers who paid generous tips and cleaned up after themselves. Occasionally they’ll receive the less-dressed, perverted, seedier diners.

It was during senior year when he took the opportunity to study dance at an academy in America that he missed the diner for seven months. He missed working there so much that he showed up at Jinwoo’s office straight from the airport, asking for his old job back, which his manager was happily obliged to give. That was also when Jimin realized his job wasn’t just a nice pastime. It was the only thing that pulled him the past year. Times have been tough lately.

Which is why Jimin needs this job. He’d do anything to keep it. And by anything that means preventing himself from physically assaulting annoying customers, no matter how gross or complicated they were being. That meant he had to try his damndest from hurling a glass pitcher onto this beautiful man’s face.

*Jeon Jeongguk, qualified asshole.*

Seokmin poked his head in the break room earlier where Jimin was catching up with his psychology notes and informed him that Mr. Jeon had specifically requested for him. That puzzled Jimin because none of the staff addressed Sangguk by his surname. The formalities have been dropped long ago. Plus, he never visited on weekends, let alone a Sunday morning. Jimin knows his schedule by heart so he can clear tables beforehand whenever he expects Sangguk to come by. So why would he want to summon him now?

He tosses his binder aside anyway and heads out to the booth area. Jimin scans the room and upon finding Sangguk’s usual seat by the window empty, figures Seokmin had made a mistake. It was still weird, because it wasn’t like his coworker was able to miss Sangguk’s signature gray hair and booming voice.
“Chim, over there,” Seokmin hollers behind the counter. He tilts his head in the direction of the farthest booth in the back, completely parallel from where Sangguk would’ve normally sat. Apparently Seokmin doesn’t know the deal either because he just nervously shrugs when Jimin raises a brow at him.

As if this couldn’t get any shadier.

Sangguk was a ball of energy that never seemed to lose his youth at the ripe age of sixty seven. Everyone—including the guys—adore him. Even long-legged Seokmin would trip over air whenever he was within a two feet distance with the old man. He was a kid at heart, and Jimin enjoyed spending his shifts talking to him.

Jemin makes his way to the back booth, only to be stopped by Jiho’s smack on the ass as he walks past. He stops, takes a step back, and punches Jiho’s bicep to which the punk only snickers at.

“Damn Minnie, you’ve got an arm,” he grins wolfishly. “Better use it on a whip and teach me how to be a good boy, yeah, babe?”

Jemin wrinkles his nose. “And why would I be doing that when I could easily become an officer and use my arm to whack your face with a baton and then throw you into a dingy cell, where you belong?”

But Jiho just smirks. “Only you’d aspire to live above us pigs, Minnie.”

Jemin sweetly smiles.

Woo Jiho, a regular that the staff address him as Zico, was next in line to inherit Kia Motors. There isn’t much above him besides the everyday billionaires and the Prime Minister.

“Now hyung, don’t tempt me,” he teases. “Karma might be a bitch and have me marry one of you pigs and then I’ll end up being one of those celebrity housewives on TV.”

Even Jiho looks a little queasy at that idea. “God, no. You wouldn’t.”

“It’ll be your fault if I do.” Jimin winks before continuing his way to the back where he expects Sangguk to greet him. The thought of the old sport visiting him on a weekend makes him feel giddy and excited. He even skips in his step. Dancer antics.

Jemin hasn’t seen Sangguk for a few weeks now, not that it’s surprising. While Sangguk is a regular, he’s also a pretty busy and important man who frequents business trips. Hence why they haven’t been seeing him lately. He looks forward to catching up with him this morning and letting him taste their newest addition to the menu—red velvet brownies.

“Well, look who we have here.

Heart beating wildly against his ribcage, Jimin blurts, “You are not Mr. Jeon.”
The man’s perfectly shaped brow arches at his accusation and Jimin feels the full blown effect of his hauteur before he can even open his mouth.

Jimin doesn’t really expect it, but out comes a crisp, collected voice saying, “Pardon me?” while sounding demanding all the while.

He has thick chestnut hair that curves at his nape and sweeps across his forehead in delicate waves, a prominent, straight and narrow nose, a jaw that could cut, and a pair of full pink lips, the top being thinner than the bottom. He’s awfully young by appearance, but his expression and actions give the impression that he’s older than he looks. What intrigues Jimin the most are his dark hazel eyes, equipped with the longest lashes he’s ever seen on a man, that are currently inspecting him in disdain.

He’s definitely attractive—Jimin can’t help but admit the dark features of his eyes and hair are those of a walking wet dream. Even the quirk of his lips is sexy.

Whatever Jimin had built up of him from the sources he acquired before doesn’t give the man justice, nor does it prepare him to actually face him at this moment. A moment he has been sort of dreaming, moreover dreading, for a while now.

Breathe, Jimin. You barely know the guy despite what you think.

He especially didn’t expect arrogance oozing out of him like an aura, with that stupid look he has on as if he could be doing anything else and anything better than sitting here in a rundown diner being scrutinized by a midget of a waiter.

“My coworker said Mr. Jeon came looking for me,” Jimin explains impatiently. “Well, I’m looking at you and you’re definitely not him.”

A scowl replaces his smug expression. “I am definitely Mr. Jeon—Jeon Jeongguk the first, to be exact.”

Judging from his bomber jacket that happens to be Saint Laurent, Balmain skinnies, and black suede Timberlands, he’s certainly loaded and dresses accordingly to that—nothing which Jimin didn’t expect. On the other hand, there isn’t a single trace of Sangguk’s qualities, like his cheeriness and bright black eyes he could associate him with. Except for that sculpted chin rudely pointing his way.

I have a feeling this is the part where I stop scribbling his name in my textbooks. Nothing like your dream man turning out to be your worst nightmare.

Jimin snaps out of his reverie and focuses on those hazel eyes that still gleam in obvious disgust. He rolls his own eyes in response. “Ah yes, the younger, more hot-headed, and less charming of the two. How could I forget. The pleasure’s all mine.”

He’s heard of Jeon Jeongguk, alright. His face is splattered all over Naver and Korean tabloids as one of the hottest topics of the media. Being the apparent heir to Jeon Industries and its current marketing director, he’s ruthless in his business, the eyecandy of social functions, and a tough case to top it all off.

And as Sangguk’s friend, he knows plenty about him. Sangguk’s told him a lot—both the good and the bad—but Jimin’s always viewed him as a character in a great novel he’d continuously reread until now.

Okay, so maybe he wasn’t just any character—he was the prince, the hero that loves the princess (which Jimin totally didn’t imagine being) but these were the fantasies he’d dream of starting from
age seventeen when Sangguk first mentioned him. Since then, Jimin started paying more and more attention to all the details about Sangguk’s son that the media couldn’t catch.

In the past year though, he hasn’t found the time nor heart to revive his inner romantic. And Jimin knows, huffing out a breath and extending a polite hand to Jeongguk, that he’s worn out and probably never will.

Jeongguk looks at his hand as if it’ll lunge at his throat in no time. He shakes it briefly.

“Sarcasm isn’t the best of greeting and it’ll get you nowhere, Park,” he answers snootily, drawing back as quick as he touched. “And you’re not that cute yourself.”

Jimin ignores the lingering warmth in his palm and proceeds to wipe his hand across the back of his jeans. He shrugs. “And you’re a hypocrite for that sarcastic comment, so now we’re even.”

Irritance transitioning to anger flares in his gold-flecked eyes as his lips curl to a sneer. “Not even close. Why don’t you take a seat and we’ll talk business.”

But Jimin shakes his head. “I doubt we have any business together, Mr. Jeon. I have work to do and places to be. I’ll call Seokmin and he can take your order when you’re ready. Have a good—”

He’d just turned away when Jeongguk’s arm shoots up and yanks his elbow in an iron grip. Jimin glances at it, eyes curving into slits. “I’d let go if I were you. I can break your nose and not a single person here would blink.”

His gaze darkens, grip refusing to loosen. “And I wouldn’t go threatening guys double your size, Park. Others might be okay with your tiny feet trampling all over them, but some of us have a little more self-respect than that. I, for one, care about where I get my kicks from. And I’m not afraid to kick back.”

Red floods Jimin’s vision and before he knows it, he throws a punch.

His fist grazes a fraction of Jeongguk’s jaw before feeling thin air and just as he reacts, Jeongguk’s on his feet, grabbing him by the shoulders and slamming him into the booth where he settles himself in front of him, trapping Jimin with no way to escape.

He’s much stronger and larger than Jimin had thought, and now he looks lethal.

“He’s much stronger and larger than Jimin had thought, and now he looks lethal.

“Let go of me, asshole,” Jimin snaps, struggling to push him off the edge of the seat, but Jeongguk’s pure muscle under that sheer V-neck and doesn’t budge an inch. “You’re an arrogant dickhead and I’m not gonna waste my time on you.”

“Shut the fuck up,” Jeongguk hisses and he would’ve clamped a hand on Jimin’s mouth if he hadn’t already obeyed. People’s heads are beginning to shoot up in concern at the sound of Jimin’s yell. He continues in a lower tone, “I don’t want to talk to you more than you do, so let’s make this quick. You need to fix the mess you created, and you need to fix it fast.”

That caught Jimin’s undivided attention. He freezes and stares at him as if he grew a horn—make that two since he’s the devil. “What the hell are you talking about?”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes and finally, finally releases Jimin from his grasp. He sits back on his heels.

“Oh, you know very well what I’m talking about, Park. Didn’t you plan this out the moment you’ve gotten all chummy chummy with my father? Play him right into your hands so that he’ll never refuse you, including blackmailing his own goddamn son into getting what you want?”
Jimin blinks, schools his expression into a frown, and very carefully says, “I’m giving you ten seconds to explain yourself before I call the cops.”

Watching his jaw clench and a vein popping out of his neck, Jimin comes to the conclusion that Jeon Jeongguk is more than angry. He’s fucking furious. This is no comedy, and the guy looks like he’s barely restraining himself from choking Jimin right there. The cause of his anger is something Jimin doesn’t know.

Okay, Jimin. You’re an adult. So act like an adult. Be civil towards the asshole.

“Let’s try again, from the top,” he manages to say calmly. “Why are you here? Tell me as if I’m unaware of everything, because you’re damn right I am. Please. Thank you.”

And while Jimin could be proud of his pleasant negotiation all he wanted, it doesn’t help because it only seems to piss Jeongguk off more. He draws in a long, jagged breath.

“I’m here to propose marriage, Park,” he says in a grave voice, as if he just announced someone’s death—but who’s death exactly, he wasn’t sure.

Jimin blinks once, twice, thrice, before he stretch into a wide grin and fucking loses it. His head is thrown back in laughter, fist slamming the nearest thing—in this case, the table. Someone from the other side curiously glances at them.

Jeongguk’s nostrils flare. “And what exactly is so hilarious about this, Park?”

Clutching his stomach, Jimin gives one last chortle and shakes his head, wiping a few tears with his wrist and looks at his excellent poker face.

“Sorry,” Jimin says. “I thought I heard you say you’re here to propose marriage to me. Who paid you to do this? Sangguk? Where is that prick?”

“My father is in Yokohama as we speak,” he answers, void of any humor. “He left two days ago and warned me that if you and I aren’t engaged by next week, it’s done for me. He’ll make my fucking cousin Min Yoongi the CEO by the end of this year.”

The little grin on Jimin’s mouth vanishes as he relays what Jeongguk has just told him. It takes a moment before realisation dawns on him.

His brows shoot up. “Wait, why the hell would Sangguk do that?”

Jeongguk mirrors his look with one brow. “You’re acting like he’s your best friend and yet still wonder why. It’s obviously because he’s so smitten with gold-diggers like you. He throws me at you because you probably prefer younger dick.”

“If by younger dick you mean yourself, then no fucking thank you,” Jimin retorts, seething at his insults. “You’re made of nasty, unpleasant shit that would be, without a doubt, hard to blow. Considering how much of an ass you are. I’d marry Sangguk over you anytime, except that he’s like my dad and that’s just plain wrong. Also, if you actually knew your dad, you’d know he’d never give his heart again after his second love.”

Sangguk had two marriages, both resulting him as a widow. His second wife, Jaeun, died young of a coronary disease five years ago. Jeongguk’s two older siblings were conceived from his first marriage arranged by his parents, while Jeongguk was Jaeun’s first born. The first wife died from an accident when they were still toddlers.
Jaeun was a bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked woman who was just as young and lively as Sangguk had
been. Jimin only calls Sangguk an old man to tease, but deep inside he acknowledges Sangguk’s
greatness and overwhelming love for his wife and all his children. Jaeun’s death not only jaded him
but the effect took a toll on his health. His grief is still evident even after all these years and many
smiles he’s put on.

“Oh yeah? Then explain why he wants me to marry you, and only you.” Jeongguk spits out.
“Explain why he’s threatening me out of a place which I’ve worked so fucking hard for as long as I
can remember, just because I need to marry some dirty-mouthed, violent, twenty-something diner
waiter who’s apparently worth more than my entire future.”

Jimin snorts. “I bet you don’t even deserve half of the entire future you’re entitled to. And as for your
dad, I suggest you ask him because I have no goddamn idea what you’re talking about. I definitely
did not do anything to cause this. In fact, I want to give him a piece of mind—what’s he thinking,
trying to marry me off to a dictating, cocky ass like you?”

“You’re not gonna tell my father anything,” Jeongguk says menacingly. “All you’re going to tell him
is that you accepted my proposal and that’s it. You’re not going to tell him anything else, because he
strictly instructed I come to you in hopes of convincing you to marry me without any bribery or
negotiation. You’re not even supposed to know about this.”

“Well, now I know you’d make a shit CEO,” Jimin mutters. “Not only can’t you follow simple
directions, but you also cheat your way out of things. Not to mention your offensive attitude.”

He scowls. “I’m only offensive to the people that lure old, gullible men into their foul traps. They
have a word for people like you. Opportunists.”

And anyways, bribery would do nothing on me. You can’t leave anything on me.”

“A lot of stuff can turn around with the help of a lot of money, Park,” Jeongguk sneers. “And guess
what? I happen to know I’m the talk of the town around here. I’m also not an old, bald fatass with a
string of trophy wives who demand alimonies.”

Suddenly, Jimin can’t remember why he ever thought of Jeon Jeongguk as his own Prince
Charming. None of the articles he read or things said about him match his pretentious, crude being.
They never warned him on just how unfair he could be.

He raises a brow at him. “You have an ego to match your bank account, Jeon. You must absolutely
despire having to beg at your dad’s feet for the position of CEO, and listening to his every whim,
huh?”

Jeongguk’s fist clenches and unclenches. “What I despise is giving you opportunists the upper hand.
The chance to take advantage of someone who’s actually working for his position. And now
everything’s up to you, and I don’t get a goddamn say in my life. Oh, but I’m the total utilitarian,
Park. I’ll negotiate, no problem. I’m willing to come to a friendly agreement instead of arguing with
you over nothing. It’ll at least get us something we both want.”

Rubbing his temples, Jimin peeks a glance at him. “Listening is easier than breaking this table with
your pretty face.”

His lips twitch and for a millisecond Jimin expected him to smile, but it disappears faster than he
even saw it come.
“I’ll agree with my father’s terms and marry you,” he starts and it takes Jimin all his willpower to not scream right there. “But I need you to sign a prenup, even though he didn’t want us having that. And I only want us to stay married for a limited time. The minimum he accepts is one year—don’t ask me why he thinks we’ll get something out of this whole scheme, much less in a year.”

Jimin silences him with a lift of his finger. He can no longer contain his annoyance. “If I’m such an opportunist, why would I agree to a prenup that’ll ultimately take your side and leave me with nothing?”

“Because I’ll pay for your cooperation, Park,” he says curtly. “I’ll pay you a million dollars to stay in a marriage with me for one year.”

Jimin’s jaw drops so fast he wonders why it isn’t hitting the floor yet. He clamps his mouth shut and swallows hard.

*A million dollars. What the fuck. That’s six zeroes—more zeroes than my bank account after the negative sign.*

His heart sinks at the memory of Sangguk’s warm smile.

God, Sangguk was the father he never had. After years of sitting with him during breakfast and lunch and eventually those soju-filled evenings to listen to him talk about anything and everything, whether it be about his late wife or busy schedules or his children’s perks—they hit it off and their friendship will forever be long-lasting.

Maybe that’s why guilt twists in Jimin’s stomach.

“No. I can’t.” he shakes his head. And although he’d do anything to oblige his good friend’s wishes, a million dollars is a luxury that a poor person like him couldn’t afford to even think about.

“No?” Jeongguk repeats faintly. He narrows his eyes. “I wouldn’t refuse it just like that, Park. A million dollars is a shit ton of money that I know you’re in desperate need of.”

Now it’s Jimin’s turn to clench and unclench both fists. “You know nothing about me, Jeon.”

The bastard shrugs nonchalantly. “Oh, but I do know enough. For example, I know that your dad died and left you under the water. You’re drowning in debt that you couldn’t even pay back with all your life. Your house is *this* close to being auctioned off. It’s six months behind mortgage and even though you saved it from foreclosure once last year, you won’t be able to save it again.

“Not to mention your own debt you’ve accumulated within the years,” he has the nerve to continue. “After your little getaway to that dance academy in the States, you were forced to sell everything you had to make a difference—not that there’s been any difference. It’s all still the same. And now here you are, surviving on your puny salary from this pigsty and depending on wealthy men who actually come here and give you better tips than the others. Nasty perverted fuckers, such as Woo Jiho, to get you by. But I bet they don’t pay enough for you to even last a day.”

Jemin’s cheeks flame furiously at the humiliating degradation. He hates the feeling of his eyes wettening and he promises to kill himself if a single tear is to drop.

“I didn’t realize it was necessary for you to research every aspect of some—what did you call me again? Oh yeah, dirty-mouthed, violent, twenty-something diner waiter like me,” he mutters through clenched teeth. “I’d say I’m honored but I’m plain disgusted at how low you stoop to get what you want. How you don’t know what the fuck you’re saying, jabbing someone’s hardships right in their face as if they weren’t already aware.”
Something near remorse flickers in his doe eyes before he scowls again. “I wouldn’t have to if you didn’t hypnotize my father into thinking you’re the perfect spouse or whatever. All I’m doing is pointing out the pros of this deal, Park. That’s how business works. You keep the cons to yourself, but it’s your choice whether you want to be blinded by the downsides rather than the benefits. If you agree, you’ll get what you need, and I can shut my dad up, and we all go home happy by next year.”

“No, you’re the only one who gets to go home happy,” Jimin says. “Don’t think you’re doing everyone a favor, asshole. For one, you’re cheating behind your dad’s back and for another, staying married to you will only drive me insane and get me nowhere. Thirdly, take a look at yourself and how you keep downgrading your honor right now. Fooling around with your dad and playing dirty just to get a stupid title. That’s what it is at the end of the day,” he repeats when Jeongguk’s mouth curves unhappily. “Just a fucking materialistic title. I don’t know about you, but I respect Sangguk with all my life. And I’m not going to plot against him, if not listen to him.”

There. His soliloquy is done. Although Jeongguk has been looking utterly bored by the end of his speech, his eyes sparkle in surprise. And confusion.

“I wouldn’t worry about other people’s conscience,” he says lazily. “Especially not my dad’s. He’s the one who made me do this shit, and we both know you’re the muse that inspired him.” Now he leans closer, gaze darkening into something dangerously cunning. “As for my offensive behavior, it’s up to you whether you want to take it as constructive criticism or not. That helps build character. I think a million dollars isn’t something you can deny, no matter your pride. At the end of the day, your pride isn’t gonna feed you nor keep a roof over your head when you’re out on the streets.”

Before Jimin can open his mouth to answer, he’s yet again interrupted by a languid flick of Jeongguk’s finger.

“Don’t think I’m desperate enough to marry you or even agree to all of this. I can easily cut your face out of this deal and find an alternative to please the old man, but you know, this is easier and it’ll work for everyone in the end, including you. It doesn’t have to be messy, yeah? Just think with your brain and not your romantic heart or whatever crap for once. It’ll help you make better choices.”

“As if you do,” he rolls his eyes. “I bet you don’t have a romantic bone in your body, Jeon. Only the ugly desire to keep making more money.”

Jeongguk laughs out loud. His voice would’ve been melodic and lovely and free, if it isn’t for the harsh irony painting over the sound. “Oh, yeah. You’re right about that. I love making money, but I’m doing this to avoid conflict with my dad. I don’t like fighting over shit. And if you actually knew my dad like you say you do, you must know he’s seen better days.”

Jimin purses his lips. He isn’t wrong. Even his coworkers notice Sangguk’s deteriorating health, and it isn’t a pretty sight. It wasn’t drastic progress, per se, but day by day his smile grows fainter, laughs sound tired, and eventually his body follows after.

“Oh, but wouldn’t it hurt him to know we’re scamming him like this? He’d be so disappointed in me. He’d never forgive that.”

Jeongguk looks affronted. “You know, I think I finally found out the reason why you’re so poor. You’re such a doormat. You could be doing great things but you keep acting based on what others think and not yourself. Is my father’s disappointment more important than a million dollars? God, Park, is that how you let your own dad treat you? Let him stomp on you and throw you into a debt you’re expected to pay despite having nothing to do with it, just so that he wouldn’t be disappointed in you?”
“That’s a low blow. You are not going there,” Jimin warns, acid dripping from his tone. “Don’t you dare speak about my father that way.”

He scoffs. “I don’t see why. He wasted his life away with liquor until he died out of alcoholism, and yet you’re still filial to his dead ass. Really? Aren’t you currently choking on IOUs?”

“No one asked for your opinion on my dad’s lifestyle. Last time I checked, it’s none of your concern, so shut the fuck up. And Sangguk doesn’t deserve this. He’s a good man.”

“And I don’t deserve none of this—this manipulation!” Jeongguk barks. “Everything was going fucking fantastic until he suddenly drops this bomb on me and expects me to reorganize my entire existence to make room for a stupid spouse that I don’t want, let alone need. And it’s not even like I get to choose my suitor. I’m stuck with one person, you of all people. There’s so many socialites out there and yet he chose you, so I was bound to think there’s some good in you—but all I see is that you’re too immature, too rough house, too violent, too ignorant with your head high up in the clouds. You’re too raunchy in your tiny uniform and too much of a pain in the ass.”

“I’m glad we can agree on one thing,” Jimin mutters. “That I’m not the perfect spouse. The perfect spouse for you, that is. I’m too hot, too kind, too generous and too righteous to be matched with some douche. I’m too pissed off at you to even consider spending a whole year of my life with you, much less breathe the same air as you.”

Jeongguk’s eyes glint ferociously. “Park Jim—”

“That’s it, your ten seconds finished ten minutes ago, Jeon. I’m done. I’m out of here. If you’ll excuse me, I’ve got shifts to cover,” he announces, and leaps over the counter and lands on the other seat, where he escapes, the flimsy white shirt clinging onto his sweaty body as he crawls out of the booth. Jeongguk makes no move to stop him.

As he walks with his back turned to the counter, he forces himself to forget this whole conversation. Forget the face of the man he fantasized for years, and forget the million dollars he offered him in becoming the one thing he’d rather die hungry than be—his lawfully wedded husband.

Jimin walks away, only because he doesn’t want to do something that’ll cause him regret for the rest of his life.

He was furious at him minutes ago, but now that there’s a good distance between them, his shoulders slump at the thought of Jeongguk taking one of the few things that gave him hope—the hope of him being the type of man he wanted to love and admire from afar.

Jeon Jeongguk turned out to be far from Jimin’s ideal type. In fact, he’s the exact opposite—someone who let him down. And that stings him the most.
The first thing Jimin wakes up to the next morning is a notification popping up on his browser saying he’s lost his internet connection. After reloading the page a few times and troubleshooting the issue, Jimin realizes it’s not something he can easily fix.

“You’ve gotta be kidding me,” he groans, burying his face into his hands.

Since it’s his day off today, he treated himself to some extra sleep before getting up at twelve and snacking on a biscotti he picked up from the display case at work last night. He planned to finally sit down on his laptop and browse through some job listings within the area for the extra money. His shifts at the diner wasn’t enough for him to live by, even if pay day is around the corner.

Jimin checks his connections and reboots the power modum once more before grabbing his cell phone to contact his internet service provider. He didn’t have cable nor a proper phone plan, but he had kept the cheapest internet service he could afford. With cheapest came the slowest.

“Hi, I’m not getting any internet connection here, so I wanted to know if you guys cut my access off,” Jimin says politely when someone on the other end picks up half an hour later.

They ask for his information which he warily gives despite knowing the answer. He doesn’t get why he even bothered to call in the place.

“Mr. Park, sir, it says here you’ve been disconnected because we haven’t received last month’s payment, as well as this month’s—which has been past due just yesterday. We’ll be able to reconnect your service once the payments have been made,” the voice informs and he sighs louder than necessary.

They make temporary arrangements to recover his service till his payment comes through. After hanging up, Jimin logs onto his bank account online and winces at the growing negative balance. His credit had been declined long ago and he’s been stuck in an overdraft on his checking account ever since. Even with his paycheck due soon, it wouldn’t be enough to cover for another month. He still has the electric bill—among others—waiting for him in a neat stack on the kitchen counter.

You’ll get a million dollars if you just put up with Jeon Jeongguk for one year.
It’s not the first time his conscience mentions that. In fact, Jimin’s been thinking about Jeongguk’s ridiculous offer since the end of his shift. The thought runs across his mind every five minutes or so.

A million dollars would not only get him out of his overwhelming debt, but also leave him enough to buy himself a nice flat and a seat at Seoul Institute of the Arts. Jimin’s always had the desire to dig deeper into dance after attending that American academy, but his high school academics wouldn’t have even gotten him an admission, let alone a scholarship.

All that could change if he gives up a year of his life. And beliefs. Based on yesterday’s encounter, maybe even his sanity.

If Jimin’s being honest, he still finds the young man attractive despite his atrocious behavior. And he doubts the attraction would cease while living with him during the year. Jeongguk obviously didn’t mention anything intimate about the marriage he proposed, but judging from his excitement yesterday, it was safe to say he probably had no interest in playing the husband role.

And neither did Jimin. There were so many things wrong with the whole concept. Firstly, they weren’t even lovers—hell, they couldn’t even bring themselves to have a friendly conversation. Plus, Jeongguk would be paying for his services and everything just felt dubious and uncertain and nowhere near genuine.

In simpler terms, it sounded something along the lines of prostitution. A high-end one that came with a temporary ring and surname.

The curious flame within him quickly dies down when Jimin views it that way. Sure, he’d love the money. It’d make life way easier than it currently is, but he’s not desperate.

He picks his phone up again, this time to dial another number. “Hey, hyung. Got any shifts for me today?”

Half an hour later Jimin’s wiping down a table at the diner. It’s a little past lunch hours so customers were bound to flood in soon. The good thing about the lunch shift is the impressive tip that comes with it. Whatever work Jimin signed himself up for is worth the distraction from the two things that’s been eating his mind—Jeongguk and overdue bills.

His good mood is spoiled when Jimin spots a man strolling into the diner and pausing at the threshold to scan the crowd. His face lights up at the sight of Jimin cringing behind the counter.

Kim Hyungsik is partnered with one of the top law firms in Seoul. Despite being in his late thirties, the man’s notorious for his mature, attractive features that consisted of dark styled hair and glinting eyes, but even with all that, something about him and the way he got around was fishy.

He’s always been overly friendly with the staff—particularly the waitresses and some of the former male employees—but he’s drilled an unsettling interest towards Jimin. Last time he checked, he was the only one Hyungsik had repeatedly asked out since his teenage years. Throughout the past months Hyungsik’s been suspiciously increasing and prolonging his visits, and it just so happens to be the same time Jimin’s shifts began.

The lawyer would bribe whoever was behind the counter that day to assign him to one of his tables. Although it bothers him greatly, Jimin couldn’t find himself complaining because when Hyungsik tipped...he tipped good.

He’d hand out fifty to hundred dollar bills like candy, which no person in their right mind would do without expecting some ‘special service’ down there.
Jimin faces his back towards the register, but it does nothing to ease the discomfort. He takes a peek behind him to see whether Hyungsik’s taken a table or not, and tries not to shudder when he finds the man shamelessly raking his eyes down his ass.

He’s got no choice but to return the smile and nod at the table Hyungsik was pointing at.

*Just deal with it. If you humor him he might just give you enough to cover the water bill.*

It’s sickening. Despite Jimin’s little heroic speech yesterday about everything wrong with Jeongguk’s sudden proposal and scheming bribery, here he is crossing the line by letting strangers verbally abuse and ogle him for an extra cent.

“Hello, Hyungsik-ssi,” Jimin greets as he walks over to the table, notepad in hand. “How’s it going?”

“Better now that you’re here,” Hyungsik’s gaze lingers a little longer on his hips before glancing up and grinning at him. “You’re lookin’ great today, Minnie. Your ass really fills out those shorts, huh?”

Jimin fights off the urge to make a run for it and forces the tension off his shoulders by smiling tight-lipped. “Thanks. Would you like today’s menu or something different?”

“Mmm, something different,” he replies, blindly reaching out to give his hip a firm squeeze. It should’ve been the last straw, but Jimin forces himself to lean closer to the customer’s touch instead. “Give me the spiciest buldak and ddeokbokki you’ve got. And some ginger ale with extra ice. I’m a little hot and bothered right now.”

“Right.” He saves the eye-rolling for later as he writes the order down and finally withdraws from the table. “I’ll be back with the ginger ale in a minute.”

Saying that Jimin avoids Hyungsik is an understatement. He tried his damndest to get out of every little thing Hyungsik would call him over for. It’s obvious that the older man doesn’t need extra napkins or a refill, only using those excuses to openly stare and touch him. By the time Jimin returns from the kitchen with someone else’s order and goes back to clear Hyungsik’s table, the man is gone and there’s a hundred fifty dollars tucked in the receipt book.

*It’s worth it.* Jimin slowly scoops the bills up and sticks it in his back pocket, fingers burning from the touch of the generous tip. *It’s worth it, so shut up and don’t complain.*

Lunch hours are over now, so he tells Jinwoo he’ll be out in the back for a quick breather. He’s easily dismissed and steps out into the back alley where Seokmin usually throws their trash out. Jimin makes his way down to the very end, dragging a garbage bin with him to empty into the dumpster.

He sets the bin down, stretches his arms over his head to crack that knick in his back when he hears the sound of faint footsteps stopping behind and turns around, startled.

“Hyungsik-ssi. Mr. Kim.” Jimin pales as said man treads towards him from the exit he’d used. The very same door strictly meant for employee use only. None of them hardly ever stepped out besides the occasional smoke, too. “What brings you here?”

“I just came out of the bathroom when you finished clearing my table,” Hyungsik explains casually. One hand is down his pocket. “Didn’t wanna leave without saying goodbye.”

He’s lurking closer now, which is Jimin’s cue to back up. But one, the fear in his gut paralyzes him. And two, there’s not much room to move around till he meets the dumpster, anyway.
Jimin forces a laugh, glancing at the exit as he decides to back a step. “Well...thanks for stopping by. I gotta get back to work now.”

“Come on, Minnie,” Hyungsik croaks, his lips upturned into a smirk. For every step Jimin takes backwards, the man only takes two steps forward in response. “What’s a few minutes going to do you? You’ll make some time for your generous customer, won’t you?”

Jimin’s hands delve into his back pocket. “Look, if you want your money back, then you’ll get your money back. Just stay away from me.”

It looks like what little control he believed he had over the situation quickly dissipates into the air as the lascivious glint in Hyungsik’s eyes darken.

He’s approached so close that Jimin stumbles into the cold surface of the dumpster. That’s when he yanks the money out of his pocket and tosses it at the man.

“Okay, here. Take it.” The bills flutter to the ground. Hyungsik makes no move to retrieve them.

Whatever color’s remaining from Jimin’s face has drained.

Hyungsik chuckles. “If it’s money you want, Minnie, then that’ll be arranged. I’m willing to pay your highest offer if it means I can fuck you senseless.”

Jimin launches a fist into his chest, face flushing at the indecent offer. “Fuck off, Hyungsik. I don’t do that kind of shit.”

The thing about majority of their elite customers was that they were more on the buffer, taller, wider end of the scale. The total opposite of Jimin’s stature and height. The punch he threw does little to the man, who laughs and seizes Jimin’s trembling shoulder in response.

“You don’t know, but you will once I get the price out of your pretty lips, boy.” He growls as Jimin opens his mouth to scream bloody murder. “Let’s see...how much to get those lips on my dick? One thousand? Two thousand? Name your price.”

“Neither.” Jimin struggles to jerk away from his grip. “Get off, get off, get off.”

“Don’t worry, Minnie, I’ll make you feel so fucking good.” Hyungsik’s palm hovers down his torso, fingers dangerously near his crotch.

“And I’ll make you into fucking dead meat, asshole!” Something inside Jimin finally snaps when he swings his knee upwards to dig into the latter’s groin.

Unfortunately, Hyungsik is faster than him. He easily catches his ankle, bends his knee in half, and pins Jimin against the dumpster where he smashes his mouth against his, teeth clacking at the force.

Most of his screams are consumed by the older man’s sloppy kissing. Jimin slams his knuckles against Hyungsik’s chest but is completely nailed by his overbearing weight. A hand curls around his nape, painfully yanking his roots in place while the other gropes his ass.

Tears flood Jimin’s burning vision and he squeezes his eyes shut, having no choice but to endure the treatment and wondering if he’ll make it out alive.

God, I can’t go down like this.

In the blink of an eye the weight lifts off of him and Jimin’s eyes fly open to a brawl taking place
right before him.

“You should’ve kept your fucking distance when he told you to, asshole,” Jeongguk growls, lunging his fist into Hyungsik’s cheekbone with enough force to send him to the ground.

“Jeon!” Hyungsik barks. He attempts getting back on his feet but is met with Jeongguk’s boot kicking his side. Soon Jeongguk straddles the lawyer, pinning his wrists in place and lifting his arm again. “This is none of your goddamn business. He and I have a mutual understanding.”

“Didn’t look like it was mutual enough to me,” Jeongguk grits out, releasing his arm, only to pound Hyungsik’s face again to a bloody pulp. “This is your first and last warning, Kim. Take a hint and stay away from anyone who’s not into you—especially Jimin.”

As if his heart isn’t already over the edge, Jimin’s breath hitches at the way Jeongguk had said his name.

_Oh, that’s ridiculous. He’s just doing it to look good._

Hyungsik scoffs, coughing out a bloody tooth and weakly spitting it in Jeongguk’s direction. “Don’t tell me he’s got you wrapped around his finger, Jeon. He looks like a good fuck but didn’t think he was your type.”

Jeongguk throws his head back down onto the ground, causing Hyungsik to groan aloud. “He’s my fuckin’ fiance, Kim. I doubt that’s any of your business. Another word about him and I’ll rip your throat out. You know I can.”

Wait a second.

Jimin pales at the sudden decree. “I am not—”

He’s quickly silenced by Jeongguk’s piercing glare. “Shut up, babe. I’m still talking to your little friend here.”

Despite itching to yank him by the collar and ask him what his fucking problem is, Jimin has to admit he’s more than thrilled to see the panic dawn on Hyungsik’s face as he puts two and two. He gives both of them a wary glance.

“Okay,” Jimin draws out a long sigh. “Get his ass up so he can scram before I call the cops. I doubt Mr. Kim would wanna spend the rest of his week in the town jail.”

A hint of a smile graces Jeongguk’s lips before it washes away into a deadly stare fixated at Hyungsik. “Capiche, Kim?”

“Look, just let me go, okay?” The older man gives in, stuttering under Jeongguk’s gaze. “I didn’t know. I’m sorry. Let me go and you’ll never see me again.”

“Sounds good to me.” He shrugs and lifts himself off of him, not forgetting to grab Hyungsik’s wrists first. He jerks him up to his feet. “Now, _fuck_ off. I mean it.” And points to the back door.

Not a second to waste, Kim Hyungsik scampers to exit the alleyway, leaving them in prolonged, awkward silence. There’s still blood rushing through Jimin’s ears, shoulders shivering from the memory of Hyungsik’s slimy touch.

Jeongguk speaks first. “You okay?” He briefly peeks up and down his body for any signs of injuries, but Jimin shakes his head in response.

“There’s no nice way to put this,” Jeongguk’s face darkens as he pulls out a linen handkerchief from the folds of his leather jacket. “And I’m not going to sugarcoat it for you. This isn’t the first time Kim’s molested people. There’s multiple charges of rape filed against him from both men and women, but the media’s quiet since he bribes his victims to keep their mouths shut. He wouldn’t have gotten away with just a mere grope and kiss. You would’ve been the next victim on the list if I hadn’t walked in on you.”

Voice trembling, Jimin asks, “How—how’d you know where to find me, though?”

“I just wanted to talk to you again about yesterday,” he shrugs. He gives the handkerchief a little shake. “Your coworker directed me to the back, saying that you were outside. By the time I got there, Kim was feeling you up against the dumpster with his tongue shoved down your throat.”

Jimin opens his mouth in response, only to hiss when Jeongguk abruptly presses the handkerchief against his jaw, drawing back shortly and lifting the stained linen.

“What the fuck.” He grabs the handkerchief, examining the blood in disbelief. “Why am I bleeding?”

The handkerchief is wordlessly taken away from him and it’s pressed against his jaw again. “Calm down. It’s just a scratch. Kim was probably trying to bite you. Not that I’m surprised,” Jeongguk adds, unimpressed. “Fucker looked like he wanted to eat you alive.”

He can’t help but shiver at the memory of Hyungsik’s hands and mouth roaming all over him. “I don’t know why he followed me outside. Normally I let him get away with some flirting, but he’s never crossed the line till now.”

Jeongguk glances down and sweeps the dollar bills off the floor. He hands it back to Jimin, but not before saying, “Guess he wanted his money’s worth.”

Lips turned irritably, Jimin snatches the money from him. He pockets it back and steps away from Jeongguk’s reach. “Yeah, well. That’s how I survive, I guess. Might as well keep it since it was so hard-earned.”

The dismay in the man’s hazel eyes are as clear as day. “Look, I’m not here to judge, okay? That was my mistake back there and it was wrong of me. I don’t give a shit where you get your money from or what your income is. All I want is your cooperation in a simple business deal that’ll grant you a safe haven during the agreement, and then enough to keep you financially stable afterwards.”

Jimin’s hands curl. “Despite what you think you know about me, Jeon, I’m not gonna sell myself to you.”

Jeongguk raises a brow. “But you will to people like Kim?”

“I’m not a whore!” Jimin yells, and before they both know it, there’s a smack against skin and the result is Jeongguk palming his flushed cheek in mute anger.

Jaw dropped at his feat, Jimin quickly lowers his stinging hand and forces himself to meet Jeongguk’s furious gaze.

They stay like that for a whole minute, staring at each other in seething silence. The apology on Jimin’s lips washes away almost immediately.

Finally, Jeongguk dangerously enunciates, “If it’s marital sex that’s bothering you, then I suggest you
forget about it. I’m not interested in sleeping with you whatsoever. On the other hand, since I’m paying you to play my loving husband, I expect complete loyalty on your part.”

“And I bet you expect the exact opposite from yourself,” Jimin rolls his eyes.

“Of course,” he says without missing a beat. “But I’ll obviously be lowkey. I don’t want to humiliate you in that sense. Neither do I want to scandalize my dad and complicate things in the process.”

“Right. How considerate of you,” Jimin mutters. He shakes his head in annoyance. “But that’s not my problem since I’m not marrying you, Jeon. You and your million dollars can burn in hell.”

He starts for the door.

“Money can make hell look like heaven, Park. I’m sure you of all people would have a first-hand experience.” Jimin halts to a stop. “Maybe you’ll appreciate my offer when you’ve actually tasted hell with nowhere to escape.”

Jeongguk steps in front of him and reveals a pamphlet from his jacket. “This is the contract,” he taps it with a finger. “It’s designed to acknowledge both our interests. If you want your own lawyer, call mine with the number on the back so you won’t be charged. You’ll also receive a non-disclosure agreement that’ll protect me in case one of them tries to open their mouths.”

He wordlessly accepts the papers, barely sparing a glance at them.

“You have till Thursday to decide. We’ll meet here again at ten.”

“You’re wasting your time,” Jimin grits out. “You might think you’re all cunning and persuasive but it’s not gonna work.”

Jeongguk flashes him a disarming grin, and Jimin is briefly caught off guard with the smile changing his impassive, handsome face.

“Oh, you haven’t seen me persuasive yet, Park.” His eyes glint mischievously as he heads for the exit backwards. “And mind you, I like to play dirty.”

Without further ado, he whirls around and disappears into the back door.

Jemin mutters a string of incoherent curses before taking a look down at the pamphlet Jeongguk had given him.

*I should just burn this to make a statement. He kicks at a rock. But then what? Work myself to death for another decade and run into more douches like Hyungsik who might actually get away with shit next time?*

He sighs and picks up a stray garbage bin.

The payment in return was definitely taking a toll on him again, especially after what happened with the lawyer. Jimin wasn’t stupid enough to deny that living with a pretentious, arrogant dick like Jeongguk was at least safer and preferable than having to deal with sleazeballs who’d grope him for an extra cent.

That’s when the rush of anger kicks in.

None of this would’ve happened if his old man had done what he needed to do years ago. Now that he was buried six feet underground with his mother who’s just as dead, Jimin decides circumstances
are tight and despite never imagining himself stooping to such a low level, he has no choice but to accept Jeongguk’s offer.

The only effective way out of this is Jeongguk’s offer.

His only concern is escaping this life in order to start a completely different one may just imprison him once again. Where he may not get so lucky the second time.

Chapter End Notes

so, how's everyone doing today? the next chapter will be on a better page. :) find me on tumblr and twitter. <3
imminent

Chapter Summary

he realizes he's got more to lose than just the money.

Chapter Notes

the reviews were so good i just had to go ahead and keep going. thank you guys ( ^▽^)
^ this will be a weekly thing now, god bless. btw the more i stare at this the more i feel like this is a filler chap even tho it isn't :

See the end of the chapter for more notes

By the time Thursday rolls around, Jimin’s on the verge of admitting himself to an asylum.

It all started when the bank first sent him the default notice six months ago. He’s tried to delay it far as it could go, but he could barely keep up with the insurance, property tax, and utilities—let alone the mortgage payments.

Knowing he’d be turned down due to neither obtaining a credit history nor a legit warrant, Jimin goes to the bank anyway and returns empty-handed. He’s tried out other loan agencies, only to be warded off when the interest rates were alarmingly high. It was almost illegal. Looking back, he’s glad he didn’t sign up for any of them since he’d ultimately be digging himself into a deeper hole.

And now Jimin stares at the notice of foreclosure he received yesterday. He’s been given three weeks before the house gets carted off to an auction and needs the money fast. His paycheck barely covers his basic necessities so if the roof above his head does disappear, he’d need enough for a flat unless he wanted to sleep outside.

There’s money waiting for you once you sign that paper.

Although Jeongguk’s proposal still pisses him off, Jimin can’t help but skim the contract.

Reading the terms and conditions bring out the reality of their deal. It’s not a nightmare he’s been trying to wake up from—getting paid a fortune to marry Jeongguk wasn’t some far-fetched idea.

If he signed, everything—the marriage, schemes, and money—would all come to life instead of being just a mere promise.

Jimin tosses the pamphlet aside on Thursday at the crack of dawn after spending a whole night going over and scribbling his amendments in red ink.

God. Why couldn’t the prince come riding on a horse to save Cinderella’s ass instead of all this complicated crap? Oh, wait. This isn’t Disney and Jeon Jeongguk’s nowhere near a prince charming.

He glances at the empty dotted line once more before tucking it in his bookbag.
Last night he had given himself some final convincing. His situation called for careful, calculated decisions—not fairy godmothers and magic pumpkins. There would be no such thing as true love in his book. While money isn’t the source of the Earth’s orbit, a shit ton of it is needed to keep the world in its place.

Jimin heads over to Vene half an hour before ten. He’d chosen a simple outfit from his even simpler, threadbare wardrobe—a baggy white t-shirt tucked under skinny jeans that are painfully tight and fastened by his only good belt and his trusty Chuck Taylors. He threw on a beanie and a slender chain before leaving the house, slipping on his full-rim glasses that he mindlessly chucked under the bed last night. They’re a little foreign since he opts for contacts now, but it doesn’t matter.

His shifts started later on Thursday and Friday evenings since that was when the tips increase in number and amount. When Jimin arrives at the diner with fifteen minutes to spare, he spots Jeongguk scrolling on his phone in a booth at the back waiting for him.

“Hey.” He says and Jeongguk idly glances up.

His hazel eyes warily rake over him from head to toe. The longer Jeongguk inspects him, the more irritated Jimin grows.

“What? Like what you see?” he scoffs. It’s a little too early in the morning for his cynicism but at least it’s better than being caught dead swooning at the guy.

Jeongguk snaps out of his trance. “You dress better than I thought you would.” And gestures to the seat in front. “You look almost young.”

“That’s because I am young,” Jimin slides into the booth and shoves his bookbag aside. “No one here would be able to believe that I’m older than you. That’s how young I look.”

“Good morning to you too, Park.” Jeongguk says dryly. “And yes, I’m younger and wiser than you.”

He rolls his eyes. “Wise people wouldn’t brag about their wisdom. Only the wannabes do.”

“Tough week, huh?”

“Don’t even ask,” Jimin snaps, snatching a menu from the napkin dispenser and burying himself into his seat. “Judging from your big ass smirk, you’ve got a pretty good idea of how great my week’s been.”

Jeongguk’s smile grows even wider. “Oh, how the tables have turned. This is sounding better by the second. And since I’m pretty sure I’ll be getting the answer that I want, let’s take it slow and get you some food. I bet you’ve been skipping breakfast lately. Waiter?”

Jimin scowls as he signals one of the waitresses over. “I can afford to feed myself just fine.”

Jeongguk ignores him and smiles at Wheein, a coworker of Jimin’s. She’s studying them curiously, trying to put two and two together as Jeongguk requests, “One Deluxe breakfast and a plate of pancakes and sausages for myself, please.”

*What the fuck.* He begins to protest at the massive order but clamps his mouth shut at the sound of his stomach betraying his resistance. Jimin lowers his gaze, praying that the inhumane growl had been overheard.

“What would you like to drink, Mr. Park?” Jeongguk’s politeness throws him off guard.
“Just a cup of black coffee, Wheein, thanks.” Jimin gives the waitress a small smile and fumes when she’s out of sight. “Are you serious? A Deluxe? Do you expect me to finish five pancakes, a plate of hash browns and poached eggs, pork sausages with buttered toast and a blueberry muffin in one sitting?”

The amusements wipes off of Jeongguk's face. “If you're gonna be the new addition to my family, then you're going to have to look like it. A scrawny build is not the trend a Jeon would don.”

“Scrawny? Excuse me. I'm thick in all the right places.”

He’s not kidding. While Jimin admits he’s always been a little curvier than the average guy, the amount of work and stress he’d gone through the past year wore down his remaining baby fat. Not that he thought it was a bad thing.

If Jeongguk was annoyed before, he’s certainly showing it now. “A Jeon also doesn’t seek attention,” he hisses as his eyes sweep over Jimin in something that could only be called attention.

“What, would you rather have an ugly, bony skeleton as your spouse? Oh, wait. As if someone would believe you’d end up with one considering your ridiculous standards dating only people with impossible quality and stature, poise and appearance—”

“Well, yeah, I’ve got pretty high standards—”

“Not to mention narcissistic judgemental scatter-brains.” Jimin smiles sweetly. “Then again, I totally understand why saving the world is unacceptable unless you're wearing Gucci.”

His lips twitch in humor but quickly curl downwards, eyes gleaming otherwise. “A Jeon consists of pristine taste, charm, perfect mannerism and pliancy with their spouses.”

Jimin raises a brow. “Pliancy? Like flexibility in bed? I may have studied dance but I can’t guarantee that I can sling my leg over my neck anymore. Besides, we’re not supposed to sleep with each other.”

“No. I mean unity with one’s spouse. When making decisions reckoned best for the both of them.”

Enjoying Jeongguk’s irritation to the max, Jimin leans back and narrows his eyes at him. “Just spit it out already. If by whatever you just said means total submission, than say that. You expect your spouse—wife or husband—to be one of your many marionettes, right? So you can pull at their strings whenever and expect them to follow. Your partner is not allowed to disagree or have an opinion, nor can they complain about your secret mistresses or point out your super inflated ego. They must also lose half of their brain cells if they want to mingle and relate with the people you socialize with. In other words, a spineless trophy wife. Er, husband. Sticking close to your arm like a prized possession or some shit. Am I wrong?”

“Yes,” Jeongguk eventually says. “You forgot a very crucial part. Less on the sarcasm?”

“Oh, sorry about that.” He smugly tosses him the contract. “I promise to sound deader next time, no big deal. Doubt all the pretty people you hang with know what sarcasm is anyway.”

The food arrives just in time. Jimin almost expects Jeongguk to shoot him a murderous glare if it isn’t for Wheein returning with plates heaping with steamy breakfast. Normally, he would’ve felt nauseous at the greasiness, but one forkful of sausage brings him to tears. There’s definitely a huge difference between eating kitchen leftovers and a paid meal.

“This isn’t signed,” Jeongguk remarks as he goes over the contract.
“Not yet. Had some alterations I wanted to get back to you with.” Jimin sets down his fork. “I want the payment divided in five installments. First two hundred thousand on our wedding night. Then the second part four months later and the third part two months after, and the remaining at the end of the year. The personal expense thing is fine, but I want a separate bedroom for myself, a charity budget, and a scholarship to any academy of my choice. If I happen to die before the contract expires, the rest of my payment should be donated to the charity listed on my will. If you die, I have the right to be paid full by your estate without adhering to the contract.”

He doesn’t notice Jeongguk leaning over him as he leafs through each section. When Jimin glances up, startled at his presence, Jeongguk sits back and shrugs.

“Sounds good to me. But why do you want a charity budget? My parents and I both are on board with plenty.”

Jimin takes a bite of his muffin to busy himself. “Might as well make the best out of your offer. There are a few projects and organizations that I’ve wanted to contribute to. Don’t worry—I’m not going to splurge on myself. It’s all for a good cause.”

“I’m not worried,” he smiles. “For someone who was really hell-bent on this whole paid proposal thing, you sure are anxious to spend it. I’m okay with all of your suggestions. Anything else?”

“No side chicks or dicks in the marital home.” Jimin enunciates carefully, making sure he’s made his point across. The idea of Jeongguk fucking a nameless somebody in the next room of the house they’d be sharing disgusts him—fake spouse or not. “That’s a ground rule. If I catch you, then I’m able to terminate the contract and receive the rest of the payment within a month after our divorce. It’s on page fifteen.”

Instead of being bothered by the condition, Jeongguk only arches a brow. “I assure you won’t find any of my one night stands at home. I keep my love life and business away from each other, Park. Besides, my romantic affairs are to be discreet, remember?”

“It’s a ground rule and that’s all there is to it.” Jimin wrinkles his nose. “God, I’m glad I’m not required to sleep with you. I bet you’re as responsive as a rock in bed. Your one night stands are better off with a dildo shoved up their ass—unless they’re in for a dick to suck while they’re at it?”

_Gone too far, Min._

Truth is, Jimin is no sexpert. At all. So he’s surprised shitless when he blurts all of that out in broad public. Something about Jeongguk pisses him off to the extent that his brain-to-mouth filter vanishes a foot within distance.

The funny thing is, Jeongguk isn’t even the slightest bit insulted. The corner of his lips quirk upwards as he eyes him almost lazily. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

What the hell.

Jeon Jeongguk isn’t a bad flirt, he decides. Jimin’s cheeks instantly flare but he rolls his eyes and winces at the bitter taste of coffee. “No thanks. While I’d love to sleep with a masterpiece, I don’t exactly appreciate the ones who either talk unnecessarily or are full of shit when they do.”

“It’s only shit if they’re things you don’t wanna hear—also known as the truth.”

Jimin purses his lips in subtle agreement. “Have I ever told you that I really dislike your guts, Jeon?”

“Not in my face, no, but you make it pretty obvious, Park.” And he’s grinning so cheekily with the
huskiest laugh that a part of Jimin kind of dies inside.

Why couldn’t he be funny on a week when Jimin’s humor wasn’t buried six feet under?

“When will I get the revised contract?”

“Tomorrow morning,” Jeongguk promises, carefully folding the contract and slipping it underneath his coat. “By the way, my dad’s coming back from Yokohama tonight so I thought we could—uh, announce our engagement to the family at the brunch we’re attending on Saturday.”

Having to lie to Sangguk and the rest of the Jeons’ faces makes his heart wrench in guilt.

“I can’t. Got work all Saturday long,” Jimin shrugs.

A wrinkle forms between his brows when Jeongguk frowns. “The contract states to quit both your job and schooling when we get married.”

“When we get married, not before. When is the wedding anyway? I need to notify Jinwoo beforehand since training a replacement takes time.”

“Look,” he grits his teeth. “In two weeks’ time the public will be notified of our engagement. I’m going to have to introduce you to everyone soon and you continuing your job at the diner just doesn’t fit the image as my fiance.”

“Well, I’m not getting my money until our wedding night and last time I checked, I need food to survive. And anyways, what’s so bad about a waiter, huh? Think of it as some romantic story—you were so whipped for the lowly waiter that you just had to marry him. See? Romantic.”

“I am not whipped for you or anywhere near that, so keep your bullshit excuse to yourself,” Jeongguk snaps.

“Did I say you were?” Jimin retorts. “It’s better than people knowing the truth—that you’re only marrying me to shimmy your way into your father’s heart and gain the position of CEO.”

“I can just say my dad forced me through it.”

“Yeah, and make Sangguk look like the criminal here? I don’t think so.” Exasperation laces Jimin’s words. “You’re just going to make people think you’re a spineless hag who can’t stand up to his own dad. Are people actually going to accept the complexity of a so-called simple business arrangement?”

“Okay, okay, I get it!” The force in Jeongguk’s tone frightens him, even if he remains the same volume. “You can keep your damn job until a week before the wedding because we’ve got a lot of shit to prepare. You’re basically playing the bride’s role in this agreement so your involvement is required more for the big day. And while you’re working here,” his eyes narrow. “You better avoid anyone trying to get into your pants. It’s already bad that I’m marrying an immature waiter. I don’t need Naver posting articles of people groping my fiance’s ass.”

“Oh yes, there’s the husbandly concern.” Jimin mutters. “Whatever. I’m not approaching any shady people unless I’m armed with a bat. I would’ve brought it along with me today for a demonstration, but it didn’t go with the outfit. I can hear the salt and pepper shakers calling my name on days like these.”

Jeongguk pinches his eyes shut. “I’m insane for considering this with you of all people.”
“Same, but you were already messed up when you met me. And now I have to endure your thugginess.”

He opens his eyes and stares at Jimin exasperatedly. “Oh really? Well since you’re being paid to endure my thugginess, I suggest you shut up and deal with it. Honestly, I’d like to survive the year without a permanent migraine that you happen to be the source of.”

“Only because you piss me off first,” Jimin lifts his chin. “But you’re right. I’d like to go through this year without being charged of murder. If we’re staying married for a year, we’ve gotta act like it. In order to do that, let’s try not to get on each other’s nerves too much, yeah?”

Jeongguk gives him half a smile. “Yeah. I’ll try my best.”

Jimin nods. “Me too.”

It’s this moment that causes the two to set their disputes aside and let a subtle change click between them.

They finish their breakfast in peace, Jimin scraping the last bits of eggs off his plate as Jeongguk wolfs down his coffee. He sets the mug down and wipes his mouth with a napkin.

“How long do you have till your shift today?” he asks.

“I start at eight tonight, but I need to take a nap beforehand since I’ll get off at three in the morning.”

“We’ve got time,” Jeongguk turns his phone on. “It’s only twelve, so we can get some shopping done and I’ll drive you home by one so you can catch up on sleep.”

“Shopping?” Jimin raises a brow. “What for?”

“An engagement ring. Maybe a new outfit. Something that doesn’t look so worn down. My assistant Yoonoh will get you a personal shopper for your new wardrobe, but till then, it doesn’t hurt to get you some stuff now.”

“Can’t this wait until after the wedding? It’s not like I have to start wearing Versace and Saint Laurent at work.”

“You definitely need the ring if you’re going to convince my dad about our engagement this Saturday,” Jeongguk argues. “The fiance of Jeon Jeongguk needs to have a rock to show off.”

“The only rock I need is one I can bash your brains out with,” Jimin mutters to himself and smiles innocently when he glares at him. “I mean—oh yes. Buy me the most expensive shit Tiffany can offer.”

“You’re going to have an appointed driver, by the way,” Jeongguk says, barely batting a lash at his sarcasm. “I don’t want you wandering around on your own.”

“Aw, baby. So concerned for my well-being, aren’t you?”

Ew.

Jeongguk narrows his glare and pulls out a hundred dollar bill, tucking it into the receipt book and standing up after.

_Damn. Lucky Wheein._
“I’m concerned with all my investments. You being the most defenseless—not to mention complicated—one I have,” he teases and offers Jimin his hand.

He takes it with a pout. “Wow, romantic. Okay, so there’s a driver and a ring and a new outfit. Anything else?”

“Not that I know of. We should be good to go. Ready?”

“More than ever,” Jimin resists the temptation to skim his fingers across Jeongguk’s warm hand. “Show me what all the fuss is about, Jeon—”

“Guk. Jeongguk.” He interrupts as they exit Vene together. His hand slips out of their hold and presses against the small of Jimin’s back. “If we’re going to play married, then we probably need to address each other with our first names.”

Jimin doesn’t expect Jeongguk’s muscular arm to snake around his waist and pull him closer to his side. He swallows hard at the possessive contact and notices the number of winks familiar passersby were giving him. Oh. “Uh, yeah. Okay, Jeongguk.”

“Better,” Jeongguk smiles a little and glances down at him.

“I’m Jimin,” he offers when they cross the road. ”Most people call me Chim or Minnie.”

Jeongguk shakes his head. “They both sound weird. Jimin is a nice name. It suits you better.”

Jimin blinks, suddenly shy under his gaze. “Um, thanks.”

“Come on, Jimin. Ride’s this way.” Jeongguk picks his hand back up again, slots his fingers carefully between his, and begins to lead him down the block.

As Jimin watches their palms touch, he wonders if Jeongguk is holding him simply because he’s currently his most valuable possession and not because he doesn’t want to lose sight of him.

Then he realizes he’s got more to lose than just the money. That’s what scares him the most about this whole whimsical engagement the first time Jeongguk had proposed it to him.

Chapter End Notes

oKay. WeRe gEtting thEre.
find me on tumblr and twitter. <3
Chapter Summary

this was no stunt. he’s actually marrying jeon jeongguk for money and survival and the truth behind it tasted bitter on his tongue.

Chapter Notes

hello my lovelies ( ^▽^ ) we are back with another chap. i’d like to thank you all for the support and comments flooding in—we’re only four chaps in and we’re all going crazy. :( today’s chapter will mark the beginning of their crazy relationship.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You need new shoes.”

They had just stepped onto the curb where Jeongguk’s sleek black Mercedes was parked waiting for them—from the looks of it, it was probably triple the value of Jimin’s house. Jeongguk had held the door open for Jimin to slip into the back, only to hold him back with a light hand on his shoulder.

He glances up at him, annoyed. “What?”

“New shoes,” Jeongguk impatiently repeats and gestures towards Jimin’s Chuck Taylors. “We’re going to one of the most notoriously expensive jewelry stores in Seoul and you’re wearing a pair of Converse that look like they’re begging for mercy. How will they expect you to afford it?”

“That’s the thing. I can’t afford it.” Jimin shoots him a look and gets in without another word.

Jeongguk rolls his eyes and moves over to the front passenger seat. The driver’s wheel is occupied by a silent buff guy concealed behind sunglasses and a bluetooth earpiece. He barely spared them a glance when they entered the car.

Jeongguk doesn’t acknowledge the driver yet and instead twists around in his seat to glare at Jimin. “I am buying it, jeez. The least you could’ve done was look like someone who deserves it.”

“Oh, so that’s what this is about,” Jimin scoffs. “Firstly, you’re just pissed because I don’t look like someone your rich ass would want to be seen with. Well guess what—I’m not. My brain’s slightly bigger than my ass and that wounds your standards. Secondly, there you go being a judgemental dick again. No one should give a fuck whether I wear sneakers or not.”

“It’s not judgemental, it’s basic protocol.” He turns to the driver and exchanges a few words—words along the lines of Swarovski and Gangnam spilling out of his lips—and then returns back to him. “Otherwise known as etiquette. You know, something that still exists in society?”

Jmin furrows his brow at him.

“It’s a good thing you’re my fiance, otherwise they won’t waste a minute to criticise.” Jeongguk
continues, looking up front as the driver weaves out of the lines of parked cars. “Who knows, they might be nice enough to think that you’re only slightly bizarre and not completely whack.”

“Right. Bizarre. That’s the word you use to describe rich, crazy people. I would’ve thought you were bizarre too if it wasn’t for your dull imagination.”

They pull into traffic and Jeongguk briefly looks over his shoulder. “I have a fantastic imagination, thank you.”

“You can’t even stand a pair of Converse,” Jimin says exasperatedly. “You don’t think of stuff like casual looks or contemporary fashion or coffee dates on a rainy day or anything else that could be associated with my sneakers. But no, the only thing you think of is etiquette.”

“That’s the only thing I said out loud. It doesn’t necessarily mean I haven’t thought of anything else,” he retorts. “Just because my brain-to-mouth filter prevents me from speaking everything on my mind —unlike someone—doesn’t mean I’ve got any less of an imagination than you.”

A corner of Jimin’s lips tug into a smirk. “Yeah? Why, what do you fantasize about? Sliding the sneakers off of someone and appreciating the way their leggings hug their curves and accentuate their long, slender legs?”

His grin grows wicked as Jeongguk’s gaze flickers over to Jimin’s thighs, his eyes darkening for a mere second before he clears his throat and crosses a leg over the other. His faintly tinted cheeks are proof of how far his imagination could go.

*So Jeon Jeongguk’s not only a dick, but a horny fucker.* He decides to let that slide.

Now that he mentioned sliding sneakers off, Jimin can’t help but imagine Jeongguk peeling away his layers of clothing, revealing a chiseled body carved to perfection and a sexy smile. Even with him wearing a bomber jacket to both meetings, Jimin can tell he’s been blessed with broad shoulders and an impressive body.

Before he knows it, he’s envisioning Jeongguk flexing his muscular arms and showing off all his hard abs glory.

As Jimin’s eyes roam across his back to his waist, his gaze narrows. “Why aren’t you wearing your seatbelt?”

“The drive’s short and you can barely speed in Seoul,” Jeongguk says snootily, sounding like an immature teenager. “It’ll be fine.”

“Um, no. It will not be fine. Put your seatbelt on.”

“Jimin, I know what I’m doing—”

“Jeon Jeongguk, put your fucking seatbelt on!” Jimin snaps. “Are you seriously stupid enough to think that you’re made of steel? What’ll happen if you fly out the window and get run over by a sixteen wheeler, huh? Won’t be fine after that, will it?”

Jeongguk’s jaw clamps at that—probably to shoot some smart-ass remark—but instead shuts his mouth and stretches the belt over himself.

“Thank you.” Jimin mutters and turns back to the window, pent up frustration draining from his body with every turn.
Silence occupies them for a good moment, the sound of different honks peppering them from various directions. It isn’t long before Jeongguk breaks the pregnant pause.

“That’s how your dad died, right? Driving in the pitch black on a bridge unattended and without a seatbelt on.”

A blunt stab of pain eventually slices through him. But just because it felt repetitively dull didn’t mean he wasn’t hurt. Jimin chooses not to reply.

“He flipped out the window when the car skidded off the bridge and landed into the lake where he died on the spot,” he continues, oblivious to the silence. “And when they found him, his blood-alcohol content was discovered to be over fifty percent.”

Jimin makes no move to stop him. At this point, he’s not surprised at the thorough research. Then again, it’s not even a personal matter anymore. The details of the accident were discussed publicly via the news, so it only made sense that he got a hold of it.

“Right?” Jeongguk glances at him for confirmation.

"Basically.” Jimin bites out, indicating the end of their conversation.

“Sorry. I know it’s hard to lose a parent, no matter the situation.”

He snorts without meaning to. Suddenly the grip on his seat grows tighter. “Especially when they leave you to clean up after their shit. It's like their death is nothing but a wake-up call.”

It happens so abruptly that if he blinked, it would’ve felt like nothing had happened at all. But he feels it and he doesn’t try to hide the stutter in his breath when Jeongguk’s large hand squeezes his for less than a second. The warmth lingers around as he quickly pulls away.

Jimin’s not sure how to react to his unexpected kindness, considering he never prepared himself for a even an ion of it. All he equipped himself with was his embarrassingly fiery temper and a bundle of harsh comebacks.

“We’re here,” Jeongguk informs him as the driver parks in front of a grandiose building crafted of glass. Two doormen make their way over to their car and escort them both to the impressive entrance.

Inside is even more striking. Jimin’s eyes slightly bulge at the sight of the obnoxiously vast and lavish interior decorated with endless rows of glass display cases that flaunt an array of diamond and crystal jewelry. Not a single semi-precious metal is in sight.

That’s when Jeongguk’s complaints dawn on him and he starts feeling a little self-conscious about his appearance. It’s not etiquette nor basic protocol—fuck that—but it would’ve been better to step out wearing something visibly nicer.

Suddenly Jeongguk’s advice doesn’t sound as ridiculous as it did in the car.

Whatever. Don’t feel bad—no one can intimidate you besides yourself.

“You okay?” Jeongguk murmurs, slipping an arm around his waist and doesn’t bother to pull back when Jimin twitches at his touch.

The beaming man who welcomes them at the entrance bows so deeply Jimin almost thinks he’ll fall into prostration. He straightens and sends them a full-patented, toothy grin.
“Mr. Jeon, welcome! Welcome. It’s so good to see you again,” he eagerly waves Jeongguk’s hand before turning to Jimin. There’s no doubt that the man’s ear-splitting smile curls downward in distaste as he gives him the once-over. Luckily he returns to his polite demeanor and offers his hand. “And you must be the lucky boy who snatched this equally lucky young man—he’s one of our most generous customers. I’m Jung Byunghee, at your service.”

Jimin flashes him a sickeningly sweet smile, eyes curving as he grasps his hand and squares his shoulders. “Park Jimin. It’s a pleasure working with you, Jung Bungee—I mean, Byunghee-ssi. An absolute pleasure.”

The subtle squeeze at his waist causes Jimin to frown up at Jeongguk, only to find him biting back his smile. He eventually schools his features into a straight face, but his hazel eyes are lit with humor.

Jeongguk clears his throat. “Jung, about those exclusive designs you mentioned in our call. We’d like to see them. Gives us a moment before your staff brings them out—don’t forget the special item as well.”

“Of course, sir.” Byunghee steps aside and gestures towards the room ahead. “Please follow me.”

Jimin holds his arm as they follow the man into a private hall. When they’re a good foot or two behind him, he tugs at his arm and leans closer to whisper in his ear, “Guess who I feel like right now?”

“Who?” Jeongguk whispers.

“Lee Ji Eun in *Homespun Tale* when Yook Sungjae went shopping with her.” Jimin grins. “All the employees were making a big deal out of impressing her even though she was trying to impress him. Remember when the manager was so desperate he even gave her his own necktie?”

His lips curve into an innocent smile. “I also remember the part where she waits for him at home in nothing but that tie. Should I be expecting something like that tonight?”

“Who?” Jeongguk whispers.

“Lee Ji Eun in *Homespun Tale* when Yook Sungjae went shopping with her.” Jimin grins. “All the employees were making a big deal out of impressing her even though she was trying to impress him. Remember when the manager was so desperate he even gave her his own necktie?”

His lips curve into an innocent smile. “I also remember the part where she waits for him at home in nothing but that tie. Should I be expecting something like that tonight?”

Jimin flushes and he playfully elbows his stomach, startled at the contact of pure muscle underneath. The last thing he needs is to think of what’ll happen if Jeongguk did walk in on him wearing nothing but a flimsy tie on.

*He’ll probably tell you to put some clothes on like a good Jeon and then walk back to his smoking hot model with those jeans that accentuate their every curve.*

“You wish,” he rolls his eyes. “That was Yook Sungjae after all. Seoul hunks over egocentric billionaires—always.”

Jeongguk’s gaze narrows as he looks ahead, tongue poking the inside of his cheek. “Pity you’re marrying an egocentric billionaire instead of that kid Seoul hunk, huh?”

*Another thing to add on the list of new profound discoveries of Jeon Jeongguk. He gets butthurt easily.*

Jimin scoffs. “Oh please—you’re like, what? Seventeen?”

Now it’s Jeongguk’s turn to flush as he steers him into the display room where Byunghee is already pulling their seats out.

“I’m not seventeen,” he protests. “I just turned twenty two.”
Despite them sharing an age gap of two years, Jimin can’t help but wrinkle his nose at the idea of marrying someone so young. Like, fresh-out-of-college young. If he even finished college, that is. One more reason why Sangguk’s idea sounds crazier by the day.

Looking up close, the age gap starts to lose its prominence. Not only does Jeongguk possess a pretty face and boyish charm, there’s a sense of professionalism to him that makes him sound and seem older. His handsomeness contains depth in his personality and the dignity he was raised to hold would make him stand out from a group of young adults like him. In fact, he could’ve said he was a minor and Jimin would’ve been just as smitten.

He must’ve been gawking at him longer than necessary because Jeongguk’s frown slowly turns smug. “I guess you don’t give a damn about my age from the way you’re checking me out.”

Way to ruin the moment.

Jemin scowls. “Why should I care about the person I’m marrying if I’m just in for the money?”

His beautiful hazel eyes waver for a second and it nearly wounds him to hear Jeongguk mutter, “You didn’t have to put it that way,” and turn away from him.

“Look,” Jimin says after a moment, guiltily reaching for his arm. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it—”

He trails off when Jeongguk leans painstakingly closer, warm breath invading his senses and sensually fluttering against his bare neck. Jimin stills, fingers suspended in midair and pales in his seat when Jeongguk mouths near his ear.

“You’ll have to pay for that sooner or later,” he murmurs, voice velvet and dangerously low. He abruptly pulls away from him and sits back in his seat impassively, leaving Jimin shell-shocked and curious for more.

Before Jimin can snap out of his reverie, Byunghee directs them onto leather-cushioned seats in front of the mahogany table where lines of jewelry lay waiting. A row of crystal lights shine above, their impeccably bright lights showering over the impressive diamonds and glinting off of every shiny surface in the room.

“We’ve presented majority of the collection, but let me know if you want anything else added. I’ll leave you to be now, Mr. Jeon, Mr. Park.” Byunghee bows once again and exits the hall, shutting the door carefully behind him.

“Pretty,” he acknowledges the jewelry and looks around the elegant hall. “Pretty expensive.”

Jeongguk smirks. “Get used to it. Us Jeons always want the best—so you should too.”

“I clearly drew the short straw for best husband,” Jimin pouts.

To his surprise, the younger guffaws, eyes crinkling in laughter as he grins at Jimin sardonically. “No, I drew the short straw. Do you even reach five feet?”

“What—of course I do! I’m five foot eight—hey!” Jimin smacks his trembling shoulder. “Not all of us are giants, okay? Besides, I can easily reach your height.”

His brows furrow in confusion. “That makes no sense.”

“Ever heard of insoles, genius?”
“I have but I didn’t think you were into those.”

“I’m not, but that doesn’t mean I’ve never worn them. I’ve got a pair that I take out when I’m feeling a little stylish. My practical personality doesn’t always define who I am.”

“You could’ve worn them today,” Jeongguk warily eyes his sneakers.

“I only wear them for special occasions,” Jimin emphasizes. “Shopping with you is nowhere near special.”

Something registers in his large doe eyes but before Jimin can figure out what it is, he quickly darts his gaze somewhere else.

“This is for you,” Jeongguk clears his throat, switching back to professionalism and reaches for a tiny velvet box, tucking it in his palm. He shows it to him, carefully prying the lid open.

Jimin leans forward, gasping at the sight of the ring inserted between the cushion.

“Whoa, it’s gorgeous.” He looks up at Jeongguk who’s busy studying him rather than the ring he just presented. “What’s it for?”

“It’s just a welcoming gift. You’ll have to wear it for the time being while they prepare our wedding bands. Think of it as a temporary engagement ring,” Jeongguk sighs and Jimin beams at that. “I picked it out earlier this week but I wanted to make sure you like it.”

He watches, mesmerized as Jeongguk gently takes his hand and easily slips the band over his ring finger—a surprising fit. The cold platinum greatly contrasts with his warm touch skimming across the back of Jimin’s hand. “Would you change it if I said I didn’t like it?”

Jeongguk pauses and releases his hand. His eyes focus on the moderate-sized diamond glinting from its place on Jimin’s finger. “I thought this was perfect for you and it is. So no, I wouldn’t change it.”

Jimin lifts his hand to admire the ring. He wasn’t much of a jewelry person but even he appreciated art when he saw it. “Why bother waiting to buy it if you don’t care what I think?”

“I’ve already purchased it Jimin, so I would’ve convinced you to like it if you didn't.”

“Confident.” he lowers his fingers and arches a brow at him. “As if you’d be able to hypnotize me. Nice try, but I’m immune to your charm.”

*Okay, that’s a fat lie and we both know it.*

Jeongguk ignores the comment, nodding at the ring instead. “Well, do you like it?”

He examines it again, enthralled by the princess cut diamond elegantly perched at the center of the broad platinum band. The design is simple with no added extravagance. If anything, it’s something Jimin would’ve chose for himself if given the opportunity.

“It’s beautiful, but,” Jimin pauses, staring at the stone as an ugly feeling washes over him. The reality of the scheme he agreed to carry out with Jeongguk. The satisfaction the ring gives him that once again proves the situation he’s place himself in—that he is indeed marrying the very same person he chose to get over years ago.

There’s more risks to it than he had realized, excluding the million dollars. In fact, there are more cons burdening his shoulders than Jeongguk’s. He’s selling his soul at a cost and being paid to lie to
a man he genuinely looked up to as a father figure. More importantly, he’d be launching himself into a web of complex society he’d never be able to adjust to.

“But?”


This is no stunt. He’s actually marrying Jeon Jeongguk for money and survival and the truth behind it tasted bitter on his tongue.

Jeongguk gives him a final glance before taking his hand and squeezing it again. His attention is back on the display case and no longer on him.

“Anyways, we still have to choose our wedding rings.” Just then, Byunghee enters the room, followed by two salesmen trailing after him. He broadly grins at them before seating himself right behind the jewelry.

Horrible isn’t even enough to describe how browsing for their rings go. For one, Byunghee’s hovering around every set that Jimin happens to breathe near and chirping both praises and the obnoxious price. Second, Jeongguk’s dismissing each piece with an attitude of wanting to be anywhere else but with him, choosing rings for their fraud wedding.

Exhausted and moreover irritated by everything, Jimin randomly points at a platinum band with a wide strip of silver running across and a single studded diamond dotted at the center. “I like this one.”

Byunghee looks disappointed. “This one? Ah, we have more unique designs consisting of—”

“I like my wedding bands simple,” Jimin cuts him off. Then he smiles. “Marriage is complicated enough, don’t you think?”

“Um.” He shoots Jeongguk a pleading look.

Jemin tenses, hoping Jeongguk won’t immediately try to interfere with his choice in front of the manager who already treated his opinion like garbage.

To his surprise, Jeongguk quietly says, “Jemin can have whatever he wants.” And acknowledges the set with a jut of his chin. “It’s nice. Have it sized accordingly by next week and I’ll have someone come and pick it up.”

When Byunghee momentarily leaves them again to fetch some paperwork, Jimin leans closer to him. “Did you really like it or were you just agreeing to shut me up?”

He appraises him from the corner of his eye before slightly grinning. “I did like it. The rest of the shit looks overdone and frankly, I like my wedding bands simple too. It’s a good thing you didn’t choose that three-striped diamond one over there.”

“God, no. It looks horrible.” Jimin smiles back. “I’m glad we agreed on one thing. The first and hopefully the last for us.”

“The last?” Jeongguk tilts his head to the side. “Didn’t we promise to get along?”

“Yeah, to get along. But that doesn’t mean I’ll agree to everything of yours. I’ve decided that in order to survive all this posh complexity and proper etiquette, I’m required to disagree with you on a lot of things.”
Now his brows furrow in confusion. “How are we going to get along if you’ll keep disagreeing with me?”

“Easy. By agreeing with me. Like you did with the rings. That wasn’t so hard, was it?”

Jeongguk gives him a look mixed with annoyance and amusement. “I only agreed with you because it concerned my preferences.”

Jimin wrinkles his nose and playfully sticks his tongue out at him. “Egocentric as ever. Are we done here?”

“Are you done here?” Jeongguk studies him carefully. “You sure you don’t want anything else?”

“Um, no. Why would I? The only thing I could afford here is the air we’re breathing. And maybe the nice tissue the bags come in.”

He exhales through his nose. “Look, you’re going to have to accept the fact that you’ll be a Jeon within a matter of weeks—and at least a whole year. It just doesn’t add up when you go around telling people that you can’t afford something.”

“Thank you,” Jimin says graciously. “But I’m still a Park and will always be a Park. Besides, agreeing to your scheme doesn’t mean I’ll play along. I’m only going to spend what’s rightfully mine—and on practical things too. Not stuff like this.”

Shaking his head, Jeongguk silently signs the paperwork without choosing to say anything. It’s as if he couldn’t understand a word of what Jimin was rattling about and didn’t want to find out either.

Ten minutes later they’re out on the curb again, heading for his Mercedes that pulls up into view.

“I’ll just take an Uber,” Jimin says by the doorway. “You’re probably busy.”

“I’ll drive you home. Get in the car,” he insists, holding the door open for him.

Jimin heaves out a sigh. It’s been a hell of an afternoon. If he spends one more minute with Jeongguk, he’ll really contemplate admitting himself into that asylum he thought of earlier. What he needs is to have the rest of the day to himself. Jeongguk driving him home isn’t going to help. “I can get home just fine, Jeongguk. I’m not sixteen.”

“Yeah, as if being eight years older proves your ability to take care of yourself,” Jeongguk scoffs. “I’m not kidding. Get in.”

“Make me,” he counters.

Jeongguk purses his lips. “I’m really going to shove you inside if you don’t get in the damn car.”

“You wouldn’t dare.”


He could’ve easily obliged and end the discussion but riling Jeongguk’s nerves up like this turned into a nice pasttime.

So Jimin crosses his arms and flashes him an crescent-eyed smile. “Nuh uh. I’m just going to stand here and piss you off.”
“Park Jimin, don’t tempt me,” Jeongguk whispers, leaning forward. The dangerous glimmer is prominent in his hazel eyes.

Jimin gulps and uneasily glances away, eventually deciding to succumb to his command and just climb in when Jeongguk swiftly grabs at his shoulder, pulling him by the nape against his body and effortlessly anchoring his mouth onto his.

There’s fireworks.

Or—the flame that was flickering inside him erupts and sweeps across his skin like a blazing wildfire. It thoroughly stuns him into oblivion, forcing his mind to swallow out the noisy surroundings and focus on his accelerating heartbeat that pounds his ears.

He’s incomprehensible until Jeongguk’s warm, supple lips restlessly roam across his. He tilts his jaw, thumbing at Jimin’s cheekbone as they deepen the kiss. The tip of his tongue coaxes Jimin to part his lips and let him tease his way into his mouth.

As soon as his tongue slips in, Jimin responds by wrapping his arms over his neck and grinding their hips together. Jeongguk’s hands snake around Jimin’s waist and matches his every move.

He expected this at one point. Just not now. And just not the crazy, rejuvenating feeling of it all.

Jimin himself wasn’t particularly shy, nor was he experienced enough to be aggressive in this ordeal. It surprises him when Jeongguk’s restraint starts to limit from the way his fingertips painfully dig into Jimin’s hips, or the way his breathy moans transition into short, raspy growls as they continuously change angles.

By the time Jeongguk pins him against the doorframe for all he’s worth, their lips are swollen and he releases Jimin’s limp arms and abruptly yanks away from him.

What the fuck.

Even with the broad daylight showering over them, the sensual haze darkens his hooded eyes and he pants, the back of his hand pressed against his parted mouth in attempt to control himself.

“Oh my god,” Jimin fights for breath, jaw slack and eyes dilating in astonishment. His glasses which he hadn’t bothered to take off beforehand remain foggy. He makes no move to even wipe them.

“What—what was that for? You...you kissed me.”

“I did,” Jeongguk curtly admits, voice free of whatever emotions he portrayed a minute ago. His hazel eyes lighten back to normal, refusing to waver anymore.

He straightens and says, “There’s a lot of paparazzi and tabloids in the area. I heard a few cameras clicking and had to take action. If we’re going to convince my dad—and the rest of the Seoul—about us, I figured this would do the trick.”

Okay, ouch.

That stings more than it should’ve. Shivers run down his spine like a bucket of ice cold water.

Repressing his disappointment, Jimin ends up snapping. “How the hell did they find us?”

It’s just a business arrangement. It’s just a fucking deal. No strings attached. No strings attached.

Publicly displaying their affection was a term in their contract, and he agreed to it no matter the
protests. He has no right to get upset just because the kiss happened to leave him flustered, hot, and bothered.

“I guess they found out when I called Swarovski about browsing the rings with my fiance last week,” Jeongguk shrugs nonchalantly, any signs of his frustration having disappeared. “Jung and his staff know how to manipulate the public unlike private jewelers who’d spread relentless rumors. They’re not very good at being discreet. Besides, gossip runs like wildfire—fucking crazy.”

A publicity stunt. That’s all it meant to him.

“Try warning me next time so I don’t kick your balls out of surprise,” Jimin grits out.

The corner of his lips tip upwards. “You didn’t look like you were going to pull away anytime soon.”

“You are such a dick.” He whirls around.

Without another word, Jimin yanks open the door, slides in, and slams it shut. He angrily tugs at his seatbelt as Jeongguk seats himself at the front, providing his driver with Jimin’s address and asking him to floor it.

Jeongguk further directs the driver through the slummy neighborhood and exits the car before it even screeches to a complete halt. He bangs the car door close without any acknowledgement and doesn’t bother to wait till Jeongguk’s out of sight.

Instead, he marches up his porch and bolts the front door behind him, back slumping against the blinds in exhaustion once he’s safe inside.

One year—more like one eternity.

Chapter End Notes

no hate but i suck at kiss scenes lmao how will i survive
what do you think so far? complicated perhaps? btw, the drama 'homespun tale' is fake.
lol i had to make it up. i did reference real actors though, one of them being a btob member.

talk to me on tumblr and twitter. ( ^◇^ )
get-up-and-go

Chapter Summary

despite the charms and looks of a prince, jeon jeongguk is and will forever be nothing but a villain whose interests lie in tricking princesses and paupers alike.

Chapter Notes

hello my lovelies! today's update is a little late since i cleared my schedule beforehand. which is stupid because it's filled up again. (╯︵╰)
please visit the padlet for this fic!!
it's an important compilation that you won't be needing til the next chapter, but i've included a set of photos and references for chapters 1-5 in case you need some visualization. i recommend to visit it with every update as i will frequently add new things to it. if you don't feel like it though, that's also okay since i'll end up linking things within the fic too.
btw: this chapter is sort of a filler. i know we're all anticipating kookmin's big day but there's some things we need to verify first before JK can make out with the groom. (╯︵╰)
as always, thank you for the feedback! i read everyone's comments and will get back to you asap if i haven't already. ❤

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Hello, Park-ssi! My name is Lim Sejun and I’ll be your personal assistant and temporary wedding planner from now on. It’s a pleasure to finally meet you and I look forward to working with you! How are you doing today?”

Jimin blinks the remnants of sleep away before taking a step back, wondering whether the kid wearing a neon yellow jumper and white washed jeans standing in front of him is all part of some hazy dream or something. The brightness of the outfit hurts his eyes so much he decides it’s more like a nightmare featuring serial killer Minions instead.

He finally concentrates on the platinum blond hair the kid is sporting when his impressively tall frame blocks out the blinding afternoon sun. The sleep deprivation is finally taking a toll on him because Jimin ends up scowling at his pearly-white grin without meaning to.

“Sorry.” He runs a hand down his face and gives him a sleepy, apologetic smile. “I’m uh—I finished an eight-hour shift last night and I just woke up. I’m running a little low on the sleep so I didn’t catch what you said right there.”

The kid's obnoxiously handsome face—like that of a Ken doll’s—twists in concern. “Oh no, that’s not good. You need eight hours of sleep every day, considering your wedding is only two weeks away. You also need to improve your diet and workout routine as well. But don’t worry, that’s what I’m here for! I’ll be making sure you’re eating properly and staying fit before you walk down the
aisle on your big day. There’s a lot of work to be done, Park-ssi.”

Suddenly his whole introduction which Jimin had tuned out earlier sinks in and realization hits him like a brick in the face.

_Shit._

Cutting him off with a raise of his finger, Jimin slips his flip phone out of his sweat’s pocket and quickly dials a number. As it rings, he peeks over the guy’s shoulder to find a suspicious black Lincoln parked by his driveway. There’s a tall buff man dressed in a suit leaning against the trunk, bluetooth tucked in his ear like yesterday.

The line finally picks up. “What do you want, Jimin?”

“Jeon, what the fuck is this Lim Sunshine kid doing here at my door?” He demands despite the thrill running down his spine from the husky way Jeongguk had lazily said his name.

“Ah, It’s Lim Sejun,” the guy says encouragingly.

Jeongguk snickers. “Didn’t he introduce himself, babe? He’s your personal assistant now. And wedding planner until the one I originally hired clears their schedule this week.”

Jimin sneaks a look past Sejun, fist clenching at the response but smiling at the blond nonetheless. After all, it isn’t his fault Jeongguk found it hilarious to inflict this whole unnecessary twist on the two of them.

“But _baby_, last time I checked I’m doing wonderful on my own. I don’t need an assistant,” he whines into the phone and tries to ignore Lim’s excitement slowly transitioning to disappointment.

“You _do_ need one,” Jeongguk retorts. “You’ll be tossed into unknown territory soon with little time to teach yourself how to get around. Lim will help you find your way and teach you the basics of what you’ll be stepping into. He’s a highly recommended coordinator, alright? Trust him and make the best of his skills.”

“Look, I feel pretty rude discussing this right in front of him—and on the phone, too. I’ve been managing fine before you, Jeon. So I’m sure I can manage being your spouse just the same.”

A pregnant pause fills the other side of the line. As soon as Jimin lifts his phone to check if the call had accidentally been disconnected, Jeongguk’s final words are, “Well, okay. If you don’t want his help, you can fire him. Your assistant, your choice. Not mine.”

And then he hangs up.

Jimin winces at the declining beep, tosses his phone somewhere near the couch, and acknowledges Lim Sejun a second time.

He’s watching him with dark large eyes wide with anxious hope which makes it even difficult to say a word against the decision. The thought of firing him—or more like kicking an overgrown puppy—makes him queasy.

He’s awfully young too. Probably a couple of years younger than Jimin judging from his enthusiastic gaze and boyish features. There’s desperation in the way he nervously stares at him—earnest and ready to give the help that Jimin isn’t fond of welcoming.

Jeongguk must have chosen him specifically to put him in an inescapable twist, because the more
Jimin wants to send Sejun back home, the more guilty he feels.

*Damn you, Jeon.*

He gives him a timid smile. “Hi.”

Sejun beams. “Hello. So, will you have me, Park-ssi? I can make your life much easier and glamorous!”

Jimin bites his lip and nods towards the living room. “Yeah, come on in. Sorry about that. I wasn’t filled in beforehand.”

*Also because I can’t kick overgrown puppies.*

“So, Lim-ssi,” he resumes awkwardly. “How should I address you?”

Sejun lights up and extends an appreciative hand. “Oh, just call me by my first name, please.”

Jimin shakes his hand, finally relaxing into the touch as his smile widens to something more genuine. “Park Jimin. A pleasure to meet you.”

“The pleasure is all mine, sir. I’ve been dying to meet you! I’m so honored to be handpicked by Jeon Jeongguk himself as his fiance’s right hand. I think I almost cried when I received the email. Everyone is so curious about you!”

“Well, they’re going to be disappointed once they get to know me,” Jimin grimaces at the gush. “Trust me, there’s nothing special about this. I’m just an ordinary guy marrying another ord—I mean, *extraordinary* guy. A normal wedding. Simple marriage and no fuss.”

Sejun’s eyes widen. “No fuss? You’re kidding, right? How can you not fuss when everyone’s digging into the romantic drama of your love story? You two are smitten with each other! Just look at this.”

He quickly pulls out a tabloid from one of his many manila files and practically prances when handing the paper over.

Jimin scans the front page and suppresses a groan, palming his forehead at the ridiculous title plastered in the center.

*DINER CINDERELLA BEWITCHES JEON PRINCE!*

The article rambles on to detail the story of Jeongguk stepping into Vene’s in search of Jimin one night and went home disappointed, only to finally sit him down over breakfast and instantly fall heads over heels with him.

He’s not surprised. After all the scheming and convincing Jeongguk had done to achieve Jimin’s hand, nothing less would’ve been expected from the billionaire’s exaggerated storytelling. As phony as the article sounds, the way it was written is impressively convincing and could move anyone to tears.

*If only they knew.*

At the right is a magnified photo of his temporary engagement ring with a lot of tiny comments surrounding it. A larger shot of him and Jeongguk passionately making out against the door of his Mercedes outside Swarovski’s follows below. Everything had been taken from yesterday morning.
and despite majority of the pictures being low quality—especially the one where the two of them are pressed onto the edge of the car—there’s no mistaking Jeongguk.

Jimin on the other hand is thankfully concealed behind foggy glasses, Jeongguk’s mouth, and his beanie that happened to slide over his face at that moment. He had his back turned towards the camera with his bare arms thrown over Jeongguk’s neck but that’s the most they’d gotten out of him.

“Romantic, isn’t it?” Sejun cooes, effectively snapping him out of his reverie.

He snorts. *Romantic* is nothing but a result of their talented acting—Jeongguk’s talented acting, to be exact.

*Since you definitely weren’t faking that kiss.*

Jimin’s cheeks flare and he immediately crumples the tabloid and tosses it onto the worn coffee table. “Is something wrong, Park-ssi?” Sejun’s brows furrow at his flushed face.

“Nothing,” he forces a smile while swallowing his anger. “I’m just annoyed by all these paps snooping around in someone else’s business. I especially don’t appreciate their interest in my personal affairs.”

The blond frowns. “I totally get you. In fact, it’s a part of my job to keep you in the low and make sure they don’t come near you. I don’t want you bothered by them more than you currently are. The guy in the suit out there is your chauffeur and bodyguard, Jaebum. He threatened the media lurking by the neighborhood earlier this morning.”

Jimin’s stomach twists uncomfortably. “Was the paparazzi outside?”

“Of course. Your sudden engagement with Jeon Jeongguk has been spreading like wildfire since last night. Not to mention the whirlwind of questions that’s coming along with it. You gotta open your eyes, Park-ssi. It won’t be long till the reporters track you down and get every little detail about and from you.”

“That doesn’t sound fun,” he gulps.

Sejun shakes his head. “Not a pleasant sight, yes. It’s great when the public helps you out on a cause but majority of the time they’re just looking for dirt against you.”

*Oh, I’ve got plenty of dirt. All six feet of it packed beneath my dad’s tombstone.*

Jimin doesn’t want to be hypocritical and say he’s proud of his past—there are parts he’s more ashamed of than others. Although being a dug-up sounds everything but reassuring, he’s not going to deny his faulty background by combining it with lies, much less encourage it.

A part of his brain had continuously warned of the consequences he’d get into when reviewing the contract—public attention being a crucial part. The reality of it finally sinks in and he sighs at the enormous risk he signed himself up for.

“Well, it’s great that you’re here to help.” Jimin forces a smile at an oblivious Sejun. “Jeongguk praised your skills greatly. I take it you know every nook and cranny of this whole ordeal.”

“Oh, yes. I’ve been raised in a family of high profile. Not sure if you know but my father Lim Donwoon was the former mayor of Seoul while my mother was crowned the first Miss Anyang in the seventies. My older brother is abroad as an ambassador and my sister’s married to a politician
with her own beauty line.”

“And what about you?”

“Me?” Sejun smiles sheepishly. “Since I’m the baby, I’m just an undergrad student with a bachelors in Modern Culture and Media and pursuing my masters in Political Science. I’m at the top of the class with all honors as well.”

Jimin gapes. “Then what the hell are you doing here?”

He shrugs as if he’s answered this a thousand times. “I wanted some insight on the situation from the sidelines instead of being the spotlight, you know? The thesis for my masters degree is on the modern influence of housewives—er, husbands—the political role and power of a socialite’s spouse. My goal is to point out how an all-important man’s spouse has greater influence than the man himself. And you’re a great case considering your humble background and opposite lifestyle.”

Jimin can’t help but wince at the bluntness of Sejun’s thesis and explanation although he does appreciate the honesty. Despite his social ranking, the boy is terribly nice and considerate and doesn’t look like one who’d flaunt their status.

“So I’m basically your research paper,” he teases. “Exhibit A: Park Jimin.”

Sejun grins at that. “Jeon. Exhibit A: Jeon Jimin.”


A sudden urge to run for the hills hits him but he forces himself to keep his ground. Jimin may be drowning in misfortune and poverty but he’s not a coward.

“Jeon Jimin.” He tastes the name for the first time, nodding to himself. “Right. But call me Jimin or hyung, please. I’m not going to lie—Jeongguk’s world frightens me. I have no idea what I’ll be handling and they have no idea who they’re welcoming. I’m going to need a shit ton of help.”

The twinkle in Sejun’s eyes tell him otherwise.

“I’ll give you that shit ton of help, hyung,” he promises, reaching for Jimin’s hand and squeezing it reassuringly. “We’ll start today. Get ready to meet your new wardrobe in twenty minutes.”

By the time Sejun and his neon sweater leaves him alone, it’s well past evening and Jimin is slumped against a corner of his couch. He’s so exhausted he knows he won’t be able to make it to his night shift even if he tries, which he doesn’t.

It’s a good thing, too. Jinwoo had called earlier on his way back home to inform him of Jongdae covering his hours as extra work. Jimin has no idea how Jinwoo had arranged backup in such little time, but he doesn’t forget to sob his gratitude out and promise his manager to bear his children if science ever makes it possible. Jinwoo just snorted and told him to enjoy the rest of the day off.

If only.

He barely got a blink of sleep since morning thanks to Sejun forcing him to stay awake till the bedtime he assigned him.

“That way you’ll be tired enough to hit the bed at a decent hour,” he explained as he handed him some more nasty herbal tea to keep him functioning.
Lim Sejun is more powerful than the force of gravity. Within an hour he'd planned and carried out an outing which consisted of lunch, a spa date, a wardrobe renovation, a silent acknowledgement from Jaebum the bodyguard, and provided Jimin with a brand new Macbook Pro and top of the line iPhone which was synced in with all the contacts he’d need, as well as a brief introduction to his new diet and workout regimen, an orderly schedule, and a finance system made up of several credit cards and a bank card. The final cherry on the top was a little planner marked with all the dates related to the wedding prep. Jimin’s brain has been overloaded with useless information since then.

Sejun also wasn’t kidding when he told him to prepare for his new wardrobe in twenty minutes—it arrived on the spot and soon whatever furniture he had in the living room was replaced with a multitude of outfits, shoes, and accessories handpicked by Sooyeon, the personal shopper whom Jimin had gotten to know during their lunch date.

Sooyeon’s choices were always on point. She mixed specific items that flattered Jimin's assets the best. At first he had been reluctant when she started throwing things together but succumbed to her excellent suggestions not long after. Sooyeon created a style suitable for him—a signature that screamed out both elegance and simplicity with a touch of street fashion. Both Sejun and her would giggle at Jimin modeling each ensemble like a group of schoolgirls.

Once the wardrobe business was set aside, the style team dragged him away as the last clothing rack was rolled to his guest room.

His stylist, Hyemin, must’ve been another choice of Jeongguk’s judging from her professionalism. Jimin is sure he’s seen her somewhere—probably on a billboard somewhere in Seoul—but couldn't put a finger to it since her beauty militants wheeled him on a chair and slapped a face mask on. They closed his eyes shut with cucumber slices throughout the whole makeover and wouldn’t allow him to watch the process they were determined to put him through.

A few hours of hair conditioning, styling, nail and skin treatments and a frightening Brazilian wax left Jimin feeling like a very naked (it’s the Brazilian, after all) and very foreign alien.

The first thing he noticed when they removed the cucumbers were the clumps of black hair strewn across the floor. He had opened his mouth to yell but caught a hold of himself in the mirror and admitted the layered bangs and curly tufts added more volume to his thick hair, making the choice of handing himself over to the experts worth it.

Jemin likes to think he’s fairly good looking—maybe not drop dead gorgeous but tolerable enough. He was blessed with porcelain skin, naturally plump lips, a fair complexion and monolids that actually compliment instead of ruin him. He knows he could've made an effort to look better with the right pampering but hadn’t had the time nor money for a makeover and trim last year.

From what he’s researched, Jeongguk is used to beautiful people surrounding his life. The last thing he’d want is to drag around a shabby husband who’d add more humiliation to his load. As much as Jimin would’ve liked to embarrassed him by acting like the complete opposite of his ideal type, he decides not to. There’s a wide range of clothes fully paid and waiting for him back upstairs, and it’d be unfair to both the prep team and the needy if he were to neglect them. It’s unethical no matter how he views it.

Besides, he has to face Sangguk at one point and doesn’t want to get on the wrong foot in their new relationship as father and son-in-law. There must’ve been a damn good reason why he chose Jimin as his son’s spouse and not the plenty of other socialites in the sea.

*God, he’ll see right through me once we meet him tomorrow.*
Jimin had no choice but to give up his Saturday morning shift in order to attend the brunch with Jeongguk. He’s been anticipating Sangguk ever since his recent trip to Yokohama but is equally terrified at the thought of Sangguk figuring out their scheme and then hating him for it. He’s not even sure if he can be convincing enough without sweating buckets at the breakfast table as he’s introduced to the rest of the Jeons.

First things first. Get to the point and ask Sangguk why he wants me to marry Jeongguk and then help him feel better about it afterwards.

Jimin repeats the mantra every time he remembers the plans for tomorrow but the effect of all the work the prep team had showered him in feels greatly overwhelming. He's barely able to form complete sentences in his head as he pads over to the kitchen where his fridge has been filled with fancy groceries he’s never bought in his life. Two employees from a retail supermarket had come over to restock his fridge under Sejun’s directions.

Jimin wearily pours a fruit cup into a bowl and snacks on it on-top of the kitchen island when the doorbell rings for the fifth time this day.

“What do they want now?” he mutters, initially deciding to ignore it but eventually sliding off as the rings increase. “Just a minute for God’s sake, please.”

Peeking under the blinds first—Sejun’s advice in case it’s a paparazzi waiting to pounce—and recognizing the dark, familiar outline of Jeongguk’s tall frame impatiently tapping his foot on the porch is enough for Jimin to grudgingly open the door.

Once he does, though, he kind of wants to slam it back on his face.

“What took you so long?” Jeongguk snaps. He steps in without preliminaries and glares past Jimin. “That door needs reinforcement and additional locks,” he adds. “I could’ve tore it down with my bare hands.”

“I’m surprised you didn’t,” Jimin retorts, closing said door.

Jeongguk’s irritance softens. “It’s for your own safety, Jimin.”

“Yeah, whatever. I’m too tired to argue. Your prep team is a nightmare, by the way.” He rubs his face with both hands. “If you’re here to nag at me, then you can see yourself out. Goodbye and good night.”

Instead of leaving, Jeongguk’s brow furrows as his eyes sweep over Jimin from head to toe. “Is this what I get from hiring a team of makeup artists and fashion critics? You look worse than before.”

In his defense, Jimin had thrown on a thin hoodie from his old wardrobe and a pair of unflattering pajamas. His carefully styled bangs from earlier had ruffled underneath his hood, his eyes puffy from exhaustion and lips chapped.

He glares nonetheless. “Look, I didn’t dress for company. I was about to go to sleep. Come back tomorrow for your money’s worth.”

Jimin opens the door again and directs him outside, but unfortunately Jeongguk turns around, closes the door with a kick of his polished shoe and nods at the humble abode in acknowledgement.

Teeth clenched, he watches Jeongguk study the living room with keen eyes and unbearable silence. He drinks in the sight of the messy boxes, the abandoned bowl of fruit by the sleek fridge, the little portraits hung up on the wall.
His quiet inspection only irritates Jimin further. He expects the billionaire to blurt something stuck-up, like how the house looks like a dumpster or the fireplace he’s never touched is shabby anyway and needs a renovation.

To his surprise, Jeongguk gives him half a smile. “It’s a cute place. We’ll hire a housekeeper to look after it once you move out.”

Jimin ignores him and walks over to the kitchen, picking up the bowl to resume his snack. “It’s fine. I plan to clean it once a week anyway,” he says through a mouthful of fruit and rolls his eyes when Jeongguk makes himself comfortable on a dining chair.

Of course the arrogant ass wouldn’t wait for an invitation. I bet he could make a chair appear from thin air if he wanted to.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Jeongguk says after seating himself. “I’m not letting you clean while we’re married. Besides, you won’t have time from the all the responsibilities you’ll have to carry out.”

“Right, as if mingling with your scatterbrained socialite friends all day long isn’t ridiculous enough.”

His large eyes narrow. “I know it wasn’t specifically listed in the contract but it’s obviously part of the role, Jimin. It’ll be hard readjusting—I’m well aware. I promise to lighten your load but you need to take it seriously. I don’t want you humiliating my family name.”

“You’re pissing me off,” Jimin says flatly. “Get out.”

“Not until you sign the revised contract that I brought along,” Jeongguk shoots him a small smile. “Plus, we need to think of some crap to feed Dad tomorrow.”

He snatches the manila file from him and leafs through the pages. “Say whatever you want. I don’t care. You’ve done a pretty good job convincing with the media with all that fairytale nonsense. I wouldn’t want to ruin it by saying the prince I kissed turned into a frog.”

Jeongguk’s chuckle causes Jimin to look up at him in surprise. “Oh yeah? Is it because kissing the frog felt so right you wanted to hate it?”

His cheeks start to burn. “Sorry, Your Highness, but your kisses aren’t that great. I’ve had and will have better.”

That’s when Jeongguk’s snicker cuts short and the amused expression on his face darkens. “You’re prohibited from kissing anyone else, Jimin. Ever.”

“Ever?” Jimin blinks innocently, lips curled into a smirk.

“While we’re married, that is,” he quickly corrects himself. “Understand?”

“Don’t see why you’d care. It’s not like you plan to keep your legs crossed with other people.”

“It’s a marriage of convenience,” Jeongguk retorts, crossing his arms. “And I’ve got frustration to release.”

“What, and I don’t?” Jimin sneers. “Newsflash, Jeon, but you’re not the only one who wants to have a good time. This isn’t the caveman era.”

He draws out a low breath, unclenching the fist that was tucked away in his pocket earlier. “If you want to have a good time, then you come to me. Simple as that.”
The world stills for a second. *What the fuck.*

“Huh?” Jimin blinks owlishly, face flushed from the statement.

Jeongguk huffs impatiently. “As your husband, it’s my job to take care of your needs and satisfy you or whatever. Those are one of my many responsibilities.”

He says it so monotonously Jimin could have mistaken him for reading off a page of terms and conditions.

Frankly, this only fuels his anger. “So if my foot’s itchy, then I’ll ask you to scratch it for me.”

“Take it or leave it,” Jeongguk snaps and gets up from the chair.

Testing his patience has never been this entertaining, so Jimin decides to press it. “I’m giving you ten seconds to get the fuck out, Jeon.”

Jeongguk simply leans towards the counter, hazel eyes scrutinizing his face from under his long lashes. “I hate countdowns.”

He glares. “And I hate insensitive dicks like you.”

“Admitting your sexual desires isn’t insensitive, Jimin.” Jeongguk’s voice drops to a softer—seductive, even—tone. It sounds like molten honey off his tongue as he says, “It’s a part of life and is perfectly natural. But I take it you’ve never gone wild before.”

Very carefully, as if his touch could burn, he lifts Jimin’s chin up with a finger before cupping his face in one large hand. Jimin struggles to fight the fire spreading within him and finds himself melting under Jeongguk’s smoldering gaze.

Swallowing, he breaks away and briefly closes his eyes to forget what just happened. “Not everyone has it easy as you do, Guk. The whole country knows who you screw every night and that’s great. But there are some people out there working so hard that seeking their carnal desires are the last thing they wish. If it makes you feel better, I promise to remember you when I’m terribly horny and desperate enough to bone anything offered. After all, it’s just a mindless fuck, right?”

Jeongguk’s lips press into a thin, angry line as he snatches the contract off the counter and turns to the page where Jimin had mindlessly scrawled his signature on.

Jemin can no longer contain his annoyance. “As for the background—just stick to the papers. They’re doing a better job at convincing than I ever could.” He tosses him the article that Sejun had given him this morning. “Now get out.”

Jeongguk barely spares a glance at the magazine but accepts it anyway. He looks furious and even a little...saddened.

“Jemin—”

“Get out.”

Without another word, Jeongguk whirls around and shows himself out, slamming the door shut on his way.

Body chilling from the loud bang, Jimin reminds himself that despite the charms and looks of a prince, Jeon Jeongguk is and will forever be nothing but a villain whose interests lie in tricking
princesses and paupers alike. He’s better off without him.

Kudos to him—he’s already signed a year of his life over to him as his husband.

Chapter End Notes

- lim sejun, member of victon and full time park jimin enthusiast. he's so cute and wow so handsome
- park hyemin, also known as PONY MAKEUP, is a korean MUA with her own makeup line, youtube channel, and collaborations notorious throughout the world. she's my source of life and is drop dead gorgeous man (σ T ω Tσ )

it's a good thing to keep the tags in mind—but remember, there are more people and potential couples yet to be introduced, so the tags and implied references are distributed to not only kookmin, but to them as well.
does that mean JK and JM will be spared from the angst? nah man they need their dose of petty drama too. ▲(⅔)▼
in the next chapter we will meet the jeons, so stay tuned and see you till then!! (´ ε `)♡

find me on tumblr and twitter.
jeonation

Chapter Summary

it’s this moment, in the midst of their entwined hands, sunny hallway, and baby blue walls, that he decides everything is going to be okay. jeongguk and him are going to be okay.

Chapter Notes

aaaand we're back! (see what i did with the chapter's title hehehe) anyways.

i haven't added anything new in the padlet for this chapter and instead, linked everything in the fic. i'll probably add 'em later for keepsakes.

as always, THANK YOU so much for the feedback, support, love, and messages on tumblr about this fic! i've gotten busier and am always trying to update this weekly, so i apologize if i happen to skip a week.

btw, get ready for a little bump in the road. today we're meeting the jeons as well as a spicy twist. (’へ’) enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You’re in some deep shit, Park.”

Holding his breath, Jimin opens his eyes and stares at his reflection for the nth time this morning.

To his disappointment, Saturday does eventually come around and he’s just slipped into his outfit for the brunch with the Jeons. Choosing the ensemble has never been easier thanks to Sejun and Sooyeon picking out majority of the items for him.

Because Sangguk’s seen him during his worst on many occasions, Jimin can’t figure out whether to dress casually or formally in order to prove his worth as Jeongguk’s fiance. In the end, he listens to Sooyeon’s advice and decides to go sleek yet chic—well, somewhat.

A black long-sleeved tunic with an unbuttoned V-neck cinches at his waist with the help of a belt from Chanel. Paired with his shirt are slim-fitting slacks that accentuate whatever curves he’s been working on since the day his assistant signed him up for a gym membership.

Hyemin takes over shortly, brushing his bangs to the side, revealing a good portion of his angled brows and forehead before applying the tinted moisturizer. She slips a silverbar necklace over his head, swipes a cherry lip balm onto his plush lips, and hands him some shades that suspiciously look like Gucci’s.

As soon as Jimin tucks them into his collar, Hyemin turns around from the counter and gives him a wary look. “I’d wear those if I were you. You’ll need them where you’re going.”
He gulps.

Checking himself out in the full-length mirror doesn’t make him feel any better. Standing before him is a a man sculpted to perfection—someone he finds uncomfortable because it isn’t him at all.

Jimin picks up the diamond ring Jeongguk gifted him and includes his own thick gothic ring on his index and an open skull duded one for his thumb. He ignores the leather Balenciaga backpack Sooyeon chose for the outfit and opts for his trusty drawstring sack instead, knowing fully well Jeongguk—or anyone petty for that matter—would nag at the replacement. Satisfied, he grabs a denim jacket and snapback from his old wardrobe and slips into his high tops, the one Sooyeon specifically instructed him to discard. Pity there’s no way he’ll wear the obnoxiously shiny pair of Oxfords lying at the foot of his bed, though.

Jeongguk’s already arrived, looking crisp in an open-collared button down tucked in his skinnies and looped with a similar belt. His rolled up sleeves cling to his muscular arms and a pair of sunglasses are hooked onto a side of his collar. He looks breathtakingly enticing from merely conversing with Jaebum near the kitchen, but Jimin knows better than to grow weak on his knees. Still, there’s no guarantee he’ll make it alive without a little slow burn.

The two men fall silent at his arrival and Jaebum announces he’ll be in the garage, leaving Jeongguk alone by the countertop.

“You know, I’ve never met your driver yet,” Jimin remarks. “Where is he?”

“He dropped me off here and is on his way to Dad’s,” he murmurs distractedly, pacing around him with a scrutinizing gaze.

The endless circling is beginning to test Jimin’s patience. He’s still wary from last night’s conversation, and Jeongguk’s restlessness around him isn’t helping. In fact, he anticipates the opportunity to flip his fiance off if he demands him to go back and change.

Eventually his tolerance snaps. “What is it?”

“I’m pretty sure Sooyeon knew better than to let you be seen with these hideous shoes and rings,” Jeongguk replies, forefinger poking out to trace along the back of Jimin’s hand. His stoic expression gives nothing away, but his fingertips say otherwise when they tiptoe across Jimin’s arm, warmth seeping into the thin sleeve and invading his skin. A rush of vertigo washes over him, and he tries to fight off the shiver running down his spine. Jimin shakes his head, determined to prevent Jeongguk’s sweetly brief intimacies from disarming him.

He shuffles back and the contact dissipates; just like that. “It’s mine. I chose it. Since I didn’t have a say in my wardrobe, I figured I’ll at least dress the way I want. And you can’t stop me.”

Jimin glances up at him, eyes crinkled stubbornly and brows drawn together in a frown as he challenges his gaze, but is stunned at Jeongguk’s chuckle.

“Sure, I won’t.” He grins and dips Jimin’s cap above his scowl before tugging his arm and steering him out the door.

Still faltered from his reaction, Jimin is bound speechless as they settle in the backseat of the limo on the road to the Sangguk’s family house. He absentmindedly watches Jeongguk press a button on his armest, summoning a panel to separate them from the front and granting them some privacy.
Eventually Jeongguk says, “You look pretty.”

“Thanks,” Jimin sounds constrained, flustered from the unfamiliar compliment. “You’re pretty too.”

All it takes is Jeongguk’s amused smirk for him to realize his mistake and recoil in embarrassment. “I mean, you look great but you get that from everyone so forget what I said.”

His thigh nudges Jimin’s for a fleeting second. “Why would I? For one, it’s a compliment coming from my fiance—something I haven’t experienced considering I’ve never been engaged before. And two, I’m quite honored just to hear you admit it.”

“Well, if you need any more victory,” Jimin mutters, yanking his cap over his face and sagging into the seat. “Feel free to watch me crumble in front of your father. He’ll figure everything out in one look.”

“Hey, it’s not a big deal.” Jeongguk picks up his limp hand and laces their fingers together. He lifts Jimin’s jaw up with his other hand and gently coaxes him to look into his wide, gold-flecked eyes.

“Listen to me. Dad doesn’t expect us to smitten, okay? He’s fully aware of our situation, and he knew the two of us wouldn’t have gone without putting up a fight. He understands that I’ve never met you before and therefore can’t be heads over heels in such a short amount of time. Dad isn’t going to look for pet names and kisses, but he will sniff out our scheme if we aren’t genuine enough. The only way to convince him is to at least try acting attracted to each other, yeah?”

“But we’re not—” Jimin whispers, eyes lowering to Jeongguk’s parted lips which are uncomfortably near his. “Attracted. To each other.”

A breathy laughs slips out of him. “I would’ve said that earlier this week, but now? Now I don’t know anymore.”

Jimin frowns. “If this is your way of buttering me up to another make out session, then you can go to hell. There’s no way I’ll perform a kissing scene in front of your dad; he’ll find out the truth the minute I punch you into oblivion.”

Jeongguk bites his lip, the pad of his thumb rubbing lazy circles into Jimin’s palm as his gaze focuses on his mouth. “Then don’t punch me,” he murmurs. “Let me kiss you. Let me take over while you sit back and enjoy the ride.”

Despite it being the words of the devil, a shot of wanton runs through him anyway.

Jimin briefly closes his eyes. “I don’t kiss random guys.”

“I’m not some random guy—I’m your husband.”

“Future husband and in name only,” his eyes snap open. “That’s even worse.”

Jeongguk sighs and snakes an arm around his waist, efficiently tugging him nearer. “Yeah, okay. Just pretend that I’m someone you are attracted to. Someone you’d spend every moment with. Someone sweet.” He leans closer, his forehead brushing the bridge of Jimin’s nose. “Someone who slowly drops in and calls you beautiful. Someone who lures you into an intimate moment. Someone you want to get to know. Someone you dream of kissing—want their lips all over you and make you breathless in one go.”

The moment is definitely hypnotic because the next thing Jimin knows, his eyes are fluttered close again and Jeongguk’s lips graze the tip of his own.
“Someone who yearns to hold you.”

He melts further into Jeongguk’s arms as they secure his hips, pulling him up to straddle his thighs.

“Someone who works for every kiss you return.”

Jeongguk tests the waters by carefully poking his tongue against Jimin’s parted lips, teasing him in attempt to ignite the spark that lit a few days ago. Jimin’s fingers slide over Jeongguk’s nape and twists through his silky hair.

Jeongguk’s grip is firm and gentle but inexorable. He takes a shallow breath and pushes Jimin’s cap off, threading his hands into the dark locks spilling out of his snapback as their mouths crash together.

The kiss blends into shared gasps and raspy moans in no time. Jimin tentatively cups Jeongguk’s cheeks, flaming at the way Jeongguk sucks on his lower lip till he parts his lip with a growl. He feels his tongue sliding inside and dragging across the roof of his mouth, tasting the remnants of his morning latte.

“Who’s got your head in the clouds,” he pants when they break away for a whiff of air. “Who makes you melt into a puddle on the spot, desirous and needy and—” Jimin swiftly leans down and impatiently kisses the words out of him, bringing a thumb to brush across his bottom lip.

He shivers at Jeongguk’s demanding response, his larger hand roaming down his back and stopping short at his thighs where his fingers begin kneading lower and palming his ass. Tormented by the sudden heat pooling in his stomach, Jimin whines when Jeongguk nips his neck. He tips his head up to give him easier access to his throat, hips rolling underneath his tense lap.

“Well, this certainly answers most of my questions.”

An amused voice slices through the thick atmosphere and snaps Jimin out of his lusty reverie. He scrambles away from an oblivious Jeongguk at the sound of a car door creaking, revealing an audience of four people—Sangguk and his children watching them wide-eyed.

Jimin winces as the eldest son, Junghyun, shrieks and slaps a hand over the younger Jeon’s face. “Oh my god—close your eyes, Hannie!”

“I can’t believe you dared to bring him here, Guk,” Junghyun then hisses at his brother, whose hands are still shamelessly resting at Jimin’s rump.

Petrified, he peeks a glance down at Jeongguk to find him smiling up at him goodnaturedly, eyes crinkled in delight and flushed lips stretched in an ear-splitting grin. Jimin scrambles off his lap almost immediately and takes refuge in a corner of the backseat, shielding himself from the rest of the Jeons.

“Of course I brought him here, hyung,” Jeongguk says and takes Jimin’s wrist. “He’s your future brother-in-law. What better time is there for you to get to know him besides today?”

*Never, maybe.*

“But Guk, we already know him,” says Junghwa, the second eldest—only a year younger than Junghyun. Her dark eyes quietly study Jimin. “We go way back in high school.”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes and slides out of the car, not forgetting to hold the door open for Jimin as well. “The same school sure, but I doubt you ever tried befriending anyone who wasn’t a rich kid,
noona. So you technically don’t know him.”

“My life would’ve been simpler if they did,” Sangguk mutters under his breath before stepping up to Jimin and extending a friendly hand. “Hello, Jimin.” He beams. “Missed me?”

His anxiousness instantly vanishes when the old man’s hazel eyes fondly glitter.

This is Jeon Sangguk, after all. Through their years of friendship, he’s gotten to know that Jimin would make up for his absence by attending night classes after his day shifts were over. He’d work as a school librarian and cashier at a bakery back then and not once did Sangguk belittle him for it.

His heart twists when he reminds himself of Jeongguk’s scheme that he has no choice but to support. Sangguk’s expression says otherwise—he looks rejuvenated and younger, as if stumbling across Jimin sucking off his second son’s face will bring a huge fortune to his health. In fact, he doesn’t seem to mind to their little make out session either. There’s a knowing smile on his lips.

“Oh, good indeed, Jimin. Especially with my son’s ring on your finger.”

Jimin instantly pales. Luckily, Jeongguk takes over by slinging an arm over his waist and bringing him to his side. “It took me days to convince him, being the tough case he is. I couldn’t let him get away.”

He sends him a boyish wink, leaving him flustered and incapable of explaining. “Yeah, well. Guk can do anything when he puts his mind to it. It was a lot to take in but I like a determined guy.”

Sangguk is pleased. “That’s wonderful news. You know I think of you as my own child, Jimin. I’m more than happy to welcome you to my family. In case you haven’t met them yet, this my eldest son, Junghyun. My daughter, Junghwa, and my baby, Jeonghan. Children, meet Park Jimin—a good old friend of mine and your brother’s fiance.”

“Hyung, get off me,” Jeonghan complains and pries his older brother’s hand off his face. “You don’t need to censor kissing scenes anymore. I’m fourteen for God’s sake.”

Jeongguk chuckles and clasps Jeonghan’s shoulder, easily tearing him away from Junghyun’s tightened grip. He ruffles his hair for a good measure and says, “It’s all good, kid. You should meet Jimin. You’ll like him.”

Jimin smiles at the young boy who gazes at him doe-eyed underneath his thick, dark fringe. He resembles a younger version of Jeongguk with similar eyes, a slimmer nose, and a delicate face. He’s lanky and a tad shorter than his sister but inherited many features from their father. His cherubic cheeks are nothing compared to his older brothers’ sharp, angled jaws. More importantly, he doesn’t possess the same shade of hazel eyes that Jeongguk has. Now that he thinks about it, none of his siblings do. Not even Sangguk himself.

“Nice to meet you, Jeonghan.” He stretches a hand for him to shake. “How’s music coming along? Any new compositions?”

A hint of amazement flickers across his stunned expression. “How’d you know I’m into music?”
“Your dad told me a lot about you,” Jimin nods. “So did Jeongguk. They said you’re talented with the piano. I’d love to hear you play sometime.”

The hand on his waist gives him a light squeeze and he looks up at Jeongguk watching him fondly. He technically fibbed the part about Jeongguk mentioning his brother—he’s never spoken of his personal life prior to their first encounter—but he isn’t complaining.

“I can play for you later if you want,” Jeonghan shyly offers. “By the way, you can call me Hannie. Everyone in the family does.”

“He’s not family,” Junghyun snaps.

“He will be in two weeks,” Jeongguk retorts. “So I expect you guys to be nice to him. Shouldn’t be too hard with all the fancy schooling Dad put us through. I just hope you’ve learned a thing or two from it.”

Junghyun’s scowl darkens in Jimin’s direction.

He expected running into possessive siblings sooner or later. The thought hasn’t dawned on him till he feels the eldest son’s glare burning a hole through him. Sure, they’ve never held a grudge against each other as students but it doesn’t necessarily label their relationship as friendly, either.

Jeon Junghyun was the creme de la creme of Busan Prep. His stark masculine beauty and mannerism, topped off with his wealth and social status ultimately made him to be the ideal guy girls fawned over and boys tried to imitate. He was intelligent, confident, and used his wits to earn his scholarship rather than his family’s money—something hard to believe back then. He was notorious for his positive personality, but once paired with his friends, the charm wore off to something nasty.

They often formed a squad and picked on students of lower backgrounds, unpopularity, and awkwardness. Jimin himself had almost been a victim if weren’t for him completely avoiding them during the first couple of years. He was doing a good job at keeping away until one of Junghyun’s bitchiest juniors, Eunbi, started spreading vulgar rumors about Jimin making up his absence with the illicit affairs he presumably shared with his female teachers ever since she spotted him tutoring a school jock in the library.

The situation wasn’t as bad as Jimin thought it’d be and he continued to ignore them, albeit provoked. He’d walk away the moment Eunbi and her league would mention the alleged truth behind his hard-earned grades. He’d pick his tray up and leave the cafeteria whenever the football team sneered at his bisexuality, even going as far as to use a few homophobic terms around him. None of it fazed him until Eunbi managed to get a hold of Jimin’s personal life and brought up the conversation of his mother’s abandonment at age five and his father’s alcoholism.

That’s when he decided to settle things once and for all.

He stole his classmates’ dictionaries and super glued photos of her under each definition of *bitch*, then handing one to the girl afterwards, resisting the urge to slam the hardbound book in her face.

“Feel free to take all of them off when you stop acting like one,” Jimin had said and left the room without another word, internally cursing himself for potentially risking his scholarship with such a low blow. Fortunately for him, his scholarship stayed in tact and despite Eunbi’s endless misbehavior, she at least stopped the teasing. Even if it did result in a lot of weird looks from the rest of the school.
And while Jimin and Junghyun kept their interaction at bay, the whole incident involving Eunbi and the threat of marrying his younger brother is enough to explain his hostility.

Jimin understands. He understands well enough, but that doesn’t mean he’ll let Junghyun get away with belittling him.

“We’ll try, Guk.” Junghwa promises softly, dark eyes still studying Jimin from afar. Unlike Junghyun, she was more reserved back then, opting to sit in her brother’s shadow than voicing herself. Frankly, everyone accepted the quiet composure thanks to Junghyun’s fatherly protection over her. He and Junghwa are the same age but never exchanged more than a word to each other in school.

“Now that we’ve got that settled, why don’t we head inside and start brunch?” Sangguk suggests and herds everyone into the sumptuous house.

With Jeongguk’s grip firm on his waist, they follow after the rest of the family.

“See, that wasn’t so bad,” he whispers, flashing a reassuring smile. “My dad’s whipped as ever and my little brother loves you.”

“Not the older one,” Jimin mutters. “I shouldn’t have expected them to warm up to me after all that happened in high school. People don’t really change much after graduation.”

“They’ll get used to it.”

“Or they can eventually sniff out the truth. Come on, Guk—face it. Junghyun and Junghwa aren’t stupid. They know me and they know your thick and thins. There’s no way they’ll be convinced by this fairytale crap and accept our marriage. There’s no point for them to.”

Jeongguk smirks, eyes darkening as he thoughtfully glances down at Jimin. “Judging from what they walked into back at the car, I think they can figure out a reason or two.”

“Jeon Jeongguk! I was caught off guard by that cheap ass trick of yours,” Jimin hisses and elbows his chest.

Heat creeps up his nape at the recollection of their steamy make out session during the ride. He forces his mind to shut down the minute he recalls the way Jeongguk felt and tasted and sounded—tries to ignore the wildfire spreading within his veins, only to fail when Jeongguk leans close and chuckles softly in his ear.

“I can catch you off guard anytime, baby.” His lips brush against his silver piercing.

“You wish,” Jimin hopes his scowl is enough confirmation. “It wasn’t even that good.”

And with that, he finds himself rising off the ground and pressing into Jeongguk’s torso, startled by the vibrant laughter rumbling through his firm chest. Jimin shrieks without meaning to.

“You two okay over there?” Sangguk calls in their direction.

Jeongguk flings him over his shoulder and grins at his father and siblings who end up halting to a stop to see what the commotion is all about. They continue walking to the nook by the garden when Jeongguk says, “Yup, just settling a little dispute with my fiance. You guys can go on.”

“Put me down,” Jimin protests around his neck. “Stop being so extra.”
Jeongguk’s nose bumps into his forehead as he glances down. His response is hidden between the waves of black spilling from his crooked cap. “Just so you know, you’re a shit liar, Jimin. I’ll put you down if you admit that you liked it.”

“After all that bullshit I had to fib about, you’ve gotta give me some credit.”

“Admit it. Say you enjoyed every second of that kiss.”

“And what, satisfy your praise kink?”

“Nope,” he grins. “I need to know whether it moved you. If not, then I’ll either kiss you again or die trying.”

The look on his face is adamant.


“Ecstatic.” Jeongguk leans in to give him a quick, satisfying kiss before setting him down to his feet. A whisk of both annoyance and pleasure whirls through Jimin, making something unexplained stir inside.

Lucky for him, the hallway is vacant when they finally enter the house. As Jeongguk gently clasps his hand and guides him to wherever the brunch is taking place, Jimin briefly wonders what the last kiss would've been for if his family hadn’t been there.

Brunch turns out to be pretty nice if he doesn’t count the amount of sneers Junghyun throws at him before drawing back under Sangguk’s stern gaze. Jimin, surprisingly, doesn’t retaliate and lets him go on, knowing fully well that the cozy mood would ultimately be ruined in one retort. Everything feels so homey and warm—a feeling he hasn’t experienced in years. He can care less about Junghyun’s distaste.

Junghwa is silent as usual and a lot more civil than her older brother. In fact, she’s too quiet for Jimin’s liking and therefore isn’t expected to make snide remarks about him. Sangguk is as lively as ever, full of puns and wicked stories while Jeonghan is timidly adorable. Jeongguk is now more open to smiles and laughs and will occasionally squeeze Jimin’s hand when he finds him musing. He’s so laid back that Jimin forgets the whole fiasco they were playing at for a second and naturally goes along with it.

Sangguk is genuinely curious about the story behind them and asks them questions regarding their meeting and abrupt decisions. Jeongguk easily answers majority of them, leaving blanks for Jimin to fill in the process. Still worried whether their explanations are generic or not, Jimin notices that Sangguk is wholeheartedly convinced, albeit surprised at the approach of their big day.

Jeongguk just shrugs and slings an arm over Jimin’s shoulders. “I found my special someone and want to keep him. Why wait?”

His father only agrees with a grunt of approval.

After the meal, Jeongguk and his older siblings catch up on the patio while Jeonghan sweetly asks Jimin if he wants to join him upstairs and hear his latest piece.

He casts a quick glance at Jeongguk and is relieved to find him nodding reassuringly before following after Junghyun.
“Guk doesn’t like to linger around. I can tell you that much,” Sangguk’s soft voice snaps him out of his reverie. “It’s always done him well but I just hope he didn’t force your hand in this marriage. I personally would’ve preferred a longer engagement, but well, if this is what you want, then by all means, go ahead.”

He must’ve been waiting for the two of them to give the situation some time and naturally come to an agreement. Little does he know that Jeongguk is only speeding the process up to get it over with—the sooner the marriage, the sooner the divorce.

Jimin’s gut clenches.

“I can’t explain why it’s all happening so fast, but I’m okay with it and trying my best to keep up,” he answers truthfully, because this is the most he can say without constantly fibbing.

Sangguk smiles fondly at him. “Jeongguk’s always had a certain charm with people, so I’m not surprised at how quickly he convinced you. But knowing you, I’m sure you’re not letting him get away with everything, which is great.”

“Oh, yes,” Jimin chuckles. “Bossing him around is fun.”

“You don’t know how glad I am to hear that. Jeongguk’s got a mind of his own and always gets things done his way. He needs someone who can put him in his place and keep him planted in the ground—a person who can stand up to him and turn his world inside out.”

“Aren’t you worried he’ll turn my world inside out instead?” He asks incredulously.

“I guarantee that he will,” Sangguk laughs. “Listen, Jeongguk is a handful. And double the handful as a husband, but I assure he’ll be good and generous to you. It’s high time you settle down and let someone take care of you, Jimin. Even for a little bit.”

His heart erupts with affection for the older man, realizing that Sangguk had probably planned this to not only help his son, but look out for Jimin as well. Although Jimin can’t understand why he had gone to the extent of blackmailing his own son into the engagement, if this is what makes him happy, then fuck it. He’s willing to abide to his wishes with or without the money.

“You see, Min, there’s not much left of me here. I’ll be gone sooner or later. I’d at least like to see my loved ones settled down and content before my departure from this world.”

“Don’t say that,” Jimin pleads. “You’re not dying.”

“My boy, we’ll all die at one point. We just can’t guarantee when. The key in living is striving and loving with all our might till we go. It’s a lesson I’ve wanted to teach my children for them to remember when I’m no longer here.”

He blinks back the sudden rush of tears and forces a smile. “You’re a really great dad, Sangguk. Your kids are lucky.”

Sangguk pats his shoulder. “You’re now one of my children, Jimin. I can’t thank you enough for marrying my son. One day, you’ll see the value of this decision.”

“I’d like to hold you to that.”

Jimin had first encountered Jeon Sangguk during a rough time. He caught the man’s attention in a
heated debate he had with a few other customers one night, and they’ve hit it off since then. Day by day, Sangguk would ask for the teenager to sit down with him and they’d talk about anything and everything to the point Jimin thought of him the father he never had. He’d reveal bits and pieces of his past till he expressed every detail. And Sangguk listened—he listened and remembered it all.

*Yet this is how you repay him. Nice.*

Ignoring the whines of his conscience, Jimin assures that this is Sangguk’s carefully formulated plan and doesn’t involve him. The least he can do is cooperate and serve his only wish.

They chat their way up to Jeonghan’s room and find the boy seated near his grand. The room is immense, equipped with high ceilings and towered bay windows and wall panels pasted with very few posters. Jeonghan brightens when Sangguk and Jimin seat themselves on the sofa by his desk.

Jemin is nothing near a musical expert, but if Jeonghan’s composition is everything but phenomenal, then he doesn’t know what is. He plays a variety of pieces, but the first piece caught his attention with its accelerated tempo, and the deep, rich melody blending into a series of dramatically falling notes.

Jeonghan had just started his fourth piece—a sonata—when Jimin feels large hands creeping their way up his shoulders. He glances up and sees Jeongguk grinning proudly at his younger brother, eyes crinkled in delight.

The minute Jeonghan plays his last note, he's all full of applauds and whistles.

Beaming, Jeonghan slides off the bench and gives an enthusiastic bow to his audience.

“That was perfect, Hannie. Just perfect.” Sangguk ushers his youngest over and wraps him in a fatherly embrace. Despite Jeonghan being born late into the family, it’s evident that Sangguk loves him no less than his other children.

“That was amazing, Hannie!” Jimin gushes and throws his arms around him. Jeonghan flushes, stuttering a thanks and shyly giggles at his pleased expression.

“I second that, squirt,” Jeongguk chimes in. He scoots in next to his father, his broad frame contrasting against the pale suede couch. His hand lightly perches at Jimin’s forearm as he ruffles his brother’s hair. “Let me know when your next school concert is so I can clear my schedule for it beforehand.”

“Are you gonna bring Jimin hyung with you?” Jeonghan asks.

Jeongguk grins at Jimin. “You wouldn’t miss it for the world, would you, baby?”

“Of course not. I promise I’ll be there.” He reassures. “I’ve never been to a performance but I’m pretty sure I’ll love it if you’re playing.”

Because he’d be damned if the concert was scheduled at a time after their year of marriage.

“It’s just kids playing, so it’s nothing sophisticated,” Junghyun drawls. “Then again, you of all people should know how it feels.”

Jimin’s lips curl. “Sophisticated musicians start out small, if you hadn’t known by now. I may know shit about music but I appreciate a good song when I hear it. Which I wish you’d do instead of pulling your talented little brother into this whole grudge against me.”
“Jimin’s right,” Jeongguk says darkly. “Stop being dramatic and leave Jeonghan out of this, hyung.”

Junghwa gently clasps a furious Junghyun’s shoulder in attempt to calm him down.

Sangguk purses his lips and gestures towards the younger boy. “Come on, Hannie. Let’s go and ask Kihyun if he can pack some leftovers for Guk and Jimin. They should probably get going if they want to spend the rest of the day together.”

Silence fills the room as both father and son exit the bedroom until Junghyun snarls, “Are you seriously taking his side, Guk? Instead of your own brother’s? You do realize he’s already got Dad and Jeonghan wrapped around his finger. Don’t tell me you’re next.”

Jeongguk mirrors his glare. “The only thing I’ve realized is your petty act.”

“Petty—” he sputters, dark eyes widening. “Petty?”

“Look,” Jimin timidly interjects although his gaze doesn’t back down. “I get where you’re coming from and I respect your opinion about me. I also understand that you’re protective of your family and I’ve got no problem with that. You don’t have to like me even if your dad or brothers do. Nor am I asking for you to like me. I don’t even want you to be nice to me, but all I’m saying is—don’t argue with your family, please? Just don’t. You won’t get anything out of it and it’ll only ruin you later on. I’ll stay out of your way, but seriously, don’t hurt what you’ve got.”

Jeongguk announces their departure and drags him out of the room as soon as Junghyun’s jaw drops.

Outside the corridor, Jimin slumps against the wall. “God, I’m sorry for interfering, but I just had to say it. I don’t expect either of them to like me, so it’s better to give each other the benefit of the doubt and just move on.”

“I mean, if that’s how you stood up to hyung back in high school, I can see why he feels threatened by you.”

Jiimin watches Jeongguk’s lips curl into a smile.

“I've never tried pissing him off,” he admits. “Never wanted to, anyway.”

“Maybe, but I’m pretty sure you kicked ass when they pissed you off.” Jeongguk’s eyes sparkle. “You must’ve showed them who’s boss.”

Jiimin sighs. “The last thing I need in this whole fiasco are enemies, Guk. The less people I have to deal with, the faster I can get through this marriage.”

His hand is seized and tightened in Jeongguk’s grip, causing him to look up at his narrowed expression. “I’m with you on that, but it doesn’t mean I don’t want you to stand up for what you believe in.”

*Looks like someone is starting to respect their annoying fiance.*

Jiimin mischievously raises a brow at him. “Are you saying that I should prove you wrong more often?”

Jeongguk pauses, studying his face for a second before guffawing out loud, and Jiimin can’t help but laugh along.

It’s this moment, in the midst of their entwined hands, sunny hallway, and baby blue walls, that he
decides everything is going to be okay.

Jeongguk and him are going to be okay.

Chapter End Notes

well, this certainly opens up some new opportunities. don't know about you but i'm getting soft for guk now. jimin needs to know whose ass he's getting a piece of. the next chapter will portray their bustling life as they prepare for the big day. am i excited? kinda. im tremblin. until then, see you next time!!

find me on tumblr and twitter.
Chapter Summary

it’s all part of the romantically passionate act Jeongguk is required to pull in order to sate his father and earn the title he desperately wants. He needs to drill that into his head, or else.

Chapter Notes

sorry for the delayed update. I had a bad and busy week and on top of that spent my weekend with a stomach virus lol. But I had majority of the chapter written so I decided to screw the pain and finish it.

In return for the delay, this chapter is super long and (according to my word count, 27 pages) and will hopefully sate us for another week since I’ve got midterms and assignments to wrap up and tend to, which means I may not be able to update next week. :( 

As always, thank you SO much for the support and I will answer everything when I can. I did acknowledge everyone’s feedback, including the ones who are disappointed at Jikook falling in love too quickly. Fear not, it isn’t love. It’s up to you to decide which part of the act is genuine or not.

Enjoy! (๑໌๑ザー)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sleeping in, as expected but not appreciated, is a luxury that Jimin can no longer afford.

It’s currently five in the Thursday morning when he trudges to the kitchen and fixes himself a cup of black coffee. As tempting as diving back into bed and canceling his agenda sounds, there’s hardly enough time to get everything—which includes his own shifts and the endless requirements as Jeongguk’s fiance—done for the day.

Plopping onto the countertop with his mug, Jimin pulls his phone out and checks the latest calendar Sejun’s compiled for him this morning.

5:45 — morning run

6:30 — breakfast w sejun & sooyeon (review the engagement party guest list)

8:30 — dance practice w trainer lee (slow dance and waltz)

10:00 — suit fitting @ jumyeon’s boutique (+10 min interview w yanghop press)

11:45 — meeting w caterer and food testing for reception
Jimin smiles without meaning to.

Ever since Jeongguk had taken a few days to Milan for a conference, Sejun and him have been juggling all the wedding affairs themselves. They only set aside whatever needs his approval, and although Sangguk was vehement against their prenup, Jeongguk’s signature is the last thing thing required before their deal is officially sealed.

Luckily, his arrival is expected to be later on this evening. Jimin would be lying if he says he doesn’t miss having his demanding ass around, as much as he’d hate to admit.

He can’t bear to say this aloud but he sort of looks forward to meeting him.

_Damn it._

Either that, or he just misses having a human punching bag close by. _Someone_ needs to hear his rants about all the commotion this wedding is causing, and he’d be damned if it isn’t none other than the betrothed himself.

Despite their major differences, the only similarity the two share in common is the truth behind everything that’s been going viral in Seoul for two weeks and counting.

After Saturday’s brunch, Jeongguk had suggested they take a stroll in one of Busan’s reserved beaches. When Jimin asked the reason for their privacy, Jeongguk easily replied with something along the lines of staying unbothered with the tabloids until their wedding prep later that week.

The first camera clicked five minutes into walking along the shoreline, much to their disappointment. With Jimin’s face free of any concealment and completely open to the dozens of eyes trailing after them, he felt slightly nauseous at the exposure and tucked his arm tightly in Jeongguk’s.

He also had the nerve to test his fiance’s patience just for the sake of the media but decided against it so the stroll actually turned out to be quite nice.

That is, until Jimin’s feet began to ache midwalk. Jeongguk forced him onto some boulders by the seashore where he removed his high tops and dipped his toes in the murky water. He set his sneakers down next to him under Jeongguk’s disapproving gaze the same time a cat crept by from its place near the rocks.

It shyly approached Jimin first, ignoring his acknowledgement and opting for his shoelaces instead. Grinning, Jimin lifted his sneaker by the sole for the cat to paw the dangling laces on its hind legs. In the midst of their small talk, his other sneaker fell into the water below and instead of calling Jeongguk over to pick it up for him, Jimin crouched over the boulder, only to slip and crash face-first, earning a shout from Jeongguk and a mewl from the cat.

Jimin just pulled the sneaker out of the sticky sand underneath and laughed his heart out. His outfit was soiled for the day, his shoes not only stained but clogged, his hair a salty mess. He ushered the cat over and gave it the clean laces to play with, cooing as he nuzzled its head.

Right on cue, he felt a shadow menacingly loom over him and looked up to find Jeongguk growling. With a scowl, he yanked him by the back of his collar and swept his coat over his trembling
shoulders, simultaneously yelling, “What the hell were you thinking back there? What if you caught a cold like that? What if the cat bit you, huh? What if it had rabies? Did that ever cross your mind?”

“It’s just a fucking cat,” Jimin snapped and waved at the animal taking its leave.

“Stupid,” Jeongguk retorted. “So goddamn stupid.” He drew the lapels of his coat closer to the elder’s neck and wrinkled his nose in disgust. “And now you reek of fish, too. It’ll take more than a hundred showers to get rid of that stench.”

Jemin simply flipped him off in response and resumed their trail without him.

As pissed as Jeongguk was at his little dip, he still drove him home and escorted him to the porch like the apparent gentleman he was. And it surprisingly didn't stop there. While Jimin stood shivering at his doorstep, clutching the coat for dear life, Jeongguk gazed at him for what felt more than forever before leaning in to brush his damp bangs aside and kiss his sweaty forehead.

“See you when I get back.” He then turned to leave.

The real question, Jimin thought tight-lipped as he watched him go, was whether Jeongguk acknowledged his mess and kissed him anyway because he just didn’t care, or if it had been for the sake of a pap that happened to be lurking within the neighborhood.

Either way, the space between his brows burned as if it were lit ablaze.

The world seemed to think otherwise when a picture of Jimin petting the cat, bare-faced and drenched to the bone, came across the media the next day. Including the look of terrible annoyance painted all over the billionaire’s face.

*He probably thinks you’re a nightmare and wouldn’t want to be caught dead being seen with you in public.*

Still, Jimin decides that from now on, he'll make an effort to prove how civil he could be regardless of his upbringings. Even if driving Jeongguk ballistic at least once wherever they go is his latest hobby.

Civilized—not propriety personified.

Sejun’s been doing his damndest to get Jimin back on track with every task needed to complete. Yet the last few days have spiraled downwards, one way or another. He still has shifts to take care of at Vene’s—courtesy of Jeongguk’s reluctant agreement since there’s less predators and slobs roaming around the diner now.

Junghyun was disgusted at Jimin’s insistence that he continue his job as a waiter for the time being, but Sangguk was perfectly content with the suggestion. In fact, he kept his usual routine and dropped by every Wednesday for lunch at his usual spot by the window. They also make small talk as he orders. So far the only thing Jimin’s learned about the grand wedding extravaganza his mastermind of a father-in-law devised is that Sangguk is allergic to eggplant and therefore wants that completely removed from the caterer’s menu.

With the fiance comes the ton of people invading his workspace to congratulate him about his engagement. Random strangers he’s never seen in his life shimmy up to Jinwoo and ask him to assign Jimin as their waiter. Some of them thankfully have an idle chat with him while others cut to the chase. When asked how it feels to marry Jeon Jeongguk, Jimin moritifies them by saying it feels like being a juicy bone eyed by a thousand rabid dogs.
“Just kidding,” he’ll quickly add when their mouths stupidly hang open.

One of the pros of having Jaebum as his bodyguard is that the man easily wards off rowdy reporters with just one look. They try to flood into the diner but falter at the towering man steering them right where they came from. It’s hard for a single man to keep the paparazzi at bay, but unfortunately none of the bouncers work at lunch hours and only take the evening and weekend shifts Jinwoo grants.

Although Jinwoo didn’t mind the endless crowd loitering around his diner, he did express his annoyance about the waste of space and how unfair it was to the actual customers. Still, Jinwoo liked Jimin enough to say he’d rather let his new fanbase infiltrate the place than see them chase the poor boy down the alley.

There was a limit to fame, though. Swarming around his workplace wasn’t enough from the way the audience practically trailed after Sejun and him everywhere—from fittings all the way to the goddamn convenience store.

The line was drawn when the tabloids startle an elderly cashier ringing him up. Jimin whirled around and faces the crowd, brows drawn in a frown as he addressed them stiffly, “Okay, here’s the plan. Quit the stalking and you’ll get a daily interview from me, ten minutes max. My schedule is a huge mess, so why don’t I have my assistant post a questionnaire online? Send him an email and I’ll get back to you. Now, would you please leave me and my ramen alone? Thank you.”

It wasn’t much, but that’d been the last he’s seen of the media. And while Sejun grumbled at the idea of giving them some of their precious time, Jimin reassured that their curiosity will fade away as soon as they start this evening.

The first message he opens is not from an anon, but from Jeongguk himself.

**J:**

*what do u want from italy*

    *idk, chocolate?*

**J:**

*do you want smth from armani or valentino or both?*

    *i want a box of italian pizza*

    *thanks*

**J:**

*um ok. toppings?*

    *pineapple ;)*

    *-C.C.C*

Without a second to spare, his phone starts to ring.
“Seoul says good morning. It is currently six a.m Korean Standard Time,” Jimin grins into the receiver, using the most professional tone he can muster. “Not a cloud in sight. Skies are perfectly blue. The sunlight is simply blinding. How’s going on the other side of the continent?”

Jeongguk snorts from the other side of the line. “Dork. It’s almost eleven at night here. Pitch black dark. Can’t see a single thing outside besides the city from the seventy second floor—not that I’m bothering to look.”

Jimin falters, freezing at the huskiness in his sleepy drawl and his response itself. He envisions a king-sized bed wrapped in silky white sheets set in front of a large window showcasing the midnight beauty of Milan. “What are you calling me so late for?”

Said sheets rustle as his cheeks flame with wild thoughts. The bed creaks slightly from Jeongguk’s end. “To inform you that pineapple and pizza don’t belong in the same sentence. And I’m not tired. Also, what does C.C.C stand for?”

“Cray Cray Chim,” he shyly admits. “My friend gave me the initials. I sign my tables with it at work.”

A snicker. “The shoe fits.”

“Fuck off, G.G.G. Pineapple pizza hater.”

“What’s that mean?”

Jimin smirks. “Grubby Gorilla Guk.”

He can tell that Jeongguk is grinning. “Wrong. It’s Gorgeously Genius Guk.”

“It’ll be an honor puking on you,” Jimin rolls his eyes and fakes a gag.

“The pleasure’s all mine,” Jeongguk says dryly. “Speaking of food—or puke for that matter—wear something red tonight.”

“Red? Not sure if I have anything in red. What for?”

“’Cause I feel like it,” he stifles a yawn. “Just get something if you don’t.”

“I’m not gonna splurge on another outfit when I’ve already got a whole line’s worth of clothes,” Jimin argues.

There’s a pause before Jeongguk stubbornly says, “Red, Jimin. I’ll buy it for you myself if you won’t.”

“Grumpy Grinchy Guk,” he mutters under his breath, but Jeongguk catches what he said anyway and chuckles.

“Cozy Cuddly Chim,” Jeongguk sings.

“What happened to Mr. Chim-Is-A-Weird-Name?”

“He’s still there, but you try finding a nice word that starts with a J.”

Jimin shakes his head and clicks the video call icon despite being clad in nothing but a thing graphic tee and a pair of shorts. His mussed bangs are all over the place prior to rolling around in bed earlier, yet he sports a bright smile as he listens to the faint ringtone that’s probably coming from Jeongguk’s
“You gonna get that?” he asks nonchalantly.

“Don’t wanna.”

“It’s probably important.” And Jeongguk groans in response.

“So is my goddamn health. Honestly, you’d think being an executive would prevent you from being bombarded with emails at this hour, but no. I didn’t sign up for this bullshit,” he grumbles and the sound of him wrestling through the comforters to grab something from the side fills the silence Jimin decides to convey until Jeongguk’s face lights up his screen.

“What the—” He squints at the screen before breaking out into a grin. “Oh my god.”

“Surprise. You look exhausted.” Jimin tilts his phone farther away from him, leaning into the headboard.

Sure enough, there are large bruises ghosting under Jeongguk’s bloodshot eyes. A stray lock of hair curls against his bare forehead, the first few buttons to his plaid onesies left open and revealing the start of his sculpted chest.

It’s a mix between the charisma of a young boy and the physique of a grown man. The combination further confuses the snug, fuzzy feeling inside.

“No shit, Sherlock. You’re looking pretty up and about,” Jeongguk murmurs as his eyes search every inch of whatever Jimin fits onto his screen.

“I mean, I just woke up. My cheeks are all puffy and gross. And I’ve got morning breath,” He blows into the receiver for emphasis.

“No, you look good.” The warmth in his voice wraps around him like a cozy blanket. “Thank you, Jimin. This made my night a little better.”

“Yeah? You’re welcome. Now go to sleep. You have an early flight and we can’t have you passing out in the middle of the airport.”

“M’kay. Good night,” Jeongguk yawns loudly.

“Night,” Jimin whispers. “See ya.”

Jeon Jeongguk being a sleepy goofball is a dangerous concept, Jimin thinks as he hangs up and giddily sets his phone down. It’s rare moments like these that steal his breath away and will eventually ruin him if he isn’t careful enough.

Still, their little conversation inspires his late morning run. Jimin slips on a hoodie and trades his shorts for a pair of joggers. He yanks his Nikes on past the doorway and leaves the house without breakfast.

The vibration of his phone chimes along with a grumble from his stomach.

**Jinyoungie (hyung):**

jiminie!! it's teacher work day today and sehyun’s off from daycare...you’re free, right? can u pls look after him...pls :S
Park Jinyoung—brother from another mother. Their close-knit friendship is as far as an age gap of six years can get. Jimin had met him and his sweet five-year-old one day during lunch hours. Because of the similarity between his son’s daycare schedule and his own working hours, Jingyoung chose to teach primary school. And since working as a single dad is tough enough, Jimin takes every chance to help him out.

They’ve lost touch prior to Jimin’s engagement, but future Jeon or not, he’ll always make an effort to beckon his every call. Even if that means letting Sehyun tag along in his wedding adventures.

Which is perfectly fine. He adored the kid to bits.

*btw i’ve got some fittings and a dance practice to go to...yoonie can come w me if that’s ok? lemme know when i should pick him up*

Jinyoungie (hyung):

*yes please. he doesn’t care where he goes as long as it’s with you lol. im leaving the house at 9 perfect, im out by then will grab him on my way :)*

Jinyoungie (hyung):

*ugh ur a lifesaver. ily!! btw, he’s been practicing his role as ring bearer nonstop smh, he’s so excited*  

Jinyoung owes him nothing.

Not after all the hospitality he’s offered him within the years. Jinyoung took him under his wing, his roof, his care, during the days Jimin’s father would stagger home in a drunk frenzy. He’d invite him over to play with Sehyun whenever his father turned up unexpected. He fed and raised him like his own younger brother, and that was enough payment for the rest of his life.

So that the end of the day, it’s Jimin that owes him.

Although involving his friends with his scheme of a wedding was the last thing he wanted to do, Jinyoung’s ecstasy was so genuine he couldn’t help but ask him to be his best man. Especially when Jinyoung had gotten to know all the details, including the part where Jeongguk had allegedly fallen hard at his feet. That bit had him swooning.

Jinyoung as his best man, and Sehyun as the ring bearer. That’s all he wants to risk. Junghyun and Junghwa are said to be handling the rest of the roles, along with Jeongguk’s own entourage.

Jaebum is on his porch as soon as the clock strikes nine. Jimin rushes by him, swiftly unlocking the door and beaming at him breathlessly to which he politely smiles back at. Past the stony exterior and expressionless gaze, his bodyguard turned out to be an actual softie but preferred to keep that on the low. Keeping a conversation with Jaebum is an accomplishment for him nonetheless.

“Good morning, hyung,” Jimin greets heartily as he lets him in. “Let me get you some coffee.”

He runs into the kitchen and pours whatever’s left from the kettle, reheating the mug after sweetening
it with the hazelnut creamer which Jaebum seems to enjoy. He’s picked up little pieces of information about the his bodyguard prior to their first encounter and tries to implement them in hopes of getting the older man to warm up to him.

“Two creamers, just the way you like it.” Jimin hands him the mug and wipes his hand with a washcloth.

“Good morning, Park-sssi,” Jaebum nods in response and mumbles his gratitude as he accepts the mug. He’d usually turn up in athletic gear before the crack of dawn to take his runs with Jimin and would magically reappear in his signature suit as soon as they finished. Jimin’s asked him multiple times to spill his secret but is only answered with an unreadable expression. He’s decided not to pry ever since.

“By the way, Yoonie’s going to join us today,” Jimin blindly reaches for his keys and wallet and pockets them. “Let’s try to make this day kid-friendly. You with me, hyung?”

Sehyun is the kind of child who charms everyone he meets at first sight. So it isn’t a surprise that Jaebum finally graces him with an excited grin and downs the coffee in one go. “Definitely, Park-sssi.”

Dressed in a new set of ripped jeans tucked into his striped V-neck and paired with his worn Converse, Jimin knocks on Jingyoung’s apartment door with Jaebum by his side. He’d texted Sejun beforehand about taking their schedule slow now that a five-year-old was going to accompany them. As usual, his assistant almost instantly replies his approval.

“Chimin hyung! Jaejae hyung!” a loud voice greets them as soon as Jimin enters the living room. Sitting on the couch is Sehyun, ready for action in a large cable-knit sweater and matching slacks. The sleeves ghost his tiny fingers when he jumps off the couch and lunges for Jimin’s knee. His large eyes glimmer in adoration as he looks up at him.

Jimin crouches down to scoop the child into his arm and sling him onto his hip. “Hi, baby! Excited to hang out with me, Jaejae, and Junnie hyung today? We’re gonna try out some clothes and visit the dance studio and eat lots of different cakes later.”

“Yup, I can’t wait!” Sehyun nods fervently. “But Chimin, I wanna go to the doggie cafe, too. Pwease? Appa packed me dog treats in my bag!”

“I didn’t promise him anything.” Jinyoung chimes in. He wrestles with his tie and picks up his briefcase perched by the coat rack. “I know how busy you are, so it’s fine if you can’t manage to go. Thanks for looking after him, Min. I initially wanted to ask Doyoung but he’s got lectures till five today. Sorry about that.”

“Don’t be sorry, hyung,” Jimin says. “And don’t worry ‘bout a thing. I’ll make some time to take him there. Sehyun and I will have a great day together, won’t we? We’ll be fine.”

“Yeah, Appa! I pwomise to be good. See?” Sehyun holds out his tiny finger to his father. “Pinky pwomise.”

Jinyoung smiles, wraps his pinky around his own, and drops a kiss onto his son’s mop of brown hair. “Pinky promise. Appa believes you on that. I gotta run, but I’ll see you soon, darling, alright? Bye, Jiminnie.” He timidly acknowledges Jaebum standing by the counter. “Goodbye.”

The first chunk of their morning consists of meeting up with Sejun at a Japanese patissiere near
As expensive as it is, the variety of desserts excite Jimin and he beats Sejun to the register for once. His assistant normally puts everything on the Jeon tab in the blink of an eye but today Jimin hands a wad of cash over before Sejun can even get up. He eventually quits insisting to pay Jimin back after receiving an adamant refusal.

They spend an hour there with Sehyun and Jaebum—who can no longer escape their outings—as Sejun pulls his files out and reviews the guest list for both the bachelor party and the wedding.

Because Jimin’s been thrown into the world of socialites with neither experience nor preparation, Sejun compiled a binder filled with information on the people the Jeons were acquainted with. He flips through page after page, trying to memorize the facial features, details, and positions of every family that made up the empire. He especially focuses on the highlighted profiles of the guest who will be attending their engagement party this weekend. So far, everyone sounds nice and don’t seem scandalous, but Jimin doubts he wants to meet them. Still, he can’t judge a book by its cover.

Next comes the dance practice at a private workshop branched off the notorious 1MILLION studio residing in Seoul, courtesy of Sejun’s lavish ass. Formerly majoring in dance, Jimin easily trains with Taemin, his lively instructor, and enjoys taking on the floor. Taemin praises his natural talent and insists they work on something outside of his formal lessons once in a while. Sehyun soon joins them with his own moves once the session is over and the studio is emptied.

He showers and changes at the studio before making an important stop—a high-end boutique owned by Kim Junmyeon, one of the most renowned fashion designers in Seoul. His crew is in charge of styling Jimin and his entourage for the wedding, including his outfit for the upcoming engagement party.

Even with bearing the title of Jeon Jeongguk’s fiance, Jimin hasn’t gotten used to the sudden luxury he’s been handed. Concept that are normally trivial to the wealthy like expenses and brands still awe and belittle him. He tends to get awkward around terms that he’s never heard of before. Dealing with errands like these confuse him greatly. Junmyeon is knowing for keeping an exclusive line of clients, therefore making his service a highly desirable one. Just passing by their display windows intimidates Jimin.

It’s even worse when he walks into the boutique in a sweater and ripped jeans and a Pororo backpack slung over his shoulder, prancing five-year-old in tow.

Hopefully the Jeon-tag will provide his mundane ass some reassurance.

“Good afternoon, monsieur.” Jiyeon, the boutique’s manager, drawls in an accented falsetto. Her poor attempt at French only worsens her overall image as she meets them in the waiting room, dressed dramatically in a fiery red and black ensemble.

All it took was one minute for Jimin to dislike Jiyeon. Her personality is a compressed force of impishly girlish—and obviously fake—features, a sweet voice dripping in venom, and dark lips curling haughtily at every word.

Her disgust was more than evident when they were first introduced. In fact, she sent Jimin daggers the second she immediately noticed him flipping through a designer’s lookbook while Sejun was discussing something with the suite’s assistants. Throwing him one more dirty glare, she turned to Sejun and babbled how honored she felt working for the future Jeon.

Sejun simply blinked at him, perplexed by the undivided attention, before returning to Jiyeon and
gently correcting her assumptions. He then lead her over to Jimin, where he made proper introductions.

In his defense, Jimin doesn’t mind the fact that majority of the public mistake him with his assistant. Despite their drastic differences—Sejun’s bleached hair and large, angled eyes compared to his dark fringe and monolids—tabloids always feature Jimin as a grainy photo concealed behind a snapback, shades, and the occasional facemask.

Besides, it’s easy to assume from Sejun’s mannerisms and the way he carries himself that he’s more of a likely candidate than Jimin could ever be. Still, Jiyeon’s scarlet cheeks after realizing her mistake is enough to satisfy Jimin’s pride.

With that aside, Jiyeon acknowledges him first today as her gaze sweeps over his appearance in something none other than criticism. Her eyes narrow further into slits when she catches Sehyun reaching out and stroking one of suite’s spotless suede couches before the child looks up at Jiyeon and tugs her flowy skirt.

“When do I get my cwothes, noona?” Sehyun asks.

Jiyeon pastes a pained smile and abruptly scoots away from Sehyun’s grip, as if staying any longer will contaminate her. She lets out a sugary laugh. “Well, if it isn’t darling little Sehyun-ah! Lovely to see you again. Your suit will be prepared in a few days, so don’t worry. You’ll get it on time.”

“Hear that, Yoonie? You’re getting your suit soon! Only if you’re a good boy.” Jimin stoops low and holds his little shoulders. “You’re a good boy, aren’t you, baby?”

Sehyun slowly nods, dark eyes large with honesty. “Appa said good boys grow really big and get money and marry princesses and princesses. And then they become kings like you. I’m gonna be good, Chimin.”

Jimin chuckles and tucks in a stray lock behind the child’s ear. “Of course. You’re gonna be a king and marry the prettiest princess or prince in the world when you grow up.”

“But Appa said the prettiest princess is Chunkook and you’re already marrying him.”

Sejun suppresses his laughter with an amused smile. “That’s right, Yoon-ah. But there will be prettier ones for you when you’re older, so don’t worry. Hyung is going try a really beautiful dress on soon and you’ll get to see it. We can draw the dress later.”

“No one is drawing any of our designs,” Jiyeon barges into their conversation. “I’m afraid they’re confidential.”

Jimin gives her a tight-lipped smile. “The kid’s five. I doubt he’d get anything out of your designs even if he tried.”

“Oh yes, of course not.” She flashes a pearly-white grin that looks more of a threat than reassurance. “I just wanted to make sure you understood the importance of our designs being carelessly misused, that’s all, Jeon-ssi.”

_Not with you trying to kill children with your goddamn vibes._ “By all means, I do. Anyways, I’d like to get this fitting over with. Is Kyungsoo hyung ready?”

A moment later Jimin finds himself following an assistant into the office of Do Kyungsoo, a talented young apprentice working under Junmyeon’s wing. Jimin’s wedding is the first project he’s been granted. For someone who keeps their work classified, he’s sure is franticly excited about the task.
at hand. They walk in on him tweaking the hem of a dressed mannequin that displays the breathtaking creation designed especially for Jimin.

“Wow.” Jimin sputters at the sight. He slowly paces around the platform in awe. “Just wow.”

The ensemble consists of a muted, dull palette that is oddly brilliant. While the dress shirt and slacks are both black, the ruffled collar is laced with intricate piping. The blazer is a different story. Dotted in different hues of gray, its design is a combination of vintage and contemporary, all delicately conveyed on a charmeuse exterior. Pearls button the sides of each sleeve and hang off the silk dress shirt like the final touch to a masterpiece.

“Hyung, it’s amazing! Seriously, I didn’t expect it to be this gorgeous.” His cheeks hurt due to the endless beaming. Jimin grins wider when Sejun and Sehyun both chime in awe of the suit.

Despite Kyungsso’s microscopic deadline, he took the time to ask Jimin for the type of style he was aiming for. The only response Jimin provided him with was that it needed to be simple yet elegant and definitely able to make a statement. With these three concepts in hand, Kyungsso began his endless work in the span of two all-nighters. He didn’t even show him a draft of what he’d envisioned. Instead, Kyungsso had suddenly called him last night and informed him that his outfit was finally ready to be tried on.

The designer smiles. “You think so? It’s got this spunky charisma to it that I think defines you well. Plain yet sophisticated. Mysteriously sexy and suave. Go ahead and try it on.”

Without needing to be asked twice, Jimin excitedly rushes into the fitting room and throws his clothes off. Kyungsso and another assistant enter the stall shortly to help him into each piece, taking great caution to not ruin any of the beadwork. At first, Jimin hadn’t been comfortable with the special assistance but after accidentally ripping a georgette shirt in half during his last visit, he has no choice but to deal with it. Plus, both Kyungsso’s professionalism and very obvious disinterest make it clear that he isn’t playing around.

Once he’s all buttoned up, Jimin exits the fitting room and twirls a very dramatically slow pirouette in front of his audience. Both Sehyun and Kyungsso clap their approval while Sejun expresses how brilliant he looks.

He studies his reflection in the illuminated three-panel mirror. “I love it, but do you think Jeongguk would?”

“Jeongguk-ssi would marry you in a heartbeat,” Sejun promises and walks up to where he’s standing on the platform. “I’m thinking we should curl your hair a bit then part the fringe for a little breather. And some dangly earrings to top it off. You’d definitely steal the spotlight with that look. What do you think, Kyungsso?”

As the two discuss the rest of his accessories, the assistants lead Jimin back into the fitting room where he begins to shed the clothes off. Halfway through his dress shirt he hears distinctive arguing—yelling—outside the suite. One voice familiarly sounds like Jaebum’s.

Cursing, he buttons the shirt back on before popping his head between the door in time to see Sejun stomping past the suite.

It’s the first time Jimin’s ever seen his assistant so furious, so he immediately bolts his way out of the stall, the assistant who had previously helped him calling him back. He stumbles into his converse and catches up to Sejun’s swift trail.
“Is everything alright? What happened?” He asks once he follows into the viewing hall where he finds Sejun snapping at an angrily flushed Jiyeon, who quickly heaves herself up at the sight of Jimin. Jaebum is by the door, hands locked within a bulky man’s collar that he recognizes as a member of the boutique’s security.

“Sejun, Jaebum hyung. What’s going on?” Jimin calmly repeats despite the demanding underlying tone.

Sejun gives Jiyeon one final glare and turns to Jimin. “Apparently Jiyeon kicked Sehyun out when she found him smearing a little bit of his frosted cookie on one of the couches. Jaebum caught her dragging him outside the shop and telling one of the guards to make sure he stays there. I’m sorry for not noticing earlier but can you believe it?”

No, he can’t believe it. In fact, Jimin’s eyes widen in pure disbelief as his fingers curl into a fist and ache to hit the nearest thing—hopefully not the manager’s face.

“What the hell were you thinking, kicking a five-year-old out because he smeared a little frosting on your couch?”

Jiyeon’s lips curl into a sneer at the inquiry. “I warned him once and he still didn’t listen so I made sure the brat learned to respect his elders because he clearly has no manners. I figured it’d do him some good in teaching him a lesson. The suede couch is exclusively from Thailand and—”

“And you could’ve fucking charged me for it instead!” He growls before rushing outside the boutique and discovering Jaebum comforting a miserable Sehyun who clutches his half-eaten cookie.

“Yoonie, baby, you okay? Tell me everything,” Jimin crouches down on his knees to meet the child’s height.

“I d-didn’t mean it! I g-got some chocolate on my fingers...I d-didn’t know. I said s-sorry but,” Sehyun explains through hiccuping sobs. “But s-she still got mad at me.”

“Did she hurt you?” he demands.

“N-No, but the lady said I can’t c-come inside anymore. I r-really am so sorry, Chimin.”

Jimin throws his arms over the little boy as the door flings open to reveal an outraged Jiyeon tailed by a just as pissed Sejun and a startled Kyungsoo. Jaebum is now seen brawling with the security guy again, their argument heating by the second but he chooses to focus on Jiyeon.

“How could you dare throw a little kid out on the street? What if something happened to him?” He demands, picking Sehyun up and cradling him against his shoulder. “I’m his guardian—you should’ve informed me if he had misbehaved or damaged something. I would’ve dealt with it.”

“As much as he’d like to lose his cool over the situation and show the manager a piece of his mind, Jimin forces himself to be rational in front of Sehyun, who is shaken enough without having to witness his wrath.

“The fact that you couldn’t keep him out of trouble is enough to prove how irresponsible you are as his guardian,” Jiyeon snarls. “You should know better than to bring a dirty little rascal into an exceptional establishment like this. But then again, I don’t expect you to know considering you would’ve never breathed near this place if it weren’t for your loaded fiance.”

The sound of blood rushing to his temples overpower the barely audible gasps coming from Sejun and Kyungsoo. Itching to pierce Jiyeon’s pounds of makeup off along with her face, Jimin lurks over
to her, Sehyun on one hip as he towers over the shorter woman with a good few inches in between.

“That’s right.” He narrows his eyes. “I wouldn’t have blinked at this place if it weren’t for Jeongguk’s recommendation. He highly praised the designers and customer service, but looks like you’re the only exception here thanks to your incompetent brain and the lack of manners yourself.”

He continues even when Jiyeon’s shade darkens. “It must be hard being unable to treat everyone equally with that biased mind of yours. You can’t help but discriminate everyone either because of your greed and arrogance, or your obnoxiously tight bra isn’t letting you think straight. Either way, I didn’t think you’d go as far as to handle a child who’s probably more mature than you are.”

The woman’s mouth unhinges open, probably to spit something offensive back, but Jimin raises a finger in silence. “Save your breath. You’ve kissed my ass enough. You won’t be dealing with me anymore—I’m leaving.”

Knowing very well what he’d be getting into, he casts a glance at a concerned Kyungsoo accompanying Sejun. “However, I want Kyungsoo hyung to continue working for me since he’s a talented artist who doesn’t treat me like garbage. As long as you’re nowhere near our appointments. If not, I’m taking my business elsewhere and will get him hired somewhere else so that you won’t get anything out of it.”

It’s a large hand at stake, but Jimin is willing to make it if it means he won’t have to work with Jiyeon anymore. Hell, he’ll pay the price himself with the one million Jeongguk’s giving him. It doesn’t matter as long as this bitch of a woman is no longer on his team. The criticism is something he can stomach. Mishandling a child like Sehyun, on the other hand, is intolerable in his book.

He just hopes the whole ordeal won’t cost him more than a million dollars.

Jiyeon angrily brushes her hair out of the way, nostrils flaring in fury as a string of lights and clicks interrupt her. She whirls around, startled to find a crowd of paparazzi and a reporter from the appointed press crowding on the sidewalk right in front of the boutique. She pales.

Shit. Jimin winces and holds Sehyun closer. Just the thing I need.

“Fine.” Jiyeon’s growl snaps him out of his trance. “Do whatever the fuck you want.”

And with that, she makes a beeline for the door, not forgetting to bump into Sejun, who would’ve tripped if it isn’t for Kyungsoo holding him.

Jaebum steps forward and shields Jimin and Sehyun away from the multitude of tabloids eagerly waiting for their daily dose of gossip. Questions and camera shutters simultaneously hurl towards him, forcing him to shut himself down for one second before taking a deep breath and handling the affairs.

“Park Jimin-ssi! What happened? Who was that woman?”

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“Park Jimin-ssi! What happened? Who was that woman?”

“Is this little boy your son?”

“—Seoul’s most selective designer—

“Looking good, Jimin!”

Swearing under his breath, Jimin hands Sehyun over to Sejun and asks the child if he’s okay. He brushes the rosy cheek coated in sticky tears and immediately softens, thereafter smiling nervously at Sejun. “Hold him for a sec—let me see what they want. Wait here, though. I don’t want you going
back in without me.”

“You sure about this, hyung? You don’t need to do this now.” Sejun asks.

It’s a bad time and place, but it’s definitely not a bad reason. Jimin straightens, flashes his assistant a reassuring nod, and returns to the awaiting crowd. Downing a notorious boutique manager isn’t going to prevent him from defending an innocent child and standing up for his morals, which included valuing every person the same.

“Good afternoon, everyone,” he politely address the crowd. Jaebum stays close to his side as a dozen reporters huddle in front of him, cameras lowering. “I apologize for the mess but am glad you all could make it today.”

“She deserves it. Heard she’s a complete stuck-up,” a disembodied voice from the back hollers. Snickers scatter across the audience.

Jimin sweetly beams and shakes his head. “No, no. It’s alright. We’ve got it under control. Now, uh, I’m not exactly dressed for the public so do take care with the pictures, please. Ask away, and I’ll try my best to answer them all. You have—” He pulls out his phone and checks the time. “—seven minutes left.”

The paps are really something. They’ve made the best out of seven minutes and by the time Jimin bids them goodbye, he’s caught the names of five reporters and a few of the hottest foreign restaurants in Seoul.

On top of that, there isn’t a single trace of Jiyeon at the shop once they head inside. Kyungsoo, bewildered and completely out of it, asks Jimin if he wants another design for the bachelor party in place of the current one.

Jimin frowns. “But I love this one. What’s wrong with it? Everyone said it was beautiful.”

“That’s the point—everyone’s already seen it.”

“So what? I’m not wasting a perfectly gorgeous outfit just because I accidentally wore it in front of the public. Besides, they haven’t seen the blazer yet. It might need some cleaning but it’s amazing and I’m taking it.”

“Well, if that’s what you want,” Kyungsoo skeptically agrees.

“It’s what I want, but if you’re still worried, go ahead and do some modifications. I trust you, hyung.” He grins at him.

The designer returns the grin. “Thank you, Jimin.”

“No, hyung, thank you for putting up with me and my impatiently confused ass. I’m sorry for making a scene back there. I hope you won’t get in trouble.”

“S’not a big deal. Jiyeon has always been a crazy bitch. Honestly, none of the customers like her. Sehyun was just an easy target.”

Jimin grunts. “Yeah, I figured. I should’ve paid closer attention to Sehyun, but still. That crossed the line.”

“Tell me about it.” Kyungsoo beams. “Don’t go to hard on yourself—it wasn’t your fault. I personally think you were quite the sight outside. Challenging Jiyeon with your sneakers and suit,
hair wild, face determined and toddler in your arms. It was like a breath of fresh air. You’d make a great dad someday, kid.”

Right. Because a twenty-four-year-old who happens to be the fake fiance of a just as fake husband could have fake children.

He simply laughs and asks him to assist him in undressing before he ruins the luxurious outfit any further.

If Jeongguk ever got a hold of the stunt he pulled off today, there’s no telling whether they’ll even have their fake wedding anymore.

Jeongguk definitely gets a hold of it, thanks to the hashtags trending nationwide on social media and the articles on Naver. Jimin can tell from his scowl when he finds him outside his porch—four hours earlier than expected—suit in tact and tie loosened.

Before he can say a word, Jimin rushes to explain. “Please don’t fire Sejun and Jaebum. They wouldn’t have stopped me from calling her out. I just did what I thought was best.”

Jeongguk gives a curt nod. “Damn right.”

Jimin blinks. “Damn right? What do you mean by ‘damn right?’ Do you even know what happened?”

“Jaebum filled me in.” He answers gravely. “If I’d been there I would’ve made sure that was the bitch’s last day.”

He honestly expected frustration and disappointment directed towards him and is left stunned when none of it happens. “But—I mean, uh. That’s not what a Jeon would do.”

Jeongguk quirks a brow. “A Jeon never lets anyone belittle them.”

That’s when Jimin narrows his eyes. “Isn’t that what you did to me?”

“Okay, well, that was short-lived. Besides, I had a feeling you’d break my face if I kept the act any longer. I like my face the way it is.”

“Good choice,” he smiles warily. “I went a little overboard in the front of the paparazzi, though.”

“Listen, a Jeon isn’t afraid to defend the weak and innocent.” Jeongguk pokes the tip of Jimin’s nose, grinning when he swats his hand away. “We don’t tolerate being trampled over.”

“I like this Jeon better. Welcome back.” Jimin smiles and reaches over to give him a swift hug.

He lets himself bask in Jeongguk’s warm scent for a second as his arms instantly gather around his waist, tugging him closer against his chest. Realizing that he missed him more than he thought he did, Jimin clears his throat and pulls away before either of them get too comfortable.

“Come inside. Sehyun’s been dying to meet you. He keeps talking about you being the king of the country and stuff. His dad fed him a lot of crap so it’s about time he learns the truth about you.”


“Yeah, whatever. Play nice, okay? He’s just a kid.”
He shoots him a further wounded look. “I am also great with kids, thank you very much. Do you take me for a monster?”

“Is it bad if I say yes?” Jimin snickers and leads him into the kitchen where Sehyun is hunched over a cookie, mini piping bag in hand. He’d given the child some leftover icing to keep him entertained while he finished up the batch of orders Seokmin needs delivered.

“Yoonie, meet Jeongguk.” Jimin strokes the boy’s head for his attention. Sehyun sullenly looks up. He’s been quiet ever since the boutique fiasco and hadn’t even cheered up during the taste-testing session they had at the wedding cake expo. “Jeongguk, meet Sehyun.”

Jeongguk stoops low to his knees and meets Sehyun’s wide-eyed gaze. “Hey, buddy! I’m so glad to meet you. I heard you went with Jimin to try dresses on and eat lots of cake. Must’ve been yummy, huh?” Sehyun studies him before slowly nodding in response.

Jeongguk grins broadly, leaning closer towards the chair. “I’m glad you kept him company, ‘cause you know what? Between you and me, Jiminie here always gets in trouble. Right?”

“Shut up,” Jimin barks without meaning to. He rolls his eyes when Jeongguk cackles. Sehyun joins him, casting Jimin an embarrassed glance as he bobs his head in agreement.

“I don’t deserve this mistreatment,” Jimin grumbles albeit smiling in relief. At least Jeongguk was able to cheer the kid up a bit. “Let me just finish the rest of the cookies and box them for the delivery. I have to drop them off at Seokmin’s in another hour.”

Jeongguk heaves himself up and sets down a large paper bag that he hadn’t noticed beforehand. “I’ll help, even though I’m shit at baking. Wait, see what I brought you back from Milan first!”

Jeongguk eagerly digs into the bag and hands a skeptical Jimin two slim maroon wine bottles. “These babies are Italy’s best white and red wine.” He proceeds to pull out a ribbed package. “Authentic Cioccolato di Modica—I think I mispronounced that, but anyways, it’s chocolate from Modica. It’s like the first chocolate ever made.”

“You didn’t actually go to Modica, did you?” Jimin sets the bottles down on the counter and examines the boxed chocolate.

“Well, no. I went to the museum. But it’s still legit.” He waves a piece of paper from the bag. “So, I obviously wasn’t able to get you pizza, but I did manage to ask around for an original recipe. I’m pretty sure we can get the chef at home to take a look at it—why are you snorting?”

“I know you can’t bring back food, idiot.” Jimin says, awed. “I was only kidding. Why’d you go through all the trouble for a recipe?”

“I don’t know. I thought you were being serious,” Jeongguk admits. “So, you don’t want it?”

“Of course I do! I’d like to make it one day.” He plucks the notes out of Jeongguk’s hands and smiles at him. “Thank you. It’s really thoughtful.”

Jeongguk grunts in reply and brings out the final souvenir. “Last but not least, a stationary box from Venice. And yes, I went there and bought it myself.” He carefully places it on the table and flips the impressively designed lid open. Inside is a pad of silk paper, decorated in floral vintage background. Perched on top is a golden twistable pen that glints below the fluorescent light.

Before Jimin can say another word, Jeongguk gently lifts the pen and twirls it to the side. A sparkle catches his attention and he takes the pen from him to find the words *G.G.G + C.C.C* engraved
along the gold surface.

Heart leaping in somersaults, Jimin swallows thickly and shakes his head. “You’re such a dork.”

He grins. “I wonder whose fault that is.”

“Thanks, Guk.” Jimin reaches upwards to peck the younger man’s cheek, breaking away when Sehyun yells his disapproval and snorting at the child’s horrified expression.

Jeongguk shrugs off his blazer, frees his tie, and rolls his sleeves up to his elbows. “Okay, back to work. What should I do?”

As Sehyun watches Pororo on the TV, they both loiter around the kitchen, making simple designs on the cookies and letting them dry on the cooling rack. Jeongguk slips into the living room to check up on the child before walking back in.

“Did you ever happen to find a red shirt?” He leans over the counter and snatches a washcloth to dry the bowls with.

“Yeah, Sooyeon got me this whole outfit based on red.”

“Pity.” Jeongguk wickedly grins. “Here I was hoping I’d strip you down and dress you in red myself.”

Jimin flicks his wrist, sending droplets flying into his face. “Keep the fantasies to yourself. There’s a kid in the next room.”

“So? Kids have siblings. How’d you think that happened?”

“We’re not doing anything that involves making babies, twat.” He scoffs. “We’re not even married.”

Eyes lazily glazing in what seems carnal lust, Jeongguk purrs out a “Yet,” and wordlessly swipes in to lick a glob of frosting off Jimin’s cheek.

“W-what the—Jeon Jeongguk! Ew!” Jimin screeches and wipes his face with the back of his hand.

Jeongguk chuckles at the apprehension. “Well, I couldn’t let the frosting go to waste now, could I?”

The huskiness lacing his voice sends heat creeping up his back and spreading through his body. Jimin flushes at the sight of Jeongguk’s darkened pupils narrowing as the smile fades off his parted lips.

Two can play at this game, he realizes, and scoots in to where Jeongguk stands. He tentatively lifts his chin with a forefinger, tongue darting across his bottom lip and twisting it underneath his front teeth as his eyes grow hooded.

“Fuck.” Jeongguk emits a guttural noise of appreciation and cups the back of Jimin’s neck to tug him closer. “Jimin, baby—”

“Can we go to the doggie cafe now? Pweaase!”

The two stumble backwards at the speed of light from the interruption. Reddened to the core, Jimin whirls around to resume his dishwashing while Jeongguk smiles and scoops a prepared Sehyun up.

“Appa said I can feed the puppies with Chimin today,” Sehyun informs him. “Wanna come with us, Chunkook?”
“Sure!” He ruffles the child’s hair. “Sounds awesome. I haven’t fed doggies in a long time.”

“You’re too old now.” Jimin suppresses a snicker as Jeongguk feigns a wounded look in response to Sehyun’s accusation.

“Yeah? But I’m not too old to give you a piggyback ride if you’re nice to me and the pups.” Jeongguk buttons his collar and takes the child’s hand.

“You guys can wait for me outside. I just need to box these up and send them to Seokmin. He lives next door.” Jimin grabs a couple of foldable cardboard boxes from a cabinet.

“Hurry up, Chimin!” Sehyun whines, bouncing in Jeongguk’s grip. “The doggies are hungry!”

He grins after them and quickly wraps up the baking business, relieved that the icing managed to dry on time. As Jimin seals the last box and sets it down in the awaiting pile, his eyes catch the engraved work of the golden pen left on top of Jeongguk’s stationery box.

A flurry of warmth runs across his chest. For a non-romantic, Jeon sure is a little too sappier than they say.

When Jimin finally marks his checklist off and brings the boxes out to the front, he finds a beaming Jeongguk chasing Sehyun across the lawn. They scream in delight upon catching each other and he’s about to warn them not to roll around in the grass but fails as Jeongguk quickly tucks Sehyun onto his neck for a piggyback ride.

He’d be damned if the sight of a disheveled Jeongguk in his dress shirt, Oxfords, and Rolex laughing along to the little boy’s cheers doesn’t make him want to lunge himself at him and kiss him senseless into the ground.

He’d certainly be damned.

They manage to deliver the cookies to Seokmin midway through their trip to the dog cafe. Jimin explains how his coworker’s side business came to be in the span of their ten minute walk. The visit is also nice to an extent. Being a cat person himself, Jimin opts to watch their table as Sehyun and Jeongguk play with the dogs and assist the employees in feeding them the provided treats. At first the child is disappointed when he isn’t allowed to feed his own treats, but Jimin promises to take him to the park one day where they could give the biscuits to pets.

Sejun and Jaebum are waiting for them by the time they return to Jimin’s house for the rest of their errands, including meeting their original wedding planner for the first time at a restaurant in Incheon. There Jimin and Jeongguk discuss the entertainment they’d like—majority of the meeting consists of Jeongguk readily agreeing to Jimin’s suggestions, much to his surprise.

“I’d rather have a band playing instead of an orchestra. You know what I mean?” Jimin says as their wedding planner, Baekhyun, furiously scribbles every detail down. It’s a weird preference considering their social circle would think low of a group of college graduates playing ballads instead of something more sophisticated.

Jeongguk nods anyway. “I want a band too. Orchestras are obsolete. We wouldn’t want our guests to fall asleep.”

Later, Jimin slips a hand onto his knee and whispers his gratitude, to which Jeongguk replies by squeezing his hand.
Sehyun is fast asleep when the meeting is over, so Jimin decides to drop the child off despite Jinyoung having an hour left till the end of his shift and his spa treatment at Lei in another fifteen minutes.

“It’s okay. I’ll hold him while you do your things. We can wait for you outside.” Jeongguk offers.

“Sejun, how long is that appointment?” Jimin asks.

“It’s just a paraffin wax bath and a massage so. Probably an hour.”

“Can you please book a room that has arrangements for Jeongguk and Yoonie? Something comfortable for them as they wait, if it isn’t too late.”

His assistant picks his phone up. “You got it.”

Private rooms are apparently a thing from the way Jimin is easily placed in a luxurious suite. They sat him on a recliner while providing Jeongguk with a leather armchair where he sets a dozing Sehyun in the crook of his neck. Sejun bids them goodbye for the day and dismisses himself after handling the rest of the affairs, and Jaebum is expected to return in an hour to pick them up.

So it feels strange, being alone in a big room as his masseuse takes care of him with Jeongguk sitting in the back. He can hear him subtly tapping his tablet and make inquiries on his phone, taking care not to wake the child in his arms.

It’s sort of like an alternate universe—a domestic one involving their everyday lives as parents with their child or something. He shakes the thought away.

Jeongguk must’ve noticed his tension because he looks up from his screen when the masseuse leaves. “Everything okay?”

Jimin glances over his shoulder. “Yeah, why?”

“It’s been a hell of a day. For you, at least. Handling that manager, answering the tabloids, baking, taking care of Sehyun, planning our wedding. You must be exhausted.”

He shrugs. “Just a typical day for a Jeon, I guess.”

Jeongguk studies him with an unreadable expression. “You’re not having second thoughts thanks to all this, are you?”

_No, but I’m warming up to you even though I know I shouldn’t._

“I’m fine, Jeongguk. This may be new and foreign to me but it’s nothing I can’t handle.”

“Yeah, but—” He redirects his gaze somewhere else. “I’m just worried about you. It’s not easy adjusting to my world in such little time.”

The masseuse returns so Jimin decides to drop the topic. “I said I’m fine, didn’t I? It’s not a big deal. Stop fretting.”

Jeongguk doesn’t bring it up anymore when they drop by Jinyoung’s apartment to drop Sehyun off once the appointment ends. The child is still fast asleep against Jeongguk’s shoulder, obviously drained from the long day.

Jimin briefly introduces Jeongguk to Jinyoung—to which his friend does nothing but drool over his fiance—and then fills him in on what happened with Jiyeon back at the boutique. Jinyoung dismisses
the incident and instead thanks him profusely for defending his son.

It leaves him stunned because Jimin expected more of a reaction than just a quick dismissal. Jeongguk rolls his eyes and clasps his waist on their way to the elevator.

“Don’t act so surprised,” he says. “Anyone can tell how much you love the kid. You may not be with him all the time but you’re like that guardian angel every parent wishes to have.”

“You sound experienced.” Jimin raises a brow, masking his flustered embarrassment. “Got any baby mamas that I should know about?”

Jeongguk snorts. “No. I’m not that sloppy.”

Right. Because you treat every relationship of yours like a goddamn business deal.

When they finally make it back to Jimin’s apartment for the third time that day, Jeongguk escorts Jimin to the bathroom, quickly pecking his cheek and informing that he’ll wait for him in the living room. Apparently his driver had already supplied him with a new set of clothes for the dinner, and all that’s left is for Jimin to shower and get ready himself.

Weirded out by the fact that Jeongguk is paying him more attention than necessary, Jimin succumbs to the warm shower after such a tiring day. The hot water does a much better job at loosening his tense muscles than the masseuse did.

As his skin soaks, he tries to figure their odd relationship out and why Jeongguk is devoting so much of his time when he could be anywhere else but tagging along with his so-called burdensome fiance. As much as Jimin’s tempted to confront him about it, he figures he’d rather stay oblivious.

He rakes through his closet once he flings a towel on and brings out the outfit Sooyeon bought for him. After blow-drying his hair, Jimin slips into the large-cut V-neck tunic, tightens his waist with the help of a circular belt, and yanks on the skin-tight slacks. The whole ensemble is black except for the velvety suede wine red blazer that hugs his slender frame.

It may not exactly be what Jeongguk had in mind but it’s perfect. Jimin has to admit that he actually looks hot in front of his reflection. He fastens a broad choker at his throat, parts his curled bangs to reveal darkly drawn brows, and puts on a pair of one-inch ankle boots.

If he’d known about Jeongguk’s impeccable taste before, he would’ve taken advantage of it earlier. Eager to surprise him, Jimin tiptoes into the living room and is astonished to find Jeongguk passed out on the couch, laptop wide open across his thighs and a rack of clean clothes draped besides him instead.

“Poor baby,” he cooes. He closes the laptop lid and sets it down on the table, careful not to wake him. Luckily, Jeongguk doesn’t budge a bit at the readjustment. The jetlag and tiresome meddling definitely took a toll on him, once again proving that he isn’t invincible after all.

Jimin kicks off his boots and enters the kitchen. He checks his pantry before calling Sejun to cancel the reservations at Jungsik. Reassuring that they’ll have dinner at home, he gets to work on the pasta he’s already boiling.

It takes him a good thirty minutes to complete the chicken carbonara and have garlic bread in the oven. He grills some pork and vegetables to finish the meal off, sets the table with the nicest dining he owned, and cracks open the Italian wine bottle Jeongguk had gifted him.

There’s not enough time to prepare dessert so Jimin makes do with the subtly sweet red wine. He
lights up some taper candles and plugs in a Frank Sinatra CD for background music before making his way back to the couch.

“Hey.” Jimin gently brushes his hand against Jeongguk’s cheek. “Hey, Jeongguk. Wake up. Dinner’s ready.”

He stirs, dazed as he struggles to keep his sweltering eyes open. Upon focusing on Jimin, Jeongguk hurriedly shoots up, hand flying to his hair and then downwards to check the time.

“W-what—where are we?” His brows draw together in confusion. “We’re not at the restaurant, are we?”

Jimin shakes his head. “Nah, you fell asleep so I cancelled our plans and made dinner here instead. I hope you don’t mind. It’s nothing special.”

Jeongguk sweeps his gaze over him from head to toe, mouth slack in awe as Jimin gets up and slips back into the boots. With a grunt, he heaves himself up and smiles at him sleepily.

“I don’t mind at all.” And Jimin isn’t sure whether he’s referring to the outfit or the home-cooked dinner.

Ten minutes into their meal, he realizes he means both.

Jeongguk happily digs into the carbonara and pork as his eyes fail to stray away from Jimin’s low neckline. He especially seems to appreciate the choker judging from his slightly flushed cheeks when he eventually says, after a pregnant pause, “You’re gorgeous.”

Jimin narrows his eyes. “Does it really take you that long to say something nice? Is it hard complimenting me?”

“No!” He darkens. “I’m just—I’m just bad with words, okay? Like you’re always full of surprises and I don’t know what to say.”

For some reason, the comment stings him. “What, so you would’ve continued to think of me as some slob if I hadn’t dressed up?”

“No.” Jeongguk repeats, shoulders slumping. “I’ve realized that there’s no difference between you dressing up and you walking around in sweats and sneakers. You were always this beautiful.”

“Oh.” The sudden pounding in his chest startles him.  Jimin glances away and forks at his food, ignoring the way his nape coats in warmth.

Jeongguk smirks. “Do you prefer my insults over my compliments? Hasn’t anyone ever called you beautiful before?”

“Well, duh. As a way to get into my pants, sure.” He says curtly. “Same old.”

Jeongguk purses his lips in disapproval. “I’m so glad you’re not going back to that wretched diner. The last thing I want is to punch douches away from my husband.”

His possessive tone doesn’t make him feel any better.

Jimin registers their video call, the thoughtful souvenirs he received, spending time with Sehyun and looking after him at the dog cafe, the intimate dinner they're sharing right now—it's all part of the romantically passionate act Jeongguk is required to pull in order to sate his father and earn the title he
desperately wants.

He needs to drill that into his head, or else.

“Don’t worry. No one would want me that bad if they knew they had to go through you first,” he forces a laugh. “They’ll pity you for marrying me, to say the least.”

Jeongguk grins. “Tell me about it.”

The rest of the dinner goes on smoothly, consisting of Jeongguk’s escapades in Milan while Jimin complains about the endless wedding planning him and his amazing wedding planner’s been burdened with. Plates set aside, they lounge against the counter, sipping their wine and just talking. The clock strikes eleven by the time they put the plates away.

“It’s getting late.” Jeongguk pulls his phone out. “I’ve got work tomorrow and you and Sejun have more errands to run. I’ll leave you alone now.”

“Ugh, yeah.” Jimin yawns. “I can’t wait for this whole damn thing to be over.”

“Just one more week until we’re married.”

“That doesn’t sound any more reassuring.”

Jeongguk mischievously grins and hauls his coat and tie over his shoulder. “It shouldn’t, because it means I’ll get to spank your ass whenever you’re mean to me. Either that—” He shrugs the coat on before pulling Jimin up against his body. “Or a tickle fight.”

Jimin gasps. “You wouldn’t dare. Jeongguk, stop it! Oh my god—”

He screeches as Jeongguk flips him onto the couch, hands securing his hips as his fingers find his side and begin to tickle him mercissely. Jimin thrashes around, wheezing and trying to aim for a kick in the balls while laughing breathlessly at the same time. Jeongguk tears away at the sight of Jimin’s eyes watering.

“That’ll teach you not to mess with me.” He smirks and helps him up. “You better remember it.”

“Oh, I will remember it.” Jimin huffs, wiping his eyes. “For payback. Now get lost.”

“Okay, okay. Night, Jimin.” He gathers his spare clothes and briefcase.

“Night. Thanks for all the help today.”

“Anytime.” Jeongguk pauses, biting his lip as his gaze drops to Jimin’s mouth. Instead of stealing a kiss from him, he opts for Jimin’s hand and presses his lips against his knuckles instead. “Sweet dreams.”

Jimin gives him a small smile and watches him run down the steps and jog into his awaiting car. Once they drive out of sight, he closes the door and makes a beeline for the couch where Jeongguk had previously slept on, burying his nose into the pillows in hopes of finding remnants of his scent.

He’s in deep shit. He’s in deep shit and he worries that nothing can be done about it.
this chapter, as difficult and long as it was to write, will hopefully leave us thinking. we've started to introduce some new minor characters and will continue to open up to more people soon! their engagement party is near so i can't wait to reveal what's in store. thank you for reading and till then, see you later!!

btw, the reference pics may show jimin as blonde, but he's still black-haired until he miraculously dyes his hair or something. hm, i should consider that. つeresaつ

find me on tumblr and twitter. ❤
Chapter Summary

his conscience that’s been nagging at the back of his mind slowly dissipates into thin air, no longer reappearing when jeongguk looks at him like he’s the only star in the room. It’s hard to believe, but easy to forget, that one of them is merely playing along.

Chapter Notes

hello my lovelies! (・ω・) we’re back with a new chapter after a week. Finals were hectic, but needless to say, i’m sorry for the wait! during the last week, i’ve gotten to draw a bit more before updating. find me on Instagram.

now, before we get started, thank you so much for your reviews! i greatly appreciate them and they motivate me to update faster. ❤ ack, do take care when reading this chapter. it’s really not the best of terms and you might get upset midway, but fear not! things will get better.

enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“How do I look? Good? Okay? Tolerable?” Jimin asks for the nth time this evening as he whirls around to face his prep team consisting of Sejun, Sooyeon, Hyemin, and Kyungsoo. They hover around him like bees, adding the final touches for tonight’s appearance.

Hyemin clicks her tongue and gives him a final squirt of setting spray. “Good is an understatement, boy. Your beauty will leave everyone snatched, trust me. Right, guys?”

“Definitely,” Sooyeon cooes. The two men nod in agreement.

In his defense, no amount of reassurance can calm him down in time for the big day. All Jimin did was blink and suddenly he’s being steered around and around through errands and then carted into his house for a grand makeover.

Despite it being just the engagement party and not the wedding itself, it’s still nerve-wracking as it’s the first officially public event he’d be attending with Jeongguk prior to their big announcement. They’ve only invited a hundred people or so—majority of the guest list being people he’d never known existed.

Jimin side-eyes his reflection once again.

Kyungsoo had gone to a completely different level after allowing him to modify the outfit which he accidentally leaked to the public. He’d gotten rid of the vintage blazer entirely, replacing it with a modern one from Saint Laurent adorned in noticeable sparkles and a deep V that stops at the peak of his chest. It’s paired with a Chanel brooch on his right, an unbuttoned collar that exposes his throat in
all its bare glory. The dress shirt underneath is tightened at the waist and matched with fitted slacks.

Soyeon parted his fringe between his forehead the way Sejun had suggested while Hyemin dusted his cheeks with a peachy blush, enhanced his eyes in a slight smokey nude, curled his lashes, and swiped tinted lip balm over his lips. The prep team kept his jewelry minimum, giving him a ring or two and chain earrings to compliment the style.

“We’re going for a natural look,” Hyemin explained as she started to pack her materials then. “Just enough to bring out your features and give you elegant, simple vibes. Like you’re not trying too hard to fit in.”

“What’s the point,” Jimin mutters under his breath. “I had to memorize a hundred profiles just so that I wouldn’t look stupid.”

The doorbell interrupts them.

“Shit, that must be Jeon-ssi. Alright, team! Let’s bail.” Hyemin announces as Sejun rushes to answer the door.

Soyeon hands over a Louis Vuitton wallet that he’s never seen before and gently lifts his chin up. “Now, raise your head high and look down on everyone else.”

Jimin frowns thoughtfully. “I thought we’ve already discussed this before, noona. I don’t look down on others. I raise my head high and—” Upon studying the expectant looks both Kyungsoo and Soyone are sporting, he says, “Force Jeongguk to get me fried chicken after the party. I didn’t starve to fit into this suit for nothing.”

Soyeon rolls her eyes. “Kid, Le Saint is catering your party and here you are daydreaming about fried chicken.”

“Who’s daydreaming about fried chicken?” Jeongguk lazily pipes up as he struts in wearing an open-collared blouse and unbuttoned blazer that hangs over his shoulders. There isn’t a single trace of jewelry albeit the tiny hoops he wears on a daily basis, the sleeves ghosting his fingers and the leather tights emphasizing his mile-long legs.

Like Jimin, his dark hair is parted, but unlike Jimin, gives off a dangerously seductive vibe with his bangs completely pushed back, stray locks of hair swept across his forehead. His flawlessly angled brows and sharp jawline are on point and grant him the overall image of an enticing prince.

He looks so perfect it kills to stare at him any longer.

Jimin sighs. “I was saying that you need to treat me to a night of fried chicken in return for that one granola bar I had today.”

He feels faint under Jeongguk’s observantly smoldering gaze, hazel eyes raking him up and down as an awestruck smile curls onto his lips.

“I’ll buy you all the fried chicken you want just for looking like this.” Jeongguk’s eyes curve delightedly before leaning over to peck his cheek. “By the way, I brought you something.”

He pulls back and peels open the ribboned package he’d been holding.

Inside is a delicate caged diamond choker, strung with sparkling jewels twinkling with every movement. It’s a simple thing and hardly formal, yet leaves the prep team gasping as Jeongguk moves over to gently sling it around his neck.
“What do you think?” He murmurs after securing the clasp. The choker fits snugly at his throat. Jeongguk had chosen well—the modest design easily compliments his natural appearance.

“It’s beautiful.” Jimin croaks and tilts his head to the side. His skin is peppered with bokeh thanks to the light catching off of each jewel. “You didn’t have to.”

Jeongguk cups his chin with two fingers. “I wanted to. It’s our engagement party.”

For a contract that you’re suddenly making yourself a little too comfortable with.

Jimin flashes him a sweet smile anyway. “Thanks. I’ll give it back to you by tonight.”

That’s when Jeongguk’s brows raise and draw together in confusion. He glances around before leaning in, voice alluringly low. “It’s a gift meant for you to keep, Jimin.”

“Oh, okay. Cool,” Jimin stutters, appalled with this new information. Instead of refusing the present, though, he slides a hand up Jeongguk’s chest and lets his fingers brush past the open neckline. His teasing touch matches his wider smile. “Thank you.”

Jeongguk seems unfazed by this, to his disappointment, and plucks his hand off to tuck it in his own. Their fingers intertwine almost uncomfortably as his fiance thanks Jimin’s prep team and dismisses them for the evening.

“They’re coming to the party, right?” Jimin asks and gives them a little wave as Jeongguk escorts him to the door.

“Of course,” he replies. “They’ll be right behind us.”

Jeongguk agreed to add his team and assistant to the guest list considering Jimin hasn’t got much of a social circle to invite. It was quite nice of him to do so, because they’d at least be able to keep him company better than the other guests, if anything.

They arrive at the Lotte—a five-star luxury hotel notorious for its extravagant banquets in the heart of Seoul. Not to mention the massive, contemporary architecture and famously spacious interior design.

Camera lights repeatedly flicker like fireflies by the time the Mercedes pulls into the valet parking, where Jeongguk opens Jimin’s door after handing the keys over to their assigned valet. There’s dozens of reporters huddled in a group near the entrance that click pictures even before he can get out of the car.

Jeongguk looks thoroughly distressed when Jimin explains, “Oh, yeah. I promised them another ten-minute interview. I’ll make it quick, Guk, come on.”

He hesitantly nods and trudges after him, gesturing for Jaebum to follow as Jimin makes his way to the awaiting paparazzi.

“Park Jimin-ssi! Excited for tonight?”

“Jeon Jeongguk-nim, what do you have to say about the CEO of Hyundai’s exposure?”

“Wait, Jimin, that’s not the outfit we saw the other day, is it?”

“How’s Sehyun-ah doing?”

“Where do you guys plan to honeymoon?” The loud question from the back is clearly the last straw for Jeongguk, who growls in annoyance. His grip tightens around Jimin’s wrist as he presses him
closer to his side.

Jimin smiles up at him and squeezes his hand. “Don’t worry, I got this under control.”

“You barely know them, Jimin. You don’t have to tell them anything.”

“They’re harmless. Just watch.” He beams at the crowd. “Hello, everyone! How are you all doing tonight?”

In ten minutes Jimin has given each reporter a piece of advice, starting from flossing tips, recipes, all the way to date ideas and the dismissal of the inquiry concerning Jeongguk’s work. He saves the best question for last, pulling his fiance forward and reaching up to pat his cheek.

“The honeymoon’s confidential, isn’t it, darling? Trust me, I’ve tried to make him spit it out but I might as well be as clueless as you all are.”

Eventually Jeongguk decides that their ten minutes are over and practically drags him away from the tabloids.

“I’m not sure if I should laugh or cry that you’re best friends with the gossip center.” He remarks as the bellboy opens the door for them.

Jimin shrugs. “They’re really not that bad. Look, if you had to tail someone’s rude ass all day for living, you would’ve liked to be treated nicely, too. So, that’s what I do. I give them the answers, they give me my space. Simple. I just want to get along with them.”

Jeongguk’s gaze lingers on him longer than he would’ve liked. His large hand rests at his hip when he sweeps down to give Jimin a chaste kiss on his forehead. “You’re really something else, huh? Come on. There’s people I want you to meet.”

The kiss, being light and brief, definitely does not reassure him and rather sends chills down Jimin’s spine as they enter the venue hall. The MC’s announcement booms over the PA, informing the guests of the couple’s arrival along with a congratulations on their engagement. The more people gather, the tighter Jimin grips Jeongguk’s arm.

“Relax, Jimin. Okay? You’re gonna do great.” Jeongguk murmurs in his ear and graces the audience with a charming grin that sends into applause.

“You owe me so much fried chicken after this, Jeon.” Jimin mutters under his breath.

The younger simply glances back at him, a fond look glazing his crinkled eyes. “All you can eat.”

Sangguk is the first to greet them with hugs and kisses. He takes Jimin by the hand and gives him a firm shake. “Jimin-ah! You look magnificent. Right, Guk?”

“Right.” Jeongguk nods obediently and cutely scrunches his nose up at his father. “You’re lookin’ good too, Dad.”

Which is true. The elderly man is flushed with happiness from head to toe. His brightened eyes and stylized gray hair compliment the sharp suit he’s dressed in.

He looks so professional, Jimin can’t help but tease him. “Out to break some hearts tonight, sir?”

Sangguk laughs heartily. “Not for this old chap. I’m just here to congratulate you two. I’m very proud of you both and hope you have a good time.” His eyes cloud and he he adds in a low whisper,
“But frankly, I’m keeping an eye out for you, Min. There’s a load of nasty people here with nasty problems they might try bothering you with. Although I very well know you won’t let them get away with shit.”

“Neither will I,” Jeongguk assures a little too firmly. “Don’t worry, Dad. I’ve got him.”

“Good, son. Well, I’ll leave you to it.” Sangguk clasps his son’s shoulder and gives them a final wink. “The program’s starting in fifteen minutes and I’m sure Gukkie here is excited to show you off. I’ll see you at dinner. Have fun, and don’t forget to use protection!”

Just like that, he waltzes away before either of them can react to what he said.

“Have you ever thought about how much of a weirdo your dad is?”

“Only you can get away with calling him a weirdo. He’s so ridiculously whipped for you.”

“Weirdos stick together,” he snorts. “That’s probably why. He’s been voicing my conscience these past few years. It’s creepy and annoying at the same time.”

“Not as annoyingly creepy as you are.” Jeongguk adds cheekily, earning a jab in the stomach. He grabs two margaritas from a nearby server and hands it to Jimin in surrender. “Okay, okay, truce. Drink up.”

Jimin smiles up at him apologetically.

Realization flickers across Jeongguk’s face and he nods. “Ah. Hey, you—excuse me, my good man.” The server curiously turns around, returning to them upon Jeongguk’s gesture. “My fiance would like something non-alcoholic. Can you make sure the bar’s supplied with whatever he wants?”

“Yes, of course. What would you like, sir?”

It’s weird to see how much of a trembling impact the billionaire leaves on the poor guy, so he gently says, “A lemonade, please. Thank you,” and sends him off.

“I should’ve remembered that you aren’t a drinker.” Jeongguk shakes his head. “Honestly, you make me feel like a sinner with all your virtues.”

“It’s a choice, not a virtue.” Jimin laughs. “Besides, you don’t need me to prove how much of a sinner you are.”

“I beg to differ.” And there he goes again, lowering his voice to a husky, saccharine tone. His captivating expression and inviting lips would’ve definitely riled Jimin up if it isn’t for a delighted chuckle interrupting their moment.

The two break away to find a tall young man sprinting towards them with a broad smile. The mop of dirty blonde hair compliments his chocolate brown eyes. He’s immaculately dressed in a turtleneck and jeweled blazer. What catches Jimin’s eyes the most is his rectangular-shaped grin that looks oddly endearing, and the hoop cross earring sporting on one ear.

The combination of a handsome brand-name model and the cute boy next door flashes in Jimin’s mind and he tries to search through the database Sejun shoved inside his head, but fails to recognize the man.

“I come home after a runway week in Beijing last night to find an invitation to my best friend’s
engagement party.” He explains after engulfing Jeongguk in a bear hug. The man turns around and smiles at Jimin almost admiringly. “I shit you not, I was about to throw the thing away because I thought it was a prank but, damn. Now I know why Gukkie’s itching to get married.”

Jimin raises a brow at Jeongguk. “I didn’t think you’d have friends, much less a best friend.”

Instead of being offended, the man only snickers. “He doesn’t look that impressed. What’s up, Gukkie? Losing your touch?”


Said douchebag kisses the back of Jimin’s hand and flashes him a wink. “Kim Taehyung. Lovely to meet you, Jimin-ssi. Exceptionally lovely. If I’d known about you two before, I would’ve ditched my trip and try to steal you away from Jeongguk instead.”


At least he has no idea of their little arrangement.

“Oh, I dunno.” Jimin drawls. “I doubt a player is any better than an emotionally constipated tyrant.”

Taehyung whistles, impressed. “I take it you’ve seen through my boy’s thick and thins and frankly, I’m guessing your impression of me isn’t that great, either.”

Jeongguk nearly growls as his arm snakes around Jimin’s waist. “Damn right, Tae, so stop flirting with him and get lost.”

His friend mirrors his glare. “I will if you stop hogging him! It’s been like ten minutes and the only person he’s met so far is your dad. Jiminie is making history, man. Everyone’s dying to get a closer look at him.”

Now it’s Jimin’s turn to frown. “Shit. I should’ve stayed lowkey.”

“Are you kidding?” He shakes his head incredulously. “You’ve sparked flames, my dude. Big ones. Now the entire Seoul is trying to figure out who exactly snatched the eligible bachelor Jeon Jeongguk all the way to the altar.”

“In that case, Guk, how does tying you up to the altar sound?” Jimin wiggles his brow. “It’ll convince everyone while we’re at it.”

Jeongguk sends him a mocking smirk. “I’d rather you tie me up in our bedroom, baby.”

Taehyung cackles at the sight of Jimin’s cheeks darkening beneath the blush. “Hope you two manage sitting through the program, dinner, and people before getting the hell out of here to enjoy your sexy time. I’ll meet up with you guys later.”

They eventually do spend the next hour greeting their guests one by one around the venue. It’s a miracle that Sejun had him go through that binder, because even if Jimin doesn’t remember each socialite as well as he’d want, he’s still able to recall a few points about the respective person that’s worth conversing about.

To his relief, majority of the guests are quite nice and friendly. Some of them are reserved and only make small talk with him—not that he’s complaining.
They bump into Junghyun, who’s clad in a royal blue, open-collared blazer halfway through their rounds. Jeonghwa stands behind him in a just as expensive but awfully plain long-sleeved pinup dress which Jimin decides not to comment on. They politely acknowledge him, although awkward, but he couldn’t care less.

Jeongguk steers him away from the last batch of specialists as soon as the PA introduces their program, claiming there’s a surprising waiting for him in the outskirts of the ballroom.

“I swear if it’s another obnoxious doctor—” Jimin’s jaw hinges open upon recognizing the group seated in front of him. “Jinwoo-hyung! Seokmin! Jinyoung-hyung and you too, Yoonie! Oh my god.”

Jinyoung looks dashing in his stylized suit, holding an adorable, wide-eyed Sehyun while his coworker and manager wear matching outfits. As Sejun ushers them forward, Jimin glances past the four to find some of his other friends from Vene’s all nicely dressed and waving at him excitedly.

It wasn’t like Jimin hadn’t invited them. Of course he did, considering they’re all he’s got. But when each of them had strangely come up with excuses, he decided to drop it since he wouldn’t have been able to look after them in the midst of socializing with Jeongguk’s circle. Yet here they are, happy to have arrived and attend the program for him.

He hasn’t noticed how handsome Sejun looks in his plaid overcoat suit, either. Everything’s been suddenly handed down to him without the option of taking it slow.

“But how? How’d you get them to come?” Jimin sputters in awe.

His assistant merely points to where Jeongguk is standing. “You should ask Mr. Mastermind over there. He’s the one who planned everything.”

When Jimin whirls around to find him sheepishly grinning at him, he lunges into his arms without thinking better of it and slings his hands around his neck, to which Jeongguk responds by lifting him off his feet and twirling them around.

“Thank you, thank you, Guk.” Jimin breathes. “It means so much to me.”

“You’re welcome,” he softly replies as their noses meet. Gaze dropping down to his lips and eyes proceeding to flutter shut, he leans in for a slow, sweet kiss—one that Jimin isn’t ashamed of sharing in front of his friends.

“Appa, I’m hungry! I don’t wanna see Chimin and Chunkook kissing!”

The grownups laugh at Sehyun’s complain while Jeongguk sets Jimin down to pick the child up. He tickles his stomach with one finger before acknowledging the guests. “Alright, everyone. Please take a seat and make yourselves comfortable. The appetizers should be here any minute now. In the meantime, I’m gonna go find something for Sehyun to eat, right, buddy?”

He leads the group to a table near the reserved seats, chatting with some of Jimin’s coworkers, including his manager. Sejun and Jimin decide to take their time and trail behind them at the very back.

“I’m smiling like an idiot, aren’t I?” Jimin ends up asking.

His assistant laughs. “Yeah, but it's adorable. I can tell the surprise really shocked you.”

“It did,” he admits as he watches Jeongguk set Sehyun down on a chair next to Jinyoung after
playing around with him. He moves over and pulls another seat back for Jinwoo and invites Seokmin to sit beside him. “It was thoughtful and unexpected.”

“What can I say?” Sejun grins. “The guy’s smitten with you, so I’m not surprised.”

Or is he? All he’s required to do is marry you and send you off with a million dollars by the end of the year. Doting and spoiling you definitely wasn’t part of the contract. Maybe he isn’t as cold and rotten as you think.

There was nothing cold about the kiss they shared a few minutes ago. Nor was there anything rotten with inviting all his friends over to their faux engagement party. He didn’t have to.

But he wanted to.

“Sejun, I can’t thank you enough for everything you’ve done, but I just need one last favor before you leave.”

“Sure, hyung. What’s up?”

Jeongguk is already beckoning him over to their table, so Jimin quickly asks his assistant to provide the reporters outside some snacks to keep them busy. Once Sejun is out of sight, he saunters towards his fiance, who grins and stretches a hand out for him to take.

His conscience that’s been nagging at the back of his mind slowly dissipates into thin air, no longer reappearing when Jeongguk looks at him like he’s the only star in the room.

It’s hard to believe, but easy to forget, that one of them is merely playing along.

The program, albeit short, is one of the sweetest things Jimin’s ever experienced.

Sangguk takes the mic first, thanking the guests for attending, then acknowledging Jeongguk and him sitting in the front. He takes a second to smile at their entwined hands resting on Jimin’s knee before continuing the speech dedicated to them.

When Sangguk gravely informs the audience about his reaction to their engagement, Jimin tenses at the thought of him admitting that he did blackmail his son into the marriage. He later relaxes as soon as his future father-in-law grins at him and says he’d like to keep the details to himself.

“Nonetheless, I wish this couple my blessings and hope that one day you’ll figure out and support their reasons.” Sangguk finishes and calls in for their special performer, who turns out to be none other than Jeonghan himself, dressed in a tux and a nervous smile.

“I didn’t know Hannie was coming tonight,” Jimin remarks. He twists in his seat and finds Jeongguk smiling absentmindedly at his brother’s polite bow.

“He wasn’t supposed to. Dad usually doesn’t let him tag along to events like these. Not even the kid-friendly ones.”

With a shrug, he wordlessly watches Jeonghan settle onto his stool before taking the microphone and murmuring, “This is a cover dedicated to my brother and Jimin hyung. Hope you like it.”

The melody starts off in an unfamiliar, simply sweet tune. Jeonghan’s soft voice soon follows after, strengthening after the first verse.

I like being independent, not so much of an investment
No one to tell me what to do.

I like being by myself, don’t gotta

Entertain anybody else

No one to answer to.

Jimin instantly recognizes the song three lines in, mouth hinged open as the young boy takes on the stage. There’s something about his version that adds an angelic quality to the song, making it sound more gracious than the original.

But sometimes, I just want somebody to hold

Someone to give me that jacket when it’s cold

Got that young love even when we’re old.

Yeah sometimes, I wish that I could grab your hand

Bring you up, pull you close, be your man

I will love you till the end.

The tempo changes along with Jeonghan’s deepening vocals. He spares a glance at Jeongguk and leans closer to the microphone, fingers dancing across the piano keys.

‘Cause if you’re out there I swear to be good to you

But I’m done lookin’ for my future

‘Cause when the time is right

I know you’ll be here, so for now

Dear someone, this is our love song.

“What the hell Guk, you never told me your brother’s a romantic. This is perfect!” Jimin can’t help but exclaim. He uses the corner of his sleeve to wipe the sudden tears that had welled up in his eyes during the performance.

“Uh huh. A nosy little romantic,” Jeongguk mutters under his breath, earning him a questioning look.

They make no further comment and listen to the rest of the cover, which moves the audience with its cleverly altered lyrics. Even Jimin has to admit the song doesn’t sound as solemn as it normally would’ve been.

Without further ado, the roar of applauds fill the entire venue when Jeonghan voices the ending and takes another polite bow. Sangguk returns afterwards to finish off the program.

Despite Jeongguk being as charming and attentive as ever during dinner, Jimin detects annoyance somewhere beneath those layers. Before he can confront him about it, though, Jeongguk excuses himself to catch up on business with his associates somewhere else, even though he’d claimed he wouldn’t bring up the topic of work tonight.

He does return by the time the music changes, whisking Jimin in his arms and waltzing with him
across the dance floor as other couples join them.

“What’s up? You don’t look too good,” He inquires, looking at up at his unreadable expression.

Jeongguk musters a smile that clearly doesn’t reach his eyes. “I’m fine.”

“You sure? I noticed—”

“Drop it, Jimin. I said I’m fine.”

And that’s that. He distracts himself with other guests and dances until it’s time to bid Jingyoung and his coworkers goodbye. The final straw is when Jeongguk stays suspiciously stiff beside him, not at all like the welcoming host he’d been hours ago.

Before Jimin can drag him to a corner of the ballroom and ask what the hell his problem is, his hand is caught being pulled into another dance, this time led by the handsome Kim Taehyung himself.

“I heard your anger is no joke.” His eyes sparkle in delight. “Pity I couldn’t get to see it for myself.”

Jimin sighs, shoulders slumping along with his irritance. “Sorry. Rough night.”

Concern replaces the humor etched across his face. “Gotcha. Why don’t you sit out and take a breather after our dance? Or maybe you can ask Jeongguk to take you home.”

“Nah, it’s cool. I’ll just skip a few dances and have a drink or something. I don’t want to ruin anyone’s fun.”

Taehyung’s sharp features twist into a piercing stare that studies him longer than he would’ve liked. Finally, he says, “Look, Jimin. I don’t know you nor how you and Guk came to be. If you were someone else, I would’ve asked you million questions about your intentions, considering how vehement he was against marriage. But after meeting you tonight, I think my best friend is damn lucky having you as his partner.”

He grins. “Thanks, but if I were someone else, I’d leave Jeongguk’s ass for yours in a heartbeat.”

They share a laugh but as soon as Taehyung glances past him, his amused expression darkens to something displeasing and his grip on his wrist tightens.

“Taehyung?” Jimin peeks over his shoulder in attempt to follow his gaze. “What’s wrong?”

Without another word, Taehyung gently steers him around. “I’m beat. Now would be the perfect time for a drink. How about we grab something from the counter?”

He leads him off the dance floor and into the bar located further in the venue. Next to the bar is the door to the hallway of washrooms. Before Taehyung can settle him down for a cocktail, Jimin raises his hands in surrender.

“You’re not trying to escape your mistress or something by any chance, are you?” He teases as the barista takes their order.

Taehyung gives him a sidelong glance, lips pursed in a strained smile. “Something like that. Sorry. I needed some fresh air.”

“Don’t apologize, but huh. Must suck being a heartbreaker.”

He chuckles and begins to loosen up. The deep pitch of his laugh slightly startles him. “Definitely. I
don’t recommend being one. Now, what would you like to drink?”

“Oh, um. I’m not too huge on drinking. On second thought, I gotta use the bathroom real quick. In the meantime can you order me an iced tea? Thanks.”

“Sure. I'll see you in fifteen?”

“Yeah. Good luck hiding.”

With that, Jimin turns around and makes his way towards the hallway. There’s a couple of disembodied voices murmuring outside the ladies’ room, which he pays no mind to until afterwards when he steps out of the restrooms. The voices are clearer now and sound like they’re coming from a farther corner near his right.

He freezes when he hears someone oddly familiar saying, “It looks like someone shit on you.”

“It’s the best I could do.”

“Just go home, Junghwa. Why would you even bother attending that motherfucker’s engagement party?”

“First off, it’s my brother’s engagement party and that motherfucker is his fiance, so shut your damn mouth, Eunbi. Besides, what the hell are you doing here after Junghyun clearly said you weren’t invited?”

Jimin suppresses a smile. The funny thing about Jeon Junghwa was that despite the cowardly impression she left on people, she easily defied said impressions with her silent, but deadly words.

And of course, he finds that Hwang Eunbi is still the bitch she’s been the last decade.

“I do whatever I want, Junghwa. Junghyun can’t do shit to me.” Eunbi snorts. “Besides, I’d like to see what Park is upto nowadays. We both know he’s obviously wrapped around your little brother’s finger. It won’t be long before he’s dumped out onto the streets, where he belongs.”

There’s a prolonged amount of silence before Junghwa calmly says, “Fuck off, Eunbi. I don’t care if you won’t listen to either of us, but try messing with Jimin and both Jeongguk and my dad will cut you off.”

“They won’t.” Jimin blurts out and enters the corridor, where he finds Junghwa handling a large stain on her dress, wide-eyed.

Eunbi’s right next to her, clad in a tight-fitting backless dress with a leather jacket hanging off her shoulders. The skirt is hitched up to her thighs, showcasing her slender legs and ankle boots. Her face is caked in makeup, including a dangerous shade of red lipstick as her long hair is thrown back in haphazard waves. She scowls at him.

“Who knows? They might catch her latest STD with one touch, if that’s even possible.” He continues, leaning against the wall and keeping a good distance from the girls.

Now, Jimin would like to say he’s normally a pleasant person, but something about Eunbi makes his toes curl in disgust.

Junghwa freezes the same time Eunbi’s lips curl downwards. She must’ve gotten a lip fillers along with her boob job during the years.
“Well if it isn’t Park Jimin, Seoul’s charity case.” Eunbi sneers. “Who would’ve thought they’d see the day you act superior to me just because you’re marrying Jeongguk.”

“I’ve always been better than you, Eunbi. That’s old news.”

“Don’t think I’m intimidated by you now that you’re engaged to him, you son of a bitch.” Eyes narrowing, she lifts her chin and drawls, “I’ll have you know that Jeongguk’s had a soft spot for me since our trip to Norway last winter. Guess what we did to warm up.”

If anything, Jimin manages to swallow down the jealousy spreading through him like wildfire, because one would know better than to trust a snake’s words. Throwing a look at Junghwa, who looks thoroughly disturbed, he shrugs. “Neither of us couldn’t give a damn what you did. Pity our wedding night would be ruined if Jeongguk did catch something from you. Just saying.”

Now it’s Eunbi’s turn to flush. “We just made out a few times, okay? He wanted to take it further but it felt awkward since I fucked his older brother once so we forgot about it. My point is, Jeongguk may favor you now, but once he finds someone better, it’s over for you. He can choose from a million, so don’t think you’re too special.”

“Yeah? Well, if Jeongguk can choose from a million, why the fuck would he decide to settle down with one, huh?”

Jimin purses his lips as she sputters in response. At least he can take advantage of the question she has no answer to. As Jimin’s voice echoes throughout the hallway, Eunbi decides this as the final blow and with a growl, whirls around and leaves the two to silence.

“That was awkward.” He flashes Junghwa a nervous smile.

She studies him warily before saying, to his surprise, “If they did make out, it’s only because Eunbi pounced on him.”

Jimin blinks, unimpressed. “Yeah, well, to be fair, Eunbi pounces on every dick she sees.” Running a tired hand through his bangs, he checks his reflection off the glass vase nearby. “Besides, I’m not concerned with Jeongguk’s past affairs since it’s none of my business.”

She’s still watching him fiddle with his hair. “We both know you are, Jimin, but I’m not asking you to admit it.”

Hoping to change the subject, he gestures towards the stain she’d been scrubbing at since he walked in. “That’s not going away anytime soon. We can still cover it with something, though.”

Junghwa glances down at her dress and sighs, tossing the crumpled paper towel in the trash. “It’s pointless. I should just go home. No one wants to see the Jeons’ ugly daughter anyway.”

“Your’re not ugly,” Jimin gently says. He hesitantly clasps her shoulder. “You’re just as attractive as your brothers are. The only difference between you two is your self-esteem. I’m pretty sure you’d steal the spotlight if you just boosted your confidence up a notch.”

She smiles halfheartedly.

An idea clicks in his mind and he quickly slides his hand into his blazer, pulling out the silk tie Kyungsoo had included but suggested not to wear. Jimin silently thanks himself for not leaving it behind in his closet, because the next thing he knows, he’s shoving the tie into Junghwa’s hands.

Junghwa raises a brow. “Uh, Jimin—”
“Wrap it around your waist in a way that leaves it hanging right where the stain starts,” he advises. “It’ll look like it’s part of the outfit, trust me.”

She obliges and ties the fabric across her midriff, pulling it into a tight knot and efficiently concealing the blemish.

Jimin steps back, admiring her handiwork. “Perfect. No one will notice.”

Junghwa silently inspects herself on the vase. A small smile graces her lips for the first time tonight as she nods towards him. “Thank you, Jimin.”

“No problem.” He returns the smile and glances over his shoulder to where the party still continues. “Are you heading back?”

“Yeah. You?”

“I’m just going to walk around here for a while. You go on ahead and dance.”

Jeon Junghwa, Jimin decides, is actually a nice person once he peels back the layers of timid insecurity. Although he knows she puts up the walls to protect herself, having her warm up to him is yet another accomplishment worth more than her designer dress.

He finds himself wandering into a series of balconies further down the hallway, each providing an angled view of the neon lit city below. Jimin’s quiet humming interrupts a couple at the corner of the railing whom he hadn’t noticed before. The soft gasps startle him and he turns around to find a pair of shadows huddling near the back.

“Shit. Sorry. I didn’t think anyone was here. I’ll get out,” he backs up, but pauses at the familiar voice groaning out something along the lines of Jimin snitching on him to Sangguk.

Jimin stills. “Junghyun? You okay?”

Sure enough, Jeongguk’s older brother peels himself off the smaller frame and steps into the light. His complexion flushes a dark red, yet Jimin can sense something more than distress in the dim lights.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” Junghyun snaps before recoiling at his mistake. He manages a deep breath. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m fine. What are you doing here?”

Jimin takes a moment to study the petite woman still hiding in the corner. Elegantly dressed in furs, her long raven hair thrown over her bare shoulder, lips left red and smudged. She looks oddly recognizable. He tries to dig through his database. “Just looking around. You?”

“Same.” Junghyun answers stiffly.

The name off the woman finally clicks in his brain, so he ends up saying, “And I’m guessing Im Yoona-ssi is doing the same, huh.”

Im Yoona is more than just a trophy wife. Besides being married to one of the most influential neurologists in Seoul, she’s an award-winning actress and creator of her own makeup line who has business with the Jeons. He only knows this because she proudly mentioned this to him when they first met.

She looks a little too undressed for someone whose husband is currently saving lives on the other side of the country.
The pieces add up when Junghyun—who’s just as bare as she is—sends him a challenging stare. Jimin decides to leave the rest to history, knowing fully well that although he isn’t one to judge, he finally finds a flaw of his that even Junghyun himself is aware of.

Jimin wordlessly returns to the party where he sees Jinwoo and Seokmin conquering the dance floor. A hand grabs his wrist and pulls him back before he can join the two. He whirls around to face an anxious Junghwa clinging onto him.

“Jimin. Let’s stay here,” she frantically says.

Jimin obliges with a frown. “Is Eunbi bothering you again?”

“No, no. She isn’t.” Junghwa easily steers him away from the dance floor. “I figured we should hang out some more.”

And while that is a sweet suggestion, he’s convinced someone, or something must’ve been forcing her to act out of character.

He gently pulls away. “I wish I could, but I’m dead meat. I’d better find Jeongguk and have a last dance before we head home.”

“I saw Taehyung by the bar earlier. He told me he wanted to have another dance with you.” She’s so adamant, it’s almost frightening.

“Um, I don’t know. I can only manage one that I wanted to share with Jeongguk—”

Not to mention the fact that he’s itching to know how his fiance is faring. Despite his earlier annoyance, Jimin’s concerned considering Jeongguk had technically been burdened with an engagement party he’d originally never asked for.

Jimin catches sight of a mop of blonde hair. Upon seeing Taehyung’s mouth set in a grim line as he zips through the crowd, he remarks. “Taehyung’s here, but he looks pissed.”

What confuses him the most is when he watches Taehyung approach Jeongguk near the bar and snatch a glass of scotch which the younger was about to down.

They seem to be exchanging angry words with each other judging from the way Jeongguk snaps and gets up, to which Taehyung scowls in response.

“What’s gotten into them?” Jimin asks, incredulous. “I should go break it up before they start a fistfight.”

Junghwa yanks him back. “No! Just stay here, Jimin. Please?”

Now it’s his turn to glare. “Alright, Junghwa, spill it. What the fuck is going on?”

“What else? She’s trying to hide you from figuring out who your fiance’s real lover is.”

Eunbi slithers behind them, a wicked smile gracing her dark lips. She points a dainty forefinger towards the crowded dance floor. “See him over there? That’s Kim Yugyeom, a model on the Vogue team and heir to KM Holdings. Which, if you hadn’t known, is Jeon Industries’ longest and closest partner. Him and Jeongguk have been tight-knit since primary school. Rumor has it that they’ve been in a relationship ever since last year. Who knows—he’s probably here to take back what he’s owned all along.”
At that moment, Jeongguk breaks free from Taehyung’s grip and stalks towards a gorgeously tall man waiting for him near the edge. He’s dressed in a dark suit that flaunts his every dangerous aspect—from his chiseled jaw, sultry eyes, silky hair, and the seductive smile he gives Jeongguk when the latter wraps a hand around his neck.

Nausea rushes through Jimin’s spine and floods his mind. He falters in his step as his stomach churns with a feeling of sudden realization—as if he’d been lured right into the mouse-trap.

“They’ve already danced the night away,” Eunbi continues. “I heard they reserved their own room to catch up on things. Taehyung’s tried to keep them apart, but hey, he might tap your ass after Jeongguk dumps it.”

He hears Junghwa say, “Make her leave, Hyun.”

“I warned you once, Eunbi,” Junghyun’s voice cuts through his reverie. “I’m not doing it again. Scram.”

“And miss all this?” She raises her brows. “Never in a million years. Admit it. We all know Jeongguk would choose his real Prince Charming over this pathetic excuse of a Cinderella any day.”

“Shut the fuck up. Yugyeom was invited for a reason,” Junghyun barks, now occupying Jimin’s side.

“Here I thought Jeon would try to get away with it after using his diner friends as a distraction.”

Stinging tears blur his vision by now and before Jimin knows it, he growls at her in a low whisper, “Get the fuck out.”

“Oh, I will.” Eunbi turns on her heel with a sweet smile. “I’ve gotten all that I came here for.”

“Ignore that crazy bitch.” Junghyun remarks once they watch her exit the crowd.

Jimin laughs darkly. “Last time I checked, that crazy bitch is your friend.”

Glancing away from the dance floor, he catches a pair of concerned brown eyes staring at him across the crowd. Jimin forces a smile at Taehyung before turning back to the Jeon siblings. The damage is too much to bear, not even for someone like him, who had been swallowing his feelings ever since his father’s negligence as a child.

It’s more than overwhelming tonight.

“Sangguk cannot know about this,” he presses. “Okay? He might kill if he finds out.”

“Dad left before the dance so that he wouldn’t disturb you guys.”

“Good. That’s great. He doesn’t have to know. Promise me you won’t tell him.”

The two exchange wary looks before Junghwa gently says, “Jimin, it could really be a big misunderstanding. You should talk to Jeongguk about this—”

“I don’t care who he fucks, alright? I don’t.” He instantly regrets snapping. With a strained sigh, he tells them he’s calling it a night and have Jaebum drop him and the rest of his friends off, but curses when Junghyun informs that his driver had already taken them home half an hour ago.

As much as he likes distracting himself with the gig, karma continuously bites his ass in reminder of the disadvantage he has as Jeongguk’s fiance—the bitter fact that at the end of the day, the fun and
games are merely temporary.

“Jimin?” A gentle hand clasps his shoulder and he whirls around to find Taehyung watching him ruefully. One glance at the siblings lets him know they are very well aware of the situation.

He breaks the silence. “My head hurts. I’m leaving.”

Jaebum picks up on the first ring. “Yes, Park-ssi?”

“Would you be able to pick me up?” Jimin cautiously eyes the three of them.

“Sure. I'm just dropping Lim-ssi off upon Jeongguk’s orders.”

“Wait. Is Sejun okay?”

“He was a little tipsy, but he's good. I’ll be there in fifteen.”

“No.” He shakes his head. “It’s fine. I’ll haul a cab. You and Sejun take the day off tomorrow and go home soon, okay?”

“But, Park-ssi—”

Jimin simply hangs up on him and pockets his phone, earning surprised looks from both Junghyun and Junghwa.

They raise their brows further when Taehyung blurts, “I’ll drive you, Jimin. I only had one glass, and I promise I won’t speed.”

He finds the earnest offer so hilarious that he can’t help but laugh despite the situation. “Well, I definitely feel reassured.”

Taehyung shyly smiles. “I figured I could earn your trust this way. We just met, after all.”

“What do you guys think?” Jimin asks the siblings.

Junghyun snorts. “Kim Taehyung is a lot of things, but he is definitely not bad company.”

Junghwa, on the other hand, is hesitant. “Jeongguk isn’t going to be happy about this.”

“Yeah? Fuck Jeongguk. Let’s go, Tae.” Jimin rolls his eyes and tugs a grinning Taehyung’s sleeve. “I’m starving, by the way. Can we get fried chicken?”

Which they do. They sneak out of the hotel and purchase a variety of fried chicken, dakkochi, and tteokbokki from a nearby street stall. After parking near an abandoned construction site, they silently enjoy their feast in the car.

Jimin is only halfway through his second piece before he bursts into tears.

“I’m sorry, Jimin. I’m sorry that Jeongguk is a fucking asshole.” Taehyung murmurs as he hands him a box of tissues. “I yelled at him when I saw his name on the VIP list but he said he was harmless when I tried to send the guy home myself. He’s not wrong, but he didn’t think of the consequences of you catching them together.”

Feeling more pissed than disappointedly heartbroken, he furiously wipes his tear-streaked face. “I don’t care.”

_Only for a million dollars. Only because he said he’d keep the deal professional. We’ve read and agreed to the terms and conditions. I agreed to his personal affairs. I’m not fucking supposed to get wounded by them._

His ringtone interrupts their conversation. He answers the call, but instantly regrets picking it up when Jeongguk’s yelling fills the other end.

“Jimin, where the _fuck_ are you? Hyung said you left with Taehyung—what the hell, Jimin. I’ve been looking for you in the hotel for the past hour!”

For someone hitting it off with his equivalent of a mistress at his own engagement party, he sure sounds concerned.

“Don’t bother finding me and get lost, Guk. Taehyung’s taking me home.”

“Jimin!”

“He’s shouting at me,” Jimin clamps a hand over the receiver. “The audacity.”

Without waiting for Taehyung’s reply, he returns to the call and gently says, “Stop stressing over it, Guk. Tae and I just stopped by for some fried chicken and are heading home now.”

The sudden silence would’ve convinced him of Jeongguk hanging up if it isn’t for his slow, measured words. “You guys got fried chicken?”

“Uh, yeah. Why not? I already told you I would.”

“You said you’d get fried chicken with _me!_ ” Jeongguk snaps.

At this point, the anger eating at Jimin’s heart melts into pure exhaustion. It doesn’t matter anymore. Nothing matters, except for the spark of annoyance flaring through him once again.

He draws out a sigh. “Well, you happened to be unavailable so I went with someone else. No one cares, Jeongguk, so leave me alone. Goodnight.”

And with that, Jimin ends the call and chucks his phone onto the dashboard, earning nothing but silence from Taehyung as they finish the rest of their food and arrive by his doorstep by midnight.

To their surprise, they find a black Mercedes parked by the sidewalk and Jeongguk leaning against the hood, arms crossed.

“I’ll walk you to your door,” Taehyung quickly says before he can refuse, the same time Jeongguk remarks, “‘Bout time you brought him back home, Tae.”

Taehyung wraps a protective arm around Jimin’s slumped shoulder. “Don’t be a douche, Guk. You’re going to regret fighting over this later.”

Jeongguk pushes them apart with a shove. “No, I won’t.”

“Cut the crap, Jeongguk.” Jimin growls, faltering when he notices the amount of rage flooding his hazel eyes underneath the dimly lit lamp post. Instead of worrying, though, he turns to Taehyung and thanks him for his company.

He has no choice but to decline the man’s offer to stay until he makes it inside, knowing fully well
that he feared Jeongguk misbehaving with him.

Taehyung frowns confusedly when Jimin murmurs, “It’s okay. He wouldn’t dare lay a finger on me. Not when he needs me.”

That being said, he sends his best friend one last glare before driving away, leaving them in eerie silence. Jimin turns around, ignoring the slam of Jeongguk closing his car door and pulls his own keys out. He hears him rushing up the stairs after him, the sound of paper crinkling with every footstep.


Jimin turns around to see him anxiously clutching a bag of takeout, his hopeful expression nearly casting a spell of forgive and forget upon him, yet he merely shakes his head in annoyance and pushes the door open.

Before Jeongguk can say a single word, Jimin tells him to go to hell and bangs the door shut in his face.

The tears don’t stop running until he miserably falls asleep on the couch, still dressed in his suit, his shoes left neglected and choker carefully placed on the coffee table.

Chapter End Notes

well, well, well. what do you think? not only have we been introduced to new characters, we've also learned a bit more about the jeon siblings and such. the more socialites, the bigger the drama. Σ(´Д`) ; )
here's the padlet.
find me on tumblr and twitter.
Chapter Summary

he now understands that getting his wishes granted isn't the same as becoming happy. not when his source of happiness is the one toxin he needs to stay far, far away from.

Chapter Notes

hi, my lovelies! (´・ω・｀)

here we are with the next installment. it's a short chapter but crucial to the story, so that's why i quickly wrote it down to answer some of the unanswered questions we all have. this may or may not be disappointing, depending how you view it. but as we all know, you need some angst before you get to the good stuff. enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After crying his soul, heart, and makeup into the couch pillow all night long, Jimin groggily wakes up to both a resolution and a headache.

As dangerous as his fury can be, his merciful attitude always gets the best of him and therefore, can no longer hold a grudge against the instigators of last night’s incident. In his defense, Jimin’s been polishing this quality since the day his father first returned home as a drunkard. It’s come to the point where he has no choice but to pick up the broken pieces without a single reprimand.

That’s why he finds himself softening at the little stunt Jeongguk pulled. Still, Jimin is no saint, and hates himself for hurting over something he never should’ve paid attention to in the first place. In fact, it’s better to continue looking out for himself—and only himself. No baggage required.

Yet he can’t help but try placing himself in Jeongguk’s shoes before resuming his unsubstantiated anger. Since the younger had clarified the deal with his personal affairs more than once, along with the crystal clear contract, Jimin is in no place to argue. He had read and signed it himself and has no place to overthrow that term.

Another thing he realizes is Jeongguk could’ve been taken long before his father arranged their marriage. He could’ve been stripped of his past love when he was threatened with their own. What’s sickening is that if Jeongguk had been in a relationship, he also had to give up his boyfriend or girlfriend, hurting them both in the process.

Jimin had never thought about that. The tension suddenly rolls off his shoulders.

Call him dramatic, but what if he’s the very reason of Jeongguk’s heartbreak and misery? What if—whatever Yugyeom is to him—is currently paining over the fact that a lowlife is stealing his man? It’s a ridiculous thought since Jimin can’t imagine Jeongguk, an emotionally constipated manchild, so passionately in love with someone. However, after spending a whole week with him, it’s hard to
imagine him not affectionately doting his sweetheart.

Even if that sweetheart isn’t him.

Which is cool. It’s someone dashing. Someone tall, lush, and gorgeous like Yugyeom. Beautiful, sophisticated, equipped with a high status—the perfect candidate for a Jeon’s bride—the total opposite of a mouse like him.

Which kind of stings, but is also cool. And understandable.

So, being the pathetic softie he is, Jimin decides that despite the heartbreak last night, he’ll excuse Jeongguk’s offense and carry on with their wedding—only with Jeongguk dating Yugyeom while they’re at it because that’s what softies do. Let themselves allegedly get trampled over. Besides, Jeongguk’s been nice to him in general lately, so it’s the least he should allow.

The next day feels amazingly normal as Jimin handles the rest of his appointments without his assistant or driver tagging along. He cancels whatever he doesn’t feel like going to and instead, drops by the bank to ask for an extension on his house.

To his utter surprise, before he can tell them he’ll be able to pay back in a week, the bank assures him to take as long as he needs, postponing the foreclosure until further notice. Jimin’s got a gut feeling that special treatment definitely has something to do with his engagement.

After a lunch date with Seokmin at Vene’s, they head out to make deliveries around the neighborhood, where Jimin catches up with a few more tabloids. If any of the eagle-eye reporters noticed his melancholy, they certainly didn’t mention it. Funny enough, it’s a huge relief none of the media got a hold of what happened last night due to being banned from entering the venue and not being around when Jeongguk and him parted ways.

They may have no idea what’s going on between the two, but they still ask him about his impression of Taehyung and such. It goes well until one of the questions—specifically, the one about him meeting Kim Yugyeom yet—instigates his bitter resentment despite the sickly sweet smile he manages to pull off.

And although Jimin appreciates one of the journalists jabbing the other for the crude inquiry, he cheekily says he’s been dying to meet the notorious model after missing him at the party, because there’s no use in playing dumb. The whole city, if not country, knew how much of a joke this whole marriage is playing at. It isn’t something he can amend.

Later that afternoon, he decides to call an Uber and visit Sangguk for a pep talk. And maybe some answers.

That is, if he can get the words out of his mouth as Sangguk curiously stares at him avoiding his gaze.

“This is quite ironic.” Sangguk eventually says, sipping his tea.

They’re sitting in the gazebo near the porch, a little away from Jeonghan who’s sprawled over the grass with homework.

Jemin glances up from his pastry. “What’s ironic?”

The elder man is watching him with an expression that he can only describe as grave. It’s the same look he sports during a serious business deal—preferably one that involves life and death. As frightening as it is, Jimin has no idea why he’s wearing such a look when they’ve only settled down
for five minutes.

He’s seen this side of him before, back when Sangguk retired from the office and instead worked from home. Jimin would drop by midway through his conference calls to witness his professionalism in action. Though the elder man doesn’t give off lively vibes and is quite older now, he looks decades younger in his khaki button-down and loose-fitting trousers.

Sangguk quirks a smile. “I distinctly remember having a similar conversation with my second son over beer at two in the morning last night. He was just as quiet as you are.”

“I don’t get your point, Sangguk.”

“What’s going on between you two, Jimin? Did something happen at the party?” He inquires. “Jeongguk looked like he hadn’t slept all night and you’re a little queasy yourself.”

“It’s nothing,” Jimin stutters. “Nothing serious, I mean. We just—we just had a little fight, that’s all. Um. But it’s alright. We’ll get over it in a few days.”

“You’re getting married next week.”

“Yeah? Well, no one’s ever told me how fucking fun marriage would be,” he snaps without thinking. “Ugh. Sorry, that was uncalled for.”

“Don’t be. Minnie, my boy, the key to a healthy marriage is working it out together, not pouting your frustration up. You need to talk. To negotiate. Otherwise, your in-laws will start snooping around.”

“You’re my only in-law and I think you’re snooping around enough,” Jimin warily says.

Sangguk chuckles. “I’m merely supporting your decision, because I want you both to be happy afterwards.”

Decision? More like you decided it for us.

“Can you be honest with me, Sangguk?” He inhales deeply. “What would you have done if this were some other guy or girl? Would you be as supportive of them marrying Jeongguk as you are with me? Would they be welcomed as I am? Would you be willing to treat them like your own child the way you treat me?”

Jimin stills under the elder’s piercing stare, hoping he didn’t give himself away with that million dollar question. The problem is he can’t figure out what he’s required to fulfill as a spouse. It was good of him to ask, because if he hadn’t, then he wouldn’t be able to go through the year without feeling like a filthy cheater.

Holding his breath as Sangguk answers, the sickening twist in his stomach worsens at, “I don’t want to be hypocritical and say yes when I know I probably wouldn’t. But, I’d consider it if their love were wholesome and they genuinely cared for each other. Thing is, being a rich, successful young man is tough since you can buy love and affection. And I don’t want Jeongguk spending a penny in this regard.”

Jimin has no choice but to stare guiltily at his teacup, thoughts forming into an ugly compilation of, You’ll definitely hate me then. I sold my hand for a goddamn million.

The disgrace thickens.

“Minnie, look at me.”
He forces himself to meet Sangguk’s kind smile, heart pounding in apprehension when the elder lightly says, “You don’t need to be the perfect spouse for Jeongguk. You only need to be a perfect match for him.”

“How can you be so sure?” Jimin whispers as his eyes glisten.

“I’m not,” Sanguk shrugs a delicate shoulder. “I’m simply hoping you are.”

That’s when tears begin streaking down his cheeks. “I—I can’t. I won’t be perfect. I—I’m not as great as you think I am.” The handkerchief Sangguk offers him only makes him cry harder. “I don’t even know where to start being the kind of spouse you—you want me to be for him.”

“I’m not asking you to be someone that isn’t you, Jimin,” he clasps his shoulder in a soothing rub. “I’m only asking you to be yourself.”

“How is that any better?” Jimin demands through a sob. “I’m a fucking poor dance major who dropped out of college because I couldn’t afford it. I’m struggling to keep a roof over my head, I hardly look decent—hell, I can’t even feed myself properly. I’m a goddamn chatterbox with a bad temper and, just. Be honest, please, Sangguk. What do you possibly see in me?”

“Dad, what the hell is going on—”

They both twist to find Jeongguk scowling at them from behind the wicker chairs. Grabbing the handkerchief and scrubbing his face free of tears, Jimin replaces his cries with a string of curses under his breath.

The last thing he needs is the man himself walking in on his sob story. In fact, the humiliation is so great he finds himself tearing up again.

“Why are you here?” Jimin snaps when Jeongguk approaches his seat. He averts his gaze away from the younger and groans. “How’d even you know where I was?”

“Just because you dismissed your bodyguard today doesn’t mean you aren’t monitored. I won’t tolerate that.” Jeongguk’s frown deepens. “Why are you crying?”

He’s answered with a sniffling silence.

“Why are you crying, Jimin?”

He’s just pretending to be concerned when he really doesn’t care that much.

“Why are you—” Jeongguk sighs and directs his irritation towards his father. “Dad, why is he crying?”

“That’s something for you to figure out, son,” Sangguk merely says.

“Jin.” A sense of pleading laces his frustrated growl as Jeongguk takes the seat next to him and gently pries Jimin’s elbow away from his concealed face. “Jin, why are you crying?”

He pulls away from the grip. “I’m not fucking crying.”

Jeongguk raises a brow at the crumpled napkin in his hands. “You are fucking crying.”

When Jimin refuses to say anything else, the younger purses his lips and gently repeats his question, to which he wants to retort a response, yet only thinks of what good there’d be if he did answer.
What would you do if I said you shattered my heart last night? Would you either clean the mess up for me or watch me do it myself?

So instead, he finds himself muttering, “I’m suffering from a case of blue balls,” and immediately recoils at both father and son’s bewildered expressions, Jeongguk’s being more genuinely surprised.

Jimin decides to get up as Sangguk apologetically watches him throw the napkin in the trash and politely excuses himself with, “I better get going. Nice seeing you, Sangguk.”

“Jimin—”

“Guk-ah, wait a minute—”

The first thing he slams into is a lanky body lurking near the gazebo and steps back to find Jeonghan stumbling, wide-eyed. Jimin reaches a hand and steadies him before asking what he was doing here.

Jeonghan avoids the question. “Are you okay, hyung?”

Whatever darkness that filled his vision seconds ago melts at the timidly concerned voice. He heaves a sigh, running his hands through his hair. “I’m good, Hannie. Sorry for bumping into you—I was kinda distracted.”

As Jeonghan studies him, dark eyes scrutinizing every inch of his blotchy face, Jimin can’t help but admire the teenager’s ability to capture feelings into captivating lyrics. Although he hasn’t heard an original song of his yet, the fact that Jeonghan chose to cover such a personal song last night terrifies him. The lyrical twist he definitely held a message that Jimin fears he’s too blind to see.

Jeonghan believes in something he doesn’t, and frankly, he’s not too sure if he wants to follow.

Worry is etched on the boy’s soft features. “You were crying, weren’t you? I’m sorry if Guk-hyung made you cry. He probably didn’t mean to upset you. You shouldn’t be mad at him.”

“Don’t worry,” Jimin laughs bitterly. “I’m not mad at him. I’m just having a shitty day, like usual.”

“Hyung’s been having a shitty day too.”

After fucking his little model friend last night? Doubt it. But you’re over that.

Jimin stills when he hears Jeongguk calling his name, but refuses to beckon and ruffles Jeonghan’s hair instead. “You should go, kid. Wouldn’t want you tasting your brother’s wrath.”

At the sound of Jeongguk’s rampaging footsteps, the younger simply responds with, “He won’t hurt you.”

“I know he won’t. But you should leave, anyway.”

He watches as the two Jeons approach each other by the lawn first. Jeonghan murmurs something to his older brother, who’s curiously listening on bent knees. Once they pull away though, their expression change into something more solemn.

Knowing fully well that they’ve come to the topic of him, Jimin swallows the urge to make his escape, just so that he’s assured Jeonghan will make it back home unscratched.

Jeongguk eventually claps the boy’s shoulder and gestures towards the house before casting a glance in his direction.
Wishing he’d taken the chance when he had it, Jimin holds his ground as Jeongguk slowly advances towards him, like a predator circling its prey.

Unlike a predator, though, his voice has grown painstakingly soft. “Jimin.”


Jeongguk returns the glare. “I promised Hannie I wouldn’t, otherwise he’d never leave me alone. What’s your secret to casting a spell over every male you see—like my dad, brother, then Tae—hm?”

The emphasis on Taehyung’s name provokes his ill temper. “You’re fucking jealous of the attention your own father, little brother, and best friend give me? Who are you to call me an attention whore when you’ve probably spent the night sucking Kim Yugyeom’s dick?”

His hazel eyes glitter apprehensively. “Is that why you’re being petty?”

“No. I’m petty over the fact that I expected something good out of you, only to feel humiliated when you let me down yesterday. I can handle the shit people give me for being the next Jeon, but seriously? Coming from you? I’d never thought of that.” Jimin swallows thickly. “Not after you’ve been so nice to me for the past week.”

Frown deepening, Jeongguk opens his mouth to argue, only to pause by a raise of Jimin’s finger. Now that he’s let out a portion of his frustration, stopping would only cause more damage.

“It’s not you, alright? It’s me. I tend to get pathetically clingy with people who treat me well. It’s my fault for warming up to you even though our contract is strictly professional. I know you hate my guts for putting you in this place anyway. If it weren’t for me, your dad wouldn’t have threatened you and you could’ve—could’ve been happy with Yugyeom and stuff. And I get it, okay, I get it. I get why you were so pissed off at the deal because here you are, being forced to marry someone you barely know, when you should’ve been with the guy you actually love instead.”

“Stay out of my business.” Jeongguk snarls. “Whether Yugyeom and I are intimate or not, he’s just a really good friend of mine that I had to invite because of something called common courtesy. Besides, he wasn’t supposed to show up, considering how angry he was at our engagement. He needed someone to lean on after people taunted him for being dumped over a diner boy.”

The blunt explanation unintentionally cuts deep into Jimin's heart.

He manages a sardonic smile. “Oh, I wouldn’t know, since I got mocked at my own party for my fiance flaunting his lover right in front of my goddamn face last night.”

Jeongguk pales within seconds, brows drawing into a cross line as he groans in realization. He takes a tentative step forward. “Jimin. I hadn’t meant it that way—”

“Of course you didn’t,” Jimin scorns. “You’d never mean it, because you weren’t paying attention to anyone else while you comforted your little boyfriend. And that’s fine, Guk, it really is. I don’t mind it since I’ve gotten used to being taken for granted, thanks to someone continuously rubbing salt into my wounds every single time.”

“Don’t try comparing me to your fucking father, Jimin. I am not anything near him.”

“I never said you were! I hadn’t expected anything out of my dad because I knew he’d be gone for the better. But you, you—you’re so hypocritical. You say one thing and do another, and it confuses the hell out of me. You’re such a contradiction to the point that I forget what you even want from
me. But I’ve learned my lesson, and I’ve learned it well. You don’t need to deal with my butthurt feelings because I’m shutting myself down in order to be your perfectly robotic husband for the rest of the year.”

Without another word, Jimin whirls around in the direction of the front gate, only to be yanked back and pinned against the brick wall they’ve been standing near.

He struggles to protest, but the words drown in his throat as soon as Jeongguk tips his head back, hands threading through his hair with a searing, bruising kiss.

For a guy who’s barely had a proper Valentine’s smooch, Jimin can easily recognize the types of kisses Jeongguk’s been spoiling him this past week. None of the tender pecks and steamy makeout sessions compare to this possessively raunchy spell he’s doing to his lips.

He feels his toes curl inside his sneakers as Jeongguk drills him further into the brick, hitching each of his legs up to coil around his slender waist. Hands pinned at either side, Jeongguk forces him to submit in one flick of his tongue invading his mouth and dragging across his front teeth.

Jimin tilts his head deeper into the kiss. Warmth shoots through his veins like a firecracker, popping at every tug, every stroke, every growl Jeongguk emits. Their mouths, slick with heat, glide at a frantic pace as the friction of their swollen lips send an ecstatic release of tension, reducing them to a mewling mess.

It’s so captivating, so desperate—like they both fear the disappearance of each other and are trying to make the best of their frozen time.

Jimin gasps at Jeongguk suddenly breaking away and dragging his lips across his jaw instead, keeping his head tilted to the side for easier access to his neck. The sweetness of his little kisses down the curve of his throat don’t last for long, instantly transitioning to rough licks against his skin.

He stays still, panting as Jeongguk murmurs something into his Adam’s apple. “I’m not fucking Yugyeom.”

Jimin’s eyes fly open. “W-what?”

“I’m not,” he repeats, glancing up at him through his long lashes. “I haven’t been, at least. Not since the brunch on Saturday.”

Which means he’d clearly been earlier that week. Rather than scoffing, Jimin squeaks and dumbly asks why.

Eyes narrowed, Jeongguk sets him down to his feet, yet keeps a hand placed on his shoulder. “Do you really think I’d keep screwing around after declaring our engagement to the entire nation?”

“No, but I’m sure you’ve thought of continuing after we marry.”

“I haven’t planned that far.” He grits his teeth. “Sure, I clarified my affairs during the contract, but it wasn’t like I’d start having them immediately.”

The honestly is hardly reassuring.

“Yeah, not until you decide whether your husband’s ass is worth—” Jimin’s breath hitches as Jeongguk’s hips stutter against his, the all-too familiar bulge sliding right underneath his thighs. “W-worth your m-money.”
It’s then, in the midst of Jeongguk’s large eyes darkening in unmistakable lust and his tongue swiping across his bottom lip, he realizes that the young man is more than just attracted to him.

“You know, while I’m very tempted to have my way with you, I’m not letting you use your price against me,” Jeongguk murmurs. “You’ve made it clear that you aren’t a whore, so I won’t go there.”

“I’ve been feeling like one ever since your dad said he wanted someone who genuinely cares about you. My affection was bought. It’s not the same.”

“Listen, you don’t have to worry what my dad thinks, okay? He’s forcing you to spend one year of your life with me, at my cost, so the least I can do is give you something out of it.”

“Whatever makes you sleep at night.” Jimin rolls his eyes. “Because if Sangguk had personally asked me, I would’ve done it anyway. I didn’t need to get paid for it.”

He quirks a brow. “Oh, really? Are you sure about that? Last time I checked, you fucking hate my guts.”

_Not always. There was a time where I fell in love with the concept of you being the prince to my Cinderella. But then I grew up and got over it._

Jimin purses his lips. “I’m sure if you were actually polite that one day and asked me over dinner, I would’ve said yes. You could’ve gotten me fried chicken or something, and I’d say yes.”

He regrets mentioning those two words when Jeongguk’s disheartened face twists to a scowl.

“That could’ve happened if a certain someone didn’t tell me go to hell and slam the door in my face when I bring you fried chicken.”

A dry laugh escapes him. “Yeah, well, you were too late, Guk. It wasn’t special. I just needed takeout and Taehyung was good company. That’s it.”

“Don’t lie, Jimin,” Jeongguk drawls, voice dangerously low. “You pranced off with Tae, knowing fully well that it was our thing, and only ours.”

“Our thing? _Our_ thing?” He repeats incredulously. “Are you serious? Marriage is _our_ thing, yet you’re allowed to screw around outside of wedlock, while all I did was eat with a guy. Fuck off.”

When he’s replied with thoughtful silence, Jimin can’t help but falter at the sight of Jeongguk gazing at him almost wistfully.

“Is that it?” Jeongguk eventually asks. “Do you want to get the best of our marriage and make ourselves exclusive—like a thing for the rest of the year? Because I can do that. I _want_ that.”

That’s when shivers run down his spine. The heavy meaning underlying his casual question has Jimin stumbling. He inches away as Jeongguk nears him for the second time.

“W-what? You said you’re not interested in that.”

A corner of his lips curl into a smile. “Even if I did, we both know that’s bullshit. Besides, can’t a guy change his mind? I’d like us to be real for the duration of our marriage.” He tentatively strokes Jimin’s flushed cheek with the back of his hand. “Besides, it’ll reassure you of my loyalty. I’ll hold you and make love to you every night. I’ll have my eyes set only for you, if it means your problems are solved.”
The offer registers inside his brain and frankly pisses him off even more. Jimin slaps his hand away and takes a larger step back to prove his ground. Jeongguk makes no attempt to continue afterwards.

“Right, because taking advantage of your spouse who happens to be available is way better than going through your list of fuck buddies. Nice try, Jeon. You’re so goddamn romantic.”

“Jimin, calm down.” Jeongguk’s weary sigh annoys him to the point he’s convinced the younger is mocking his self-respect.

“No, you calm down. You don’t have to tell me twice,” Jimin hisses. “Here’s the deal—I’m your husband in name only. You’re no longer allowed to lay a single finger on me unless absolutely necessary. This deal was professional, so we’re keeping it professional. I don’t want you sending me mixed signals with every little thing you do, especially if I’ll have to endure the bitter aftertaste. The more distance we have, the easier it is for us to part, as if this never happened at all.”

It isn’t until Jimin witnesses the crestfallen look on Jeongguk’s face immediately wiping into frustration. The sharp angle of his narrowed eyes indicates hazardous fury.

“Fine. Have it your way, Park.”

And with that, he wordlessly brushes past him and heads towards the house, leaving Jimin in an uncomfortable silence.

He now understands that getting his wishes granted isn’t the same as becoming happy. Not when his source of happiness is the one toxin he needs to stay far, far away from.

Chapter End Notes

so, how do you feel knowing that such a statement can't last any longer, not with kookmin barely able to keep their hands off each other. (o´▽´o) how long do you think they'll abide by their words? a week?
the next chapter will take some time, as it's got both a wedding rehearsal and a bachelor party. with every celebration comes a little drama. btw, we'll see more of taetae there too, but until then, see you next time!! ( ^=^ )
find me on tumblr, and twitter, and insta.
upshot

Chapter Summary

the reality he’s now living completely contrasts against the dream of longing to find true love with jeongguk. it’s simply impossible. loving him will only cause devastation.

Chapter Notes

hello my lovelies! ( ・_・ ) J

oh god, this chap took a while to write. it was originally supposed to be longer, but i decided to leave it somewhere good while i tend to some schoolwork. i haven't been updating the padlet lately, but eh. sometimes linking within the fic is easier. i'll probably binge-update somewhere. ( つ.・_・)つ

as always, thank you so so much for the reviews and feedback! i've been getting messages lately throughout twitter, tumblr, and insta about TTK and it delights me to no extent. feel free to message me on my platforms about anything! i'm always here <3.

btw, i've changed to the actual amount of chapters since readers have questioned the length of this fic. it was never 20 chaps long to start with. i just wanted a ground to stand on. :>

without further ado, let's get started!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I love you so much, Tae. You’re a lifesaver.”

Taehyung merely responds with a roll of his eyes as Jimin swipes a few more Skittles from the mini pack he managed to smuggle in during the wedding rehearsal.

They’ve been standing here at the chapel since noon for the past two hours under Baekhyun’s strict instructions. On the bright side, at least it isn’t crowded. The wedding entourage only consists of ten people, including the groom who hasn’t said a word to Jimin yet.

And that’s fine by him. Despite still being pissed at Jeongguk over their argument back at his dad’s house, Jimin is adamant on fulfilling the role as the perfect husband. Even if it means having to fake a smile as he stands next to Jeongguk for the entire rehearsal. Observant people like Sangguk and Taehyung would’ve easily noticed the ice between them by now, yet they, along with the team, are oblivious.

Taehyung is still trying to get on his good side, hence the candy.

“D’you love me enough to ditch this wedding and elope with me instead?” Taehyung asks
innocently, batting his lashes.

Jemin ends up coughing out his Skittles at the question. “Know your place.” And after clearing his throat, continues, “Do you use that pickup line on everyone?”

He grins. “Only to the ones I actually want an answer from.”

“Works like a charm, doesn’t it?”

To his surprise, Taehyung easily shrugs. “Dunno. You’re the first one I’ve asked and you’ve yet to answer me.”

A sudden warmth would’ve crept up his nape by now if it isn’t for someone’s violent cough interrupting their conversation. They both turn around to find an expressionless Jeongguk towering behind them.

Jemin tenses.

During the span of their twenty minute break, Taehyung’s showered him in three different snacks while his fiance took a call near the front, restlessly pacing outside where he first spotted him. Jemin prays he hasn’t been standing there for too long. The last thing he needs is Jeongguk ganging up on his own best friend again for the harmless flirting.

Well, less harmful than Jeongguk himself.

He gently smiles at him anyway. “What’s up?”

“Can I talk to you outside for a second?” Jeongguk asks, thumbing towards the direction of the entrance.

Jemin is about to question why, but realizes that Taehyung is still silently observing their awkward exchange next to them. It’ll confuse him further if they give each other the silent treatment. Besides, it’d only be a minute. He can afford to give the guy he’s marrying at least a minute.

Stalling sounds like a good idea. “Yeah, but, we don’t have much time left. Our break is almost over.” He glances back at a demanding Baekhyun for emphasis.

Jeongguk quirks a brow. “They won’t be starting without the lovely couple anytime soon. Come on.”

“Okay, sure. Here, Tae.” Jemin hands him the packet of Skittles. “Guard my loot for me?”

“Yessir!”

Taehyung dramatically shoves the packet to his chest, earning a giggle from him that Jeongguk merely ignores with narrowed eyes. Jemin drops the smile and braces himself for a petty scolding but is surprised when he doesn’t provide one. He merely steers him out the door by pressing a palm over waist, immediately withdrawing once they’re out of sight.

Because Jemin has neither dreamed of weddings nor invested himself in one before, his mere opinion about the chapel they’ve chosen is that it’s pretty. It’s a small building located in Suwon, an hour away from the heart of Seoul. There isn’t much to say about its architecture—just that it’s quaintly traditional. The only disappointment is that they aren’t getting married in Busan. If anything, he probably would’ve preferred his hometown despite this wedding being a total scam.
“So.” Jimin starts for him once they step onto the lawn. For someone who was so eager to rip him apart from company, he’s awfully quiet.

He makes the mistake of glancing up and nearly loses his breath, because Jeon Jeongguk is too damn beautiful to handle. There’s afternoon sunlight streaking through his tousled hair, catching glints of copper gold among his thick locks. The white tee he sports loosely hangs off his broad shoulders and frankly, attracts Jimin more than any designer suit could. His lips, plump and red from the constant wringing, is merely one feature of his overall perfection.

It’s painful to look. He’s missed this. It’s only been two days and yet he misses Jeongguk’s soft smile and crinkled doe eyes.

But Jimin knows better than to draw closer. He’s doing himself a favor by avoiding unnecessary time with Jeongguk. Distance is the resolution that’s bound to work if he picks up his game.

As Jimin forces himself to tear his gaze away, he finds Jeongguk staring at him with a similar intensity—like his bare eyes can easily peel back the layers of fear and discover the concealed truth.

Realizing that he’s merely dressed in ripped jeans, an oversized hoodie that swallows his figure, and an unflattering snapback distresses him. It’s nothing refined—not compared to the exquisite photos he’s searched of Kim Yugyeom on Naver.

No matter how many times Jimin tells himself it’s unhealthy to measure up to the model, he can’t help but feel belittled. Not when Jeongguk is just as sophisticated as Yugyeom in the pictures of them together at events, looking like the ethereal beauty he is as he glows in a goddamn t-shirt right in front of him.

Their pristine figures are so empowering. It makes Jimin want to bury himself alive because Jeongguk and Yugyeom will forever be the ideal couple, while he and Jeongguk are an ugly pair of mismatched shoes.

Confidence has become an issue for him prior to meeting Jeongguk. He’d never had the time to fret over himself thanks to the domineering workload from back then. After taking a good look at himself in the mirror, Jimin’s convinced that the two of them are incompatible—even for a year. It’s another reason why he’s so adamant against the whole arrangement. He’ll regret letting his insecurities take advantage of him later.

Jeongguk’s low voice snaps him out of his thoughts. “Sejun told me they’ve started moving your stuff to the penthouse today. It’ll be done by tomorrow.” He pauses momentarily, teeth absentmindedly catching his bottom lip. “I—your room is ready, but you’re free to check it out for yourself before moving in. I figured you wouldn’t want people knowing we have separate bedrooms.”

Don’t see the problem considering we’re a little too estranged for a couple whose wedding is in three days.

“I’m fine with anything. Doesn’t matter to me,” Jimin shrugs. “Couldn’t be worse than my current room anyway.”

He replies after giving him a long look. “Okay, well, I guess you’ll see how it looks during the wedding night. We’ll tweak whatever you want while we’re away on our honeymoon.”

Jimin swallows thickly at the mention of their honeymoon. Sure, they’ve casually discussed it before, but the fact that he’ll be alone with Jeongguk in a private, most likely very romantic setting, was just
a concept devised in his head. Reality hasn’t quite hit him yet.

And now it’s actually going to happen. Having to spend an exotic getaway with a man he’s striving to avoid has his stomach flipping uncomfortably. “Um, is a honeymoon really—you know, necessary?”

Jeongguk narrows his eyes. “Obviously. We’re still playing star-crossed lovers. People won’t believe us otherwise if we don’t go on a honeymoon. It’s weird enough that it’s only a week long.”

He nods, albeit unconvinced. “Where are we going again?”

Obliging wasn’t a problem when Jeongguk first reassured that he’d care of all their arrangements, but now that he thinks about it, he’s starting to have second thoughts. What if Jeongguk had rearranged it to have his little boyfriend tag along with them?

_Goddamnit, Park. Stop overthinking it._

“Somewhere you’ll like, hopefully.” Jeongguk cracks a small smile that aches his heart. It isn’t even a full-on grin, yet its genuineness gives him a low blow.

“You’re still not telling me?” Jimin asks in disbelief. “I don’t even know what to pack because I’ve got no idea where we’re going.”

“Just bring whatever you want, and we’ll buy the rest when we get there.”

“It must be a place of civilization then. Interesting.”

“We’re not having our honeymoon in the _woods._” The younger chuckles. “Yes, it’s a place of civilization. With water, electricity—the works. Don’t pack for an apocalypse.”

“No?” His shoulders slump. “Here I thought I’d finally get a chance to use my combat boots.”

Jeongguk’s smile deepens. “Go ahead and bring them. We’re not going to need it, but do whatever makes you happy.”

“I’d rather not have Sejun slaughter me. I swear he and Sooyeon are so extra. They’ve appointed me a whole wedding _trousseau_. Like, what? Firstly, this is the twenty-first century. Secondly, I’m a guy. But Sooyeon was still squealing about how they got me satin, silk, and lace over the phone. I can’t believe them.”

It isn’t until Jeongguk’s prolonged silence has Jimin glancing up to witness the dark, hooded look growing on his face. His lips part involuntarily as he faintly repeats, in a raspy voice, “Satin, silk, and lace?”

He realizes the suggestion underlying his words. “Oh—um, yeah. Like lingerie? God, I don’t know. They’re ridiculously expensive and I’m better off without them, but—”

“I don’t care about the price.”

Jimin rubs the wrinkle between his furrowed brows and draws out a sigh. As embarrassing as this conversation’s headed, the mere mention of provocative underwear ignites his roasting imagination, which is definitely not appreciated.

“You do realize I won’t be wearing them in the first place, right? Much less in front of you.” He gently says. “Not worth your expense.”
Reality seems to snap Jeongguk out of his hazy trance, because the next thing he does is awkwardly clear his throat, avoiding his gaze. “It hardly matters to me. To be fair, I know you’ll like them.”

Instead of retorting something sassy per usual, Jimin defeatedly blows him a raspberry, to which Jeongguk laughs loudly at. His eyes curve in delight with a flash of pearly bunny teeth.

“Yes. Real sexy, Jimin. Speaking of so, I heard your friend is throwing you a bachelor party tonight? Didn’t you give Jaebum the night off today?” He frowns. “Who’s gonna look after you?”

“No one. I don’t need it.” Jimin mirrors his frustration. “I’m serious, Guk. We’re only having drinks at the pool in a private lounge. It’s not like hyung hired strippers or something.”

“Good to know,” is his dry response. “While my seniors are begging me to have strippers at our own stag party.”

“Yeah? Why don’t you let them?”

“Because I have enough guy problems with you already. I don’t need you torturing me any further.”

That kicks Jimin out of it. He blinks twice, flabbergasted. “Me? Torture you? Wha—why would I do that?”

As much as he hates to admit it, he’s relieved that his fiance is no longer physically associating himself with others. But despite his displeasure regarding Yugyeom, the fact that Jeongguk is convinced about punishment throws him off guard.

Jeongguk raises a brow. “Isn’t that what you’re doing? Cuddling with Taehyung, ignoring me, pushing me away at arm’s length. The list goes on. If it isn’t punishment, then what is it?”

“It’s called reinforcing the deal we had at your dad’s house,” Jimin bites out. “I clearly remember telling you this before, Jeongguk. This isn’t punishment. It’s self-preservation. Just because you won’t bother protecting me, doesn’t mean I can’t defend myself.”

“I’m not going to hurt you, Jimin. How many times do I have to tell you that? I may look like the villain here—forcing you to marry me, supporting my scam, and taking advantage of my father’s trust—but I’d never hurt you.” He snaps. “Why can’t you understand that?”

Both his persistence and solemn expression are nearly persuading, but Jimin’s aware that the young man has never tasted actual pain and therefore, isn’t acquainted with the many forms it comes in.

He freezes when Jeongguk promptly squats down at his feet to retie his undone laces. A feeling of warmth settles in his chest. Its tenderness suffocates him as he gently rakes his fingertips through Jeongguk’s chestnut locks.

“There’s more than one way to hurt someone, Guk.” Jimin whispers and retracts his hand. “But I’m not taking the risk of discovering the other ways with you.”

Jeongguk rises to his feet, now centimeters closer than he had been a minute ago, hazel eyes carefully studying every inch of Jimin’s paling face. “There’s more than one way to show someone you care, Jimin. And I’m willing to risk discovering all of them with you.”

Panicking thoughts arise when he leans over to kiss his forehead, so Jimin deliberately pushes him away with a soft nudge, startling him in the process.

Although disappointed, Jeongguk takes the hint and steps back. “Have fun at your party.”
“Thanks.” He finds himself muttering after watching the younger head towards the chapel.

Their final rehearsal ends an hour later where everyone begins packing up. Jimin bids Sejun and his friends goodbye before Jaebum drives them back home. He lingers around, thanking Baekhyun and his prep team for their time and even acknowledging the three Jeon siblings, who leave with their father.

Once majority of the entourage leave, Jimin grabs the mini polaroid camera Jinyoung had gifted him and makes a run for it.

“Whatcha doing?” Taehyung asks curiously as he skips down the stairs.

Jimin eagerly holds up the camera. “I’m going to take pictures of the place. Jeongguk and I have twenty minutes left—”

“Jimin.”

A click emerges at the sound of his name and Jimin pulls out a blurry polaroid of Jeongguk’s face. He glances up to see his fiance pocketing his phone before approaching him. “I won’t take too long.”

“I know.” Jeongguk says apologetically. “But I’ve something to take care of at work, so I’m leaving right now. Is it okay if we come back later for photos?”

Discontentment replaces the bubbling excitement inside. “Oh. Alright.” He shrugs. “Let me just get my stuff real quick.”

“I can take Jimin home, Guk.” Taehyung suddenly offers. “We’ll stay behind to take the pictures and I’ll make sure he gets back in one piece.”

Jeongguk quirks a challenging brow at his best friend. “Should I trust you?”

“You do with everything else. What makes this any different? I’d never lay a finger on him, you know.”

“No, but you’d try to steal him away from me.”

Taehyung flashes him a sweet grin. “I definitely will. And even though I’m not one to compete—especially with you—I’ve got a hunch that I can treat Jimin better than you do. I just want him to know that before he regrets walking down the aisle.”

Jimin rolls his eyes and lifts a hand in between them. “Okay, guys. That’s enough talk and no bite. Stop addressing me like a chew toy and get on with it.”

Jeongguk’s murderous gaze doesn’t leave Taehyung’s deadly expression. He swiftly pulls his phone out. “I’m staying.”

“Guk, no.” Jimin shakes his head. “If you’ve got something to take care of, then go take care of it. Tae will drive me home. And don’t worry about my virtue or whatever. I promise you I’ll stay intact.”

“Don’t make promises you can’t keep, babe.” Taehyung drawls, directed more towards his Jeongguk than Jimin, who smacks his arm.

“Behave yourself, kid, or I’m not staying with you.”

He whines a complaint, to which Jimin just shakes his head before clapping Jeongguk’s shoulder and
steering him aside.

“I’m serious about being fine with Taehyung. He’s harmless, okay? Just go.”

The younger scoffs. “I remember telling him the same thing about Yugyeom back at the party, yet he still threw a bitch fit, didn’t he?”

Jimin returns the scorn. “Probably since he’s your fuck buddy, while Tae and I have nothing going on.”

“You’ve got some nerve, Jimin.”

“I know. I’m capable of many things, including skinning your ass alive if you don’t cut it out.”

Jeongguk smiles despite himself. “Okay, okay. I’m leaving. Make sure Taehyung doesn’t do anything stupid. And if he does, I’m on speed-dial.”

“You’re so paranoid,” Jimin sighs.

“And you’re a brat.” He taps his nose with a soft fingertip. “I’ll see you later.”

Jeongguk turns around for the door, and upon spotting Taehyung patiently waiting for them near the entrance, hollers. “Hey, Tae. Remember when I broke both of your arms in middle school? Yeah? Keep thinking about that.”

“You too, bastard,” Taehyung calls. “Remember when I kicked you in the balls afterwards? Looks like Jimin can’t ask you for babies anymore.”

“Just don’t forget it.” And with that, he’s down the steps and out of sight.

They find themselves sitting underneath a towering oak tree fifteen minutes later, sharing a single water bottle and bag of shrimp chips they’d found lying in Taehyung’s Audi.

“Are you excited for the wedding?” Taehyung passes him the bottle.

Jimin shrugs. “Isn’t everyone?”

“We’ve already established how you’re not like everyone else, Minnie.”

Yeah, because not everyone gets paid to marry Jeon Jeongguk for one dreadful year and become a millionaire by the end of it.

Majority of this doesn't have to be part of the scheme, though. He can be a filial son-in-law to Sangguk, a nice addition to the entire Jeon family, a supportive husband to Jeongguk, and more importantly, a good friend of Taehyung’s without having to lie about it.

“I’ve always dreamed of marrying Jeongguk, you know?” Jimin admits, because at least that isn’t a fib. “I’ve dreamed that he’d be the one to sweep me off my feet and carry me to his castle where we’d live happily ever after.” Glancing at Taehyung with a small smile, he continues, “I mean, it technically has come true—just without all the glittry magic and a real castle.”

Taehyung chuckles. “Guk would give you it all if you just said the word.”

“He can’t grant me magic. He’s only human, not perfect.”

“Definitely not perfect,” his friend agrees. “You see, Jeongguk’s a good guy once you look past the
stubborn asshole in him. He doesn’t open up to just anyone—he warms up within a matter of time. He’s usually insensitive, but when it comes to supporting someone he holds dear, he’ll be the first one to sacrifice himself.”

“Are you trying to convince me to marry him, Tae? Because I’m already doing that.” Jimin teases.

A flicker of apprehension passes through Taehyung’s dark eyes. “I can’t deny that Jeongguk’s a smart guy, snatching you before you slipped right through his fingers.”

“More like I was the one who didn’t want him slipping through my fingers,” he mutters under his breath.

“Actually, Jiminie, despite your current catch, I think you can get anyone you want.” Taehyung reaches for the bag of chips with a tender smile on his face. “The only reason why you’ve chosen Jeongguk is because you love him.”

A rush of blood pounds past Jimin’s ears and surges down his chest as he registers this statement. There’s no use renouncing the longtime crush he’s had on Jeongguk since his days as a teenager. Being young, he was merely in love with the concept of Sangguk’s son—and not the actual man himself. The reality he’s now living completely contrasts against the dream of longing to find true love with Jeongguk.

It’s simply impossible. Loving him will only cause devastation.

“You do love him, right?” Taehyung’s tentative voice interrupts his opted silence.

Jemin forces a grin. “Come on, Tae. Are we really going there?”

He sighs and leans back against the tree trunk. “Guess not. Anyone, regardless of who they are, would gladly fall heads over heels with Jeongguk’s good looks, wealth, and high status. I’ve known Guk since our diaper days, and it’s a given. But that’s the thing. It’s the whole reason why he’s managed to avoid marriage till now—because that’s legit what people like about him. The packaging he comes in. Though I doubt you’re in for that.”

It’s only when Jimin’s heart wrenches at the words that he realizes the opulent qualities that make men like Taehyung and Jeongguk so desirable are the very same weaknesses anyone selfish could use against them. And while Jimin hadn’t exactly hunted for Jeongguk's hand, the bribery that originally won him over doesn’t make him any less of a gold-digger.

It’s better if Taehyung is kept in the dark about the arrangement. Besides, it’s the first time Jimin’s been regarded as an angel despite being the opposite. He could get used to this.

“What are you talking about?” He snorts. “I love a rich hot guy as much as the next person.”

Taehyung laughs. “I’m serious, Minnie. What do you love the most about Guk?”

And here Jimin had hoped that he’d continue avoiding this topic. He purses his lips, thinking of a way to escape this question, simply because he’s unable to provide an answer.

As much as he hates lying, Jimin can’t admit that he doesn’t love Jeongguk. How could he love someone he’s known for a mere two weeks, despite imagining him from what Sangguk had told him years ago? How could he ever love a guy who’s paying him to play the role of a loving husband, and the third wheel to his fling with a model?

But you don’t exactly hate him, either. Even if you’re not in love with him, there must be something
“Um, well. I love that he rescued me from a douchebag harassing me at work once,” Jimin says, watching the way Taehyung’s eyes curiously light up. “And I love how he squeezes my hand when I need some reassurance. I love it when he’s being a dork and nothing like the asshole he usually is. I love how he randomly messages me at two in the morning when we’re time zones apart. I love how easily he gets along with kids like Jeonghan and Sehyun. I love how he maintains a strong bond with his father, even if their domineering personalities take advantage of them both. I love how he makes me feel good about myself by getting a little lost in my eyes without meaning to. I love how he always makes the best of my flaws, I don’t know—I like it all. He deserves someone better and yet he’s still says I’m the prettiest thing alive, when we both know I’m not.”

Embarrassed at his rambling, he shyly peeks up at Taehyung’s ear-splitting grin and mumbles, “What? You asked.”

“I know, and I’m not sure if I regret that.” Taehyung sighs deeply. “As delightful as it is to know that you see more in Jeongguk compared to all the others he’s dated, it ruins my chances of convincing you to dump him for me.”

Jimin dissolves into giggles. “Stop. I might end up taking your word for it if you keep this up.”

“Think of it as an open offer.” A warm hand gently slides over his palm. “Whenever he does something stupid, I’ll be there.”

The seriousness underlying his playful tone causes him to narrow his eyes. “Are you sure you aren’t just trying to compete with Jeongguk?”

“Oh, please.” Taehyung has the audacity to look offended. “I wouldn’t fight with him over this. We don’t even have the same type.”

“Yeah? Why do you like me then?”

He pauses. “I knew you weren’t Guk’s type since the moment I saw you. The way you carried yourself—from your funny expressions, sarcasm, goofy dances, and genuine smiles—it was nothing Jeongguk would normally pine after. You did whatever you wanted without the fear of being judged. That’s when reality hit me with the fact that my best friend is actually settling down with the right guy.”

Jimin smiles, cheeks flushed. “Is that a compliment?”

“It’s more than just a compliment. You shouldn’t change yourself in order to fit in, Minnie. You’re perfect as you are.”

“Thanks, Tae. I needed that.”

Taehyung clasps his shoulder with a fond look on his face. “Anytime. Come on, we better go before Jeongguk charges me with kidnapping.”

"Wow, you look like just got fucked.”

“Thanks.” Jimin grins and gives Junghwa a brief hug.

“To be fair, Chim is really fucking hot for a virgin.” Wheein chimes in. The other girls laze by the
pool, clad in bikinis and sundresses. “He can twist even the simplest outfit.”

“Stop exaggerating—what?” He trails off at the sight of the Jeon siblings’ mouths hinged open.

“You’re a virgin?”

“Guk hasn’t fucked you yet?”

Cheeks instantly flaring at the outburst, Jimin sends one thunderous glare towards his coworkers before facing the two. “Yes, I’m offering your brother my virginity on our wedding night. Happy?”

“I’m not surprised.” Junghwa shakes her head in disbelief while Junghyun, despite arriving like he wanted to blow up the place, gives him a small smile.

“You’re really not what I expected, Park.”

He snorts. “Welcome to the club. Why don’t you guys change and join the hot tub? Hyung’s coming in a bit with the karaoke machine.”

“I hope the bar has something strong,” Junghyun mutters as he peels off the black button-down to reveal a well-endowed, lean figure. “I’m gonna need it tonight.”

“We’ve talked about this, Hyun. You’re not drinking,” comes Junghwa’s sharp tone.

He glares at his sister. “You said I need a distraction—so here I am. Besides, why try to stop me now when you clearly know I’m not one for rules?”

“Because you don’t clean your messes up,” the younger Jeon argues. “Dad’s going to kill us both if he finds out we went drinking.”

Junghyun simply dismisses her with lift of his chin and a fling of his shirt. “Too bad. He’s already pissed at me, so no point on missing out. If you’re not going to loosen up, I will.”

Meanwhile, Jimin silently watches them banter in keen interest, noticing the loaded tension between them.

Junghwa is a little more outspoken tonight while her brother’s attitude is probably based on steroids. Judging from their exchange, he figures this argument refers to Junghyun’s illicit affair with that married actress, but as juicy as the situation is, he’s in no place to interfere.

Instead of lingering around, Jimin grabs Junghwa’s hand and steers her towards the refreshments table, where they meet Sejun and Seokmin lounging by the appetizers in their swim trunks.

“Hey, Sejun. Weren’t you having trouble with your thesis?” He blurts. “About people’s movement or something. Junghwa can help—she minored in Sociology.”

“Huh? I never—”

Ignoring his dumbfounded assistant, Jimin makes a beeline towards a furious Junghyun who miserably types away at his phone. “And you. I need your opinion on my fashion crisis. Come with me?”

The changing hall is empty by the time they stumble inside. There’s an aperture leading towards the shower stall and an empty room equipped with mirrors and racks for them to place their clothes.

He quickly says after glancing over his shoulder, “I have no idea what to pack for my honeymoon
with Jeongguk. You’re fashionable. What do you recommend?”

Junghyun eyes him suspiciously. “I doubt you’ll need help seducing him with where you’re heading right now.”

Jimin checks his reflection out for the first time tonight and can’t help but agree that the oversized, open-collared button-down cinching his waist definitely does a number on him. Especially the nude shorts stopping right at his inner thighs, showcasing every hard-earned muscle he’s gained during his workout.

He swells at how religiously he’s followed his morning runs and choreo these past few weeks. They may not have made a huge difference yet, but the subtle changes are enough satisfaction. The gym routine Sejun had gotten him into blessed him with a firmer, perkier ass that’s currently being glorified by his shorts.

His damp fringe is swept to the side while a pair of rose-tinted sunglasses and white low tops finish off his ensemble. There’s still work to do, but he finds himself looking like a hot mess tonight.

Junghyun’s offhand comment draws his attention back. “I still can’t believe you’re a virgin. Who graduates high school without losing it nowadays?”

Jimin gives him a sidelong glance. “The ones who obviously didn’t want to waste it on immature, horny fucktards like the kids at Busan Prep.”

He’s responded with a harsh laugh. “Jeongguk is literally walking sex on legs. The idea of him marrying a virgin is pretty fucking weird.”

>You have no idea.

“Are we really going to discuss your brother’s sex life here?”

“God, no.” Junghyun wrinkles his nose. “I’m just surprised, that’s all. I would’ve expected something by now after walking in on that steamy makeout session at brunch.”

“That was uh—an in the moment kinda thing.” Jimin frantically explains. “I was just sitting on him.”

Junghyun studies him once more before deftly rising to his bare feet and head for the door. Halfway out, he slyly throws a wink. “Right. Well, hope you get to sit on him more often during your honeymoon.”

All in all, the bachelor party turns out to be a successful blast, consisting of a Korean gourmet, drinks by the pool, and weird games like Pin The Donkey, but with a life-size cutout of Lee Minho instead. Jimin stays back as everyone dives into the pool, smiling throughout each wave of torture they send his way.

Everyone then huddles by the edge of the pool to watch him unwrap the wedding presents after dinner. Despite expecting no less from his perverted friends, Jimin chokes at the bundle of sex toys placed on his lap, and struggles even more when fuckers like Seokmin and Wheein suggest tips on how to work the crystal vibrator and other kinky shit best.

The only bummer is the obvious ice between the Jeon siblings, who, prior to the argument, begin avoiding each other at all costs. With every shot a tipsy Junghyun downs, the more furious his sister grows. And Jimin’s attempts at watering each drink does more damage as he drowns further into a drunken haze.
Taehyung’s call gives him a reason to step inside the changing room and ignore the chaos going on outside.

“I shouldn’t be calling, but I just wanted to know how your party is going so far.” He can literally hear the smile in Taehyung’s voice. “Send me a video of the girls making out, please?”

Jimin rolls his eyes as he peels his damp shirt off in exchange for a tee. He forgot an extra pair of pants, and now has to deal with his shorts clinging onto his cold, clammy skin. “I wouldn’t send it either way, you sick fuck. Besides, this party is rated PG.”

“Yeah, right! Don’t keep all the goods to yourself, man. Why else would you ban us from your party? Obviously because you’re getting some private sexy time.”

“It’s all good fun, Tae, so shut up.” He laughs. “No one here is—”

Shouts from outside interrupt his conversation as Jimin glances out the window to find Junghyun and Junghwa exchanging screams by the hallway. Determined to break them apart before it turns serious, Jimin promises to call back and hangs up, pocketing his phone and hurrying out of the changing room.

“—do you want her to see how pathetic you really are—”

“—you don’t fucking understand—”

“Hey, hey! Stop it.” With a frantic wave, Jimin plants himself between the glowering brother and sister, Junghyun being completely wasted while Junghwa is fully dressed. “That’s it, spill. What is going on with you two?”

Neither of them speak, just silently seethe. He sighs and pulls out his phone. “I’m calling Sangguk.”

“Jimin!” Junghyun wobbly lunges for him, swiping the phone away and stumbling face-first onto his shoulder.

“Hyun lost it when he heard Yoona’s husband returned for their fifth anniversary tonight,” Junghwa coldly informs, shaking her head. “He keeps forgetting that he’s nothing but a side dick.”

“Shut the fuck up, Junghwa,” her brother hisses from where Jimin holds him. “You, of all people, have no right to judge my business. You’ve no idea how it feels to be in love, okay? She told me she loves me. She’s said it so many times.”

“Last time I checked, it’s not your name on her marriage certificate,” she retorts. “I’m not believing any of this bullshit she’s feeding you. Come talk to me when your name finally replaces his.”

It’s only when Junghyun’s anger contorts into a hurt expression that Jimin decides to shield him away from Junghwa, preventing him from strangling her. “Of course you wouldn’t believe it. You ever wonder why no guy has loved you before? It’s because you’re a fucking doormat who’s too picky for her own good. You’re convinced that you’re too good for anyone. Let this get into your damn head, Junghwa, because I’m not saying it twice. You’ll realize how fuckin’ stupid you were to think everyone as your inferior when you die alone. Remember that it’ll be your own fault all along.”

The brawl ends as soon as Jimin catches the pain flashing through Junghwa’s eyes, lips trembling in effort not to burst into tears right here.

“Junghwa,” he starts. Handling either of them would be a hassle, considering Junghyun’s this close to humping the floor if he releases him now.
She stiffens at the sound of her name. “Don’t worry about it, Jimin. I’m fine. If anything, you should fret over my brother who’s clearly too blind to see that he deserves more than settling down with bits and pieces of someone who’ll never love him back.”

Wincing, Jimin nervously glances between the two. “Let’s sit down and talk this over—”

“Sorry, but I have to go. Enjoy the rest of the party.” Junghwa silently excuses herself.

“Wait, Jung—Junghwa!”

But she’s gone within seconds, leaving a whimpering Junghyun in his arms. He looks nothing like his usual sleek, handsome self as his fringe mats against his forehead and eyes glaze in an intoxicated haze.

He gently sets the mess down on a chair. “The fuck is wrong with you, huh? Where’d the confident, egotistic Jeon Junghyun go?”

That clearly isn’t something to tell a drunk guy because Junghyun doesn’t take it well. His face scrunches in distress. “Fuck off, Jimin. You don’t have to pretend that you care, because I know you don’t. My dislike towards you isn’t going to change Guk’s decision about marrying you. So you might as well drop your act.”

Before he can open his mouth to protest, a shrill laugh startles him. “And to think Junghwa dared to fucking lecture me. She wouldn’t know what love is even if it slapped her in the face.”

“As if you know better,” Jimin simply says. It’s neither a challenge nor a question. It’s a statement that has Junghyun narrowing his squint.

“If you knew better, then you wouldn’t be miserably drinking your ass away. You would’ve been happy. But instead, you’re crossing your fingers hoping you know better, when you obviously don’t. That’s not suffering, Junghyun—that’s plain stupidity.”

“Don’t talk, Jimin,” he growls a warning. “You can’t relate.”

“I know. I can’t relate. It’s normal to view toxic things as love when we’re desperate, but it isn’t normal to pursue them. You need to understand that.”

Junghyun avoids his gaze. “No one gets the thing between me and Yoona. It may look bad right now, but it’ll get better. Meeting at the wrong time and place shouldn’t stop us from picking our shit up and making us work.”

“Sure.” Jimin hastily agrees. “But for now, you gotta figure out something so you won’t continuously hurt yourself like this, Junghyun. Where’s your driver?”

“No.” A snort. “I haven’t had someone tailing after me for years.”

“M’kay, well, I’m just going to let everyone know that we’re leaving. I think you need to go home and sleep this off.”

After gaining his nod of approval, Jimin informs Sejun of their leave and arranged rides for everyone once the party wraps up. He slips on the hoodie from earlier this morning before heading back to the hallway where he finds Wheein grabbing her stuff outside of the change room.

“How’s Junghyun doing?” he asks upon seeing her furrowed brows.
Wheein looks confused. “Junghyun? I saw him leave for the bar a few minutes ago. Is he not at the pool?”

“Shit, no. He bailed on me.”

“What’s wrong, Chim?” Wheein’s calls after him when Jimin rushes out of the lounge. Yelling out his reassurance, he stumbles into the elevator and frantically punches the lobby’s button into the panel, praying that Junghyun is hopefully being denied of more alcohol.

Sure enough, the bar is equipped with a discerning host who takes one look at his shaggy outfit and blocks him from barging into the fancy entrance.

Jimin glances past the host’s shoulder and gawks at Junghyun lazily feeling up a girl behind the counter, She’s draped all over him, her sundress literally a thread away from tearing. They sloppily swap kisses to point that it’s nauseating to watch.

“Okay, buddy, I’m only going to take five seconds to get my friend back here.”

“Are you a guest here, sir?”

“Yes,” he impatiently replies. “We’ve booked the rooftop under Park Jinyoung’s name.”

By the time the host finally goes over the rentals on his computer, Junghyun is snaking his hands up into the girl’s dress mid-kiss. Jimin’s on the verge of losing it.

“And are you Park Jinyoung?”

“Uh, no. I’m Park Jimin, his, uh, brother.”

There’s a bouncer who sizes him up again in annoyance. Clearing his throat, he continues in a long drawl, “With all due respect, sir, the bar requires a strict dress code that you aren’t—”

“Look, I’m Jeon Jeongguk’s fiance, and you see that guy over there?” Jimin jabs a finger towards Junghyun sinking into his stool. “He’s my brother-in-law and I have to get him out of here before he vomits on your stuff.” As much as he despises taking advantage of Jeongguk’s name, there seems to be no other choice from how adamant the host is holding his ground. “Got it?”

He looks unimpressed. “Yeah, we get that a lot. Someone came in claiming they were Michael Jackson five minutes ago. Guess how that went.”

Groaning, Jimin swipes his phone out and quickly searches himself up on Naver. He chooses the first picture—which happens to be a shot of Jeongguk and him at the engagement party. There’s an obvious difference between the designer suit and his current, grubby getup, but Jimin leaves his phone for the bouncer to see and shoves past him.

He manages to swim through the murmuring crowd and spots Junghyun pressed onto the counter, hands roaming across a girl slotted between him like the TSA. Jimin yanks him by the wrist in effort to wrench him away from the girl, who whines in distress.

“Come on,” he mutters, but Junghyun doesn’t cooperate and instead throws his arms back around the girl’s waist.

“Jiminnie, look!” Junghyun slurs. “This is Hyejin! Say hi!”

Hyejin delightedly drinks in his appearance and wraps a lazy hand around Junghyun’s neck. “Babe,
why don’t we have a little fun with your friend here? We could go up to my suite. It has the best view.”

Jimin forces a smile and grips Junghyun’s other hand a little too tightly. The fact that he’s stronger than an average drunk doesn’t help the situation at all. “Uh, I don’t think so. Scatterbrains aren’t exactly my type, and you look like you lost yours.”

Junghyun apparently finds this hilarious because he doubles over in shrill laughter. “Oh, Jiminnie! You’re so funny! Isn’t he funny, Hyejin-ah?”

“Yeah, real funny. I bet he’s got a good mouth in bed,” her dark lips curl in response.

Jimin shakes his arm. “Okay, that’s it. Get up, Junghyun.”

“No! I’m staying here with Hyejinnie. She makes me happy. My one true love.”

“Listen.” He faces Hyejin’s pleased expression. “While you’re probably some poor guy’s one true love, it unfortunately isn’t this one. Nice knowing you, Juliet, but we got better things to do like run the hell away from you.”

And with one final tug, he successfully pulls Junghyun up and catches his waist in effort to hold him up. They grad past the entrance without much resistance and stumble into the host once again.

Jimin barely spares him a glance. “What? Did my ID not work?”

The man gives him a stiff apology and steps aside for them to reach the lobby. Stage two of a drunken mess begins once he releases his grip on Junghyun in the lobby.

“Jiminnie. Don’t wanna go home. Don’t wanna be aloooone!” He whines, clinging onto his hip.

Jimin draws out a sigh and rakes his hair in thought. “I guess you could stay with me tonight? You’re so wasted, you wouldn’t even care.”

They exit the hotel entrance by now and stand near the front steps. “M’not wasted. M’broken-hearted. There’s a difference.”

“Yeah, okay, but getting wasted won’t solve your broken heart, dumbass. You either fix it or get over it.”

Without waiting for his reply, Jimin is stopped by a doorman’s offer to help. Just as he’s about to request a cab, Junghyun pries himself away from his hold and staggers towards a taxi pulling by the sidewalk, where the door opens to reveal passengers.

“Junghyun!”

He dashes after him as Junghyun elbows his way inside, jabbing at a woman who brushes past. Throwing an apologetic smile her way, Jimin curses when he spots Junghyun babbling nonsense to a very confused driver inside. He swings the door shut, straps in their seatbelts before demanding, “Where the fuck are we going?”

To his horror, Junghyun is surprisingly sober enough to give a proper address along the lines of Seoul and a suite number of an upscale condo.

The address does sound a little familiar. “Is that where you live, Junghyun?”

When he’s answered with silence, Jimin leans over to find him sweating beneath the AC vent.
Junghyun’s legs are tucked underneath his folded arms. The slightest touch has him breaking into a cold sweat, and he simply whimpers in response.

“Hey,” Jimin softly says. “You okay?”

“Don’t—don’t feel too good.” And he proceeds to hunch forward and spill his contents past his shoes and onto the taxi floor without another word.

“What the hell?” The taxi driver glances at them from the rearview. “You can’t just throw up in my cab, you fucking—”

Rubbing little circles into Junghyun’s back with one hand and reaching for his back pocket with the other, Jimin manages to shut the driver up with his entire wallet, promising to pay extra. He focuses on the task at hand right now, which is letting his brother-in-law spill his gut for as long as needed.

The driver, albeit mutters after accepting a wad of more than six hundred thousand won, eventually pulls up at a twenty-something-story building. The car speeds away as soon as they shuffle onto the sidewalk. Junghyun’s Saint Laurent boots are soiled while Jimin’s thin hoodie is a little stained from the aftermath.

He wordlessly peels the hoodie off and crouches down to wipe Junghyun’s shoes with it. He avoids saying this aloud, but Jimin’s grateful for the skillset he developed after years of looking after his drunkard of a father.

That’s when Junghyun sways towards the entrance, yelling out for Im Yoona and begging her to come outside. Jimin instantly pales at the shout.

“Fucking hell, Junghyun.” He slaps a hand over his damp mouth after pulling him aside. Security is bound to be summoned with how intense his raised voice is. “Of all places, you brought us to your girlfriend’s?”

It’s a nice part of Seoul, but its quality doesn’t guarantee their safety. Jimin silently hopes they won’t run into any thugs lurking around this dead of the night as Junghyun twists away with a wail.

“Jiminie, I have to see her!”

“Like hell you will. I’m not letting you get us arrested at ass o’clock in the morning!”

Tears glisten in his darkened eyes. “But you said I have to fix the situation myself, remember? I have to fix it or get over it!”

“Okay, but you’re not fixing anything in this state!”

“No, I have to see her!” He repeats, yanking his arm away. His towering frame does nothing on Jimin despite their apparent height difference. “Yoona has to decide whether she wants to be with me or that bastard. She’ll choose me, I know she will. I should’ve done this before.”

“God, Junghyun, just shut up already. You can try again tomorrow, okay?”

“But Jiminnie.”

“That’s it. I’m taking you home.” Jimin palms his jeans, only to realize he left his phone with the bouncer back at the hotel. “Fuck—my phone. Where’s your cell?”

“No cell,” Junghyun weakly answers.
“What? What do you mean, ‘no cell?’”

“Threw it in the pool when I called Yoona and heard them together...I got so pissed, Jimin. I couldn’t.”

“Fucking fantastic.” He mutters in disbelief and rubs his throbbing temple with one finger. “I left mine back at the hotel with all that shit going on and—great. Both Jeongguk and your dad will slaughter me alive if anything happens to you.”

As tempting as it sounds, breaking into Yoona’s apartment is the last thing on their list. The quiet streets are left bare this weekday night. Jimin glances around the block to find a phone booth located outside of a closed cafe. Before he can drag Junghyun with him and make their call, he hears the older whine his name against his shoulder.

It’s the final straw. “The only thing you’ll do if you visit Yoona is kiss her ass goodbye. Ask yourself, Junghyun, do you really think she’d leave her husband for a bawling, grown ass man reeking in his own vomit like you?”

He hadn’t meant to come off as brutally harsh, but Junghyun’s tactics were this close to leaving them on the verge of arising trouble in the morning. Fortunately, his statement sobers him up as Junghyun finally straightens in agreement.

“You’re right,” he breathes, hot breath uncomfortably hitting past Jimin’s nape. “I’m an idiot. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have bothered.”

The apology melts Jimin’s hardened heart and he gently tugs his hand forward. “It’s cool. We all get like this sometimes. Now, let’s see if that phone works.”

They had just made it inside the booth with a scarce amount of coins when a body slams against the glass panel and effectively startles the both of them. The quarters fall out of Jimin’s hand as he struggles to keep a trembling Junghyun close. Two figures loom over the door, stenched in weed and alcohol.

One of them manage to corner them from behind. “Hey, pretties. Whatcha doin’ out here, so late? Up for some fun?” A grubby hand presses against the back of Jimin’s thigh, only to be swatted away at full force.

“Touch us and we’ll scream bloody murder,” he growls, knuckles paling in Junghyun’s grip. The taller one facing them switches his beer bottles and lets out a wheezing laugh. “Big talk for a cockslut. What’d ya say about sucking my friend’s dick here?”

Heart pounding wildly against his ribcage, Jimin narrows his eyes. “I say get the fuck away.”

“Mouthy bitch.” The one who’d previously ogled him now grabs him by the jaw and twists his head in a grip. “If you won’t give us a good time, then give us all your cash. How about the one next to you? He looks loaded.”

Poor Junghyun immediately fishes his wallet out and tosses it to the bulkier of the two. “It’s all I have.”

The short one tugs at the studs Sooyeon had given Jimin. “I like those earrings. Real diamond? Hand it over.”

Without realizing what’s to come afterwards, Jimin silently obeys and reaches to unfasten his earring.
That’s when the man grabs his wrist and yanks him out of the booth, unoccupied hand snatching the diamonds away.

“Look at this shit, Daesuk.” He beckons the taller one over. “It must be fourteen carats or more.”

“How much do you think this’ll get us, Eunsoo?” Daesuk excitedly asks.

“A good million or two. Jesus Christ.”

Leaving them to their ecstasy, Jimin slyly gestures at Junghyun to slip out of the booth while the robbers are occupied. As soon as the time is right, he takes the huge risk of swinging his knee forward and jabbing his sneaker into Eunsoo’s crotch, causing Eunsoo to howl. The bottle of beer is left lying on the ground when Jimin yells at Junghyun to make a run for it.

A thick arm grabs Jimin and flings him towards the open booth, where he’s caught by Daesuk and feels his ribcage crumbling underneath the burly man’s steel fingers.

Groaning but on his toes, Eunsoo manages to join his partner and send a fist flying straight into Jimin’s gut, stealing the breath out of him in one go and replacing the air with excruciating pain.

Stars blurry his vision as he takes the hit.

“Jimin!” Junghyun hollers.

Jimin coughs out a gasp, his midsection twisting as Daesuk tightens his hold on him. The blood pounding in his ears eventually dims his sight as he begins to blacken out. “R-run, Junghyun, just fucking run.”

Eunsoo takes notice of Junghyun hesitating and before he can lay a hand on him, Jimin uses his remaining strength to bend his legs, push his feet up, and swing back onto Daesuk’s chest, which thankfully has him spiraling onto the ground.

Now free from his grip, Jimin catches hold of the abandoned beer bottle and smashes it against the side of the man’s head as he shouts for his partner.

The powerful blow he never knew he was capable of causes him damage, too. Swearing when he feels glass shards prickling his palm, Jimin quickly pushes a wailing Eunsoo aside and screams when he sees a recovering Daesuk lunging for Junghyun.

Meanwhile, Eunsoo clips a hand under his collar and sends him hurling into the concrete bench standing a foot away from the telephone booth. The force of his throw easily smashes him against the solid rock edge, despite catching it with his left wrist which eventually bruises upon contact. His battered midriff worsens once his body meets with the concrete, sending a severe jolt of pain raking through his bones. The rough surface of the sidewalk scrapes Jimin’s exposed knees raw as he sinks low onto the ground.

Head clouded and gaze no longer clear, Jimin is on the verge of drifting into unconsciousness when he copes a deep breath and coaxes himself onto his feet. The wail of a siren slowly approaches the large crowd of neighbors formed around him by now, many of them being equipped.

The last thing he hears before blacking out is a string of curses and a shout for an ambulance.

Chapter End Notes
(˘_˘)
find me on twitter, and tumblr, and insta.
The next hour passes in a blur.

All Jimin remembers are vague moments of the robbers getting arrested prior to a guy across the street spotting their brawl and calling the police after the first blow. Apparently, the guy had spotted them both bickering near the telephone booth before Eunsoo and Daesuk had approached them.

The two are immediately carted off to the hospital as soon as they gave their statements. Ignoring his wrecked state, Jimin insists that Junghyun be treated first since the backhand he received probably caused a serious concussion.

Once Junghyun’s out of sight, he confesses his very basic health insurance to a nurse, explaining that he could barely afford medical bills and therefore opted to sit out. Besides, it wasn’t like he broke a bone.

Nor did he want to touch a single penny of Jeongguk’s.

The nurse, albeit hesitant, eventually lets Jimin off the hook due to his ratty appearance. Instead of examining, she seats him on a gurney outside of the medical room and tends to the numerous cuts littering his arms.

“Thank you,” he softly says, wincing as he props a leg forward. The sting in his midsection
combined with his sore knee makes it difficult to straighten himself. “I really appreciate it.”

“I can’t tell whether your ribs are broken or bruised, so I suggest you ice them a bit when you go back home.” The nurse informs. “You’ll have trouble breathing, talking, and eating, so you should take prescribed painkillers stronger than your typical over-the-counter stuff.”

“Yeah, that makes sense. I’ll see if I can—”

“Jemin!”

They flinch at the deafening voice resonating through the vast hallways, Jimin nearly crying from the piercing pain his rib gives when he quickly sits up.

He grieves over how unnecessarily loud his fiance is as an enraged Jeongguk races down the corridor with Taehyung anxiously trailing along.

“I fucking sped here when the police called saying you and Junghyun were attacked by thugs and in the hospital.” Jeongguk snarls, darkened eyes wide but menacing. “I went to the private suite booked under my name and only found hyung there. After threatening the goddamn staff to tell me where you were, all they said was that you were listed for ambulance expense and denied medical aid.”

His fury is quick to draw the unwanted attention of others towards their blatant scene from all over. Jimin can’t help but shrink under the audience’s curious gazes.

“Why the hell is my fiance sitting out here untreated when I can easily sue this place out of business?” Jeongguk growls as he inspects him from head to toe.

The nurse exchanges a wary glance before Jimin grunts, “Well, I can’t. You know how my dad’s medical bills added more debt after his death?”

“And you know you should let me take care of it for once!” He yells, staggering back when Taehyung clasps his shoulder in warning.

Tears, along with his cheeks, burn Jimin’s eyes and he furiously blinks them back. Tired, starving, and still shaken—all he receives is the indignation he’s never asked for.

“You drive me insane, you know that?” Jeongguk scoops him up without warning, only to pull away when Jimin shrieks in his arms.

“Baby, are you okay?” His voice quivers. “Jemin?”

“Should’ve asked me that before, asshole!” Jimin snaps, eyes briefly squeezing shut while he tries readjusting. Talking only adds more to the pain that heaves a long groan out of him.

“You can take him back to the ER if you want him examined,” the nurse offers and gestures towards the wide door. “I hope you understand that he chose not to seek medical help. I just patched him up.”

Wordlessly nodding, Jeongguk follows her into a vacant room where Jimin is gently laid down on a bed.

“You’re overreacting. I’m fine.” He finds himself saying faintly as he gratefully settles into the large mattress. It’s spacious enough to stretch without hurting.

“Are you a doctor?” Jeongguk retorts from his place near the headboard. The nurse had already left to get a specialist. “Exactly, so sorry for consulting one.”

A searing pain jabs his abdomen again, cutting him off short. He steadies himself by biting down on his lip and gulping small breaths.

“Don’t worry about him for now,” Taehyung says softly on the other side of the bed. “He’s fine. You just need to focus on recovering yourself.”

“And then we’re talking about tonight. Who the fuck told you two to run around the city unsupervised—wearing that rag—at two in the morning?” Even with his eyes closed, Jimin can picture Jeongguk’s wrath rolling down in waves. “You said you’d take care of yourself, yet here you are knocked up in the ER. I should’ve never believed you. They hurt you, goddamn it. What if someone hadn’t called for help—fucking hell. I can’t even think about it.”

“Look at that, Minnie. You’ve successfully tore him up.”

Taehyung’s mischievous whisper leaves Jimin grinning despite the throbbing ache spreading all over. Knowing better than to meet the younger’s frenzy, he whines into the pillows instead.

Jeongguk shoots them a glare anyway. “What is it now, Tae? Stop bothering him—”

“You’re the one bothering him, Guk. Yelling at him won’t make things better. Why don’t you step outside for a breather—”

“I’m not leaving him!”

“Then shut the fuck up and stay with him,” Taehyung retorts. The sound of a chair scraping against the floor follows afterwards. “Don’t let go of his hand. I’m gonna go check up on hyung.”

Silence envelopes their curtained area once Taehyung leaves. The disembodied noises outside remain detached as Jeongguk slowly interlaces their fingers together, instantly curling around each other when he raises Jimin’s hand and presses his lips against his fingertips.

“Jimin,” he mutters, soft and mellow and wounded.

“Mmm.”

Briefly quiet, Jeongguk buries his face into the older’s palm before whispering, “I was scared.” His long lashes flutter across Jimin’s skin when his eyes shut close. “So, so, scared.”

Although riveting thoughts continuously flood his mind for the past hour, Jimin strangely feels better. A tender ache, unrelated to his injuries, flares something sweet in his chest.

He smiles faintly. “You and me both, Guk.”

“There’s no way I’m staying over at your place.”

“You don’t have a choice. It’s either that or I go to yours.” Jeongguk says and drapes his overcoat around his shoulders.

They’re sitting at the emergency ward two hours later, after going through several X-rays and a thorough examination. The doctor had only confirmed bruised ribs and a sprained wrist among other
insignificant injuries before prescribing him high-end painkillers that completely numb his body, thus giving Jeongguk the advantage of keeping him for the night.

He might as well. Aside from not having a say in the first place, Jimin doesn’t want to be left alone tonight. Memories of the incident vividly paint his sight.

“Do you have instant ramyun?” Jimin asks as Jeongguk hunches forward to slip his battered sneakers back onto his feet. “I’ll come with you if you do.”

He cautiously glances up. “No, but I promise to stock up. How about some rice instead?”

“S’okay. Can we please go now?” Sleep starts to override Jimin as he nuzzles into Jeongguk’s chest, ignoring the tingle the younger’s hands give when he draws him closer.

Taehyung’s startling voice causes them to twist around and find him wheeling Junghyun towards them.

“Look who came to visit you,” Taehyung grins. “We only have five minutes before I take him back.”

Junghyun is dressed in the same pale gown as Jimin is—the only difference being his face scrubbed free of makeup and a darkened bruise near his temple. Hair pulled back in gauze, his expression is mellow but lights up at the sight of Jimin struggling in Jeongguk’s arms.

“Junghyun!” He exclaims. “Are you okay?”

Junghyun weakly smiles. “I’m good. Just a little knocked up like you. I’m not allowed to go home tonight because they’re convinced I’ll have a concussion with how hard I got hit.”

“That’s great,” Jimin sighs in relief, remembering the exact moment he watched Junghyun’s head snap back from the severe blow. “Shit, I’m sorry I couldn’t stop him...I don’t—I thought—” The words clog his throat so he swallows thickly instead.

“You’re alright, baby. It wasn’t anyone’s fault,” Jeongguk murmurs in his ear and rubs his arm soothingly.

“No, Guk, it was my fault.” Junghyun interrupts, shaking his head. “I should’ve listened to you and Junghwa about drinking. We wouldn’t have been in this situation if it weren’t for my dumb ass.” Heaving a breath, he wipes his eyes with a shaky wrist. “I’m sorry, Jimin.”

“It’s okay. I get where you were coming from. I’m just glad we got off the hook before it got serious.”

“Well, those bastards won’t,” Taehyung snarls, handsome face twisted dangerously. “They’ve been accused of several cases, sexual assault and theft just being a few of them. They’d gotten away with everything till now.”

“Have you told Sangguk yet?” Jimin asks.

“First thing tomorrow.” Jeongguk frowns at his brother. “Giving the police my name won’t keep Dad out of this, hyung. You should know that by now.”

When Junghyun responds with silence, he further informs, “I called noona on the way. She’ll be here soon.” And Jimin easily detects the discomfort underlying those layers of weariness, which he can’t blame since the siblings are in a rough patch.
“Also, not to be nosy, hyung, but there’s one more person you need to talk to. You know who I mean.” Jeongguk gently rests his hand on his shoulder. “It’s your decision.”

Despite his overall disapproval, Jimin can’t help but smile gratefully at Jeongguk’s understanding of the situation and the lack of harsh judgement. At least he’s given him a chance to think about it.

“Time’s up. Let’s go.” Taehyung declares. “I’ll look after him and maybe stay the night once Junghwa comes.”

“Thanks, Tae. Hyung, text me if you need anything, okay? I’ll be there.”

An hour later, Jimin finds himself tucked into Jeongguk once again as they arrive at an impressive high-rise building that he can barely appreciate thanks to his numbness. All he remembers is watching Jeongguk hand the keys over to a valet before scooping him up and carrying him into the quiet elevator, where the ride is brief but tense.

He doesn’t have the heart to observe his surroundings because the next thing he knows, he’s carefully being placed onto a large bed and peppered with pillows that Jeongguk tries sliding underneath him for leverage. He then leaves him to prepare the rice while Jimin views the midnight skyline through hooded eyes.

Eating—slurping, more like—becomes troublesome with the fading painkillers but Jeongguk patiently feeds him, coaxing him through each spoonful and encouraging to take his time, even if the tiny bowl lasts a good hour.

“Need a shower,” Jimin croaks. “Need to wash it off, Guk.”

It doesn’t cost him much of an explanation since Jeongguk simply nods and sets the tray aside before lifting him up and carrying him over to the giant en-suite bathroom, where he slowly sets him down to his feet.

“Here, let me.” Jeongguk says after turning the shower on. Fingers delicately roaming through his fringe first, Jimin stutters a breath when Jeongguk’s hand slips over the curve of his spine and pulls the laces holding the hospital gown apart.

Delirious or not, he’s more than aware of both his hardened nipples and the very obvious heat creeping past the thin fabric at the sensation of Jeongguk stripping him naked.

To his relief, Jeongguk makes no further move and lets the gown sit at his shoulders. He does murmur about finding him something to wear into his neck though, hand still curled in Jimin’s hair as he gives him a small smile and leaves him to silence.

Jimin shivers, not because of the cold or the fragments of what happened earlier, but because of the frightening way Jeongguk’s husky voice stirred the heated libido deep in his belly and further down below.

It’s just for tonight. You only agreed to this because you can’t sleep on your own right now.

Despite being under Jeongguk’s protective care, Jimin fears the harm that’ll bruise him won’t be physical, but rather mentally strong enough to shatter him. Still, he shrugs the gown off and steps into the shower, avoiding his gaze in the full-body mirror until he’s sure every speck and remnants of the incident has left.

The scalding water soothes his aching muscles and helps clear his clouded mind. Since he can’t find something unscented, Jimin blindly pours a dollop of a random body wash over his head, letting it
lather underneath the showerhead since one hand is sprained and the other is bandaged.

He smiles to himself once the aroma of warm sugar vanilla fills the steamy air. Jeongguk smells like this all the time.

A soft knock interrupts him as he steps out of the stall and slings a large towel over his dripping body. Finally facing his reflection with the towel loosely hanging from his arms, Jimin calls out a, “Come in.”

Jeongguk shuffles in, already dressed in a set of black cotton pajamas. He has the decency to focus elsewhere, but Jimin doesn’t mistake the curious spark in his gaze when he shyly glances away.

“Oh, Sejun hasn’t sent your clothes over yet, so—I just got you one of my shirts and clean underwear—hope that’s okay.”

He sets down a folded white shirt on the marble counter, along with a pair of gray briefs. If Jimin wants to flush at the image of the younger rifling through his underwear, he decides not to. Instead, he observes him opening vanity drawers and setting an extra razor and toothbrush next to his in the slate cup.

With that done, he turns back to Jimin and gently says, “Come on, sleepyhead. Let’s get you dressed for bed. You look like you’re gonna pass out right now.”

They stand in the stillness as Jeongguk delicately runs a towel through Jimin’s hair, occasionally spoiling him in soft presses when he moves onto his upper half. The shirt turns out to be a button down, which Jeongguk explains why while prying the buttons apart.

“Slipping this on would be a pain, so I figured this’ll be easier. You can, I mean—if you want—cover up, I guess? But I’ll have to slide your arms into each sleeve so you don’t get hurt.”

He wordlessly lets Jeongguk dress him, only moving to switch arms. The oversize of the shirt gives him enough room to keep the towel on until Jeongguk buttons it up for him. Jimin drops the towel to the floor and reaches for his underwear.

“I’ll turn around.”

“You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?”

Jeongguk’s grin widens. “I like taking care of you.”

“Right. Close your eyes, kid, and no peeking.”

Bending over proves to be difficult as Jimin struggles stepping into his briefs, midsection throbbing with every flick his wrist took. He manages to snap them right above his hips just as Jeongguk asks if he needs helps.

“I thought you slid panties off, not put them on.”

“I’m a man of many talents,” he shrugs. Upon opening his eyes and noticing Jimin’s wince, his playfulness melts into concern. “You okay?”

Jemin mirrors his look. “I will be. Eventually.”

He resumes buttoning but is interrupted by Jeongguk’s sudden grip on his wrists, who pulls his arms aside and widens the slit of his open shirt despite the protest dying on Jimin’s lips. His fingers slip
underneath, lightly tracing the swelling injury.

Harshly breathing through his nose, Jeongguk mutters, “Wanna see,” and cautiously tugs the shirt up to reveal Jimin’s thighs, briefs, and the start of his faint V line.

Jimin stills at the sight of clustered bruises right below his ribcage. There’s a combination of sweltering red transitioning into blue and purple littering across his torso in various cuts and scrapes that scar the generally unblemished skin he once had.

Jeongguk’s hand now curls into a fist as he grazes his palm against the flat planes of his hips. “I wish—I wish I could’ve been there.”

Jimin answers by pushing his hand away from the hem of his shirt. “Well, I’m glad you didn’t. You would’ve gotten yourself arrested and I’d have to bail you out.”

Eyes crinkling in a soft smile, he cocks his head to the side. “You never know when to shut up, do you?”

Something in that comment tugs at Jimin’s strings, yet he manages to play it off. “I don’t see you complaining.”

With that, Jeongguk rises and offers him the new toothbrush, taking care to wipe their mouths once they both finish.

He then carries Jimin to the master bed and pulls the duvets over his bare legs and underneath his chin before volunteering to sleep on the couch, which is on the other side of the room and extends towards the glass wall where Jimin spots the beginning of a pink dawn rising above Seoul.

“Stay here,” he says, startling himself with his sudden response, although he means every bit of it. Jeongguk eventually tosses the pillow back onto the bed and settles a few inches away. He reaches up to click the lights off, shrouding them in a room full of subtle darkness.

They lay there for a while till Jimin yawns, eyes drifting close and leaning into Jeongguk’s warm touch sifting through his damp bangs. “Thanks for taking care of me. I can’t remember the last time I’ve felt like this before.”

“Get used to it.” There’s an innocent lull to his voice. “I’m gonna do it all the time.”

Smiling, Jimin noses into his shoulder in search of all the tender affection he can score tonight. Silence engulfs them again as Jeongguk lightly trails a hand down his back, avoiding all the wounded areas.

It’s only when Jeongguk murmurs, “Thank you, Jimin,” that brings him back to reality.

“What?”

“Thank you for looking out for my brother,” he clarifies. “Hyung told me what happened.”

“It’s the least I could honestly do. The poor guy’s so smitten, he doesn’t realize how toxic his one-sided relationship is.”

Jeongguk presses his palm flat against the curve of Jimin’s hip. “Love is pretty shitty, isn’t it? Imagine having so much power over someone to the point you can either save or ruin their life in one go.”
“It sounds shitty when you put it that way,” Jimin soundly agrees with another yawn.

Jeongguk’s sweet tone, one hand raking his hair while the other holds his waist is the perfect combination that lulls him deeper into a numbing sleep. It’s so perfect that for a fleeting second, Jimin wishes it could last forever.

“Would you do it?” Jeongguk asks him in his haze. “Even if it were shitty, would you do it?”

“If they’re worth it, sure,” he mumbles subconsciously. “Would you?”

“If he’s worth it, then yes, I would.”

A sense of deja vu floods Jimin’s mind as he recalls pieces of his earlier conversation with Junghyun. Here he is, pressed against Jeongguk’s firm chest and hearing the sound of the younger’s steady heartbeat—a heartbeat meant for someone else. The fuzzy feeling quelling inside him dies down at this thought, but he knows better than to feel hurt over something he never had control of in the first place.

If tonight is the only night Jimin can have Jeongguk to himself, then he won’t waste regretting over what they could’ve been. After talking to Junghyun, he’s made the decision to let his fiance choose whatever he wants since he owes it to him. Even if it’ll fucking hurt because Jimin knows, for a fact, that he isn’t the solution.

“You can still call it off, you know.” He murmurs. “I’d understand. All I want is your happiness now.”

“Cancelling the wedding wouldn’t make me happy.”

“I’d rather you choose him over spending the rest of your life regretting it with someone else, Guk. You should choose him.”

Even if it isn’t me. Just as long as you’re happy. He squeezes his eyes shut when Jeongguk’s lips ghost past his temple. Consciousness fades away as he hears the younger whispering, but his mind gradually slips into a comfortable slumber which prevents him from catching what he had exactly said.

“I’ve already chosen him, Jimin. Forever.”

The last thing Jimin would expect is to peacefully arise in an incredible but unfamiliar bed after the multitude of crap he and Junghyun had gone through that night. He thought of something more like endless nightmares frightening him to no extent, but instead slept dreamlessly.

He wakes up to soft daylight greeting him outside of the glass panels. Jimin stretches in the covers, holding back a groan when his midsection burns in agony. It takes him a moment to register his surroundings after waiting for the pain to subside.

The contemporary furniture compliments the slate gray and white color scheme. Burnished wood floors, metal accents, the view of Seoul’s skyline—all a part of the modern, masculine look. The room is surprisingly clean, aside from the stray comic books left abandoned on the coffee table, sweaters thrown across multiple chairs and the couch in front of the flat screen TV, where two controllers are neatly tucked next to the latest Playstation monitor.

It gives off the image of a cozy, lived-in place and feels like it should be a featured article in an interior designing magazine.
Turning his head to the side, Jimin finds a centered indent in the black pillow next to him, reminding him of exactly whose bed he’s laying on.

*Jeongguk.*

Instead of scrambling out of the blankets, he surprises himself for the second time by yanking the pillow closer and breathing in the warm, sugary scent as if it’s the air he’s deprived of.

Last night plays like a silent movie for him, each scene perfectly sequenced right after the other. The funny thing is majority of them are Jeongguk—from his fury to the anxiety he expressed in the emergency room—including the moment where he grimly studied Jimin’s injuries before tucking him into bed.

Despite being unable to recall what they’ve conversed about, what Jimin does remember is the confusion riveting his heart whenever they did something intimate.

*How do you repel someone who keeps pulling you back in?*

He decides to lay it off for now and think it over some breakfast. Carefully adjusting himself out of bed, he sneaks a glance at the digital alarm clock perched on the nightstand that reads past two in the afternoon.

That explains a lot.

Jeongguk has probably left for work or something, so Jimin figures there’d be no harm to roam the place around in his underwear. He doesn’t bother checking his reflection when he enters the bathroom and tugs the hem of his off-shoulder shirt down his thighs.

The most Jimin does to his tangled bedhead is brush the stray locks from his face with one aching arm. He quickly brushes his teeth, washes up, and wipes the remnants of smudged eyeliner away.

Hungry and barely surviving off rice, he pauses by the door and decides he can’t leave without inspecting the room of the complicated man he’s marrying. Maybe it’ll tell him something Jeongguk wouldn’t have provided him with himself.

Jinmin knows he’s being a little too nosy when he searches random places—the medicine cabinet, the laundry hamper, even his toiletries—but he finds that Jeongguk is pretty simple. High maintenance, considering his various brand-name products, but simple since he only kept one of everything.

Another thing he notices is the lack of someone else sharing the bathroom. For a second, Jimin expected a drawer dedicated to a mistress or something, but is gladly proven wrong. He does spot his own clothes lying on top of the hamper in the corner, which looks strangely domestic.

*Still, you know this doesn’t mean anything.*

Jeongguk’s sleek bookshelf is bare except for the impressive collection of various shounen manga. There’s a few novels, all of them being related to business or old textbooks, and free of the chic-lit Jimin would read in his spare time.

So, despite owning nothing romantic, Jeon Jeongguk had been that one dark prince who whisked it all away last night. For someone Jimin assumes to be as caring as dirt, the tables sure keep turning against him.

Anyways, he figures he shouldn’t dwell on something that the other would’ve regarded as nothing. Besides, last night was different considering they were both stressed and under pressure—whatever
they’d done no longer holds a meaning. As it should.

Lost and hungry, Jimin saunters into a large hallway of three rooms that eventually leads him to a drawing room, where he catches a familiar voice nearby. He tiptoes past the living room and freezes by the dining area.

There stands Jeongguk behind the kitchen island, clad in a fitting apron over his black sweatshirt and gray joggers ensemble, ladling something suspicious into a saucepan. His Macbook accompanies him on the other side of the counter with a swarm of voices online responding to his occasional hollers.

It’s clearly a bad time to interrupt but Jeongguk glances up from his conference call, startled at Jimin’s fond gaze as the older slowly approaches him.

“—they’re willing to sign a contract with us as long as we provide them shipment—”

“—terribly risky and would cost a fortune if things go wrong, but their success is notorious and therefore we should take advantage—”

_God, he has no idea how fucking sexy he looks with that apron on. If only he was shirtless underneath._

Jimin’s smile widens when he discovers the thing he’s prodding turns out to be kimchi fried rice, topped with thinly sliced beef and sauteed vegetables.

Roses swirl his cheeks as Jeongguk appraises him from head to toe, because even though he’s clothed beneath that apron, Jimin is sure his own sheer white shirt’s got nothing to hide. Aside from his stiffening nipples under the breezy fabric, his legs are bare in all its glory, minus the bandaged knees.

He looks thoroughly fucked despite being clean. Jeongguk seems to agree from the way his darkening pupils drink this all in, fully blown out and mesmerized.

The feral look in his eyes should be enough to scare Jimin off, yet he pulls in, fragments of last night’s slumber controlling his common sense.

All he envisions are Jeongguk’s lips roaming his face and hair. Jeongguk’s protective arm over his hip. Jeongguk’s sweet voice murmuring soft words that he no longer remembers.

Maybe it’s the drugs doing their magic. Or maybe it’s the unanimous fact that Jimin is ultimately smitten, and there’s nothing stopping him from grasping Jeongguk’s biceps as he slowly leans up and presses a featherweight kiss on the corner of his mouth.

He feels the younger tense below him, yet isn’t pulling away. Instead, Jeongguk tentatively tilts his jaw—so slight that their lips slot together for a millisecond—before he cups Jimin’s nape and edges him for a deeper kiss.

And all would’ve gone well if it isn’t for the numerous coughs snapping them out of their reverie and tearing them apart. Jimin winces from the sudden pain spearing his torso, but the discomfort only doubles when he notices the dim lit screen with a gasp.

_Fuck._

A conference room of more than ten people stare either jaw-dropped or completely away. Even with half of Jeongguk’s body shielding their lower halves, it doesn’t take much for the audience to realize
there’s a guy making out with their boss half-naked.

Jeongguk easily recovers, setting the spoon down and sliding his hips onto the counter’s edge to block the suggestive view.

“Alright, team, that’s all. Please continue without me and email me the final decision,” he sighs, then slyly adds, “My man’s up so I’m all his now. Enjoy the rest of your day.”

By the time Jimin can peek over his arm to see their reaction, the blank screen is shut close.

He can’t help but sneer, “All mine, huh? Now your company will think of me as some needy bitch who walks around your place in my underwear.”

Jeongguk smiles, unfazed. “Nope. They’ll think of you as the poor, sickly fiance that I’m nursing back to health. Why else would I be cooking in a damn apron during my meeting?”

Softened, Jimin bites his lip and glances at the pan. “How’d you know I like kimchi fried rice?”

He smirks and picks the spoon up. “Your friend Jinyoung told me. Thought it’d be obvious considering I could’ve made something way easier, like cereal.”

“Throwing shade won’t make it tastier,” Jimin rolls his eyes. “No one asked you to make it. I wouldn’t have minded cereal.”

“Then I’ll get it ready for you. You must be starving.” Jeongguk gestures towards the row of barstools lined up behind the island. “Sit there. The fried rice is for dinner. I also made tiramisu for dessert.”

Jimin swallows. “I’m not dreaming, right?”

“Doubt it,” he replies cheekily. “I did expect you to be bedridden today but I think you’re slowly getting there, Jimin.”

“What, were you hoping I’d be weak enough to let you have your way with me?”

“Just enough to catch you off guard so I could do this.”

“Do what—”

And that’s when Jeongguk leans down and hungrily kisses the words back into Jimin’s mouth. He slips his tongue past his lower lip and ravishes the air out of him, to the point that thrills dive down his spine and leave his toes curling.

For a second, he forgets everything—from the ache to his appetite—and allows Jeongguk to dominate.

“What was that for?” Jimin stutters after breaking apart, little breaths moistening their lips.

“That’s for scaring the shit out of me last night,” Jeongguk murmurs and lunges forward again.

Heart pounding in his ears, all Jimin registers is the way their breaths comes out rough and low, a pitch he isn’t used to—and how Jeongguk delves in, tongue first, teeth clacking as they try keeping a pace.

“And that one?”
“For neglecting yourself just because you didn’t want to pay the bills.”

He’s dragged in by the collar again, fingers curling around Jeongguk’s shoulders as he licks into his mouth for the third time. “G-god, another offense?”

“For being too fucking stubborn and fighting with me all the time.”

The next kiss is strangely heated, and Jeongguk can’t tell whether it’s the possessiveness flaring his chest when he smells vanilla lingering on Jimin’s skin, or the deep infatuation driving him to do so.

“And that one,” he rasps before the latter can say a word, “is for flirting with Taehyung when you know he wants you.”

“He doesn’t want me,” Jimin manages as Jeongguk lowers him onto the counter. “Not—not in that way.”

Another deep kiss that cajoles a whine out of his lips. “No? You’re so naive. Don’t trust people like us so easily.”

Jimin’s had enough by now. He props his elbows upwards and raises a brow at him. “If you’re going to kiss me for every flaw of mine, we’ll be here all day.”

Jeongguk simply flashes a dazzling grin. “I know. I never thought I’d enjoy disciplining you this much.”

“Shut up.” Jimin shoves his chest with his recovering hand. “I’m not apologizing for half of it.”

“Trust you to play innocent.” Jeongguk’s hand is still curved over Jimin’s neck as he laughs and presses their foreheads together, mouth slightly open. His gaze softens. “But seriously, you’re okay, right? Are you still in pain? Should we call a doc—”

Jimin silences him by pressing a finger against his lips. “It definitely hurts, but the painkillers are doing their best. I’ll be fine. It’s not the first time.”

That’s when he realizes he shouldn’t have blurted that out loud, because the moment Jeongguk’s eyes narrow in suspicion, Jimin knows the younger has caught on.

“What do you mean, that wasn’t the first time?”

Jimin glances away and reaches for the cereal. Concentrating on pouring the Cheerios into his bowl, he says, “It’s nothing of your concern, Guk. Forget I said it.”

“You can’t just say something like that and tell me to forget about it,” Jeongguk spits. “Answer me, Jimin. Has someone hurt you before?”

“Is the milk ready?”

“Don’t avoid the damn question!”

He glares at him. “Can I at least eat before confessing my deep dark past? Not that it’s any of your business.”

Although displeased, Jeongguk backs off and brings him the heated milk. He pours it in and lets Jimin readjust before sliding onto the stool beside him, arms crossed over the counter.

“I need all the names and locations so I can find and kill them first,” he says so seriously that it’s
more intimidating than his temper.

Jimin snorts and takes a bite. “You can’t exactly kill someone who’s long dead.”

“So it was your dad.”

“Ironic, isn’t it? Who knew the one you trusted would be the very same person to lay a hand on you,” he laughs bitterly. “Nothing beats getting abused by your own family.”

When met with Jeongguk’s hardened expression, Jimin says, “Hey, it’s okay. It’s over—he can’t hurt me anymore. I wasn’t his punching bag. It’s not as bad as you think.”

“Your father beating you up wasn’t bad?”

He shakes his head. “I mean, it could’ve been worse, yeah? I could’ve died if he wanted me to. It started off with a few shoves here and there when he was drunk. I got punched whenever I yelled at him to clean his shit up.”

“What else?” Jeongguk cautiously asks.

*Might as well spit it out while you have the guts.*

Jimin pushes his spoon around. “I talked to him about America before graduation came around. Jinwoo knew this administrator who worked as an instructor at a dance academy, and he signed me up when I had enough savings to get started. I figured I could find a job there to pay the rest.”

Setting the cereal aside, he sneaks a glance at an impassive, nonetheless angry Jeongguk. “My dad didn’t like the idea. He said to stay in Busan and help with the rent. He got me a job without my permission as a receptionist at an auto mechanic’s. The only catch was every person who tried out there left after the owner’s son fucked them. I knew I wouldn’t handle the job without murdering someone, so I declined the offer.”

“He shouldn’t have suggested it in the first place,” Jeongguk seethes, to which Jimin weakly smiles at.

“I doubt he knew what actually went on there. He was barely updated on our house.” The myriad of distressing memories should’ve arrived by now, but is only replacement, regret, and a hint of sadness for what both father and son could’ve been.

“Our argument wasn’t pretty. You’d know—you’ve seen how adamant I get. I was a little more passionate that day.” Jeongguk’s response isn’t helping, and no matter how Jimin phrases the next part, he knows it’ll still rile the younger up—the same way he’d been as a teenager.

“I said I’d go to America after graduating anyway. He couldn’t stop me.” Jimin bites his lip, afraid of the reaction this would receive. “That was the first time he actually viewed me as—well, it didn’t occur to him that it was a person he was manhandling. He thought it was his son’s hair he grabbed and forced face down on the couch, where he beat wherever he could.”

He notices Jeongguk’s pale knuckles trembling in his peripheral vision and doesn’t comment on it. The conversation should be wrapped up and never mentioned again, but once a word slips out, a whole waterfall is to follow after.

For the first time in seven years, Jimin finally admits the truth behind the incident he tried concealing. Everyone who checked up on him that day didn’t know the full story, only because he refused to answer.
He’s saying the truth and the feeling is so emancipating he doesn’t bother sparing Jeongguk the ugly details.

“I fractured my face, busted my lip, and was an overall bruising mess afterwards. I had to go to the ICU in case I required surgery, but my condition was mild. The fractures were fine too—you can only see traces of it when I smile.”

“How the hell was your dad not charged with child abuse?”

“No one knew it was him,” Jimin quietly replies. “I apparently ended up at Jinyoung's door unconscious, where he took care of me. He was a teacher at Busan Prep then, so I’d stay with him on weekends to avoid being home. Hyung took me to the hospital and called the police, but I never told them what happened. I just said I couldn’t remember.”

“Why the fuck not?” Jeongguk demands.

“Because I still couldn’t believe my own father did that to me, let alone be angry at him. I always knew there’d be a day we’d fall apart, and when that day came, I no longer associated myself with him. I tried forgetting it all. I didn’t want it getting in my way after his death. For a guy, I couldn’t even protect myself or fight back.”

They sit in silence as Jimin finishes up his cereal, head hung so he can avoid Jeongguk’s eyes.

“Jinyoung knew it was my dad all along, but he couldn’t take action unless he had proof. He asked me to stay with him and Sehyun till I left for America, and I immediately agreed. As a teacher, Hyung had somehow convinced the school to let me study the rest of the semester at his place. I was so grateful that they let me graduate with all that going on. I owe him and Sangguk so much.”

“Yup.” Glancing up with a smile, Jimin nods. “He visited me at the hospital after Hyung must’ve told him. I couldn’t talk because of my swollen face, but he sat with me for an hour anyway, before telling me he handled the hospital bill and slipped an envelope in my hand, which turned out to be a ticket to America.”

Despite the smile, tears flood his vision. Jimin swears under his breath as he tries to wipe his eyes.

“Fuck, Jimin.” Jeongguk pulls him into his chest with an anguished groan. “I—goddamn. Now I know why you were so against my stupid proposal.”

The tears continue until Jimin is a sobbing mess in his arms, aside from the pain igniting his midriff again. He doesn’t cry out of pity, but for the freedom he’s gained after two years of suppressed emotions. His father’s death not only angered him because of the financial state he was now placed in, but the fact that losing him hurt more than the bitter resentment.

“I’m sorry, Jimin,” Jeongguk murmurs against his forehead. “So sorry. I would’ve killed your dad myself if he were still alive.”

“Don’t waste your breath on someone worthless,” Jimin views him through his watery lashes. “There’s no point in getting revenge over something that’ll destroy you along the way. I learned that the hard way.”

Jeongguk forces a smile as he brushes Jimin’s cheek with the back of his hand. “Sometimes your spirit surprises me, and other times it pisses me off because you won’t let me protect you.”

He smiles back. “I don’t need protection. I’m fine the way I am right now.”
“The fact that you think you can fight for anyone and everyone is exactly why you need more protection,” Jeongguk heaves a strained breath. “Every hero needs the occasional sidekick.”

He leans over and kisses Jimin tenderly, fingers cupping his jaw in attempt to dry the tears away.

After that embarrassing breakdown, Jimin wanders off to the massive balcony while Jeongguk finishes preparing dinner. He joins him later and they wordlessly bask in the glorious city skyline.

Jeongguk is seated next to him on the sofa as he works on his laptop. Jimin tries giving him the peace he needs, but zipping his mouth is a bit harder than expected.

Five minutes into staying silent, he pipes up. “How bad has the media taken it? They know what happened last night, right?”

“Considering the mess you guys attracted, it’s safe to say that yes, they do.” Jeongguk’s eyes don’t stray away from the report he’s reading. “My PR team released a proper explanation, but as for what you and Hyung were doing in that side of the town—well, I have a friend living in the same building as Im Yoona, so we made an excuse saying you two paid him a visit.”

“Sounds convincing enough. At least Junghyun’s affair is still a secret. Now that would’ve been a real scandal. How is he, by the way? Has he been discharged yet?”

“Yeah. Tae said Yoona came in right after we left the hospital. Apparently Junghwa called her, which is funny because she hates her guts.” He rubs his temples with a sigh. “Hyung ignored Yoona’s bawling the whole time she was there. She left before Dad came to pick him up.”

Jemin smiles. “I’m glad everyone managed to survive. Sangguk won’t be happy, sure, but he’s not gonna hold Junghyun’s mistake against him.”

“No, he won’t,” Jeongguk returns the smile. “You know my dad more than I do. Speaking of which, he dropped by earlier this morning to see how you were doing. A lot of people did, actually.”

His eyes widen. “I had visitors?”

“Uh, yeah. Don’t you know many admirers you’ve gotten? I had to send them home since you were still sleeping, though. Didn’t look like you’d wake up anytime soon.”

Jemin laughs. “Cruel.”

“Well, I’m not an emotionally constipated tyrant for nothing,” Jeongguk says sardonically.

“Never thought it’d come in handy till now. As long as you’re not bossing me around, you’re good.”

“Oh, please. As if you’d ever let me without breaking my face first.”

“Come on,” Jimin snorts. “I’m not that bad. We both know you could use the beating, anyway.”

Jeongguk places Jimin’s hand on his knee. “You know I do it all for your own good, right?”

“That sounds like a highly suspicious disclaimer. What are you up to now, Guk?”

He briefly studies him before saying, “I was thinking we delay the wedding till you’ve recovered.”

Jemin frowns. “I am recovered. The painkillers will help me manage.”
“Jimin, you can barely move, not to mention you’re bruised all over.” Jeongguk sounds like he’s admonishing a child. “It’s not a short program. The wedding will take a good day with the morning prep, ceremony, and the reception party afterwards. You can’t expect to manage everything in two days.”

“Let’s just elope then. That wouldn’t take long.”

“No way. I’m not settling for anything less than a small, traditional wedding. Besides, Dad won’t let us. It’s a big deal for him too, you know.”

“That’s because your dad’s a sap.” Jimin grumbles. “But you’re right. People are looking forward to it anyway, so we should go as planned. We’ll be fine, Jeongguk.”

“Jimin, I really don’t think—”

“Don’t try bailing on me now,” he narrows his eyes. “Don’t use my injuries as an excuse to postpone a wedding you’ve never wanted in the first place.”

Jeongguk stiffens. “You know that’s not what I meant. I figured the least I could do was make things easier for you.”

Realization floods over Jimin and he sheepishly bites his lip. “Oh. Thanks, I guess.”

“One day you’re going to kill me by doing something utterly reckless.” The younger sighs out loud. “You bet your cute ass I’ll haunt you for the rest of your life when you do.”

“I am not that troublesome.”

“Yeah, you’re way worse than that. My own personal torture.”

The sound of a ringtone interrupts them, and Jeongguk swiftly answers the call. “Hey, Dad. Yeah, he’s good. You wanna come? Let me ask him first.” He presses a hand against the receiver. “Dad wants to see you. Is that okay?”

“Of course. Maybe he can come over after I’ve showered.”

“He said sure. Give us an hour. You can stay for dinner if you want. Yeah, I know. Is he okay? I called him this morning—oh. I’ll visit him tomorrow, don’t worry. Okay. Thanks, Dad.”

Once he hangs up, he sets his phone and laptop aside before helping Jimin up. “Come on, let’s get you cleaned up. I’ll show you your bedroom on the way so you can pick your clothes while I get your bath ready.”

Jimin protests, “I can shower and change on my own.”

“A bath will be more soothing than a shower. Plus, you weren’t complaining when I undressed you last night.”

“Keep that ego in your pants, Casanova. You’re just trying to get your hands all over me again.”

“And here I thought I wasn’t obvious.” Jeongguk’s wink says otherwise.

“Right.” Jimin rolls his eyes and before he can another word, they push open the door to one of the most gorgeous rooms he’s ever stepped foot in.

Breath hitching, he takes in the creme-colored walls behind the white platform bed stacked with
silver and bronze pillows. A set of matching nightstands stand at either side, one equipped with a table lamp and picture frame. The decor is sealed with a large fur rug underneath and two folding stools up front. The glass door leads to a similar balcony showcasing another side of Seoul.

“Holy shit,” Jimin blurts without meaning to, but one look at Jeongguk’s relieved expression tells him that was the right thing to say.

“D’you like it?” He asks anxiously, to which Jimin eagerly nods in response. “Oh, good. I wasn’t sure if this was your kinda thing. The bathroom is similar—it’s got a really nice clawfoot tub for bubble baths. Your closet’s over there.”

The door at his right reveals a room filled with racks and shelves that hold few boxes. Jimin pulls out some boxers from one of the bags left unopened.

Majority of his clothes are probably with Jeongguk, so he makes do with whatever’s hanging on the racks. Jimin grabs a red sweater, slacks, and a pair of derby shoes among the vast collection he hasn’t seen before. Jeongguk must’ve went shopping again since everything’s a perfect fit and doesn’t seem meant for anyone else.

He finds the younger hunched over the tub, pouring lemon-scented bubble bath in when he walks into the streakless, Jack and Jill-designed bathroom.

“Do you have the rest of my stuff?” Jimin asks and sets his clothes on the leather armrest station at the corner of the bathroom.

“Yeah, they’re in my closet. I’ll move them soon.” Jeongguk answers, eyes flickering as they follow Jimin’s hands up his shirt, fixated at the first unclasped button.

Jimin awkwardly pauses. “Are you gonna stand there and watch me strip?”

He flashes a cute grin and sets the bottle down. “If you don’t mind, that is.”

“Get out. Go wait outside.”

“But you need help getting in.” Jeongguk strides over to where he is and replaces the older’s hands with his own. “Trust me, Jimin. I’m not gonna faint. I’ve seen naked bodies before.”

He glares. “Do you have to rub that in?”

“Jealous?” Jeongguk cocks his head to the side, lips stretching to a smug smile. “‘Cause I’ll worship your body if you let me. I won’t deprive you of anything you want.”

Flushing, Jimin narrows his eyes at the offer. “Just wait till I have the strength to deprive you of your balls.”

Jeongguk just barks out a laugh and lifts him up in his arms. He slowly sets him down on his feet, and Jimin shudders from the warm water once he’s settled in. “Violent little shit. I’ll leave you to strip in peace, then. Let me know if you need anything.”

Following his instructions isn’t too hard now that the kid’s proven himself to be a decent guy last night despite the occasional flirting. Jimin thinks he can be trusted.

Plus, he was right about the bath being soothing. Now Jimin can recollect his thoughts and trace back to the emotional baggage he confessed earlier. It’s been years and yet he’s still struggling to leave everything behind.
But behind for what? This temporary arrangement which only lasts for a year? What will you do when it all ends?

Jimin reminds himself—once again—that whatever comfort he’s enjoying right now won’t last forever. So would this weird, friendly alliance he’s created with Jeongguk. He shouldn’t get used to the luxury no matter what, even if he’s a little desperate for a sense of home now.

He’s half asleep when Jeongguk returns, dressed in a tee tucked in his ripped jeans, his mop of chestnut hair falling above his forehead. Jeongguk offers him a big towel before turning around for Jimin to cover himself. Once Jimin’s ready, he picks him back up and gently plants him onto the fuzzy bath mat.

“I found your toiletries bag by the sink. Anything else?”

Jimin shakes his head. “I’ll take it from here. Thanks.”

A good ten minutes later, he discovers the younger sprawled over the couch, playing video games on his Playstation with a first aid box by his feet. Jimin asks if he could comb his hair for him, to which Jeongguk responds by gesturing towards the couch.

They sit silently for a while, Jeongguk carefully raking a wide-toothed comb through Jimin’s damp bangs and working out the tangles.

“Guk?”

“Hm?”

“We’re still getting married on Friday, right?” Jimin asks.

“If you’re up to it.”

“I am.”

“Then Friday it is,” Jeongguk finishes by dropping a kiss near his temple. “We can ditch the reception party in case you can’t manage.”

Twisting around halfway, Jimin finds himself inches away from Jeongguk’s face. The urge to kiss him swells by the second as he licks his bottom lip and leans closer until the doorbell brings them back to reality.

“That’s probably my dad,” Jeongguk says upon hearing voices in the living room. He grabs the first aid kit. If either of them are disappointed by the interruption, they don’t express it. “Let me rebandage your hands and knees real quick. Then we’ll go and meet them.”

“I think Hyemin noona should really get her priorities straight and choose whether she wants her boyfriend or job.”

“Wait, but if her boyfriend loves her, then shouldn’t he understand and support Hyemin?” Jeongguk pauses typing and glances to where Jimin is resting against the headboard. The two are clearing their workload of emails later the evening.

Sweater hitched up to his chest, Jimin holds an ice pack over his torso after realizing he had yet to ice it. Jeongguk is playing as his secretary and writes up replies under the older’s guidance. They welcomed a few more visitors earlier, but majority of them asked about Jimin’s condition via text
ever since Jingyoung returned his phone from the hotel.

Jeongguk has surprisingly cleared a dozen emails in the span of that half hour they spent on the amazing kimchi fried rice and tiramisu gourmet. The kid’s actually a pretty good cook.

“Of course he does. They’ve been together for five years,” Jimin says. “But they’ve come to a stake where Hyemin noona can’t make time for him since she’s focused on being a successful stylist, you know? You can only stay committed for so long.”

Jeongguk shrugs, his nose wrinkled in confusion. “Eh, makes sense, I guess. Anyways, sent. The next one is from a guy named Lee Jihoon who says: Hi Jiminnie! Remember me, Woozi from middle school?” He raises a brow. “What kind of name is that?”

“It’s an inside joke. Read on, I haven’t heard from him in years.”

“‘Kay. Continuing: I heard you’re marrying that Jeon gazillionaire guy. How the hell did that happen? I mean, sure, he’s fucking hot and loaded—” Jeongguk lets out a low whistle. “He’s not wrong there.”

“Jeongguk!”

“Okay, okay! So: I honestly couldn’t believe the news considering you hate most rich people’s guts. Then I wondered, was he possibly your sugar daddy? Is that why you’re getting married so quick?”

“Ugh, not him too.”

Jeongguk frowns. “Why are people assuming random shit? Someone even asked if you were pregnant. I didn’t think there had to be a whole history behind a marriage.”

“Are you serious?” Jimin snorts. “We’ve never been together till last week and now we’re suddenly getting married—of course people would make assumptions.”

He shrugs. “I’ve never cared before. Probably because people have nothing to tell me in the first place. Not that I’d give a damn, though. Only you, Taehyung, and my family rub all my mistakes in my face.”

“That explains the size of your ego. No one would want to tell you anything when you’re busy being a full-time asshole.”

“See what I mean?” Jeongguk narrows his eyes and reaches over to tickle Jimin’s foot. He catches his ankle before Jimin can kick his arm. “What did I say about unnecessarily moving around? You’ll hurt yourself.”

“What did I say about tickling?” Jimin demands.

He grins, replying, “You shouldn’t have insulted me then,” and continues the email. “Whatever the reason, I’m happy for you, man. You deserve the world. By the way—not sure if I’m right—but I think I saw your mom not too long ago. They looked similar and her name happened to be Sooyoung so I—”

“Stop right there. That’s enough.”

“Where does Jihoon live?”

“He’s still somewhere in Busan, which I don’t intend visiting if my mom is there.” Jimin squeezes
his eyes shut.

Long story—if there even is a story—short, he hasn’t heard from his mother in a decade and certainly wasn’t interested in her whereabouts now. She stopped existing the minute Jimin woke up to an empty household with both her and her belongings gone. She didn’t need a note to explain her permanent absence, and Jimin’s father hadn’t returned home till a few days afterwards. He remembers his younger self surviving off leftovers and water and looking after himself at school. That was probably the moment childhood slipped away as he was forced to mature ever since then.

The fact that Jimin technically isn’t an orphan is hilarious because he’s felt like one for a damn long time.

“Um, just tell him I said thanks and no, I don’t have a sugar daddy, and never mention my mother again.”

Jeongguk bites his lip. “Don’t you at least want to know—”

“Drop it, okay?” Jimin instantly regrets snapping. He tries again, softly, “She’s been confidential for years. Hearing how she is now won’t make a difference. She’s out of my life. Has been, always will be.”

“It’s just that I think you—”

“Jeongguk, please.” Jimin shoves the ice pack off and struggles to sit up, relaxing when the younger immediately beckons at his side.

“I’m sorry. I won’t bring her up again,” he apologizes and tries placing the ice back, only for it to be swatted away.

“I don’t want ice. I’m tired. Want to sleep,” Jimin says miserably.

“We have to ice it a bit more, though.”

But Jeongguk won’t take his no for an answer and the next thing he knows, the ice pack is chilling on his abdomen for another hour.

Jumin tosses the liquidy bag aside with a yawn. Jeongguk then closes his laptop and says, “Time for bed, baby,” before taking the pack. He pulls the older’s shirt down afterwards. “Where do you wanna sleep?”

In your arms. He coughs a laugh. “Right here in my room, obviously. We agreed to separate bedrooms, remember?”

“I do remember.” Jeongguk says impassively. “I also remember that was from two weeks ago, back when things were different. But it’s your choice.”

And as much as Jimin itches to understand the message underlying that suggestion, he’s afraid to ask in case he was just delusioning after all.

“I’ll be okay here,” he reassures. “Thank you for everything, Guk.”

Jeongguk visibly deflates. “Anytime, Jimin. Good night.”

It takes all of Jimin’s willpower to prevent himself from yanking Jeongguk into bed right then and there. He tightens his hold on the blanket when the younger leans down to kiss his forehead.
By the time Jeongguk leaves, he immediately feels the loss and grows restless. *This* is how their arrangements are meant to be, not the other way around. Their deal consisted of separate rooms, lives, everything—little involvement as possible.

He reckons he’s gotten too spoiled and should admit that Jeongguk only a year-long job. Sighing, Jimin gets up and changes into a shirt and boxers before returning to bed, where he lays wide awake, tortured by suffocating memories of his parents in the darkness for hours.

Whatever flashbacks that hadn’t arrive earlier appear now—from his father’s rage to every blow he landed on Jimin’s body then, to every hair he practically ripped off—until Jimin is shivering and no longer in the mood for sleep.

He’d been able to shut himself down during breakdowns like these for years, but not only did confessing the truth to Jeongguk liberate his emotions, it also released his inner demons.

Without thinking straight, Jimin roams around the pitch black hallways which are only illuminated by the brilliant skyline outside, till he grasps open the first doorknob he walks into, revealing Jeongguk’s room.

He barely has the layout memorized but somehow finds his way towards the bed and climbs in. Jeongguk must be asleep, otherwise he would’ve kicked him out by now, but it’s all Jimin has unless he wants his past haunting him for the rest of the night.

He’s just peeling the covers back when a pair of muscular arms tug him forward, wrapping around his waist and cocooning him in the familiar scent of warm vanilla. Jeongguk is definitely awake.

“I just didn’t want to be alone after—after what I told you today.”

“Mmm.” Jeongguk mumbles sleepily. “You can just stay here, you know.”

Jimin bites his lip as he adjusts himself in his fiance’s embrace. “That’s not a good idea.”

“It’s the best idea.” He smiles against his brow. “We get to cuddle.”

“I didn’t think you were into that.”

“I’m not, but I’ll take whatever I can get from you, Jimin,” Jeongguk whispers, one hand sliding down the small of Jimin’s back as the other rubs soothing circles past his flimsy shirt. “It’s all I need if it means I can hold you in my arms every night for as long as we’re married.”

It’s an ominous threat that’ll rekindle the kind of attachment Jimin can’t risk having if he isn’t careful, but the more he breathes Jeongguk’s scent in, eyes drifting close and body succumbing to sleep, the more it sounds like a solemn promise.

Chapter End Notes

OKaY before you say anything, i just wanna let you know they're getting married in the next chapter so there's two points to make:

1. they're finally getting married smh
2. and because of that it might take some time to write all the baggage the wedding comes with so i'm warning you beforehand. ( ヽωヽ )

i'm excited as ever!! sort of. it's not gonna be the easiest wedding. you know how these seoul socialites go. what did you think of guk here though? is he on your good side now? they're not official yet, and i haven't dealt with vmin either. see you soon!!

find me on tumblr, twitter, and insta. (=■■■■■=)
The day before the wedding, as hectic as it is, is splendid nonetheless.

It consists of snuggling a peaceful Jeongguk, whose facial expression while asleep is so angelic it nearly gives Jimin a coronary.

He lays there, studying the younger’s softened features that are usually stark and intense for a good ten minutes. The contrast between that Jeongguk and this adorable baby slumped in front of him is marvelling, considering all Jeongguk did when awake was dictate and organize every detail of his life into a perfect fit.

Except you being the random obstacle in his carefully calculated life.

And being the attractive, successful smartass Jeongguk is, he suddenly opens his eyes and catches Jimin staring.

His lips drowsily stretch to a quirky smile at the sight of Jimin groaning and rolling off the bed, and
he cages the older against his chest till they’re practically spooning.

“E-enidofee,” Jimin stutters as he feels the wicked grin grow around his nape.

Jeongguk pulls away with a strangely endearing giggle. “What?”

“I said I need to pee.”

Instead of looking disgruntled, he playfully smacks Jimin’s ass when the older struggles out of their tangled mess. “Then go! Don’t let me stop you.”

They brush their teeth in front of the mirror together afterwards once Jeongguk convinces him to start the day with breakfast through a mouthful of toothpaste.

With that being said, the two of them lounge around the breakfast bar in their tees and sweats and talk over pancakes and eggs, occasionally diverting their attention towards the news being relayed on the mini flat screen attached to the wall.

Sejun arrives with a list longer than his lifespan just as Jimin’s rebandaging his wounds. He’s still exhausted and surviving on painkillers, but the shit ton of work waiting for him right before the wedding cannot be neglected.

Jeongguk had taken the day off to help, but since all he’s doing is disrupt their critical discussion, Jimin locks him up in his study until further notice.

The penthouse crowds just an hour later.

Jaebum is stationed at the buffet, where he handles the flow of visitors and suppliers flooding in and out. Jeongguk eventually pokes his head out at the sound of Sehyun’s squeal and steals the little boy while Jinyoung and Jimin catch up. Sooyeon and Kyungsoo soon follow with the final details about both his wedding suit and honeymoon wardrobe.

Things complicate when Baekhyun shows up to fill Jimin in with the remaining wedding prep needed to be done, including the ceremony and reception. For someone who’s managed to throw Seoul’s grandest wedding in two weeks, he certainly seems collected. In fact, the wedding wouldn’t have even happened if it weren’t for Baekhyun and Sejun’s tactful planning.

The Jeons come over lunch after the team leaves. Junghyun has joined them today in a far better shape than last time. He surprisingly insists on keeping his roles as part of the wedding entourage despite his poor recovery. Jimin is personally touched. The idea of the handsome Jeon Junghyun, a person whose imperfections are never displayed, is willing to attend the wedding with battle scars means a lot.

A silent hug from a tearful Jungwha tells Jimin everything which he needs to know.

Taehyung makes his grand appearance once the Jeons are gone, hands Jimin a rather large bouquet of tiger lilies, and says, “I left the car running in case you still want to dump this loser for me,” while pecking his cheek.

Jeongguk steps out once again, this time sending daggers in his best friend’s direction.

Jumin accepts the flowers with a laugh. “Thanks for the offer Tae, but I’m afraid I have to decline since Jeongguk would crumble if I abandoned him. Poor thing can’t live without me. Isn’t that right, babe?”
When his fiance merely scowls in response, he bites back another laugh and ruffles his hair. “Just kidding, Guk, calm down. Get back to work. Tae and I will be on the balcony if you need us.”

“I’ll have you know he dated three people at once in high school,” Jeongguk thumbs towards a grinning Taehyung. “Fucker only got caught when he returned the girl’s sweater to the guy.”

Jimin raises an affronted brow, nevertheless amused. “You’re quite the player, aren’t you, Kim Taehyung? How could someone possibly trust you anymore?”

Taehyung shrugs. “There’s only one person’s trust that I’d want to earn, but Guk is unfortunately in the way.”

“He’s mine,” Jeongguk bites.

“Not yet—not till tomorrow. I’ve got ten hours left to steal your man.”

“At this rate, I’ll ditch both your asses and marry myself instead,” Jimin mutters.

Slithering an arm into Jimin’s, Taehyung readily agrees by cocking his head at Jeongguk and smugly countering, “Yeah, babe. Don’t get butthurt or someone else will sweep Jimin off his feet, and then you’d be stuck with me forever. We wouldn’t want that.”

Jeongguk’s eyes narrow further into slits. “Don’t make me kick you out.”

Smacking Taehyung with a bandaged hand is a no-go, but Jimin does it anyway, wincing in the process. “Stop teasing him, you ass. Guk, don’t worry. I’m sure Taehyung here would love to experience my nut cracking skills.”

The model’s fleeting look of horror is short-lived as Taehyung bursts into a huge grin and shakes his head when Jeongguk returns to his study with one last warning. “You’re a little shit, you know that, right? A petite and pretty package of mischief.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Jimin scoffs when they reach the balcony. Instead of settling down on the wicker chairs, they move to a corner where they lean over the railing and admire the magnificent skyline surrounding a bustling downtown.

“It’s really good to have you back, Jimin,” Taehyung starts on a sober note. “I was unable to express my concern that night since Jeongguk panicked for the both of us. I dropped by yesterday but left when Jeongguk said you were still sleeping. I figured I’d give you some space.”

He smiles. “Thank you, but like I told Jeongguk, I’m fine. It’s really not that bad. I’ll recover in no time.”

Taehyung considers this with pursed lips flattening to a thin line. “Now I can see what Jeongguk meant when he said you’re the type to downplay yourself. Honestly, Jimin, you should let people worry about you for once—someone’s ought to do it. You don’t take care of yourself as much as you should.”

“Well, there’s not much to worry or care for,” he answers. “Sure, I might have dreams and goals, but it doesn’t take much for me to say that life’s good. As long as I’ve got a roof over my head, food, and a steady income to pay the bills.”

“You’ll definitely get that and beyond after marrying Jeongguk. Are you ready to become the next Jeon?”
Flinching, Jimin admits, “I don’t know. It sort of feels like auditioning for a role I never signed up for.”

Taehyung reaches over and squeezes his hand. “But knowing you, you’d stray away from the script and make something original up yourself. Hilarious, but original.”

They dissolve into chuckles at first, Jimin regaining his composure afterwards. “I dunno, Tae. Sometimes the reality of what I’m getting myself into scares me shitless.”

*And it’s not because of joining the Jeons. It’s because Jeongguk will work his way up my heart as my husband and no matter how much I’d want him to stay there, we both know he won’t.*

“If that’s the case, would you consider becoming a Kim instead?” Taehyung teases.

Jimin makes the mistake of glancing up as he giggles and witnesses the flash of longing in Taehyung’s eyes. His laughter abruptly fades when the amusement suddenly morphs into shameful regret and knots his stomach.

Shit. Jeongguk was right. He really does want me.

Assessing the matter only clogs the words down his throat and forces him to stay mute.

Taehyung and him could’ve worked out in an alternate universe far from this one. Despite being just as filthy rich and capturing the hearts of many and the fact that they wouldn’t have met outside of Jeongguk’s connections, he’s still a great, caring guy that would’ve matched his ideal type. Their introduction only lasted a minute before they ended up liking each other. Plus, Taehyung isn’t as demanding and infuriating as Jeongguk is.

Not to mention that Taehyung isn’t under an influence like a certain someone and is genuinely interested in him.

At the end of the day, Taehyung is still Jeongguk’s best friend and would hate them both if he ever learned of the truth behind the marriage. Besides, Jimin doesn’t plan on lingering around after the divorce. It’d only make things awkward between the three of them if he did.

In simpler terms, they have no chance. Not now, not ever.

Taehyung doesn’t deserve a deceit like Jimin anyway. The quicker he gets rejected, the quicker he can move onto someone worth his attention.

“Tae, I’m—”

“Don’t, Jimin. Please.” Taehyung’s weak smile has traces of embarrassment, as if he’s realized the answer yet to come.

The sadness in his dark eyes pains him. Jimin gnaws on his lip, struggling to find the right response that’ll neither compensate nor summarize his endless thoughts.

How can he marry someone who never wanted him in the first place when their best friend is easily handing their heart and soul over?

The thought of Taehyung pining after him this whole week while knowing of his engagement is unnerving. Guilt had overridden Jimin when he first discovered Yugyeom since he was under the illusion of breaking people’s hearts with this marriage, but he had never viewed it in a perspective where he’d ruin someone himself. This is his first time receiving a confession, after all.
All Jimin can do is lamely apologize. “Taehyung, I’m sorry. I—I didn’t think you were serious.”

The half-hearted chuckle in response only worsens things. “Yeah, I figured as much. I didn’t want to hold you to it. We shouldn’t even be talking about this, dammit. You’re marrying my best friend tomorrow and here I am still hoping for the impossible. I should’ve kept my distance.”

“B—but, I mean—how could you?”

“How could I what?”

“How could you even fall for me?” Jimin regrets blurting out.

Yet Taehyung seems unfazed at the inquiry. “What’s the point in explaining myself when we both know you’ll be wedded tomorrow?”

Because even though I’m signing my name on another man’s certificate, I want to know if I’ll ever get a chance at being loved for who I am.

Forcing Taehyung to admit to his unappreciated feelings is unfair, but Jimin is hungry for reassurance. He yearns a day where he can earn someone’s affection without doubting it. Not only is his situation with Jeongguk a fraud, the skepticism that follows after is just as great as their fake infatuation.

There is no use in hearing him out, Jimin decides as he rubs his temples. It’ll only crumble the both of them.

“You know what, Tae? You’re right about not being obligated to tell me anything. Forget it all happened—”

“Would you believe me if I said I fell in love with you at first sight?” Taehyung resigns with a loud sigh and avoids Jimin’s gaze. “Or would that come off as more pathetic than I already am?”

When Jimin shakes his head in response, he continues. “Between you and me, I never believed in something far-fetched like that. Nor did I expect it happening to me the moment you stepped into the venue at your engagement party. I had no idea who you were, much less notice you holding Jeongguk’s arm.” Taehyung pauses, hand curling the railing in a tight grip. “You looked like the moon with your sparkling suit and beautiful smile. The mischief in your eyes contrasted the daring aura you carried that challenged anyone to come your way. I felt so light-headed back then. I didn’t know what came over me.”

Jimin gazes at the latter’s profile—drinks in the sharp features of his radiant beauty outlined by golden hair and soft, dark eyes. Taehyung is truly the sun, and his feelings both astounds and frightens him. Astounds him because there is someone out there liking him for who he is. Frightens him because he doesn’t know what to say.

Taehyung grins fondly upon noticing his stiffened expression. “You’re not used to this, are you?”

Jimin rolls his eyes. “Of course not. No one’s ever called me the moon before. I’m more like one of those cheap neon glowsticks. The ones that are still fun and colorful even after getting trampled on.”

He throws his head back and roars in laughter, his genuine amusement instantly lifting Jimin’s spirits. “God, Jimin, stop it or I’m picking you up and making a run for it before Jeongguk can catch me.”

Despite the analogy, Jimin manages a smile. “On a more serious note, I really am sorry. I hadn’t meant to put you in a situation like this. Believe it or not, you—you mean a lot to me and I’d never
hurt you intentionally.”

Without thinking twice, Jimin steps forward and wraps his arms around the blond’s waist, cheek buried in his shoulder. Taehyung stills before engulfing him in a tight embrace and carefully resting his chin on top of Jimin’s head.

“I still wanna be friends, Tae. I don’t want this getting between us, but, you know—it’s your choice.”

“I’d like that too,” he murmurs and squeezes Jimin tighter. “I can’t ruin your happiness with Jeongguk. I knew I couldn’t resent the moment he introduced you to me.

*If only you knew how one-sided that happiness actually is.*

Taehyung suddenly pulls away with a sober expression and sternly says, “Let me tell you though, if Jeongguk ever happens to fuck things up, then I won’t hesitate to butt in and make you mine, whether he likes it or not. I’ll try my best to make you happy if he can’t.”

Jemin chuckles. “Deal.”

They share another laugh and stand in comfortable silence. The confession isn’t so awkward anymore, and in fact, draws them closer. Jemin is grateful for the pleasant outcome, since it doesn’t cause uneasiness between them and rather strengthens their friendship, as weird as it sounds.

“I’m heading to Thailand right after the wedding.” Taehyung mentions midway through their pause, face stoic. “And I’ll be gone for a while.”

It doesn’t take Jemin long to understand the message underneath that casual heads-up. He himself wouldn’t want to stick around as a third wheel for a newly married couple he once had feelings for.

“As long as we still keep in touch,” he assures. “And get me something cool, obviously.”

“I’ll get you anything. Just say the word.”

Jemin wordlessly shifts closer and cups his cheek. “Just come back when you can, Tae. That’s all.”

To his surprise, Taehyung leans into the touch, pressing a kiss against his forehead. “Okay, I can do that. Promise.”

Jemin lingers around the balcony after Taehyung quietly excuses himself. His eyes flutter close as he lets the afternoon breeze play with his hair and drowns himself in the sounds of Seoul traffic so he won’t have to hear his own thoughts.

Never has he experienced so much in such little time in all twenty four years of his life. It’s only been two weeks and he’s sorted himself out of many dilemmas. The sudden test he’s going through is irking, as no one but himself will help adjust to this suffocating lifestyle.

“That was a pretty long conversation.”

He doesn’t bother acknowledging Jeongguk’s arrival as the latter comes forward, snaking one arm around his waist and pulling him closer.

“It was.”

“Should I be concerned?” Although the question is asked with a casual tone, there’s a certain way Jeongguk’s muscles tighten around and hold Jemin down as if fearing for his sudden escape.
Jimin decides not to comment unless Jeongguk wants to worry about his best friend falling in love with his fiance while his fiance is trying his damndest not to fall in love with Jeongguk himself.

“Don’t think so.”

Jeongguk silently processes this. “By the way, when Taehyung left, he said something about not deserving the moon but to be fucking grateful for it anyway. I have no idea what he meant.”

“He’s got a way with words,” he absently remarks.

“If Taehyung thinks he can—”

“Don’t.” Jimin presses a few fingers against the younger’s lips, instantly silencing him. “You don’t know how lucky you are to have Taehyung as your friend. Nothing else matters.”

Jeongguk’s jaw tightens. “You very well know that you’re mine, Jimin.”

“Oh, I know, alright. You don’t have to remind me.” He says wryly. “But it’s not everyday that a guy is forced to choose a million dollars over a chance at having a normal relationship.”

“Don’t let Taehyung’s romanticism fool you.”

“I would’ve dumped you by now if it did.”

Ferocity burns in Jeongguk’s eyes as the comment definitely riles him further, to such a point that his dangerous reaction truly puts Taehyung’s well-being at stake.

Heaving a sigh, Jimin pulls away and squeezes their hands. “Look, there’s nothing going on between us, but I’ve always wondered how it feels being in a normal relationship for once. One where someone genuinely loves you and doesn’t regard you as a business deal. You can’t blame me for getting carried away.”

And with that, he turns around and heads back inside.

Jimin keeps to himself for the rest of the day.

Stress, along with those stiff moments from earlier occupy his mind and barely lets him think. To make things worse, the distress reaches his bones, taking a physical toll on him, so Jeongguk kicks everyone out of the penthouse by five.

“No, you need rest,” he says and hauls a protesting Jimin pliant in his arms. Jimin glares at him the whole time Jeongguk carries him over to the separate bedroom. “You’re all pale and sickly.”

“Way to boost my ego. I can always count on your insults even though everyone says I’m the best.”

A corner of Jeongguk’s lips lazily quirk in subtle amusement. “Of course you’re the best. Disagreeing with that would sentence my death.”

Yawning, Jimin digs deeper into the duvets and props himself up against the pillows. “At least you’re smart enough to agree, even if you’re kinda stupid.”

“I’m a wise husband, aren’t I?” Jeongguk carefully sifts a hand through Jimin’s fringe, brushing the strands away from his face. Jimin smiles at the gesture and nuzzles his cheek in the crook of the younger’s palm.
“A wise husband would make some extra spicy ramyun for his pale, sickly, starving spouse.”

Jeongguk laughs and gets up. “‘Kay, extra spicy ramyun it is. You want that to go? Sejun’s picking you up in ten to see Dad.”

“Shit. I completely forgot to ask if he packed everything.”

“I’m pretty sure he’s got it under control.” He flicks a thumb towards the neat pile of designer luggage tucked in a corner. “We’ll just take whatever’s left on the jet with us.”


Jeongguk genuinely doesn’t understand this question and tilts his head. “Uh, because we’re not normal people? Besides, a jet is the best option—it’s private, comfy, and more importantly, convenient considering your current state.”

Despite knowing deep down that it’s the right decision, the thought of cruising in a private jet is more than just foreign to Jimin. He’s always regarded travelling as a gigantic, messy adventure of losing suitcases, delayed flights, pricey food since he always forgets breakfast, and jet lag. He’s never imagined himself practically bathing in luxury as they fly in and out. It’s just not his style.

It doesn’t matter how much Jimin protests though. He’s officially becoming a Jeon tomorrow and needs to accept the high maintenance sooner or later. Might as well get a head start.

“Yeah, I guess.” He settles back into bed. “I mean, Sejun’s probably packed my whole closet so I’d need the extra space. We have a big ass plane to ourselves after all.”

Reassuring that he’ll get used to it with a snort, Jeongguk leaves him to rest.

That’s exactly the problem, isn’t it? Getting used to playing as Jeon Jeongguk’s husband and all the complicated flaws said man comes with. Readjusting isn’t easy, especially for such little time. What if he ends up getting too attached and refuses to let go?

Jimin glances at the alarm clock placed on the nightstand. There’s still time to make a run for it and escape whatever helicopters and NPA Jeongguk would probably send after him.

Calm down, Park. You just have a case of the wedding jitter shit any typical groom would have.

Except that he’s not exactly a typical groom.

He slips out of bed and gets ready before Sejun’s arrival anyway. Even though Jeongguk himself suggested wearing comfortable clothing due to the injuries, he certainly doesn’t expect Jimin to walk in the kitchen looking everything but a Jeon.

Jimin does a final check before deciding he’s got everything he needs for his overnight stay at Sangguk’s. The elderly man recommended staying over with Junghyun and Jeonghwa so that he and Jeongguk could prepare separately for the wedding. It’s an overused tradition typically meant for the bride, but Jimin could care less.

But if they knew the truth behind their whole arrangement, then Jeongguk and him could’ve easily hung out over pizza, dress together, and appear at the altar like some dynamic duo.

Sejun leaves a text apologizing for his tardiness and that he was caught up in something regarding reservations. He promised to sort it out and have Jaebum pick Jimin up and drop him off before returning as he was Sejun’s ride for the day.
Knowing fully well that his assistant is finalizing the last events for tomorrow, he tells him to relax and keep the driver. Things don’t have to be complicated, especially since Sejun and Baekhyun are working so hard to piece the wedding together for his sake.

He grabs his snapback and bag and heads towards the living room, where Jeongguk’s impatient voice is rising out of the open door of his study, loud and clear for Jimin to freeze at the next few words.

“This really isn’t a good time—yeah, I know. Can we talk when I come back? Yugyeom, please—”

Yugyeom.

His throat suddenly constricts at the thought of Jeongguk talking to him.

Jimin decides to ignore them and attempts walking away, yet not a single limb budges. As much as he wants to disassociate himself with Jeongguk’s personal business, including old flames, he finds himself planted firmly in place as he strains to hear the rest of the conversation.

He’s got to know something, anything. It doesn’t matter what it is.

“Of course I’m staying with him. Why would you even ask that?”

Jeongguk heaves a long sigh afterwards and Jimin glues himself onto the wall, just inches away from the doorway in order to capture snippets of something along the lines of an argument.

“No, I clearly remember what I said. This isn’t about you, Gyeom. I already told you—what—I’m not dumping him, for God’s sake. Just fuckin’ listen to me. Under all circumstances, you can’t—”

Jeongguk’s heavy tone tenses once again as he snaps, “What Jimin does is none of your business. Don’t be stupid—this is my husband you’re talking about.”

And that’s when Jimin decides to take his leave. He sprints out the door as fast as he can.

To be fair, the conversation didn’t sound too bad. Jeongguk was obviously saying no from the looks of it. Jimin should be happy that he’s adamant on the decision and isn’t longingly talking to his ex or boyfriend or whatever Yugyeom is to him—but the more he thinks about it, the more he panics.

Before Jimin can even realize what he’s doing, he’s riding down the elevator in attempt to calm his frantic heartbeat. His sore ribs are nothing compared to the tight contraction of his chest.

Since he can’t remember the layout of the condo when he first came, Jimin stands there in the vast lobby like a lost child until he figures out where the entrance is. He needs an Uber to get him to Sangguk’s first. Figuring out a way to get the rest of his luggage transferred comes later.

Jimin flashes a nervous smile as he passes by a sophisticated, elderly couple. They acknowledge him with a nod that sort of looks like they’re judging his battered sandals a little too hard. Once he reaches the front of the glass entrance, he pulls his phone out and begins scrolling for an available cab when someone interrupts his search.

“Can I help you, sir?”

A concierge squints at him as if he’s trying to decipher who he is from behind the counter. Jimin smiles and holds his phone up.

“I’m good, thanks. Just calling an Uber.”
The concierge looks even more puzzled. “Um, we can call one for you if you want. Is your driver absent? We provide car service for all Gangnam Dessian residents. Do you, uh—I don’t mean to be rude, but do you live here?”

Jimin decides to spare him the details. The guy probably knows each resident by heart, so he can’t blame the confusion. “I’m Jimin. You?”

“Sanha. At your service.”

He grins. “Ah, well, I’m actually staying with my fiance—”

“Let me in, goddamnit! I don’t care what the fucker says. I need to see him!”

A demand interrupts their exchange and the two glance up to find a towering figure approaching them, heeled boots clinking against the marble flooring.

There was a tall guy talking on the phone in the corner of the lobby earlier, now that Jimin thinks about it. Neither of them exchanged looks, though, so he didn’t bother.

Said tall guy is now stomping his way down to the counter in long strides, sharp features twisted into a fiercely determined expression.

That’s when Jimin realizes this elegantly dressed man is none other than Kim Yugyeom himself.

Yugyeom doesn’t notice him though. He’s too busy making a beeline towards a shaking Sanha. His broad shoulders sway with his impatient pace, one large hand curled around his phone and the other holding a leather knapsack.

Sanha shakes his head with a grimace. “I’m sorry, Kim-ssi, but I can’t let you in without Jeon-nim’s consent.”

Fuck. So he was downstairs this whole time during the call since he came to see him. Great. The groom running into the mistress. Just what I need.

Was Jeongguk that horny enough to call his boyfriend over before Jimin could even leave the building? Talk about pathetic. Then again, he didn’t sound too excited back there.

“Fucking ridiculous,” Yugyeom mutters under his breath and slams a hand against the countertop. “You never had a problem letting me in before! I need to see him—need to talk to him. He’s getting —”

“Married tomorrow,” Jimin blurts without realizing. “Um, yeah.”

The two of them turn towards him now, Yugyeom’s flushed face paling by the second as his eyes widen in recognition paired with Sanha’s apology.

“I’m sorry, Jimin-ssi. I’ll get back to you—”

“You.” Yugyeom’s rhythmic voice (because he just has to be perfect like that) drops low to a disdainful growl. His handsome face darkens and he tilts his chin upwards, mop of luscious chocolate brown hair falling right above his brow.

And while Kim Yugyeom lives up to his name as a Vogue model in an all black ensemble of a large sweatshirt adorned with chains and skinny jeans that flaunt his mile-long legs, Jimin feels stupid for wearing random coveralls over a simple white tee and wishes he chose something other than chunky
sandals. Not to mention his hair is currently squashed under his fading snapback, adding more to his inadequate look.

“You’re the little gold-digger scamming him.” Yugyeom snarls the accusation, but Jimin is momentarily stunned by the size of the gigantic gemstone on his forefinger.

Instead of returning the attitude, he finds himself sweetly saying, “Yup, that’s me—Park Jimin. Nice to meet you,” and reaches to shake Yugyeom’s hand, only to be rejected when the latter abruptly yanks his hand back.

Meanwhile, Sanha’s jaw hinges wide open in shock. “You’re Park Jim—you’re Jeon-nim’s fiance?”

“That’s right.” He nods and feigns an innocent pout. “I hope you’re not planning to kick me out ‘cause I look like a hobo.”

“O-of course not! I’m sorry. I should’ve—”

But Jimin’s attention is once again drawn towards Yugyeom’s muttering curses.

Yugyeom is definitely the epitome of elegance. From his stiff posture to his luxurious outfit, something about him screams aesthetic, but just because he’s the better dressed than either of them doesn’t give him the right to interfere.

So being the petty thing he is, Jimin casually shrugs. “Looks like Guk isn’t letting you in, huh? I couldn’t allow you even if I wanted to, since I’m technically not a resident here. Yet.”

Yugyeom’s dark eyes narrow. “Your residence hardly matters considering Jeongguk wouldn’t listen to you in the first place.”

The comment is slightly unnerving. “Sucks for you, then. If you can’t even enter with my permission, what makes you think Jeongguk will?”

“Because unlike you, Jeongguk and I have a mutual understanding that doesn’t involve your irrelevant ass,” he bites back, shoulders squaring indignantly.

Sighing, Jimin glances at Sanha’s uncomfortable expression and decides not to piss the guy off for the sake of the both of them. “Look. Let’s not do this here, yeah? I don’t want to start a brawl.”

“A brawl?” Yugyeom snorts. “Trust me, Jimin. I’ve got more dignity than to stoop to your level of immaturity.”

“Oh, really? So you’re telling me that barging in here and misbehaving with the staff, not to mention insulting a person you’ve never even met before just because Jeongguk won’t see you, isn’t immature?”

Something in Jimin’s words must’ve struck some sense in Yugyeom, because his expression miraculously melts to one of embarrassment. He makes a beeline towards the elevator, ignoring the way Jimin is hot on his trail.

He eventually faces him so abruptly the shorter male screeches to a halt before they can crash into each other.

“I know the truth,” Yugyeom says darkly. “I know what Sangguk was up to when he picked you. Guk explained everything when he decided to break up with me. You can’t blame me for hating you.”
“I’m not—I don’t blame you,” Jimin admits despite the disappointment from Yugyeom’s confession. “I’m not kidding when I say neither of us wanted it. We didn’t have a say in it. I’m sorry you have to go through this.”

Which isn’t a lie. He truly does feel apologetic over the fact that Yugyeom—someone who is genuinely smitten—is lingering outside his boyfriend’s apartment instead of being with him solely because Jimin is now added to the equation.

Yugyeom silently studies him before saying, “You really had no idea about this, did you? Jeongguk said you didn’t know who he was until his proposal.”

“I don’t like complications. And this thing I got myself into? It’s more than complicated.” Upon seeing his frown deepen, Jimin sighs. “I don’t know what you have with Jeongguk, okay? And frankly, I don’t care. I’d like to stay out of this.”

“Easy for you to say even though you’re the only thing that’s stopping us,” he retorts. “It’s not funny at all.”

“I never said it was,” Jimin mutters and runs a hand over his face. “God, you know what? Forget it. I’m sorry. I’m tired and I feel like shit and I’m—”

“A fucking pain in the ass.”

They glance up and see Jeongguk stepping out of the opposite elevator, eyes narrowed into dangerous slits as he approaches them in long strides.

Jumin groans to himself while Yugyeom’s frown shifts into something adoring, only to falter a second later. “Guk, I—”

“Shut it, Gyeom. Shut the fuck up.” Jeongguk snaps.

When hurt flickers across said male’s face, one of irritation washes over Jimin. “Is that how you treat someone who came all the way here to see you?”

Yugyeom watches their banter wide-eyed while Jeongguk grumbles, “I went to look for you after finishing your ramyun, but you were nowhere in the house. I almost thought you were kidnapped before the staff told me you were actually downstairs. Do you know how much shit you put me through?”

“Probably nothing, since you overreact over the smallest things.” Jimin rolls his eyes.

“That’s only ‘cause you don’t take care of yourself properly so I have to do it for you.”

“Who asked you to, huh? You were so busy with your phone call that I decided to fuck it and grab an Uber.”

“An Uber?” he repeats, scandalized. “You just had an accident the other day and you’re suddenly ready to throw yourself in another random ass taxi again? Didn’t you learn your lesson the first time?”

Jeongguk, Jimin realizes, will be the death of him one day. It takes all the willpower to prevent him from rolling his eyes a second time. “Not everyone’s a goddamn criminal, okay? And one little incident isn’t going to stop me. Jaebum hyung isn’t going to chaperone me forever, you know.”

“Don’t be stupid, Jimin.” Jeongguk grits out at last.
“Don’t be stupider, Jeongguk.” Jimin mimics and grins at the sight of his stubborn glare softening into a reluctant smile.

And then Yugyeom clears his throat, bringing them all back to the awkward reality they’re currently handling in front of the lobby.

Jeongguk exhales through his nose, lips pursed in a grim line and brows furrowed. “I’m sorry, Yugyeom, but this really isn’t a good time.”

“I figured as much,” the latter replies as he exchanges glances between the two of them. “I shouldn’t have come.”

“No, it’s nice to finally meet you,” Jimin gushes. “I heard about your collaboration with MAC. It’s part of the UNICEF campaign, right? Really admirable. Aside from the whole Jeongguk thing, I really do think you’re amazing.”

Overwhelming as the compliment is, it’s nothing less than genuine. Jimin did do his research, after all. He first asked Sejun about Kim Yugyeom and, with the useful information his sweetly naive assistant easily gave, gathered around some more information before deciding that the model truly was an icon.

Yugyeom is so stunned that it takes him a while to voice his gratitude that Jimin wholeheartedly accepts.

Jeongguk, impatient as ever, pulls out his keys from his back pocket. “Come on, Jimin. I’m driving you to Dad’s. There’s no way I’m letting you in another taxi when I’m around.”

“I’m leaving too,” Yugyeom quickly says, earning a side glance from the couple. His tone is clipped —straightforward, as if he’s trying to pull himself together. Which he probably is.

“Need a lift?” Jimin offers, much to his fiance’s annoyance.

But the man politely declines. “No thanks. I’ll just call my driver to come pick me up.”

So he sent his driver away thinking that he’d probably stay the night when I’m gone.

And while that personally shouldn’t bother Jimin, the image of Yugyeom coddling the very same bed he and Jeongguk snuggled in a night ago definitely bites his ass a little harder than he would’ve liked it to.

He nudges Jeongguk and says, “There shouldn’t be a problem in dropping you off. Right, babe?”

Jeongguk loudly protests the same time Yugyeom repeats himself, leaving Jimin not only weary but disheartened at being unable to do the poor guy a favor after all the twists he’s put him through.

He’s dragged away by the wrist without another word and ends up accompanying Jeongguk in the garage, where a valet hands over the Mercedes to them.

Jimin ditches the front and opts for the backseat instead so he can get comfortable, preferably a good distance away from Jeongguk. But Jeongguk’s squinting at him and insists Jimin sit up front, despite his adamant refusal.

His excuse is that he needs someone to monitor his amateur driving, to which Jimin replies with, “Okay, then let me drive instead.”
“And have you ruin my precious baby?” Jeongguk scoffs. “Yeah, no.”

Before Jimin can argue any further, he suddenly leans forward, wraps a strong arm around the base of his thighs, and easily dumps him onto the passenger seat before securing the seatbelt over.

Jemin’s head, along with his torso, throb from where Jeongguk had carelessly handled it bothers him to no end. Perhaps Jimin brings out the barbaric in him, since he’s never seen an uncivilized Jeongguk around others.

The ride from Gangnam Dessian to Sangguk’s house is everything but pleasant.

It’s more awkward and quiet and consists of background music playing from the various radio stations they dig through, an occasional pop song Jimin once learned choreography to reappearing once or twice.

He stretches over and lowers the volume, yet Jeongguk remains impassively focused on the swerving lanes in front.

“So, Yugyeom.” Jimin starts. “He’s very pretty.”

“Yeah. He is.” And although they’re merely acknowledging a proven fact, Jimin can’t help but feel stung by the immediate agreement, but continues anyway.

“Gorgeous, an accomplished philanthropist, has more than one stable career, a strong personality—”

“What are you getting at, Jimin?”

“Nowhere. I’m just saying that I can see why you fell in love with him.”

“I’m not in love with Yugyeom.” Jeongguk avoids his gaze. “Never have been. Things were different with him.”

“Yeah? How different?”

Jeongguk watches him through the corner of one eye, lips curled halfway as his grip on the steering wheel loosens. “Well, for starters, our families were partners since we were both in primary school. We were attracted to each other and slept around at first before taking things slow. He wanted to be exclusive so I said why not? I figured it’d be easier considering we both knew what we wanted and couldn’t offer.”

Jemin raises a brow. “So he was basically a convenient fuck?”

“Not convenient per se.” He carefully says. “The feeling was mutual. I definitely wasn’t asking for the commitment he wasn’t capable of giving. I’m not a clingy person. We focused on our work and only met when we could. We became a thing somewhere along the lines, but Yugyeom’s not one for relationships and I prefer my career over affairs. We were okay with our fling, so stop looking at me like that.”

“Didn’t seem like a fling to me. The guy was about to strangle someone when you refused to see him. And seriously, how many people have you screwed around with? A whole harem?”

Jeongguk snorts. “God, no. I can’t even keep up with you, let alone a harem.”

Jemin narrows his eyes. “Then explain why Yugyeom said he never had trouble getting into the condo before.”
When met with silence, the implication finally dawns on him and he groans into his hands. “Ugh, don’t tell me. Please.”

“We haven’t fucked at my place, if that’s what you’re asking. I never bring my romantic affairs home, and you know that. Besides, we were only mutuals before our arrangement.”

Jimin refuses to glance up as Jeongguk palms his knee. While the reassurance should be more than relieving, the idea of the latter secretly meeting up with unknown faces in the nooks and crannies of Seoul is disturbing. The last thing he wants is to be the type of spouse loitering around at home, fully aware of his husband’s various rendezvous with nothing to do about it.

His concern must come off a joke to Jeongguk, especially since the contract only tells him to keep his illicit relationships at bay instead of having them at all.

“Open your eyes and look at me, Jimin.”

“No.”

“Come on, Jimin. Look at me,” Jeongguk softly repeats. “Please?”

“It’ll only hurt if I do.”

The grip on his knee tightens. “Why would it hurt?”

“Because I feel like punching you and I’m not in the mood to get my hands dirty again,” Jimin mutters. “Or cause an accident.”

“What are you talking about? We’ve been pulled over for the past five minutes.”

His eyes fly open at this and sure enough, they’re parked at a corner of the massive driveway to Sangguk’s magnificent house. Jimin gnaws his bottom lip in response and turns his gaze towards the window, where he quietly watches the drizzling weather outside.

Jeongguk’s tone grows more serious as he watches Jimin frustratedly. “Did Yugyeom offend you?”

“Nothing that I haven’t heard before.” Jimin’s stoic attitude contorts into something sardonic now that Jeongguk is apologizing. “Why are you saying sorry? For using the same shit against me back then or that your boyfriend insulted me as well?”

“Both?” Jeongguk’s lips purse into a fine line. “I’m sorry for my misbehavior during our first encounter. I was just—I wasn’t being myself. And I’m sorry that Yugyeom is giving you the hard time that I caused. I broke up with him prior to engagement because I know he wouldn’t want to continue our affair like this. And I didn’t want any distractions either, considering my life was all over the place then.”

“You told him the truth,” he simply says, feeling defeated. It doesn’t matter what Yugyeom had seen between them earlier, he will always know the story behind their engagement and the fact that Jeongguk was basically blackmailed into marrying him.

Said male heaves out a sigh and leans back into his seat. “Yeah, and I regret it. I know I shouldn’t have, but I wasn’t thinking when I called it quits over the phone. I thought he’d understand the situation better.”

“He’s not over you yet, now that he know who he’s competing with.” Jimin forces a laugh and it fucking pains him to say, “It’s no secret that he loves you Guk—in fact, it’s obvious that he loves
you so much it hurts to see you marry someone else. Knowing that you’re being forced into this doesn’t make it any better, either. I bet he’s more upset over the fact that you didn’t argue with your dad over marrying him instead.”

“I hadn’t planned that far with Yugyeom.” Jeongguk says and slowly laces their fingers after Jimin runs a bandaged palm over his knuckles. “Marrying him didn’t sound like an option for me. I never thought of walking down the aisle with him.”

The tenderness in his words blows such an impact on Jimin that he nearly envisions himself walking down the aisle with Jeongguk, and despite the visual coming to life in a few hours, imagining the younger’s sweet smile at the altar hurts terribly.

Convinced that the painkillers are ruining his notion, he quickly masks his fervor into a little smirk. “You know, with your emotional constipation, I’m guessing you don’t go fantasizing about your ideal spouse.”

“No, but if I were to fantasize about you, you’d be wearing those hideous sneakers with your wedding suit,” Jeongguk says wryly before falling into peals of laughter.

They exchange grins afterwards, hands entwined as their gazes linger and soften with every touch they leave, the gentle rain playing a calming melody outside their cocoon of a car.

The smile melts off Jeongguk’s parted lips and he briefly swipes his tongue over them. “Stay with me tonight? I’ll drive you back in the morning.”

Jimin wrinkles his nose. “Your dad won’t be too happy with that. We’re getting married for him, remember?”

“Oh, please,” he scoffs. “He’s still getting what he wants. I want things done my way too for once.”

“You always get things done your way.”

“Not anymore. A certain someone has been making me compromise lately.”

Jeongguk lets out a frustrated groan at Jimin’s teasing wink and tells him to get out before Sangguk finds them making out in the car a second time. He easily obliges, feeling a sense of emptiness once they break apart and unbuckle their seatbelts.

Moments like these should be utterly embarrassing or even dangerous, but since the flurry of incidents whizzing past them under their current circumstances, they’ve not only drawn closer, but formed a sort of awkward friendship where Jimin no longer feels uncomfortable.

Their relationship is like two allies forming a pact to survive in an engaging battle. Forced to trust and watch over each other and move forward in a way so that by the end of the fight, they know every thick and thin of their personalities.

“Hold on,” Jeongguk says after he scrambles over to Jimin’s side and makes the show of lifting him up by the knees—a newly developed habit.

He shields himself from the rain with the help of his sleeves and clings onto the younger as they walk a short distance to the house where the butler welcomes them inside, retreating at the sight of Jeongguk’s silent order and closes the door.

“How do people follow your wordless commands?” Jimin asks once he’s carefully placed him back on his feet. He pulls his snapback off to give his head a little shake. “I can barely follow your verbal
Jeongguk leans closer and brushes a stray lock away from his temple. “I know. You’re usually convinced with another method.”

“Yeah? Which one?”

The answer is in the form of a slow kiss—one that requires Jeongguk lowering onto his mouth and parting his lips with a languid flick of his tongue, tilting his head so he can taste and swallow every whimper in one go.

Jimin slings a hand over Jeongguk’s nape and slides their noses together as Jeongguk circles his arms around his waist, slipping fingers into his damp hair. They briefly pull away, breath hitched in their throats before dipping back in for another kiss; this time deeper and open-mouthed and fused with all sighs.

Jeongguk pecks the corner of Jimin’s mouth one last time before peppering him in eskimo kisses and then smiles against his flushed lips.

“Like that,” he murmurs, eyes sparkling in childlike amusement. “I’ll ask Sejun to deliver the rest of your stuff by tonight. And I’ll see you tomorrow at the altar. Don’t be late, Park.”

He steps back and with a final wave, hurries down the porch and jogs towards the car where he disappears amidst the light, foggy rain.

I won’t be, Jimin silently promises as he wraps his arms around himself in attempt to fight off a shiver unrelated to the cold weather.

The quicker the night wanes into the day of the wedding, the more fidgety Jimin grows.

Dinner that evening had been pretty nice now that the Jeon siblings’ initial dislike towards him has simmered down. They even help him lay everything out for tomorrow. Three members of the prep team—Sejun, Sooyeon, and Kyungsoo—arrive later to wrap things up, from dressing the mannequin in his wedding suit placed in the corner of the guest room to organizing the various accessories sprawled on the massive vanity.

Despite Sooyeon’s warning to avoid consuming anything before the big day, Jimin ditches his appointed bedtime and stumbles downstairs in hopes of smuggling midnight snacks into his bathrobe.

He’s strolling down the hallway when he notices light spilling out of the ajar doorway to Sangguk’s office and softly knocks. “Sangguk? It’s me.”

“Come in, Jimin.”

He opens the door further to find his father-in-law flipping through a photo album near the bay window.

“What are you doing up so late?” Jimin asks as he takes a seat across from him.

Sangguk glances up with a smile. “I should be asking you that, Mr. Groom. It’s your big day tomorrow.”

“I know. That’s exactly why I’m awake.” He frowns. “I’m a little nervous.”

“Nervous? What for?”
What for? Our scheme is officially starting tomorrow where I’ll be committing myself to a guy too dangerous for me to handle.

“Wouldn’t any groom panic before his wedding?” Jimin answers in lieu of the complication buzzing in his mind.

“You have a point, although you’re not exactly everyone’s typical groom,” Sangguk agrees before they descend into silence. Then, in a soft voice free from his usual dry humor, he asks, “Would having your family with you ease things?”

Jimin shakes his head. “I don’t have family, remember? I’ve been flying solo for a while now.”

“Ah, but I hope you know that we’re your family now, Jimin. You’ll always be like a son to me no matter what.”

Guilty regret knots his stomach again—even if the arrangement is being carried to Sangguk’s liking and on his behalf, the original plan didn’t involve so much trickery. They may be getting married for the elderly man’s sake, but they’re still lying and that insignificant detail is the very same reason why Jimin hesitates to be on board. Sangguk, the man who had raised him like the father he wished he had is being deceived in spite of not deserving an ounce of manipulation.

Yet Jimin can’t bring himself to call things off.

“Thanks, Sangguk.” He ignores the uneasy way his heart wrenches and focuses on smiling instead. “Your children are lucky to have you as their dad.”

“I can’t guarantee whether I raised them well.” Sangguk resumes browsing the album left in his lap. “Only time can tell if my work paid off. None of my kids are perfect. And frankly, that’s okay, regardless of what they think. I just want them to be happy.”

*I’m neither a parent nor one to interfere, but how does limiting your child’s choices help support them?*

Jimin stays quiet at Sangguk introduces his favorite picture of a younger Jeongguk, carefully peeling the film out of its thin casing. “We took him to the beach back in Busan for the first time,” he says and hands the photo over. “He just turned two then and would pose in the sand before his mother helped him build a sandcastle. I remember his confusion when I caught him trying to take a bite of the castle.”

Jeongguk as a toddler is all full, ruddy cheeks, heart-shaped lips, and large doe eyes that sparkle adorably as he stares into the camera in awe. He’s squatting next to a sandcastle with a pile of seashells at his feet. He looks both marvelled and lost—as if he’s discovered newly found treasure but isn’t sure what to do with it.

“It’s funny how this is my favorite shot, yet he’s not even smiling in it. I personally think it captures him best as a person,” Sangguk explains when Jimin examines the photo. “He’s always taken matters into own his hands yet looks overwhelmed when he does. Like he can’t believe his luck. Jeongguk was a mischievous child but he worked hard to gain his current position. I never had to tell him anything myself—he did all the effort. He’s the type to rigorously climb a mountain and forgets to give himself a pat on the back when he makes it to the top because he’s so fixed on achieving beyond his share. Sometimes he forgets that there’s more to life than success. It’s about enjoying his temporary youth while he can.”

“He’s accomplished so much at such a young age,” Jimin murmurs, fingertips roaming across the
“Accomplished, yes, but neither satisfied nor happy.” Sangguk sighs. “Life’s just a competition to him for a reward he’s not even sure of. He goes from woman to man like a bargain—only because he’s not content with the deal he originally struck.”

Call him paranoid, but Jimin is convinced that Sangguk’s statement foreshadows his awareness. As if the elder knows the whole ordeal going on behind his back. But that doesn’t sound logical, otherwise they wouldn’t be having a heartfelt conversation this late.

“Well, I can’t say the same for us. Jeongguk can barely breathe around me.” He laughs nervously in attempt to keep his paranoia at bay.

Sangguk nods. “It won’t be easy. It won’t always taste like fresh air. But you’ll adjust only if you give it a chance. You have to learn how to crawl before walking and running, and I believe you two will fly once you both find your wings.”

The metaphor is certainly overwhelming and Jimin feels the subtle drop of his jaw. He glances down at the photo again and can’t help but wonder how Jeongguk’s own children will look like—whether they’ll have his dark hair and Jimin’s eyesmile, or Jeongguk’s doe eyes and Jimin’s inky black hair.

Wait a second—where the hell did that come from?

Sangguk allows him to keep the picture and wishes that it’ll act as a reminder of what he loves and wants for his son. They rise to their feet as he gestures towards the door and says, “You should probably go to sleep now. It’s a big day tomorrow.”

Still recovering from the intimate talk, Jimin clutches the photo and bids him good night. Midnight snacks are the last thing on his mind when he trudges up to his room and pulls out the journal he hasn’t touched in a while. Not only was he too busy for new entries, reminiscing the hardships written down on paper is far too unbearable.

He tucks Jeongguk’s baby picture between the worn pages and writes for the first time in two years.

I’m marrying Jeon Jeongguk tomorrow.

My reasons? Do they even matter? Or can I convince myself that it’s finally my turn to experience fairy tales turning into reality?

Whatever his reasons maybe, I’ve come down to one—the same reason why a character marries their prince.

—P.JM.

“You must be Jeongguk’s fiance.”

Jemin looks up from his phone and finds a handsome, small-statured man watching him from behind the leather recliner. Hyemin is no longer drying his hair and is searching around hair pins instead, which she’ll insert underneath his locks for the time being.

Jemin tries searching his mental database of profiles for the familiar face and upon failing, weakly smiles. “And you must be an important somebody that I can’t recognize.”
“Hyung, meet Min Yoongi.” Sejun pipes up from his place in the back, where he’s checking off a clipboard in his sweater and jeans. According to traditions Jimin’s never heard of, the bride needs several hours of preparation, and since they don’t have a bride, the team deems Jimin as the best next thing. Hell, his makeup took two hours along, and he’s still waiting for Kyungsoo and Sooyeon to quit fiddling with his suit and let him step out of the itchy bathrobe he’s donned.

“Oh.” Jimin says, surprised.

Min Yoongi. Otherwise known as Jeongguk’s cousin—the very same cousin threatening Jeongguk's position as CEO if he doesn’t marry Jimin.

He studies the impeccable man through his reflection. Delicate and pale, the black tux he’s got on compliments his bleached hair, warm eyes behind large-framed glasses, and an easy smile to match. He can’t be more than a few years older than Jeongguk.

“I wasn’t invited and I bet it’s got nothing to do with you and everything to do with my cousin.” Yoongi says casually. “He just doesn’t like me.”

Suddenly defensive on his fiance’s behalf, Jimin counters, “And I bet you know why.”

His brow lifts in response before he laughs dryly. “Mostly.”

The prep team continues working around them, but not without a keen ear on their conversation, so Jimin keeps the details and formalities to a minimum considering Yoongi is probably unaware of Sangguk’s motives.

Instead, he asks, “Then what are you doing here without an invitation?”

“I didn’t even know Jeongguk was getting married.” Yoongi replies, slowly making his way towards the recliner and begins pacing around him. “I only received the news yesterday while lounging in my Daegu office. I figured I shouldn’t miss such a great family occasion.”

“Well, it definitely wanted to miss you.” Jimin rolls his eyes. “I’m not looking forward to any fistfights at my wedding, so please stay out of Jeongguk’s sight, if you may. You can’t say I didn’t warn you.”

His cat-like eyes inspect him thoughtfully. “You’re not exactly what I expected in Jeongguk’s bride.”

“There you are, Yoongi.”

They glance up, much to Hyemin’s distress since Jimin’s squirming enough, and witness Sangguk’s entrance in a darling silk shirt and slacks. “Junghwa said she saw you here.”

“Samchon. Good to see you.” Yoongi greets politely and exchanges a quick hug with his uncle. “I was just introducing myself to the lucky man here.”

Jimmie smiles sweetly when Sangguk glances at his direction and with a smirk, the elder says, “I’d be careful around Minnie if I were you. That boy’s not afraid to kick if needed—preferably your jewels, at that.”

The room buzzes with laughter and even Yoongi smiles wryly at Jimin’s snicker.

“I’ll take your word for it.” He concedes, giving him one last look. “I’d like to excuse myself now and perhaps join you in your office instead of bothering the groom.”
Sejun fills Jimin in with a report on Min Yoongi once the two men take their leave.

Wealthy since birth, generally notorious, and single, the man is currently running the Jeon Enterprises’ branches in both Daegu and Tokyo. He wasn’t exactly annoying, nor did he come off as an imposter, but Jimin’s loyalty to Jeongguk’s words is the cause of his wariness. He doesn’t understand why they can’t get along.

One hour of preparation, arrival of the entourage and guests, and a little break, Jimin finally steps into his suit with the help of two people. The ensemble is the one of the few things he didn’t choose and rather trusted Kyungsoo to decide for him. In return, he receives a remarkably designed suit which he only got a glimpse of days ago.

Now that Jimin’s standing in front of a full-length mirror, with his bangs cascading down his forehead like a raven waterfall, he can fully appreciate the beauty Kyungsoo has dressed him in.

He looks nothing less than a prince.

The three piece suit is simple—a dress shirt made of black Georgette paired with a creamish pinup blazer that’s snug around around his waist and flows downward, then finished off with form-fitting slacks and polished leather Oxfords.

Diamonds trail above the dangling set of earrings on the first piecing, accompanied by the choker Jeongguk had gifted him at their engagement party. Kyungsoo crafted satin wrist-length gloves compatible with Jimin’s injuries in order to conceal the few bandages binding his fingers.

Hyemin’s professional makeup skills leave him looking like a fresh rose—dewy, flushed, lids dusted with natural tones, and reddened lips plumped with a shade of raspberry.

“Whoa,” Jimin breathes, performing a slow pirouette in front of the mirror as he settles into his shoes.

“You look magnificent, hyung.” Sejun sniffs just as the rest of the team join him.

“Absolutely gorgeous.”

“Jeongguk’s gonna faint.”

“So beautiful, Minnie!”

“Simply stunning. You—”

A series of quacks interrupt Hyemin’s compliment and before anyone has the chance to ask what it is, Jimin and grabs his phone and answers, the room snickering upon hearing Jeongguk’s grumpy voice.

“Hello?”

“Did Yoongi hyung meet you?”

“Yup,” Jimin says, popping the ‘p.’ “Seemed pretty nice to me.”

“Don’t fall for it. Charisma is his greatest weapon.” Jeongguk warns.

Jimin snorts. “You should ask him to share since you’re clearly lacking in that department.”

“Stop goofing around, Jimin. This is serious,” he says exasperatedly. “I don’t know what he’s doing here but I don’t want him stirring trouble. The last thing I need is him talking you out of this.”
“I’m in a fucking fifty-layered wedding suit after five hours of hair and makeup, Jeongguk. I doubt I’ll change my mind now.”

“Oh.” Jeongguk sounds sheepish and after a pause, says almost dreamily, “Are you really dressed in your suit?”

“God, yes, and it weighs a ton,” Jimin retorts, aware of the audience tuning in behind him. “Walking in this shit and the shoes it comes with will require me a wheelchair tomorrow.”

“Anyone marrying Gukkie will need a wheelchair by the end of their wedding night,” Hyemin hollers, causing everyone to guffaw and Jimin’s cheeks to burn.

He shoots his stylist a glare, but Jeongguk happily hangs up with a “See you at the altar!” before he can even resume the conversation.

“Impatient now, is he?” Jinyoung smirks. He looks handsome and years younger in the cranberry red suit Baekhyun assigned for the entourage to wear.

Jinyoung smirks. “He just wants to make sure I haven’t bailed on him yet, which is why we should probably head out now.”

They arrive at the church in two limos—a white one for the family and a black for the entourage. Security keeps the outsiders and paparazzi in check. Although Jimin promised to share wedding pictures with the media afterwards, he wouldn’t allow photos on their own.

Jinyoung smirks. “He just wants to make sure I haven’t bailed on him yet, which is why we should probably head out now.”

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Jimin grows queasy as the front yard speckled with elegantly dressed guests comes into view. Sangguk squeezes his hand in reassurance and after heaving a long sigh, he squares his shoulders. He’s so nervous that he instantly pays no heed towards his midriff suffocating underneath the layers of his tight suit and the slight discomfort lingering around his wrists.

What if someone stands up when the priest asks for objections to their marriage? What if Jeongguk isn’t at the altar after all, and expects Jimin to endure the humiliation on his own? What if he’s abandoned? Jimin calms himself down with deep breaths, the trembling in his hands refusing to stop.

*You can do this, Park. Do it for Jeongguk.*

The wedding feels like a mirage.

Jinyoung smirks. “He just wants to make sure I haven’t bailed on him yet, which is why we should probably head out now.”

Jimin recalls exiting the limo, walking up the steps and into the church’s entrance, vision slightly concealed underneath his fringe. He recalls the slow and sweet music playing as he walks down the aisle, arm tucked in Sangguk’s, eyes zeroing in on the tall, young man waiting for him by the altar beside Taehyung. He recalls gazing into Jeongguk’s sparkling eyes as they echo the lengthy vows after the priest.

What he certainly remembers is the taste of Jeongguk’s soft kiss when instructed to seal their promise. The yard breaks into an applause once they reluctantly pull away and grant the audience embarrassed smiles.

Jinyoung smirks. “He just wants to make sure I haven’t bailed on him yet, which is why we should probably head out now.”

They’re truly, finally married, now making him Jeon Jimin neé Park.

Jinyoung smirks. “He just wants to make sure I haven’t bailed on him yet, which is why we should probably head out now.”

Jimin glances at his new husband grabbing his hand and helping him down the altar. Their wedding bands clink with every step they descend. Jeongguk grins broadly by the time they make it to the yard and says it’s time to party.

The reception is held in a large barn that has been renovated into a charming banquet hall solely for
the wedding. Baekhyun had explained his concept earlier, but Jimin only had a vague idea of how glamorous the arrangement could get.

They start the reception after an hour-long photoshoot around the chapel and churchyard. Tired and feet throbbing in his uncomfortably stiff shoes, Jimin cuts the photography short and asks the guests to proceed to the hall instead of waiting any longer.

The guests are seated with appetizers before their arrival which is dramatically announced alongside the entourage that follows in tow. Their large table is set just beside the currently unoccupied dance floor.

Sangguk says a few words before dinner.

“I’m not going to take too much of your time. Words can’t explain how happy I am to see two very beloved people of mine start a life together as not only friends, but husbands.” He smiles in their direction. “Congratulations to Jeongguk and Jimin for fighting the odds and making it here today. Remember, my boys, that this isn’t your destination as you’ve got a way to go. This is merely the beginning of a long journey that requires your cooperation, love, and support. It requires you to take advantage of the journey by helping each other up and enjoying along the way. Your only destination is each other and wherever your heart goes, and I hope you understand this soon.”

As sappy as the speech is, Jimin’s eyes water when the words hit home. He brings a hand to his mouth, chin quivering, and Jeongguk swoops in to wipe his tears away with his thumb.

“Hey, don’t cry,” he murmurs. “Why are you crying? It’s a happy day.”

Jimin smothers his tremor with a shaky laugh and continues listening to Sangguk thanking the guests for their attendance before he nods towards Taehyung. And Taehyung, looking simply marvelous in his tailored suit, rises with a champagne glass in hand.

He expects an awkward encounter but Taehyung’s smile is so bright and genuine that Jimin’s heart stutters once their eyes meet.

“Normally, I would’ve embarrassed the hell out of Gukkie to make this the most hilarious best man’s toast in history, but since Jimin exposes him enough, I decided to spare him tonight.” Taehyung winks at them, earning the laughter of just about everyone in the hall. “And instead of scarring the groom with Jeongguk’s past antics, I’m here to tell you why you should consider yourself one of the luckiest guys in the world.”

Jimin feels the life being squeezed out of his hand and watches Jeongguk’s solemn stare intensifying as he focuses on his best friend.

“Aside from being unable to take a joke, a little too serious, a bit of a workaholic, and sort of ugly—” A few snickers. “—not to mention a huge pain the ass even when all he’s doing is keeping an eye on you. These qualities are honestly underappreciated until you become the apple of Jeongguk’s eye. That’s when you realize just how much he truly cares for you. I’m saying this as his best friend, but you, Jimin? You’re his husband, his lifelong partner.”

Oh, Taetae. We don’t deserve this from you.

Right on cue, Taehyung turns his gaze towards a stoic Jeongguk. “And you, Guk. My cute little junior that used to be beat me up for eating the last cookie in kindergarten all the way to the last slice of pizza in boarding school—you’re fortunate to have such a amazingly wonderful man like Jimin by your side. Jimin is like the one treasure that’ll get you somewhere compared to the jewels of this
world. Do your damndest to keep him happy, Jeongguk. I mean it. Do your best to shower him with the love you know he deserves.”

Tears flood Jimin’s cheeks now and he brushes them away with a trembling hand.

“It doesn’t matter what people think. I don’t care whether people criticise your background or for taking things too quickly. Looking past all the details and onto what’s important—that you will always recognize each other regardless of where you go or when you drift apart. You will always find each other.”

Eyes moistening, Taehyung raises the glass up high and cheers, “To Jeonggukkie and Jiminnie and their incredible love story!”

Everyone, including the newlyweds, join Taehyung’s toast in a flourish.

_Goddamn you, Kim Taehyung_. A mischievous but astounding man who, despite his unhappiness, stuck by his word and set his fierce loyalty as an example for others. Jimin is more than grateful for each and every word he said tonight.

Once dinner is served and the guests are fully diverted towards the food, Jimin faces Jeongguk with a sigh. “I hope Tae is okay.”

“He will be,” Jeongguk assures. He leans closer and presses a kiss against Jimin’s forehead. “Please smile, Jimin. I can’t stand seeing you upset.”

Jimin receives a little grin and a full kiss on the lips in return for his timorous smile.

The catered food is delicious, the band they hired strike up lovely tunes over dinner, the guests smile and genuinely enjoy a good time. Then Baekhyun comes forward and announces the couple’s first dance, to which Jimin groans in defeat.

“You’re gonna have to hold me tighter, okay? My shoes are fucking killing me and I’m so close to falling on my face.”

Jeongguk smirks and says, “I have just the thing,” before crouching underneath the tablecloth, much to Jimin’s surprise. There’s some rummaging followed by Jeongguk grasping his feet and slipping the Oxfords off. A little massage later, Jimin feels his toes sliding into something and peeks under the tablecloth to find Jeongguk putting his white Converse on.

His jaw drops. “You brought my sneakers?”

Jeongguk tilts his head up at him, grin large and innocent. “I hid them inside before the ceremony.”

Jimin can’t help but break into a ridiculous, smitten smile. “Jeon Jeongguk, I seriously feel like the luckiest guy in the world right now.”

He finishes typing the laces up, rises to his feet as soon as Baekhyun leaves the stand, straightens his bowtie, and offers Jimin a hand. “May I have this dance, Jeon-ssi?”

Jimin places his palm over his shoulder and beams. “You may.”

They dance—more like twirl—all over the floor. Majority of it consists of how fun it was gliding without a care in the world, having Jeongguk lift him by the waist so that his sneakers are fully displayed for the audience to see, but he hadn’t given a damn. Not now, not ever. He didn’t mind the way his midriff ached when dancing with Jeongguk or laughing his heart out at Taehyung throwing
cake at his husband’s face.

Knowing fully well that things will never be the same again after tonight, Jimin is okay. He’s perfectly okay with how things have turned out.

Chapter End Notes

i dunno what to say, man. ĩ(´д`)ĩ their relationship is ugly yet beautiful. ugly because it's so twisted and most of the fam is convinced otherwise, and beautiful because they're so fluffy without even trying. which is the dangerous part.

follow me on tumblr, twitter, and insta. А(ò´っò)>
what matters is in the span of jimin’s life, where chances are fleeting and rare to come by, he needs to throw the first stone and grab whatever he can before it dissipates without warning.

he needs to seize what he wants because he knows it’ll never come around again.

first off, a huge apology on my end for sudden hiatus. honestly, school had been taking a toll and sacrifice was required in order to get those grades. ( ’ ’ ) but i got 'em and hopefully a little while left before hell starts again.

so much has happened in the span of the last update. love yourself; tear still rules me to this day. my fave song is outro: tear bc i love emo hip hop combined with painstaking highlight reel music. jfc, the whole album is life-changing.

what's your fave song off of it?

ramadan mubarak to my fellow muslim ARMYs btw!! (we're like halfway done tho, wyd) that's also another reason why things went slow. since my chapters tend to be longer with each update, i realized that sometimes a week isn't enough, especially when i have other things to do.

happy bts festa as well! a wonderful 5 years with our kings ;; i haven't started my collab for it yet kms

as always, thank you so so much for the feedback and comments ❤️ the support i receive even when i'm not writing is amazing. i'm forever indebted (¬ω¬)

warning: explicit stuff ahead. nothing too bad but in case.

happy reading!!
The most Jimin can recap from his wedding night is the verge of passing out in front of the audience. Whatever energy he had left dwindled after dancing multiple rounds with Jeongguk, Taehyung, and a few of his newly acquired relatives, including Yoongi—much to his husband’s displeasure. He even performed a choreography with Taemin that they designed off a popular song the band played. Numerous people had cheered them on as they effortlessly glided their feet across the dance floor, and the feeling of it all was exasperatingly overwhelming.

In other words, it’s a wild night, but in an unexpected way.

Jimin hadn’t heard of the rock band until Baekhyun introduced them to him during one of their luncheons. And judging from their high demand, he’s both amazed and grateful that his wedding planner was able to book them for the reception, because they seem like sweet people.

So sweet, that the main vocalist even takes the time to call Jimin one of the prettiest grooms he’s ever seen, despite the many girls fawning over him. The compliment regarding his looks leaves a tipsy Jimin giggling and hungry for more fabricated praise.

That’s where Jeongguk barges into the picture, slinging a protective arm around Jimin’s waist and declaring himself a lucky man as he frowns at the singer. And of course, the amount of arrogance he incorporates into his glare is something only Jeon Jeongguk is capable of.

Which is disappointing, but not surprising, considering one would expect him to tone his possession down to a notch now that they’re married, but the need to stake his claim has only grown the minute they tied the knot with a kiss. His dominance only proves how fitting he’d be as a wild animal in his next life.

All this drama, and the party isn’t even over yet.

Jimin loses himself due to the medications and injuries somewhere along the way, so Jeongguk thankfully takes his exhaustion as their cue to leave. Except that he uses this opportunity to scoop Jimin up in his arms and cross the dance floor, oblivious to the public’s keen eye.

It isn’t until the audience snickers that Jeongguk gets the hint and glances down just in time to meet Jimin’s mischievous grin up at him. Flushing in response, he clears his throat and addresses their guests, “Don’t mind me. Just stealing my bride for the rest of the night.”

“This is it, guys,” Jimin chimes in, sliding an arm around Jeongguk for leverage. “Check your nearest lake or dumpster if you never hear from me again.”

And while that elicits roaring laughter from the audience, Jeongguk’s horrified expression says otherwise. Jimin giggles and takes the heart to clarify, “No, no, if I do die tonight, Hyemin noona said it’ll be out of pleasure.”

The crowd erupts again as Jeongguk lowers his jaw in disbelief. “You’re fucking drunk, Jimin-ssi.”

“And you’re fuzzing, Jeongguk-ssi,” Jimin purrs and misses the smile he bites back.

There’s a sigh, followed by a, “I thought I made it clear to the bartenders not to give you any wine.”

“Just a glass or two. No big deal.” He squints with a hiccup. “I know Junghyun gave me some. Said it brings the vixens in virgins or some shit.”

“Jesus.” Jeongguk groans and tightens his grip. “We need to get you out of here, now.”
With one last incoherent farewell to their guests, Jimin finds himself jostling in Jeongguk’s arms as the younger speeds down the venue and over to where the limo awaits them.

Although the back is spacious enough to seat five, Jimin decides not to complain about their close proximity when Jeongguk settles him on his lap instead. It sort of feels right in the midst of their tangled legs and suits pressed together, even if it’s just for one night.

“Holding up okay?” Jeongguk asks once they hit the road. The light in the backseat dims to a darker setting as the panel that divides them from the driver slides up.

“M’tired and aching. Hurts all over.” Jimin answers, burying his cheek into the latter’s shoulder. “Feel like silly putty.”

He can tell Jeongguk is chuckling from the way his shoulders shake. “Nothing sexier than your husband feeling like silly putty on your wedding night.”

And that’s when things finally click.

The truth, concealed by a sheen of alcohol and painkillers, strikes Jimin once again with nothing to cushion its impact. Here he is, tucked in his lawfully wedded spouse’s lap in the backseat of a limo, on their way to spend a wedding night by doing who knows what.

It’d always sounded far-fetched, mainly because the workload they both went through the past few days numbed the realization. Jimin has been so occupied that the idea of sharing their first night as a married couple doesn’t register till now.

He immediately sits up with this in mind.

Not that it should’ve registered. After all, his original statement still stands. He is not sleeping with Jeongguk by all means.

Easier said than done, because despite the belief, his body says otherwise. Jimin fights the urge to straddle the younger right then and there, yearning to feel him up past the layers of chiffon and silk. It’s a hard task, yet he wants to glide his hands across Jeongguk’s warm skin, across his broad back and around firm muscle. He wants to taste the weight Jeongguk would hold pressed over his body and experience the intimate invasion that would ultimately mark him as his.

With that, Jimin snaps back to reality—one where he doesn’t have such privileges. But if Jeongguk is aware of the carnal turmoil he’s currently battling, he chooses not to say so.

Instead, he’s staring out the window, lips stretched to a delicate, dreamy smile as his eyes flicker against every light caught outside. He eventually acknowledges Jimin’s sudden silence and asks what’s wrong.

And because Jimin would never openly admit his fantasies, he goes with the usual fib. “I just got married, cut me some slack.”

“You make it sound like a bad thing.”

“Only if you’re with the wrong person. Whether you are or not is still debatable.”

Jeongguk’s frown deepens at this and the arm circled around Jimin’s hip stiffens. “Not to sound conceited, but no one will treat you as generously as I will, Jimin. Sure, I’m not perfect, but that won’t stop me from taking care of you.”
Tempted to retort something regarding the fact that their marriage is practically built off a fib and therefore doesn’t give him any right to claim so, Jimin trails off at the intensity in Jeongguk’s look. He means every word, and although Jimin should take matters lightly—and with an attitude—he can’t help the erratic heartbeat pounding in his chest.

Jeongguk isn’t the only one with obligations to fulfill in their marriage. Jimin has his fair share of plays as well, and he’s willing to double the amount he’s been offered. It may not be enough by Jeongguk’s standards, but he plans to give more than what’s been said—if allowed to.

“Only if I can do the same,” Jimin starts, swallowing thickly. “We both know I’m not your ideal spouse by default, but I can take care of you too, Guk. I wanna look after you, keep you company, advise and reprimand you, cook you meals, and just be there for you. I will do all that if you let me.”

Jeongguk then softens, mouth curling into a sweet smile. “I haven’t been stopping you at all, Jimin.”

“You don’t let me beat you up enough,” he jokes, earning another grin.

“Okay, but that’s only when I really need it—hopefully not anytime soon.”

“A little smack isn’t much of a lesson for you, my dear husband,” Jimin replies with a devilish smirk. “The crew gave me a pep talk before the wedding. According to Hyemin noona, the most effective torture is pain through pleasure.”

Jeongguk looks affronted. “Firstly, Hyemin noona doesn’t know a thing about gay sex, so I wouldn’t trust a word that comes out of her mouth. Secondly, what crap has she been feeding you? You’re picking up all her bad habits.”

“Look, I have no parental figure in this, okay? Hyemin noona’s the only one in a relationship. Plus, it’s not my fault she’s kinky.”

“There’s no way I’m imagining our wedding night based off someone else’s kinks—especially hers.”

Jimin regrets his lack of a brain-to-mouth filter as soon as he blurts, “So you’d rather imagine our sex life in the first place?”

He watches, frightened, as Jeongguk’s darkened eyes glimmer in the shadows. “Not rather, per se, when I already do. All the time.”

“Wait, what?” His throat constricts. “You—you do?”

Now it’s Jeongguk’s turn to look a little surprised, if not perturbed. “Are you serious? I’m a young man constantly being tested by a perfectly sculpted guy with intoxicating kisses and a degree in seduction. The very same guy I’ve been sharing my bed with lately. It’d be a miracle if I wasn’t affected.”

Jemin would’ve handled Jeongguk’s husky voice and suggestive tone better if it isn’t for his inability to cope with situations like these. So being the awkward little shit he is, he rambles off in a similar manner.

“How affected?” He whispers, palm trailing down the latter’s shoulder and laying flat against his bicep, where he digs his fingertips along the curve of his rigid, muscular arm.

“Why don’t you feel for yourself?” Jeongguk murmurs wickedly, and with a soft groan, angles his hips just enough for Jimin to feel a growing hardness slot between his closed thighs.
Awareness hits home and Jimin nearly falls off Jeongguk’s lap in attempt to scramble away from his unabashed glory. He yelps as Jeongguk hisses out a laugh, hands coming up to secure him in place.

“Shit!”

“Get off me,” Jimin protests, cheeks ablaze.

“You’re the one straddling me, babe.” Jeongguk winces before snorting at his panicked reaction. “Relax, will you? It’s not gonna bite.”

“Pull something like that on me again and we’ll see who will.”

This only amuses Jeongguk more, as he throws his head back in cheeky laughter, endless snickers ringing through Jimin’s ears and further embarrassing him.

Bewildered more than frightened, Jimin tries easing the pain by sliding off, only to be held down by both Jeongguk’s embrace and the lapels of his blazer that are now trapped underneath their posture. He attempts yanking backwards and kicking his feet up so he’d topple over, but the velcro grip between their tight dress pants prevent him from moving freely.

His constant grinding brings attention upon Jeongguk’s aching groin as he unmistakably grounds himself against it, bottom lip caught in his teeth, faltering once Jeongguk retaliates.

“You’re making it worse, fuck,” he moans, hands smoothing forward to cup Jimin’s ass and heaving him up onto his raised hips.

Jemin, in the depths of this heat, squeezes his eyes shut and holds in his whine. “Jeongguk, no. We can’t. I can’t.”

“I want you,” he mouths at the shell of his ear. Hot breath, moist and haunting, presses near his earlobe and trickles further down his jaw. “I’ve told you this before, Jimin. After the engagement party.”

Right, getting exclusive and taking advantage of our marital rights for a year before breaking it off with a final check and divorce papers once you think everything is going perfectly well.

A wave of frustration washes over Jimin, and he pulls away with a shake of his head. “I want it too. I want to share my spouse’s bed and make love to them, talk and cuddle and kiss until we fall asleep in each other’s arms afterwards. Of course I want that.”

Jeongguk’s brows shoot up. “You do?”

“I do.” He confirms, looking everywhere but at him. “I’d like all of that with my real spouse—not the one I’m being paid to marry.”

The backseat, once filled with wanton and lust, stills to a colder, brutal atmosphere that even the traffic outside can’t supersede. The transition is so drastic, Jimin can’t comprehend how quickly the mood went from laughter to bitter silence in one go.

Jeongguk exhales shakily after what seems like forever, his words cautious but definitely punctured.

“If that’s what you really want, then okay. You deserve that. It—it’s just frustrating, you know? But it’s not your fault.”

“Sorry,” Jimin mumbles, and Jeongguk gently strokes his cheek with the back of his hand.
“Don’t be.” He drops his hand as quick as it came. “I’ve crossed the limit by wishing something completely different compared to what I originally signed up for, and asking you to reciprocate is unfair.”

Swallowing his remaining hunger for affection in attempt to give them space, Jimin jerks away, only for Jeongguk to cradle the back of his head and urge him into the crook of his neck once again. He sighs, vigilant as his fingers thumb with Jeongguk’s undone collar from when he loosened his tie at the after party.

“This whole deal is being dangerously played.” Jimin mutters. “The longer it lasts, the bigger the lie grows till we won’t remember the truth.”

“Or maybe the lie will eventually evolve into the truth, so the story behind it won’t matter.”

And oh, how effortless would things be if it were that simple. If lies really did grow into the truth, now would be a good time. Then there’d be nothing stopping Jimin from grazing his lips against his skin and melting further into his warmth, until neither of them would think straight in the midst of their haze.

*Just because you can’t see the truth, whether it be now or then, doesn’t mean it’s not there. There can never be something beautiful between us, not when it’s scarred by a dirty secret.*

“We’re almost there,” Jeongguk whispers against his forehead. The arm that’s still circled near the edge of his hip tightens as his unoccupied hand traces soothing patterns into Jimin’s nape. “In the meantime, rest a bit. I’ll carry you up.”

“Bridal style,” Jimin manages a smirk before dozing off. “How basic of you.”

He misses Jeongguk’s smile when the younger says, “Nothing is basic when you’re involved,” but is pleased with the thought anyway.

Exhaustion, bundled with painkillers and a stinging midriff is more than enough to bring Jimin out of it. He’s grown a little delirious by the time Jeongguk stirs him awake, gently easing him out of the car and into his arms.

He notices the front entrance in his peripheral vision as they make their way up the steps of Gangnam Dessian, and judging from the quiet surroundings, it’s probably past midnight. Jimin’s just about to snap his eyes close once more if it isn’t for flashing lights startling the both of them.

“Fuck,” Jeongguk mutters and holds his body close, shielding him away from the paparazzi as much as possible. Jimin, on the other hand, doesn’t mind a bit and even waves sleepily at them before resting his hand at his husband’s chest.

Their driver must’ve taken action, because soon the clicking of cameras mute and they’re dashing into the elevator.

“I bet the reporters wanted to see for themselves after Hyemin noona told them that I’d need a wheelchair by tonight,” he says once the doors draw to a close.

Both Jeongguk and his firm grip falter for a second. “Hyemin noona should mind her own business.”

“She’s just trying to look out for a virgin in need.” Jimin yawns loudly, pressing a dainty hand against his mouth. “They all are.”
They stand, motionless, even after the unmistakable ping of the elevator doors opening. When realizing that Jeongguk isn’t going to budge anytime soon, Jimin peels his eyes open to demand what’s wrong, only to stare up at Jeongguk’s eyes narrowing at him in a blank gaze.

“What? What are you looking at me like that for?” He asks, glancing at the closing doors. Jeongguk thrusts a hand forward to keep them open.

“You’re a virgin?” He blurs incredulously. “What do you mean you’re a virgin?”

It’s this moment that Jimin curses himself for taking the damn wine Junghyun had offered. The alcohol and painkillers consume his common sense more than usual, resulting in double the thoughtlessness.

He blows his fringe out of the way before elaborating, “Medically speaking, it means I’ve never had a dick up my ass—”

“For fuck’s sake, Jimin!”

They’ve exited the elevator by now as Jeongguk strides into the penthouse that Jimin has unanimously missed for a day. It’s quiet without a housekeeper greeting them, but it doesn’t exactly feel empty either.

“I’m pretty sure I mentioned my virginity somewhere,” Jimin shrugs.

“And if you did, it must’ve come off as a joke since I can never take you seriously.”

“That’s your own problem.”

Jeongguk dumps him onto the bed in response and he immediately groans deliciously at the soft, silken touch the comforter envelopes him in. He delves deeper into the lustrous sheets, back arched delicately as he buries a cheek into a pillow.

“Jimin,” Jeongguk starts hoarsely and gets cut off with another moan. He tries again, voice tight and irritated. “Jimin. If you want to stay a virgin tonight, then kindly shut the fuck up.”

“Mmm, sorry, couldn’t get you there.” Jimin says, crossing his ankles together in attempt to kick his sneakers off.

“Why do I even bother.” Jeongguk rolls his eyes and squats down. His hands grasp around Jimin’s calves before he slips both the shoes and socks off his feet.

The sarcastic reply is riling for some reason. He props himself up on his elbows despite his aches and glares at the younger. “What is your problem?”

“Nothing you haven’t heard,” is the bitter reply.

Jimin watches Jeongguk through narrowed eyes, observing the crease between his knitted eyebrows as he pries the laces apart. He has a vague idea of why Jeongguk’s mood is set so low, but doesn’t confirm until one of them snap—in this case, the latter.

It’s his special day too, Min. Give him a break.

Yet that’s the thing. They both want to spend their wedding night in a way neither of them can permit, each with their own reasons why. It’s funny how they’ve been easily sharing a bed for the past few nights, only to feel burdened with expectations after officially tying the knot. All these
standards are merely increasing the temptation they’re struggling to overcome.

“Guk,” Jimin says quietly, reaching out to grasp his hand. “You don’t have to do this. I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

Jeongguk warily glances up at him. “I’m—I’ll be fine.”

“By the way, I’m not trying to turn you on or whatever. In case you think I am.”

He smiles half-heartedly and rises to his feet. “Yeah, I know. Anyways, get up so that I can help you undress.”

*And what, strip me of my defenses and do something we’ll both regret?*

“Nah, I’m good. I got this,” Jimin assures and tries to sit up. His midsection still throbs in protest whenever he yanks a little too hard, but it’s nothing he can’t handle. He’s gotten used to it now that the pain feels normal. In fact, pain and suffering could be a daily thing if he practiced hard enough.

“How exactly are you going to get out of a suit that required a whole crew the first time?” Jeongguk raises a brow, unamused as he watches him blindly feel around for buttons to pull.

“That was only because they didn’t want to ruin it.”

A few attempts later, he manages to pry open the blazer and slips it of his shoulder. The cufflinks are easier to undo, and soon little diamonds drop to the floor before Jimin can catch them. Teeth grit in pain, he accidentally hisses when his abdomen strains against his thighs as he crouches over to pick them up. “Not that I want to ruin it now. It’d be cute to see my kid in this one day.”

The intensity of his words don’t hit home until he sneaks a peek at Jeongguk, who’s wordlessly watching him struggle by the wall.

“That is, if I get to keep it,” he quickly adds.

A flicker of undefined emotion flashes through Jeongguk’s eyes. He crouches down, scoops the cufflinks up, and joins Jimin on the bed. “Course you’re keeping it. I’m pretty sure your son will look great in it.” His hands gently turn the older around and start working on the buttons lined up at the front. “Who knows? He might have brown hair, but your eyesmile and spunk.”

Jimin stiffens at the tender touch, eyes up at the ceiling as Jeongguk carefully unfastens every flap. “What makes you think he won’t have black hair like me?”

He’s answered with a shrug.

Their conversation is dangerously straying off topic, despite there being no topic in the first place. Still, the thought frightens Jimin, simply because he knows exactly what shade of brown Jeongguk is implying, and he’s not sure if he likes it.

It’s bad enough that his alleged husband is undressing him for the night. And although this has been their antic for the past few days, something about tonight feels symbolic and laces into place. As if everything before the wedding meant nothing, and whatever they do now—whether it be the smallest gesture or the longest act—will hold meaning. Still, he does not want to have this discussion regarding *their* doe-eyed and heart-lipped children.

All the more reason why they should quickly get this over with and sleep in their separate beds.
Jimin resists the urge to kick him. “Any day now. For a guy who specializes in sliding panties off, you’re pretty fuckin’ slow.”

Jeongguk snorts. “Well, I’ve never tried jumping a groom before. I usually let the bride do her job.”

“Oh, yes. A gentleman always waits until after the honeymoon.”

“I don’t fuck married people in the first place, Jimin.” He says, amusement laced in his words. “Why risk getting beaten up by an angry spouse when there’s plenty of younger, single people?”

If that was meant as an indirect jab, then it hits Jimin harder than he would’ve liked. The next thing he knows, his face burns in what feels like anger more than embarrassment.

“Right, you like them young and fresh,” he blurts without thinking twice. “Like Hwang Eunbi, who’s only a year younger than me. Heard you two groped each other at that ski trip.”

Fully ignited with no intention of stopping, he continues before Jeongguk can say a word. “Must’ve been nice shoving your tongue down her throat. Everyone hated the fact that she stuffed mint and dick in her mouth at the same time, but she apparently liked her blowjobs sweet.”

Jimin knows he’s being petty. He’s the older, more mature one of the two, for God’s sake. Yet here he is, stooping down to such low, accusatory levels for something that isn’t even his business. Eunbi hadn’t even attended the wedding as a result of her ruckus back at the engagement party, so why is he bringing up incidents from years ago?

Because, regardless of where he stands, he can’t stop himself from growing undeniably jealous and immature.

To his surprise, Jeongguk just sighs. “I could spend the whole night convincing you that it was just a stupid kiss which she initiated.” He runs a tired hand through his hair. “And that I’m not into her nor any of my brother’s friends, but go off, I guess. It’s your choice whether you want to believe me or not.”

The hands around his waist suddenly draw back once the shirt is undone. Jeongguk gets up and carefully eases him out of it, the silk fabric running across his fair skin like dark, rippling water. Even with his head hung low and gaze elsewhere, Jimin can detect the audible hiss slip out of the younger’s mouth.

He shivers at the wave of coolness washing over his back and kissing his bare arms. Typically, the bride is expected to wear something provocative underneath because it’s the traditional way to get the mood going. But since Jimin is neither a typical bride nor a bride to begin with, he’s been exempted with the excuse of his injuries.

Besides, he wasn’t sure if he wanted to don lingerie just yet, fraud or not. It’s not much—rather simple, really—but it’s enough to rise Jeongguk on his feet and kindle the fierce, glowing wanton in his eyes.

His sultry gaze whisks Jimin into an embrace as he steps forward, mouth pursed in what seems like restrained hunger. He eventually does say something, but it comes off as an incomprehensible croak that needs repeating.

“You’re like a charging bull.”

Jimin’s head snaps up. “Excuse me?”
“You’re like devastation from afar—subtle and indifferent,” he tries again. “Until I get too close and it starts to suffocate me. I’m the moth drawn to a flame that will break down any barriers I’ve put up, steal my breath, catch me off guard. The one that’ll show me hell if I don’t get out of its way.”

This merely offends and flatters him at the same time. “Is this how you try wooing me? By calling me a fucking bull?”

Jeongguk grins cutely. “Just the way you affect me. Why, not romantic enough?”

“What part of charging bull do you find romantic, dumbass?”

“Okay, okay. Lemme rephrase that. You’re like a UFO—wait, hear me out!” He protests when Jimin aims a pillow at him. “Like, like a meteor that will inevitably crash into the earth and change everyone’s lives. Thing is, the people are spellbound by your phenomenal descent. They’re enraptured by your beauty, and they’re so busy gushing instead of wondering whether they’ll survive your impact.”

Jeongguk has drawn closer now, eyes locked in a long, heated stare. He swings a thumb over Jimin’s chin to his gaping lips, rubbing across the silky smoothness which grows softer with each touch.

“You’re brilliant.” That’s all it takes for him to crash and burn, removing his thumb and capturing Jimin’s plush mouth into his.

And Jimin finally, finally thaws on the spot right then and there, because there’s no other choice but to succumb. Even if he’s a meteor bound to collision as Jeongguk said, in no way will that tear him away from him—from something that feels so goddamned good to submit to.

He frantically tugs at Jeongguk’s suit, and the younger peels back a little to shrug it off, one hand gripping his wrist, as if he fears his escape.

“Jimin.” Jeongguk rasps, arms slipping round his waist as he drops kisses down the shell of his ear to his shoulder blade. The tip of his tongue darts forward and closes over his throat, flicking at delicate spot under his jaw.

He’s responded with a mewl and a delicious shudder that both their bodies writhe in. at this point, the previous exhaustion glazes into a demand for relief.

Yanking him by the collar, Jimin quickly unbuttons Jeongguk’s shirt and pries it apart. The white chiffon glides off Jeongguk’s shoulders, revealing tanned, muscular glory the same time Jimin’s back presses against the luxurious sheets in the matter of seconds.

Jeongguk takes a minute to admire the black silk adorning his front before stripping it off and discarding it somewhere. His hands, large and warm, drag along the curve of his collarbone, brushes into the divot between his clavicles, and ventures downward. A few fingers meld into the planes of his chest as he leans up for another sweet kiss.

Jimin’s palms roam across smooth skin, his legs bent and parted, heels digging into the soft mattress. He slings a leg around Jeongguk’s hip and stills when met with stiff warmth.

The growing insistence just reminds him of the path he’s too far gone to give a fuck about. Whatever lightheaded drowsiness he experienced earlier has turned into full-blown temperance, yet he feels completely drunk in the lust rushing through his blood.
Sensation builds and sends him arching up the bed when teeth graze his hardened nipple, Jeongguk’s scorching mouth following after and sucking the firm bud with a flick of his tongue.

Fingers raking through his dark hair, he cries out and returns the favor by slotting one thigh between the younger’s and angles himself into him till he grinds onto something incredibly hot and rigid.

The stinging friction causes Jeongguk to break away with a loud smack, a heavily distressed groan caught in his throat.

“Oh, fuck.” He bites his lip and frantically nudges along the solid muscle. He continues rolling against it, increasing his pace when he raises a knee to press where he needs it the most.

“Fuck—Jimin, baby, not yet.” Jeongguk croons and grips the soft flesh on his hips, “Wanna, wanna see more of you.”

A flood of consciousness floods over Jimin and he instinctively curls his body inward, concealing the bruises peppered at his ribs. Jeongguk, however, catches his knee and gently coaxes him back to normal.

“There’s nothing to see there,” he whispers, arms wrapping around his torso in attempt to shield the marks away from sight.

Yet that doesn’t stop Jeongguk from carefully prying his hands away and revealing the unseen—harmless scabs compared to the purple blemishes that haunt him of memories he regrets recalling.

“S’ugly,” Jimin tries again when fingers trace the ridge of his faint abs and then the bandages.

“They aren’t.” Jeongguk reassures, running his fingertips across the discolored skin ever so lightly. “They’re a result of your bravery. You don’t have to hide them.”

He glances up in response, breath hitching at the sight of the younger’s dark gaze, lips slick and pink, pupils dilated.

Beautiful is an understatement when it comes to Jeon Jeongguk. His sculpted body—from toned pecs down his contoured abdomen, to the narrow V of his hips—all of it is perfection, and Jimin can’t help but watch him push his slacks down, the stark outline of his cock straining against his briefs now visible.

And shit, he's well-endowed.

Throat parched, Jimin can hardly hear himself through the blood rushing to his ears as Jeongguk tosses his belt aside. “Y-you know a good therapist? One that doesn’t judge, maybe?”

His brow furrow in confusion. “Um, why?”

“I might need that wheelchair after all,” Jimin gulps, and Jeongguk lets out a breathy laugh more than a snort. He lowers himself just slightly, broad body blanketing Jimin’s own with his lips ghosting the older’s hairline.

“You’re precious. So fucking precious.” He murmurs against soft locks. His lips roam downward till they peck the space between Jimin’s brow, the tip of his nose, both his full cheeks, sliding past his mouth and right on the chin. “I want everything about you. Your pretty smile and laughter, your golden heart, your spunk, your kindness—all of it.”

It’s this moment, in the midst of tender kisses and warm skin along skin that Jimin realizes how
irrelevant time is. It doesn’t matter whether Jeongguk wants him for a year or for a lifetime. What matters is in the span of Jimin’s life, where chances are fleeting and rare to come by, he needs to throw the first stone and grab whatever he can before it dissipates without warning.

He needs to seize what he wants because he knows it’ll never come around again.

And that’s why Jimin drapes an arm around Jeongguk’s neck, ignoring the sting of his midsection as he heaves his legs up and wraps them against his waist. “I want you too, Guk. I want your sweet smiles, cute laughter, your thoughtfulness and affectionate kisses. I want you even when you’re being an overprotective prick. And although I said I shouldn’t, I still want you because you’re always so damn full of surprises, and there’s no one else I’d give my—”

Jeongguk kisses him then, cupping his jaw with both hands as he swallows the rest of his ramblings. And Jimin melts into him immediately, like he’s waiting. His hands tentatively slide down to rest at Jeongguk’s shoulders. It’s a good thing he was interrupted, he thinks as the younger sucks on his lower lip till he parts them with a moan. Otherwise he might’ve continued convincing himself about his reckless decision.

Jeongguk’s mouth is hot and sweet and tastes like remnants of champagne. The air around them is a little too heated, especially when Jimin pistons his hips forward and brushes right across his erection. A hand slithers near his thigh, hooks onto his belt, and unbucks it before tugging his pants off.

One touch, and that’s all it takes for fire to erupt. Now stripped bare and separated by nothing but thin fabric, they both pant from the ecstatic tension their intense grinding gives. It’s delicious—the warmth and the friction and the sweltering heat pooling in their stomachs.

Jeongguk slowly works down Jimin’s body, going from his throat to his collarbone, to his chest and the blade of his hip bone. He savors his pretty gasps once he settles in between his legs and mouths at the thin skin between his inner thighs, hot breath tickling painfully near his throbbing groin as he snaps the waistband of his underwear and oh, fuck—

The phone rings.

“Hey, you got any spare change?”

Taehyung fishes around for coins in his pocket and hands Jimin a few of them. “You’d think all places would accept credit by now.”

“Tell me about it.” He inserts the money into the vending machine after making his selection. The two stand in silence as Jimin fights back a yawn and waits for the coffee to finish pouring. It’s sort of crappy, lukewarm, and more bitter than his liking, but he gulps it down anyway.

“It’s four in the morning; you okay?” Taehyung asks. He’s ripping a packet of sugar to stir into his tea. “Pretty sure you haven’t slept at all after your wedding.”

Jeongguk and him wasted no time in getting dressed and driving straight to the hospital, where they met the Jeon siblings in the waiting room. Taehyung and Yoongi had also joined their restless pacing. Everyone had changed from their wedding outfits, but wore the same look of weary concern.
Not wanting to interfere, Jimin had sat with the others while Jeongguk and Taehyung consulted one of Sangguk’s attending physicians. He tried to be positive about Sangguk’s situation despite his own fear, but it was hard ignoring everyone’s worried expressions—especially his husband’s, who looked so panicked under all that exhaustion.

From what he’s picked up from the doctor’s explanation, Jimin discovers that Sangguk suffers from coronary artery disease, an illness where plaque builds up in the heart, thus narrowing the arteries and limiting blood flow. He’d been diagnosed and received medication since three years ago, but because its incurability increased the risk of a heart attack regardless of activity, Sangguk toned the work down a notch and improved his diet. Although consistent treatment and a healthier lifestyle would help one live through it, that wouldn’t prevent them from having a single yet fatal heart attack.

Which frightens Jimin even more because the elderly man practically joked about his death just a week ago. He didn’t expect it to nearly happen, and it doesn’t help that Sangguk always discussed his demise like a plan without informing him of his condition.

He had gone through angioplasty to decrease the chest pains and told his children it was a mild heart disease that would be cured with proper treatment. And judging from strong healthy and lack of rent attacks, they must’ve believed him. And tonight’s attack was severe enough for an emergency bypass surgery, the doctors had warned.

Whatever it is, Sangguk’s life is at stake, and Jimin’s heart clenches at the option. The surgery may be risky, but it’s even riskier denying it.

Unable to withstand any longer without possibly breaking down, he heads over to the cafeteria and fetches something for everyone to snack on. He initially considered calling Sejun and Jaebum over with a substantial meal, but those two had supervised the venue till morning and shouldn’t be bothered further.

Although there’s a cafe across the street that Taehyung offered to tag along to with, Sangguk’s pending condition and the chance of any updates prevents Jimin from leaving the hospital. Nothing would taste good to him right now, anyway. Jeongguk is also too distracted to notice his surroundings, which is good considering the last thing they need is a jealous rampage.

What Jimin does do, however, is stop by the seat he’s tucked into outside the hallway, and gingerly strokes his hair till the younger looks up.

“Wanna eat something? A drink?”

Jeongguk shakes his head. “No, thanks.”

“You sure?”

When answered with another nod, Jimin kisses his forehead and joins Taehyung downstairs, where he finds a solemn Jeonghan quietly sipping his juice from a few tables away.

“I’ll be okay,” he sighs, turning back to Taehyung. “Not sure if the Jeons will be.”

Taehyung glances in Jeonghan’s direction and nods. “Believe it or not, they’re tough nuts to crack. They may have been privileged, but they don’t take things for granted. They’ll get through it.”

Jimpin returns the nod. “All of us will. You, me, everyone else—we’ll make sure will. They’re good guys.”

“They are.” He pauses stirring the last cup of coffee. “I delayed my trip to Thailand so I can stick
around for as long as I’m needed.”

Jumin smiles at him as they leave the coffee station, cups and sandwiches in hand. “Thanks, Tae. it means a lot having you here.”

Jeonghan, having left his seat long ago, joins them and offers to help carry things over to the elevator. As they wait for the next lift, Taehyung asks how he’s faring so far.

“I’m alright.” He shrugs. “I’m just wondering if they’ll let me bring my portable keyboard so I can play for Dad. He doesn’t like missing our daily sessions.”

“I’m pretty sure you can,” Jumin reassures. “You can have your own concert if Jeongguk convinces enough. I’ll even sing as backup.”

Jeonghan snorts softly. “That’s too extra.”

“I’m just saying that Sangguk would love it if we did. Right, Tae? How do you feel about drumming?”

Tilting his head to the side, Taehyung presses a hand onto his chest and feigns shock. “Well, I’m more of a saxophone guy, but I wouldn’t mind beating some drums.”

The thick fog of tension has lifted by now. Jeonghan’s little smile has grown to a grin. “Then Hyunnie hyung and Noona should join Jimin hyung in vocals.”

“And Jeongguk?”

“Uh, he can be the director? All he has to do is sit there, look serious, and boss us all around. Kinda like how he is in general. Ooh, wait—make him a loaded sponsor who falls for the beautiful backup singer.”

Well, at least the kid’s a little happier.

“Jeongguk would definitely pull off the dictator role.” Jumin drawls. “It’s in his blood.”

“It’s not called acting if you’ve been in character since birth.” Taehyung chuckles.

“And since Tae won’t be the drummer, he’d be one of those socialites who always flirt around with the dancers,” Jumin adds, playfully nudging the model.

“Watch him drool over a hot, hazel-eyed blond or something,” Jeonghan chimes in.

“Really now? Does this hot, hazel-eyed blond happen to be named Sejun as well?”

Taehyung, upon hearing this, chokes on his drink in response. He throws Jumin a glare as he wipes his mouth. “I am not into your manager, Minnie.”

“No?” Jumin asks a little too innocently. “Pity you’re missing out. Sejun’s handsome, smart, talented, not to mention super sweet.”

His gaze narrows. “That’s great. I personally wouldn’t know since I’ve hardly spoken to the guy. And I’d like to keep it that way.”

Finding the excuse ridiculous, he just rolls his eyes and turns to Jeonghan. “Why not? He’s perfect, isn’t he? What do you think, Hannie?”
“Sejun hyung would be a pretty neat boyfriend.”

“Then that settles it.” Jimin grins, satisfied. “You two are a match made in heaven.”

A flicker of hurt crosses Taehyung’s face as he turns around once the doors open. Jeonghan strolls out of the elevator, followed by Jimin, who notices his silence and faces him tentatively.

“Tae?”

He heaves a sigh. “Look, Jimin. I know you don’t mean any harm and that you feel bad about me ever since what happened before the wedding, but I don’t appreciate you hooking me up with the first person you see. It’s just—I have feelings too, you know? It hurts when you think you can replace the feelings I had for you with someone else.”

Shit.

“Oh,” is all Jimin can say. Their conversation replays in his head and stops at the point where he should’ve zipped his mouth. It isn’t until now that he puts himself in Taehyung’s shoes and realizes he too wouldn’t appreciate a substitute like that.

“I’m sorry, Tae. I hadn’t it meant it like that. I should’ve thought first.”

Taehyung smiles weakly. “It’s fine. I’m sorry for being moody about it. You were just doing what you do best—cheering people up.”

“Yeah, and I can’t even do that right.”

“No, you can,” he says with a quiet laugh. “There’s something wrong with me, that’s all.”

When answered with an expectant look, Taehyung keeps silent till they round the corner leading to the waiting room next to the ICU. He gently elbows Jimin along the way, saying, “It’s been a rough night for me, Minnie.”

“I know.” Jimin whispers. “The fact that you’re here despite wanting to disappear is proof of how good you are, Tae. And it frustrates me to know that I can’t make you happy the way you deserve to be.”

“But I’m only there for the people who make me happy—are I simply returning the favor? That doesn’t necessarily mean I’m good.”

Jimin opens his mouth to answer, only to clamp it shut when Yoongi suddenly pops up from the corner and nearly collides into them.

The man regards them in disgust. “Well, don’t you look cozy. Didn’t think Jeongguk shared nowadays, Kim.”

“I’d shut my mouth if I were you, Min.” Taehyung snarls.

“Why? Still afraid of big, bad Jeongguk?” His lips curl into a sneer. “You’d think you’d learn a thing or two after following him like a dog for years.”

Jimin, who had been momentarily stunned at the abrupt insults, regains his speech and says, “Finding my reasons for disliking you sure didn’t take long.”

Yoongi scoffs at him. “And what makes you think I care, Jimin? After all, gold-digging trophy wives like you are meant to sit still and look pretty.”
“And lunatics like you are meant to shut the fuck up before they bite more than what they can chew.”

Yoongi’s cat-like eyes dangerously narrow into slits as a series of shouts travel down the hallway.

“Guk, no! Don’t—” A frantic Junghwa pleads when Jeongguk speeds towards his cousin, face twisted in anger. Jimin has never seen him this furious, and he has a sick feeling that the younger set out to beat Yoongi senseless.

“Stop walking away like a fucking coward, Hyung!” He yells, fighting the resistance his older siblings capture him in by taking each of his arms and holding him back.

“I’ll do whatever the hell I want, Jeongguk,” Yoongi snaps back, whipping around to face his cousin. “Listening to your brainless accusations isn’t one of them. I will not tolerate you pointing fingers at me whenever something screws up.”

Jimin sneaks a glance at Taehyung’s scowl, to the Jeon siblings who are now tense. The hostility between the two cousins is more than conspicuous and literally radiates in the air—only a fool would try interfering without getting hurt.

He must be that fool, because the next thing he knows, his attempt to settle things down is ignored by both men.

“Of course it’s never your fault,” Jeongguk drawls. “There’s always someone else responsible for your mess, and you’re only involved when it’s convenient for you—doesn’t matter who gets hurt in the process.”

The latter merely shakes his head. “Says the one who’s just as bad as you claim me to be despite your little preaching. Fucking hypocrite.”

Jimin’s eyes widen as Jeongguk advances towards him with dangerous steps, disregarding his siblings’ hold on him. “Right, because I’m the one who asked my bedridden father about the company’s future, as if he was already dead.”

And that’s the final straw.

“Are you fucking serious?” Jimin hisses at Yoongi. His grip on the coffee cups loosen till they threaten to spill. “We’re in the middle of a goddamn surgery, and that’s what you’re concerned about?”

Yoongi flashes him a sickening smile. “And you’re not? Your husband would gain more power and money if Sangguk died—basically the whole reason why you married him, wasn’t it?”

Son of a—

Before he can react properly, though, Jeongguk’s already doing the job for him and tackles his cousin, shoulder to chest, into the ground with a feral growl. Jimin watches, horrified, as his husband throws the first punch when Taehyung quickly sets the coffee aside and scrambles down to pry them apart.

“Cut it out, you two! The fuck is your problem?” Junghyun shrieks.

Junghwa shields Jeonghan away from the brawl while Taehyung yanks Junghyun back from throwing himself into the mess that are his relatives. Both men are rolling around the floor, trying to bruise every inch of the other’s face.
“Don’t you dare speak to my husband like that, you bastard,” Jeongguk spits. He grabs Yoongi’s collar and drives his fist below his jaw.

Jimin can’t believe the sight unraveling in front of him. Here he is, stranded in a hospital hours after his own wedding, only to witness his husband pummel someone onto the floor in the middle of his father-in-law’s surgery.

He didn’t think things could get any worse than this, but apparently it could, because he soon finds himself pouring coffee over both of their heads.

And that definitely stills them.

“Jimin, what the fuck?” Jeongguk demands, staring at him through drenched bangs as he blinks away the liquid dripping down his nose. Yoongi is too busy sputtering and shaking his head to even respond.

“As much as I’d like to kick your cousin’s ass, Guk, now is not the time and place to do it,” Jimin all but yells. “We need to be here and I’ll be damned if I have to bail you of jail.”

He feels Taehyung gently tugging him away but pulls his arm back and lowers onto his knees to face their gawked expressions. “Now, you either grow a pair and get the fuck up, or I wipe the floor clean with your asses.”

“You’re so much more prettier with your mouth zipped shut, Jimin.” Yoongi barks, instantly rekindling Jeongguk’s violence all over again.

“Sorry, baby, but I’m not letting that slide,” is all he says before slugging the man once more.

Yoongi mirrors the punches till the fistfight returns, and Jimin ends up having to step aside as Taehyung dives in to separate them with a groan.

The lobby then floods with security and staff in the matter of seconds.

Jimin squeezes his eyes shut and curses under his breath. When he meant having a wild night, this was clearly not written on the agenda. He winces at the busted lip and bruises littering across Jeongguk’s jaw and although he remains silent, his heart aches inside.

If Jeongguk keeps this up, he’ll be widowed in no time.

“You're such a child, Guk.”

“Jimin, I’m fucking starving, surviving off an hour of sleep, my dad just finished a bypass surgery, and I still smell like the jail cell I sat in for two damn hours.”

Grimacing at the loud reply which only worsens his headache, Jimin sighs into phone as they ride up the elevator to Jeongguk’s penthouse. “That’s what you get for nearly murdering your cousin in the middle of an operation. The hospital staff were bound to call the cops on you at one point.”

“Two hours.”

“Well sorry for not calling your lawyer immediately. Your dad just happened to go into surgery the same time as your arrest, so we all forgot about you.”

“You forgot?” Jeongguk echoes incredulously. “How could you forget after you promised to call Soonyoung as soon as the police handcuffed me? I was sitting there in the backseat thinking he’d
come bail me out in a second since I paid his team a shitton—only to call an hour later and find him asleep. I’ve never felt this betrayed.”

Jimin sighs and rolls his eyes. “Guk, it was literally two hours. You got out before the operation even finished. Hell, you were carted off in your own damn car. Yes, you’re hungry and tired and look a little disgusting, but life isn’t perfect. You’re lucky you paid yourself out and that your dad made it out alive. You’re also lucky you get to lounge in his expensive ass hospital suite while I go pack you some clothes and food and meet you there in an hour. So stop fucking complaining.”

It’s silent for one second, before he hears Jeongguk huff indignantly.

“But you weren’t here when I came back,” he whines, and despite the irritation boiling in his blood, Jimin can’t help but smile. He exits the elevator and enters the private foyer of the penthouse.

When Jeongguk and Yoongi were released from their respective cells, neither of them decided to press charges against each other. Yoongi had flat out refused, saying he’ll offer some peace by disappearing for a while.

Jimin twists the key that Jaebum had given him earlier this morning. He called Sejun at a reasonable time and informed him of Jeongguk’s arrest. Both Jaebum and Sejun were well aware, thanks to the local news. Apparently the cousins’ brawl had gone viral within hours. The paparazzi were already camped outside the entrance when Jimin had left, leaving Taehyung to call security.

“One hour, okay?” Jeongguk says. “Otherwise I’ll come and get you myself.”

Jimin snorts as he walks into their bedroom—Jeongguk’s, specifically, but he’d been sleeping there till he grew comfortable on his own. He’d be lying if he said he didn’t want to keep sharing his bed. In fact, he’d glue himself there if he could.

“I don’t remember signing up for a clingy, needy husband.”

“S’your fault.” Jeongguk sulks, and Jimin’s not sure whether he’s even addressing a grown adult anymore. The fact that Jeongguk is perfectly aware of his pettiness and continues even though he hates it is sort of cute. “How’d you even get in, anyway? I didn’t give you the keys.”

“Jaebum hyung. And Sanha, too.”

“Who’s Sanha?”

“My friend at the front desk, remember? The one who took care of Yugyeom like a day ago.” Jimin sighs. “By the way, do your siblings need food too? The minibar back at the hospital is only filled with snacks, and their gourmet food service is pricey as hell.”

“Nah, Taehyung and Junghyun already fed and dropped everyone off home. Tae said he’s coming back later. You and I are on night duty but since Dad’s still asleep, we can nap a bit. There’s a really big sofa bed. It’s super nice.”

“I know.” Jimin cooes. “I saw it before I left. Not the way I’d spend our first day married, but it’ll do. I’ll bring more blankets over.”

“Just please hurry up.” Jeongguk falters, voice laced in desperation more than impatience. “I’m gonna pass out soon and I can’t sleep without you.”

“Yeah, yeah. Hang up so I can get everything done and come back as soon as possible. Okay, baby?”
“Okay, baby.”

The whole petname deal may have been random, but it didn’t sound awkward, either. It’s ironic since Jimin was originally so vehement against the idea of falling into such gestures.

He slides his phone into his back pocket and pauses by the kitchen, alarmed by the sound of the television playing. It must be the housekeeper Jeongguk keeps around monthly. They haven’t been introduced yet, so Jimin pops in to say hello.

The housekeeper turns out to be a woman named Dasom who’s older than him by a few years. They make small talk—Jimin explaining Sangguk’s condition, and Dasom reassuring that the food will be taken care of while he showers and fetches extra clothes.

Dasom hands him a cup of strong black coffee after his shower, to which Jimin thanks her profusely for. The steam and warmth soothe his aching midriff and headache, calm his nerves, and prevents the sleep deprivation from knocking him over. Once again, the painkillers and lack of sleep are a powerful, torturous combination.

He slips on a black sweatshirt paired with ripped jeans and Timberlands, along with a few essentials that’ll keep him incognito, including a snapback, face mask, and oversized sunglasses. Recognition on the streets is the last thing needed.

Since majority of their clothes had been packed for their honeymoon, Jimin has to search around the walk-in closet. After finding a leather duffel bag, he grabs a navy button down, a set of slacks, and clean briefs, which he totally doesn’t stare at in reminiscence of last night. Imagining the tight fabric fit snugly over the slopes and planes of Jeongguk’s hips—truly a masterpiece he wishes to see more of.

If Sangguk hadn’t fallen ill, they would’ve been on their way to their honeymoon destination, enjoying the lush life supplied by more than just a private jet.

Jimin still isn’t sure whether he dreads that day to come ever since his defenses crumbled. He expected them to anyway, regardless of his preference. His body clearly desired Jeongguk, even if his heart hesitated from the minor difficulties of their relationship.

All it wants is to make sweet love to the man that he hopes to eventually call his true husband. For how long, that is yet to be decided.

Snapping out of his reverie, Jimin hovers around the nightstand picks up a few of Jeongguk’s stuff like his Rolex, charger, and tablet. The wireless headset he’d been holding falls to the floor, bouncing off a leatherette portfolio sticking out from under the bed.

He picks it up absentely and is about to set it aside since it’s probably work-related, but falters when he notices a map tucked in one of the tabs.

Jimin opens the portfolio without thinking twice, eyes widening once he glances down at the contents.

Inside the tab contains a compilation of tourist guides, maps, an assortment of tickets, brochures, and reviews. Clipped underneath is a mini notepad, scribbled with Jeongguk’s unmistakable, messy handwriting.

Slowly placing the other papers to the side, Jimin scans his notes with an inaudible gasp.

**OPERATION: Honeymoon with Jimin!!**
GOAL: Make my husband happy by letting him enjoy one of the places he dreams of going to

TIMELINE: Span of one week (Apr 22-29)

REFERENCES: JM’s profile report, Jinyoung, Sejun, Junghyun, and Junghwa

IDEAS:

1. Shopping (mainly Harajuku—JM loves shopping) in every city possible
2. Dinner date at Tokyo’s ramen street!! Contact Miyeon for further recommendations
3. Reservations at Hilton Tokyo for the week (contemporary, chic, view of Tokyo’s skyline)
4. Disneyland for two nights. (JM is dying to go there, according to Jinyoung)
5. Book an appointment with one of JM’s favorite choreographers (Gaston Gurevitz) and take him to his studio (also see the programs and lessons)
6. More shopping in Ginza (JM loves shopping ok)
7. Bowling Arena
8. JM loves spicy food, so tell Miyeon to search around for renowned spicy JPN cuisine
9. Romantic (!) strolls along Kiyosumi Teisen (teahouse), Imperial Palace East Garden (really gorgeous), Koishikawa Korakuen (bc JM loves cherry blossoms)
10. Museums and shrines (Ueno Park, TNM, Asakusa)
11. Bike rides, bookstores, Kabuki theatre (JM’s never been but he wants to) Akihabara? (JM likes One Piece, etc)
12. Most importantly, as per Sejun, Hyung, and Noona, spoil him with whatever he wants and treat him like the prince he’s never been. Prince Jimin. Yes, please.

ITINERARY:

— Sunday, April 22, AM - Arrival in Tokyo. Check into hotel. Reservations @

(NOTE: STYLISH. Keep ur cool. Gotta be the hottest tourist couple on the block)

- have fun (i hope)
- hold!! his!! hand!! u fool
- KISS THE SHIT OUTTA HIM
- frequent recharges (aka cuddle sessions)
- is snuggling the same as cuddling? Idk but i want it
- buy him lots and lots of flowers
- tell him he’s beautiful and gorgeous and the prettiest thing u’ve ever seen :(
- (REFER TO ABOVE) try to control urself tho
- read manga or books to him, whatever he likes
- dance with him on the streets, in the stores—anywhere and everywhere
- late night convos. ask him how he likes Japan so far, grant him his every wish, ask him places he wants to visit and where he wants to eat. get lost in conversations with him till we both fall asleep
- film him. capture every single moment of his joy and laughter. edit it into a montage after. let him be young and carefree and happy as u show him the world.

By the time Jimin sets the notepad down, trembling fingers tracing around the scribbles, he's stunned by what he just read.
The format came off as creepy at first—the whole businesslike outline being nothing but one of Jeongguk’s antics as an organized professional. He isn’t surprised considering Jeongguk’s logical way of approaching things, and hadn’t expected things to go downhill the moment he reached the stated goal.

What looked like a company project has obviously morphed into something else.

Jimin can picture the younger sighing aloud when his random thoughts take over the stern outline and begin filling it with his own ideas—ones he formed with his heart rather than head.

He wanted to take him to Japan, of all places.

While Jimin’s never mentioned his desire to visit Tokyo, it had been the dream escape he’d been willing to pay a high price for, if it weren’t for the cage his father kept him in. Living in America had been tough due to expenses, and although Jimin tried extending his stay for as long as he could, his father eventually dragged him back home to where he belonged.

Japan had secretly been one of the reasons why Jimin accepted Jeongguk’s proposal—the chance to go reclaim that dream and start a life there—and here he was, planning to take him there, even for a short while.

Jeongguk was going to let him relive a dream that initially seemed far-fetched and join him, even for just a week.

And he was going to hold your hand, kiss you, and make it an unforgettable trip.

Tears spring out in the corners of his eyes without warning, and he sniffs them back along with his smile.

Jimin hadn’t mentioned a word about Tokyo since he wasn’t fond of memories reminding him of his sacrifice, yet Jeongguk had done thorough research regarding his favorites, hobbies, and wishes. The gesture is so touching, so sweet, it has him curling into a pillow, folder tucked in his chest as he cries.

It feels like peeking into a window of Jeongguk’s soul—one where he’s surprised to see his reflection staring back at him.

Jimin lays there and grins stupidly for a bit before he sits up and arranges the folder back where he originally found it. He finishes packing, grabs the cooler Dasom left by the door, and heads out of the penthouse where car awaits.

Jaebum helps him carry the cooler into the hospital, leaving as soon as they enter the suite. He’s been guarding the lobby in order to prevent the press from breaking in the private waiting room. The suite is indeed lavish, but Jimin still can’t wrap his mind around the fact that people are willing to pay thousands for an upgraded hospital room.

Jeongguk is seated by his father’s bed, head buried in his hands as his fingers knead his temples. Even with his face scrubbed free of coffee and grime, he still looks dirty and disheveled.

With the contents of the notepad in mind, Jimin quietly approaches him from behind.

“Hey,” he greets, placing a hand on his shoulder and leaning against the seat. “I brought breakfast and a change of clothes.”

Jeongguk glances up at the touch, his tender, sleepy eyes anxiously searching Jimin’s gaze. “I’m sorry about earlier,” he blurts and squeezes his other hand. “I was exhausted and worried for Dad, and
Yoongi hyung’s question regarding the company’s future after his death was the final straw. It—it pissed me off, I guess. I wasn’t prepared for that at all, much less answer it.”

Humming in response, Jimin cradles Jeongguk’s hand and lightly runs a fingertip across his scraped knuckles. “I know. I understand.”

But Jeongguk shakes his head. “And then when he ganged up on you like that—I just sort of exploded, you know? Sorry for putting you through that. I seriously wasn’t thinking. I hadn’t meant to go that far. I’ve never been arrested before either, so that also scared me. I’ve always been too practical for serious trouble.”

“The stress from the past twenty four hours must’ve taken a toll on you and forced you to break down. I hadn’t made it any easier for you, either,” Jimin admits. “I’m really sorry about not calling your lawyer, Guk.”

“It’s fine. Gave me time to pull my shit together.” Jeongguk glances at Sangguk lying unconsciously in bed. “I almost thought he wouldn’t make it. I started panicking because that meant I wouldn’t be able to confess the truth behind our marriage and ask for his forgiveness. I may have done it to please him, but the guilt isn’t something I want to live with.”

That’s definitely relatable—the very same guilt gnawed at Jimin since morning when they anxiously waited for updates on Sangguk’s condition.

“He’d be happier without knowing,” he continues, eyes still studying his father. “But why waste the opportunity to get it off my back and just tell him? He doesn’t deserve to be left in the dark. If he had died, he’d take the chance away and leave me with something unbearable to cope with.”

“He’s gonna be okay, Guk.” Jimin reassures, pressing their cheeks together as he wraps his arms around the younger’s shoulders. “Sangguk’s a stubborn guy. We won’t be losing him for a good while.”

Smiling, Jeongguk leans into the embrace, bringing a hand forward to caress the side of Jimin’s face before stroking his hair.

They hold each other like that for a long while, Jimin eventually shifting positions and slides his chin into the crook of Jeongguk’s neck.

“And I’m also sorry about our honeymoon,” Jeongguk says in dismay. His blunt fingernails scrape soothingly against his scalp. “I’ll take you another time, promise.”

“S’alright.” He grins. “Where were we going anyway?”

“Somewhere really special. I know you would’ve liked it.”

_I would’ve loved it, but you don’t need to know that yet._

The false compared to the truth.

Sometimes, Jimin wishes they could stop relying on the first one and start admitting the latter instead.

Chapter End Notes
sorry for the major cockblock lmao, my virgin ass ain't ready for this yet (´ω｀)

things went downhill quite fast, didn't it? the situation will hopefully settle down, and soon we'll see how jikook adjust to their newly wedded life ;)

until then! ❤️

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twitter,
and insta.
epiphany

Chapter Summary

It’s this moment, in the midst of vocals fading into adlibs overheard in a dimly lit room peppered in city lights and bokeh during midnight, that Jimin decides he’s completely, irrevocably, head-over-heels in love.

Chapter Notes

HELLO MY LOVELIES

Once upon a time before June came around, I preached abt simultaneously working on TTK and posting other fics or excerpts this summer, but all I could literally squeeze out were two chapters and a few scenes of fics that I won’t even be focusing on til I’m done w this. Life’s a mess and school's back up again in two weeks. It’s my senior year and it’s getting more packed than I want it to be, so both my future and my upcoming updates look bleak, but worry not my shistars, I will get this done before I die. And preferably before I get into uni lmao

I apologize for the huge ass wait, but it's finally here! Am I excited to present it? Only partly. I know it's not that plot thickening, but there's some candy floss fluff waiting for u down there too if ur into that :))

Again, thank you so much. THANK U GREATLY for the patience and understanding messages a lot of you sent! There are so many comments and reviews on the previous chapter that I just feel rotten for being unable to respond to them. But just know....i read each comment more than twice and cherish them to this day. I love u all so much.

Now, without further ado!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This isn’t some kind of cult, right?” Jimin cautiously accepts the cream-colored envelope and examines the golden cursive printed across the front.

Sejun shakes his head with a laugh. “Nah, of course not. SKSB is an organization that’s been around for as long as I can remember. It’s an esteemed group of Seoul’s wealthiest individuals who campaign for charity funds and other worldwide advocacies. Majority of them help the cause with their social connections. Just being invited to their dinner is honorable enough. It usually means you’re on your way towards recruitment.”

Jimin wrinkles his nose in response and tosses the invitation aside.

It’s been a few days prior to Sangguk’s hospitalization, and because it’s his turn watching the elderly man today, Jimin’s brought his work outside the suite’s posh balcony where he and Sejun go through the weekly rundown of crap he normally ignores. The list has been doubling now that he’s officially
Jeongguk’s husband.

One thing on the agenda is a benefit dinner hosted by none other than South Korea Society Build, a group specializing in social reform, and also the ones who happened to show their interest in him when they congratulated Jeongguk on their wedding day.

The most Jimin knows about them are their notorious parties and fundraisers. Although the events are usually successful, they only cater anyone rich and famous enough to donate generously.

And while their charitable efforts are widely recognized and appreciated, something about them doesn’t feel genuine for Jimin to sign up. It seems like most of the acts are up for show—something Jimin knows better to affiliate with considering they only reached out to him on behalf of the Jeons.

In fact, they wouldn’t have noticed him if he hadn’t married Jeongguk, much less associate. Which is fine, now that Jimin thinks about it. He wouldn’t have been able to get along with them, regardless of his contributions.

Besides, SKSB sounded like a stereotypical group with stupid requirements like a formal dress code and would most likely disapprove his ripped jeans and sneakers. That’s not even the worse part. What’s annoying is the fact that he’ll probably be regarded as that one unwanted thing they had no choice but to include, harmless or not. And frankly, he’s not in the mood for mistreatment.

But you promised Jeongguk you’d carry out your new responsibilities, so you can’t skip them anymore. Especially since you said you’d try your best.

“Uh, would Jeongguk really want me to join this thing?” Jimin asks and takes another sip of his frappuccino. “He might think it’s ridiculous.”

Sejun is adamant. “He won’t. Not when he’s one of their main sponsors. It’s only beneficial that someone from the family represent them in the Korea Society.”

“There’s Junghyun and Junghwa, who, in my opinion, are way better material than I could ever be. I bet they’re even used to the dress code.”

“Point made,” Sejun smiles. “But unfortunately, they’re too young to join.”

“Young? Junghwa’s only a year younger than me. I’m not even going to start with Junghyun.”

“What I mean is—they’re not married.”

Jimin waits for him to continue, but upon realizing that’s all there is to say, his jaw drops in disbelief.

“You’re kidding. You have to be married in order to join an organization? In this time and era?”

Sejun looks taken aback. “Well, no. Not every organization does that. Just the more private, traditional ones. You know how it goes.”

“Tell me about it. Read enough historical romance for a lifetime.” Jimin rolls his eyes. “Seriously though, are they aware that marriage doesn’t define one’s maturity? Just take a look at the divorce rates nowadays.”

His assistant gives a sympathetic shrug. “I know where you’re coming from, hyung, but that’s just how they’ve done it for decades. You’re either twenty five or married to be considered eligible. It’s always been their policy. Sorta makes them unique, I guess.”

“I love how people are all about stuffing discrimination up their asses but end up doing exactly the
opposite.”

“And I thought I was the poli sci major here.” Sejun snorts. “But hey, aside from all the rules and regulations crap, it’s still an opportunity for you to get up and get involved, yeah? I’d join in a heartbeat if I could. Think of all the exposure I’d get with whatever they’re up to.”

Jimin casts a sidelong glance at the invitation once more as he weighs his options, lips pursed in thought. “I guess I’ll join for the hell of it. Maybe I can convince them to drop their dumb marital restrictions. That seriously needs to go. I think any legal adult can join if they’re passionate enough. And once that happens, you’ll be my first recruit, Junnie.”

The latter just sighs and leans back into his seat. “If that’s what it’ll take for you to join, then by all means, go ahead. Although, I think you should probably focus on something more important than our fucked up pride.”

“You’re right. I’d choose the poor and needy over us any day.”

“You’d make a big difference there, hyung.” Sejun says firmly. “Sure, it’ll take time adjusting since you might feel awkward at first, but you’ll find your place there in no time. Who knows? You might impact the board as a whole and make better changes for the society.”

“Oh, it’ll take time alright.” Jimin mutters. “I’ll talk to Guk about it before sending them a reply. See what he says about the extra funding, because we’ll need it.”

Jimin would’ve donated himself if he had the money, but he had yet to discuss his allowances in detail with Jeongguk. The contract had been the last thing on his mind with all the recent events.

“I know they’re going to expect more than just my labor and creativity,” he continues, tucking the envelope into his knapsack for later. “And I’ll be damned if it’s cash, so I gotta make a withdrawal from Jeongguk Express first.”

Speaking of Jeongguk, who is technically still on vacation, switches back and forth between the hospital and the office to keep things in check while Sangguk recovers. It’s funny how Jeongguk’s keeping the investors under control despite his recent arrest.

By the time Jimin and Sejun wrap things up and call it a day, Sangguk is wide awake and is perched up on his elevated bed, watching the news intently. The tubes and catheters had been removed yesterday, and he would’ve been placed in an ICU if it weren’t for Jeongguk’s adamance and bribery. He insisted that Sangguk be transferred to a suite more compatible with family visitors. The suite is well equipped and includes a nurse stationed at all times.

The elderly man, although exhausted, has been recovering nicely and is well enough to return Jimin’s smile.

“There haven’t been any economic recessions since your hiatus, in case you’re concerned.” Jimin says and takes a seat next to the bed.

“I know, my boy.” Sangguk nods, voice raspy from the days of unuse. “It’ll take more than a heart attack to get rid of me, but at the same time, it’s a good thing. Looks like I’ve trained my son properly to fare without me.”

“Have you ever doubted him before?”

“Not often. Jeongguk is a fast learner and an even faster worker. He adapts quickly, no matter the circumstance.” Sangguk explains. “He’s always prepared for the worst, especially since he knows
Then why did you threaten to hand the company over to someone else when he had things under control the whole time? Why drag me into this?

To be fair, things have been turning out fine for Jimin lately. Aside from the drama he’s been involved in, he’s proud to say he’s gotten the hang of settling down. The guilt that’d previously ate his heart sort of faded after Sangguk’s hospitalization as well.

“I mean, I know Jeongguk can handle the ride, but no one’s ever taught me how to be a good spouse, much less his.” Jimin mumbles. “You get where I’m coming from, right? Even I need some convincing at times.”

Aside from the million bucks and the guilt tripping.

“There are plenty of reasons for marrying my son, from a general perspective.” Sangguk says goodnaturedly. He smiles softly at him. “But I’m sure Jeongguk was enough reason in your case.”

Jimin initially opens his mouth to protest, yet falters at the meaningful look in the elderly man’s eye. He sighs instead. Although Sangguk may not know the real incentive behind the marriage, he’s perfectly aware of how smitten Jimin is with his son.

None of this would’ve happened without a fight if Sangguk hadn’t spent years feeding his younger self with far-fetched crap about Jeongguk being the prince of everyone’s dreams. So in retrospect, everything was ultimately his fault.

Jimin wished for the crush’s demise as soon as he met said prince personally, but if anything, his infatuation has only been growing till he finds himself head over heels with him all over again.

“You tell me. Sometimes I question my decisions when he goes paranoid.” Jimin shakes his head in exasperation. “By the way, you never mentioned Jeongguk’s foul temper. He literally gets pissed over the smallest things. Beating his cousin shitless was only one of the things I’ve had to deal with.”

“Actually, Jeongguk is known for being the opposite.” Sangguk’s grin widens. “He usually doesn’t give a damn about things that aren’t his business.”

“So, what—you’re saying he’s bipolar or something?”

He hadn’t expected his father-in-law to laugh at that and isn’t sure whether he appreciates the gesture as Sangguk slightly winces before composing himself.

“I apologize, Jimin. I didn’t mean to offend you. What I meant is that maybe Jeongguk is finally learning how to care. Saying that he's easily provoked nowadays is a good sign.”

“A good sign? In what way? Yoongi was a mess after Guk was done with him. He’s even banned from visiting you.” Jimin pulls the covers up to Sangguk’s chin and carefully tucks it in.

No one bothered to inform Sangguk of what happened outside the operating room, but it didn’t take long for the old man to piece things together. He didn’t exactly reprimand Jeongguk’s actions, nor did he apologize to Yoongi on his son’s behalf. In fact, he seemed unfazed by their enmity and instead advised Jeongguk to avoid the latter until he returned to Daegu.

Sangguk pats his hand. “You just have to be patient with him. He’s like a toddler teetering all over the place. He’ll get the hang of it sooner or later.”
Jimin places another hand on top of his and squeezes them together. “Did you know he was going to take me to Tokyo for our honeymoon? I wasn’t supposed to find out, but I think it’s the sweetest thing ever. Tokyo is one of my favorite places.”

Still smiling, Sangguk closes his eyes and leans back into his pillow. “I’m glad things are working out for you two now.”

That’s when Jimin freezes, but before he can ask what Sangguk meant, he’s answered with a soft silence.

Despite the urge to interrogate the old man because he’s sure there was something more behind that suspicious statement, Jimin retreats and slides off the bed, turning the TV off while he’s at it. He promises to wake Sangguk up for dinner, pressing a kiss onto his wrinkled forehead.

He’d just begun settling into the couch with a paperback when he receives a call from the front desk. “Min Yoongi-ssi is here to see Jeon-nim,” the security guy informs. “I already denied him access, but he said he wanted to speak with you.”

Dealing with Jeongguk’s sinister cousin is a challenge Jimin isn’t up to, but someone had to do the dirty work around here. Besides, he hadn’t given Yoongi a piece of his mind yet.

“I’ll be there in five, thanks.”

After paging the nurse on standby, Jimin takes his time around the lounge and wonders what exactly Yoongi wants besides the opportunity to insult him. He’s got a good amount of comebacks himself but needs to be cautious considering Yoongi is still Jeongguk’s relative, asshole or not.

And I thought all this family drama would be over when Dad died.

Yoongi’s back is turned when he enters the main lounge connected to all the luxury suites. It’s a spacious waiting area, offering seats, a row of vending machines up front, and a well-stocked bookshelf located in the corner.

“You look great.” Jimin remarks, to which Yoongi whirls around at. He’s roughly patched up, swollen jaw unshaven and littered with bruises.

Yoongi narrows his eyes. “I want to see my uncle.”

“Sorry, but no can do. Jeongguk banned you from visiting him. And based on what Sangguk’s heard about you, I doubt he wants to see you either.”

He snorts and paces in front of the seat Jimin’s taken. “Well, I’m not surprised, considering how fucking dramatic Jeongguk is. The kid always makes sure I have a bad reputation.”

Jimin raises a brow, unimpressed. “Or maybe you did that to yourself without any help needed.”

He must’ve hit a nerve, because Yoongi’s face immediately cloudens. “Samchon raised me more than my own father has. Just because Jeongguk has a problem with me living up to the old man’s expectations doesn’t automatically make it my fault.”

Jimin can relate to his situation in a twisted way—they were both nourished under Sangguk’s care during their darkest times, and although he technically understands where Yoongi is coming from, he also expects the man to deny his faults. And while Jeongguk may have never specified his dislike towards his cousin, his accusation regarding Yoongi’s irresponsibility makes a lot more sense.
“I don’t blame Jeongguk for getting pissed off since you were the one acting like his dad was already dead.” Jimin points out. “That basically questions the sincerity behind your actions—whether you’re really trying to make Sangguk proud or just so that you can snatch his fortune later.”

“And I won’t be a hypocrite by saying I’m not interested in taking over one day,” Yoongi retorts. “But at the same time, I truly didn’t mean to word it that way. I don’t want Sangguk dead at all. I was just—just rambling out of anxiety. You of all people should relate to blurting out things you don’t mean.”

Looking past the rough exterior in order to determine whether the guy means it or not would be difficult, so Jimin gives him the benefit of the doubt anyway. Underneath that remorseful look could either be genuine regret or super acting.

He sighs. “Sure, I may be blunt, but at least I’m apologetic about it.”

“Are you asking for an apology, then?”

“Over what? Shit I know you aren’t sorry for? Save it for when you need it, because I could care less.”

There’s a contemplative pause afterwards as Yoongi purses his lips, deliberating on saying something other than the apology Jimin knows he won’t get.

“I want to apologize to Sangguk.” He finally says.

That’s Jimin’s cue to get up and tuck his hands into the pocket of his hoodie. “I’ll let you know what Sangguk says.”

“I thought Jeongguk—”

“Last time I checked, Jeongguk isn’t his dad, so therefore has no say in this. Besides, it’s not like that’ll stop the old man from doing what he wants.” He gives him a small smile. “And maybe you can use your apology on Jeongguk the next time you try to fight him.”

Yoongi chuckles humorlessly, voice harsh and filled with scorn. “Our grudge goes way deeper than a little beef, Jimin. You wouldn’t know until you ask, which I don’t recommend unless you want him triggered again.”

Jimin barks out a laugh of his own as he exits the lounge. “It isn’t about what will trigger him. More like who will.”

He leaves before his own guilt can expose him.

Doing the right thing was easier back when he wasn’t living a lie himself. Now everytime he thinks he’s doing well by concealing the truth with good intentions, it all comes back to the same point—that lies were dishonest and make him feel terrible.

Jimin spends the rest of the afternoon slaving over negative thoughts and reminds himself that if he hadn’t married Jeongguk, regardless of their deceit, he wouldn’t have had the opportunity to look after Sangguk when no one else could. So there was some good to the bad they’d already done.

He informs his father-in-law about Yoongi’s visit later on when the elderly man wakes up. Sangguk doesn’t seem too excited about meeting his nephew, so he kindly dismisses it and says he’ll deal with him when he’s in the mood. Despite being hungry for more details, Jimin tames his curiosity and decides it isn’t his business anyway.
Taehyung drops by with takeout at six, followed by the Jeon siblings who joined after picking Jeonghan up. They all keep Sangguk company till Jeongguk arrives for dinner.

The takeout is apparently tempting enough for Sangguk to ditch his prescribed diet, but everyone knew how pleased he was at the company.

“This is harder than I thought,” Junghwa mutters as she tries twisting the cap off of a bottle of sparkling clementine juice. “Isn’t it supposed to pop open like champagne?”

Taehyung, who’d been busy sneaking pork from the boxes, rushes over and snatches the bottle away. “Of course not. You shouldn’t be opening this with your bare hands, anyway.” After removing the cap with a paper towel, he hands it back to her. “You gotta pull it in one go, otherwise you’ll get cut.”

“So, kinda like this?” Junghwa holds her palm up to reveal a slightly bloody scrape.

Cursing, Taehyung grabs her arm and steers her towards the sink, where he cleans the wound with warm soap and water. Junghwa’s trying hard not to wince at the sting as he carefully pats her hands dry.

“Brat. What did I say about asking me for help when you need it?” Taehyung softly reprimands, taking the bandaid Jimin prepared and applying it with gentle fingers. “I would’ve handled it if you told me to.”

Junghwa frowns. “Calling me a brat isn’t very convincing.”

“My bad. You’re a stubborn brat.”

Junghyun glances at his sister’s injury with a snort. “Trust Junghwa to give you shit, Tae. Just because she’s quiet most of the time doesn’t mean she’s incapable of being shady.”

“The quietest ones are the scariest.” Jimin agrees.

Taehyung shoots them a glare. “Shut up and stop encouraging her to be a snake like you two.”

“I am a snake.” Junghwa shoves his arm. “I’m just not a fucking blabbermouth like you.”

“Yikes. You might wanna shut up before she roasts your ass any further.”

Taehyung opens his mouth in protest, only to give up when everyone starts laughing at him, so he shakes his head and stomps away.

“What’d I miss?” Jeongguk pokes his head into the room.

Jimin’s smile falters at the sight of Jeongguk’s fitted button down tucked into his ripped jeans with a long overcoat to top. Late afternoon sunlight streak across his hair, forehead and sharp brows peeking underneath his parted fringe.

“Oh, nothing. I’m just really glad I’m an only-child.” Taehyung grumbles and resumes stuffing his mouth.

“Looks like the kids ganged up on Taehyung again,” Sangguk remarks to which Junghwa snorts.

“Please, if I knew we were ganging up on him, I wouldn't have cut my own hand.”

Jimin holds his arms up from his spot on the floor, so Jeongguk shrugs at his best friend before
making his way over and eagerly dipping down for a quick, ravenous kiss.

Because he’d missed Jeongguk all day, Jimin can’t help but wrap his arms around the younger’s neck as he kisses him sweet and slow, their exchange eventually turning so passionate that Jeongguk nearly lifts him off the ground.

“F**k’s sake.” Junghyun coughs. “This is cute and all, but could you do this some other time? Preferably in another room? We’re trying to eat here and, frankly, I’m losing my appetite.”

Jeongguk lowers him back down with a laugh. Jimin’s cheeks burn upon noticing all the dirty looks sent his way, including Jeonghan who quickly hides his reaction between a book. The only person who remains stoic is Taehyung.

“Whatever.” Jeongguk says and pulls Jimin closer by the waist. “It’s not my fault my husband’s lookin’ like a whole snack while I’m sitting here starving.”

Jimmie smacks his chest as Taehyung groans out loud, palming his forehead onto the coffee table.

“Did you really have to say that?”

“He’s just showing off how domestic his marriage is.” Junghyun starts passing plates out and promptly skips his brother’s share. “We got the message, asshole.”

Jimin doubts they understood the message, whatever it was. Despite being married for a week, he and Jeongguk had yet to continue what they started on their wedding night.

Their schedule is so loaded that by the time they return home from either work or the hospital, they’re both too exhausted for anything further than sleep. Aside from cuddling each other in bed, the most they’ve been able to spare are some steamy makeout sessions and touching here and there. Even though Jimin’s been trying on his part, Jeongguk’s mastered the art of chastity nowadays and doesn’t pressure him into things that might be uncomfortable.

And since actions spoke louder than words, Jimin prefers physical seduction rather than verbal. It’s awkward enough to think dirty, much less saying it aloud, so he’s been dropping hints in the form of stripping and frottage. He even straddled Jeongguk once in nothing but a tee and briefs, grinding against his hips until the younger plucked him off his lap and set him right beside, peppering his cheeks in soft pecks at a safe distance from down there.

While Jimin does appreciate the abstinence, he knows how painful restraining must be on Jeongguk’s end. Which is why he decided to take up the challenge of seducing his husband outright by the end of this week. He’s got a few tricks up his sleeve, including a potential lap dance and maybe even a costume if the situation is dire enough—but if anything, he’s prepared to take the man down in one bite with charisma.

“Okay, but just ‘cause I’m bragging doesn’t mean I’m letting you guys get married anytime soon.” Jeongguk gives Junghwa a knowing smile. “Especially you, noona. For one thing, you’re my only sister and, two, I haven’t given you my approval yet.”

Junghyun rolls his eyes. “Fuck off, Guk. Junghwa’s literally the same age as Jimin. And I didn’t know we needed your opinion on our personal lives either.”

“Maybe you wouldn’t have ended up where you are now if you did.” Jeongguk says nonchalantly, but it’s insulting enough.

“Leave him alone, Guk.” Sangguk scolds. “He’s older than you, so respect him first. A good brother
offers advice, not jabs.”

It isn’t long before the two brothers forgive and forget, turning back to their normal consistency of petty jokes and roughhousing around the table.

Jimin’s heart swells at the sight of their good-natured silliness. Jeongguk may occasionally be an arrogant, little asshole, but he’s still the ideal son and brother anyone could’ve asked for. The Jeons are lucky to have him as a member of their family.

*Kudos to the person who’ll get to see him be a great husband and dad one day.*

There’s no use moping over something situated, so Jimin dismisses the melancholy as quick as it comes and focuses on the year that’s been handed to him instead. He’s going to savor every second he has with Jeongguk. It’s the least he can do.

*Even though the chances are slim, I just wish we fall in love with each other at the same time before it’s too late.*

And as much as he’d like to hope, sometimes dreams end up staying as dreams.

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Dinner was great.

It consisted of delicious food, light banter, a shit ton of lame puns and finished off with Jeonghan’s latest piece which he performed on the keyboard he brought along.

It’s a quarter past ten when Sangguk tells everyone to head home early. Junghyun and Junghwa usually assist their father till evening, but Jimin and Jeongguk had been lingering around them lately until the clock struck eleven.

Jeongguk expresses the need for a shower as soon as they get home. He drops a kiss on Jimin’s forehead on his way to the ensuite while Jimin makes himself comfortable on the couch before turning the television on.

Due to the previous lack of cable in his house, he quickly grew fond of the luxury since moving in with Jeongguk—and practically conquering his room like his own, which according to his husband, is cute, if not a little weird.

Speaking of which, Jeongguk steps out of the bathroom in white *pajamas* half an hour later, damp fringe combed back and over his forehead in uneven waves. He makes a beeline towards the couch at the sound of sniffling and notices Jimin’s blotchy, tear-streaked face.

“Jimin? Baby, what’s wrong? W-why are you—” He throws his arms around the older’s slumped shoulders and follows where he’s pointing at on the television screen.

“I-he was holding onto her hand for so long and promised to get her out, b-but then the agent shot him and he was almost dying so—so she let go of him first. I just…”

The noise Jeongguk emits sounds like a combination of a snort, a sigh, and a laugh. He scoops Jimin up by the arms, fingers absentmindedly stroking through his hair. “Ugh, I can’t believe you’re seriously crying over a k-drama at this age.”

“So what?” Jimin sulks. “It was an act of true love.”

“Right, true love in an action-packed drama about agents and the FBI.” Jeongguk rolls his eyes.
“What’s next, necrophilia?”

“Listen, I found it romantic, okay? Stop being a dick about everything.”

Jeongguk just chuckles and kisses the pout off his lips. Climbing over the bed and onto the couch, he settles into the tiny space behind Jimin, chin buried into his shoulder and hands perched at his waist. He picks the remote up and resumes the paused scene, where they watch the rest of the episode in silence. The drama even captures Jeongguk’s attention at one point, his brows knitted in concentration by the end of the tragic conclusion. As satisfying as it is, there’s a few tears rolling down Jimin’s cheeks which the younger promptly wipes away.

“Well, that was traumatizing.”

Jimin slides off the couch and turns the television off, heaving himself up with a sigh. “Yeah, but it was worth it. I haven’t cried this much from a show in years.”

Jeongguk pads over to where he stands and cups his face in both hands. “This doesn’t count as me making you cry during our marriage, right? Because I’m supposed to make sure you don’t while you’re with me.”

“It doesn’t.” He gives him a soft, wobbly smile. “Now move it, I gotta shower. ‘M all gross and sweaty with tears.”

“And snot.” Jeongguk pinches the tip of Jimin’s nose, pulling away before the older can smack him. “I’ll be working in my study for a bit,” he says on his way out. “Call me when it’s bedtime, ‘kay?”

“No if I make you sleep outside tonight, asshole. It’s what you get for teasing me earlier.”

That sends Jeongguk backtracking. “Really?” And a second later he’s walking over to Jimin and yanks him by the shoulders. He brings a hand to his nape, slides him nose to nose, then mouth to mouth, before sighing and slipping his tongue in between Jimin’s lips as the older makes a slight sound of surprise.

The kiss is soft, insistent. It tastes like heaven, mouths hot and wet and deep in as Jeongguk’s hands roam down Jimin’s shirt and pulls it over his head, flinging it across the room. Jimin’s so responsive —pushing himself up on his toes and twisting fistfuls of Jeongguk’s hair. Little gasps leave his mouth, hips twitching when the latter’s fingers fumble with the waistband of his sweats and pulls them along the curve of his ass in one deft tug.

Jimin’s been religiously following a workout routine prior to picking dance up again and has grown fond of his shape since. Jeongguk seems to like the results so far from the way he traces patterns into his inner thighs, squeezing fistfuls of flesh in large hands.

He’s panting by the time Jeongguk pulls away, breath caught in his throat. There’s a moment of silence as he drinks in the soft look on his husband’s face, interrupted when Jeongguk murmurs, “You like that?”

Jimin dumbly nods.

A corner of his lips tug upwards, and he presses another kiss right below Jimin’s mouth, briefly sucking on his bottom lip. “Am I forgiven yet?”

More nodding.

“Good.” Jeongguk turns around again but not before him giving a firm smack on the ass. “Now
hurry up and shower.”

There’s a string of curses, followed by a frustrated yell on his way to the bathroom as Jimin complains about the horny state the kiss left him in, smiling albeit irritated.

Once Jimin’s finished his night care routine, he throws on a terry cloth bathrobe over his briefs and trudges barefoot to Jeongguk’s study. It’s a large room, equipped with a built-in shelf stretched over one wall, two large desks containing a desktop and a Macbook respectively, and finished off with laminated wood flooring underneath. The only illumination in the office comes from the dimly lit recessed lighting on the ceiling, followed by the bokeh of city lights filtering outside the paneled bay windows that make up most of the area.

Jeongguk is hellbent on a swivel chair, focused on his laptop screen as he clicks away in concentration. A stereo system, equipped with audio controls, is mounted on the fourth wall. It’s only now that Jimin realizes the entire suite is wired in speakers, which adds more to his curiosity.

“Whatcha doin’?” Jeongguk pipes up distractedly when he plugs his phone into the system and chooses a playlist. Chris Brown’s voice starts to fill the room.

“Setting up the music I’ll dance to once I climb your desk.” Jimin walks over to where his husband is seated, glancing at the papers spread around the piano-sized desk, which is larger than the second one. “Like seriously, what the hell. It’s huge as fuck. No wonder you’re emotionally constipated—you’re all cooped up here like a hermit.”

Jeongguk peers up from his screen to give him a smirk. “That’s not what you said last night.”

“Shut up, smartass.” He rolls his eyes and heaves himself onto the desk, bare legs dangling from the side. “Anyway, I wanted to tell you that the SKSB organization or whatever invited me to their benefit dinner next week.”

“Wow, that was fast. I didn’t expect them to reach out to you this early, but it’s good that they did. I was hoping they’d contact the new Jeon soon so they can stop tailing my ass for extra funding.”

“You make them sound like high end tyrants.”

Jeongguk laughs out loud. “They’re the most expensive, high-maintained and educated, socially trained tyrants out there, if that’s even a thing.”

“Not sure If I wanna join them,” Jimin says wryly. “I mean, their cause to aid charity is great and all, but I don’t think I’d be a great fit. I especially dislike their stupid requirements. Why do members have to either be twenty five or married into an esteemed family? What, am I supposed to wear Gucci next in order to save the world?”

“No one said SKSB was ever reasonable, though. In fact, they’re pretty bullshit if you ask me.”

“If you think it’s bullshit, then why are you okay with your spouse joining something so sexist and particular?”

“Well, I wouldn’t say I’m okay with it. I just expect a typical Jeon to accept the offer.” Jeongguk explains. “After all, it’s only strange if they didn’t get invited. But since we both know that you’re nothing near a typical Jeon, you can decide whatever the hell you want to do with the invitation.”

Jimin shrugs. “I’ll join. I already told Sejun I would since they asked. Sejun made a good point about this being my opportunity to get out and involve myself with things I find important. Which I will do, after I get rid of these membership requirements.”
“There you go, then. As a Jeon, you have all the power within your means to accomplish what you wanna change.”

“The most I can do is ask, persuade, and talk them into it.” He says, but Jeongguk shakes his head.

“That’s not all. You got me and the influence I have over the Society. Not to mention my family and Tae’s support as well. We’ll back you up. Plus, you also have generous funds waiting for you at your disposal.”

When answered with a confused look, he continues, almost sheepishly. “Uh—I forgot to tell you this earlier, but I opened up your charity account this morning. Along with the first quarter million in your regular bank account.”


Jeongguk nods and smiles up at him. “Yeah. Why’re you surprised? Isn’t that what we agreed on?”

Great. Now I’m officially a quarter of a hooker.

Here he is, enjoying a modified life to its fullest, having long forgotten about the money considering he’d channeled his reasons on the marriage into something entirely different than what they previously were. The deal regarding a payment had been the last thing on his mind for quite some time now.

While it is an unavoidable fact regardless, it definitely ruins his blissful mood now that it’s been mentioned again. Jimin appreciated the fact that he didn’t have to stress about it before. Although his mortgage is delayed for God knows why, he’s determined to either pay it off on his own or with the money promised.

“Aside from your charity account that I’ll be matching up deposits with your regular one, you have a checking account with a monthly allowance that has been accessed and managed by Sejun prior to our engagement.” Jeongguk interrupts his thoughts. “In short, there should be plenty of money for you to splurge with, Jimin, but if isn’t enough, then just say the word.”

What if I don’t want to splurge on anything? What if I don’t want money anymore? What’ll it cost me to have your heart instead?

Jimin represses a long sigh by pursing his lips tightly. “A quarter million is too much for me to begin with, much less an individual charity account and a checking one on top of that. I have no idea what to do with all of this, Guk. I used to be a relatively simple person, you know? Never wanted anything more than what I could have.”

Like winning the heart of Jeon Jeongguk, a fantasy no can could dare achieve. He wasn’t supposed to marry someone like me in reality, at least, not within these circumstances.

“There’s no harm in wanting something better for yourself, Jimin.” Jeongguk says softly, eyes kind and gentle and full of anonymous fondness. “I guess you could say life’s like a treasure map. There’s a lot of obstacles and risk in your journey, but you go for it anyway since you know there’s a treasure worth searching for behind that X.”

He’s not wrong. It’s just that Jimin is convinced there are treasures more luxurious than others, thus making it harder to find. And hoping for a perfect ending—if not beginning—with Jeongguk is the definition of futile itself. Nearly as mythical as it sounds.

Diverting the conversation elsewhere before it gets too sentimental, Jimin forces a smile and reaches
over to pick up some reports left askew. “Hm, let’s see.” He scans them almost mockingly. “Expansions, safety standards, requirements states in the proposal for expanding facilities, authorities over operations—jeez. Awfully boring shit.”

“Gotta make a living somehow,” Jeongguk grumbles and makes a grab for the papers. “Give them back. I was still working on those, if you haven’t noticed yet.” He even holds his hands out desperately when the older dodges out of his reach. “Please?”

Jimin smacks his hand away from the document and feigns more interest, crossing his legs and leaning back till his weight is fully propped onto the desk. “Don’t worry, it’s obvious enough. You look like a sadistic teacher who feeds off of innocent children’s fear so they can grow up miserable later.”

His mouth twitches in what seems like a drawl. “Well, naughty boys like you deserve some discipline, don’t they?”

“Sounds like something I’d like, sir.”

And with that purr reeking of all flirts and teases, Jimin hitches a leg and drapes it over the other—slowly, deliberately, with such precision that the robe pooled around his hips slips off and reveals sun-kissed legs and a hint of his inner thigh.

He watches, satisfied as Jeongguk’s eager eyes follow every direction his fingertips sway, darkening in curiosity. He flexes a hand on one knee and casually traces the slope of his thigh before lifting his fingers and carding it through his hair. Tilting his shoulders till the sleeves roll towards his arms, Jimin cocks his head to the side, eyes lidded, bottom lip caught in teeth, parted fringe falling over his brows in a wave of ebony while his gaping neckline flaunts the inner swell of his well defined pecs.

Sure, he’s not a certified Casanova, but it doesn’t take much to figure out Jeongguk’s weaknesses. He would’ve fallen off the table by now if not for his wicked amusement.

And entertaining it is, as Jeongguk licks his lips nervously, pupils dilated and breathing heavy. He struggles to meet Jimin’s eyes when he croaks, “T-thought I was the one punishing you—not the other way around.”

“All part of the plan, baby.”

Yeah, a plan to get the prince to capture the damsel in distress and ravish the fuck out of them.

Jeongguk groans at his response with a shake of his head, pulling him off the desk and onto his lap. Jimin yelps from the lack of balance, but Jeongguk’s got him trapped against his thighs, strong arms coiled around his waist as he leans into his chair.

“You’re such a troublemaker, you know that? A pretty little bundle of mischief that’ll haunt me for the rest of my life.”

Jimin scoffs and settles down comfortably into the younger’s lap nonetheless, legs dangling over the armrest. “A year is not the rest of your life.”

“It will be if I die in the process.” He points out, eyes bright and teasing. “Which will probably happen sooner or later from blue balls, if not your antics.”

“Or a tumor. I heard all that pride in your chest blocks blood to the brain.”

Jeongguk stretches his legs forward till his heels meet the edge of his desk in order to accommodate
their weight. “That won’t happen since it’s going down somewhere else.”

Completely flushed at this point, Jimin takes the conversation up a notch and forces himself to look Jeongguk in the eye, anxiously gnawing his lip and hoping his next sentence won’t come out like word vomit.

“I meant what I said on our wedding night, you know,” he starts and immediately searches for a reaction.

The younger just raises a brow a little too dramatically for his liking, much to his surprise. “Huh. Which one? You biting my dick off, your virginity, or the fact that you’d need a wheelchair afterwards?”

“When I said I wanted you, dumbass.” Jimin snarls, rolling his eyes. The last thing needed was for his idiocy to haunt him in a situation like this. “I know it’s cheesy as fuck but it’s my response to what you said at your dad’s house after the engagement party. I’m only saying it once, so you either get the message now or never because I’m never repeating it again. Ever. Capiche?”

Jeongguk blinks once, twice, thrice. It’s amusing—the way his long lashes rapidly flutter as his jaw drops, stupefied. It’s so adorable that Jimin can’t help but giggle, maybe smack his shoulder to snap him out of it—but when answered with nothing but utter silence, he realizes that Jeongguk isn’t being extra for once.

In fact, he looks downright bewildered.

*Wow, imagine that. Jeon Jeongguk caught looking like an idiot.*

To be fair, someone did express their desire to fuck despite vehemently preaching against it countless times earlier, yet melted into a gooey mess everytime said person gave them the slightest kiss and touch. And now that Jimin actually puts himself in Jeongguk’s shoes, he decides that he too would’ve felt a bit braindead.

“Wait, so.” Jeongguk blurts. He slowly repeats everything as if the meaning behind the words will betray him any second. “You want us—you want us to be real. Like, exclusively real. You want us to be a thing. You want you and me and our life together, as an actual couple.”

He grins a little breathlessly. “Took you long enough.”

It only takes a second for Jeongguk to recover because the next thing Jimin knows, his husband tightens his hold, lifts his chin up, and gives him a kiss deep enough to send his toes curling.

Jimin delicately cradles his face in return, but before he can thread his fingers any further to emphasise the urgency of his lust, Jeongguk pulls away as quick as he pounced, breath ragged and lips rosy.

“Jimin, as much as I really want to have you, right here and now.” And it takes all his perseverance to prevent him from stepping any further. “I wanna do this the right way.”

“Uh, it honestly doesn’t matter however the fuck you wanna do it. As long as you’re, er, gentle with me. First time and all.”

“Ugh, that’s not what I meant.” He groans. “I wanna do this the right way—you know, everything you deserved from the very beginning and not the shit we’re currently slumped with? A proper, romantic wedding night and an actual honeymoon. Something that’s worth your first time.”
Jimin suppresses a laugh. “That’s cute, Guk, really. I hate to break it to you, but life’s not a fairy tale.”

“Maybe, but neither is bending you over a desk on a boring ass weekday.”

“You’re so picky, oh my God. Don’t tell me you’re going for a Saturday evening after a candlelit dinner or something.”

“Well, no.” Jeongguk smiles sheepishly. “But it has to be special for your first time. Then I can fuck you six ways from Sunday anytime and anywhere without feeling guilty. Or make love. Whichever you prefer.”

Although he can’t remember the exact turning point of when his original arrangement with Jeongguk started transitioning towards something more meaningful and lasting, Jimin guesses that hope had been within him after all and now that it’s leaking out, it’s intent on taking over as well.

He pretends to think about it. “Considering that your dad’s still in the hospital, and you’re back to working full-time in a week, I can’t really ask how you’ll give me the wedding night you’re so pressed on doing.”

“That’s for me to know and for you to find out.” Jeongguk says and kisses the tip of his nose before pressing their foreheads together. “I’ll figure it out soon. I don’t know how or when, but I will make time for you, no matter what. Promise.”

Heart fluttering at the assurance, Jimin rolls his eyes and smiles shyly. “It better be worth the wait, kid. For a fuckboy, you’re pretty damn sappy.”

“Okay, no. I’m not the fuckboy here. That’s Taehyung’s job.” He frowns. “I may have not been committed back then and dumped every person I screwed around with at one point, but I certainly didn’t date several people at once. I couldn’t even deal with one person properly, forget about more.”

“Would it be rude of me to say I finally take your word on that?”

“I’d be offended if you didn’t.” Jeongguk’s wary expression softens into something so gentle, so sweet. “I’ll be good to you, baby. I promise. I’ll try my best to make you the happiest.”

Don’t, is what Jimin wants to say. Don’t be good to me, otherwise it’ll hurt me more than it already is. More than it will when it’s time to leave you.

The only thing stopping him from confessing so is the intimate moment. Their kiss—delicate and cherishing and more affectionate than any other exchange warms him inside out and fills his body with the good kind of shiver.

“Time for bed, baby.” Jimin murmurs against his mouth, drinking in Jeongguk’s little sigh that comes after.

“Fifteen more minutes. Not done with this report yet.”

“Technically, you shouldn’t even be working since this is still our honeymoon week.”

“Ten minutes?” He pleads, puppy eyes bright and round. “Five?”

“Nope.” Jimin scrambles off his lap and climbs forward due to the dead-end sandwiching him between Jeongguk’s legs and the edge of the desk. “Go to bed, or I’m dancing.”
The surface seems pretty stable when he first heaves himself up, standing to his full weight to test the waters. Given from the way it stays solid underneath his bare feet, Jimin figures it’ll be okay.

Jeongguk, on the other hand, is watching him with mild amusement. “Yeah, right. You wouldn’t dare.”

Thrusting a hand on his hip, he glances down at the younger. “Was that a challenge, Jeongguk-ssi?”

It’s only when Jimin pinches each side of his robe and performs a full bow that Jeongguk takes the hint and starts panicking. “I was only kidding, Jimin! Stop that. Get down from there.”

“Don’t be a buzzkill, Guk.” He twirls along to the melodious vocals of Chris Brown’s Take You Down playing from the stereo. It’s not a romantic song, dirty even—but it gives off vibes sexy enough to grind to, hips swaying at every note and drop.

“Care to join?” Jimin extends a hand before thing get too provocative for the second time tonight. “Show me what you got.”

Jeongguk declines. “Uh, I’d rather not break the desk with my weight, thanks.”

“This desk will be fine as long as you don’t weigh a ton.”

“This desk also cost a fortune.”

“A sturdy fortune.” He taps the desk lightly for emphasis. “Get up and dance already!”

“I’m telling you this is a bad idea. It’s literally why I’ve never danced on a table.” Jeongguk says despite eyeing the space between him and Jimin’s feet. He climbs up, albeit reluctantly, and reaches out to steady himself.

Jimin winks at him. “Relax, I’ve done this before. I’ve danced on top of the bar at Vene’s countless times.”

“In front of an audience? Were they even appropriate dances?”

“Nah, it was just me and the coworkers after closing. Why, are you up for a performance? A lap dance, maybe?”

When Jeongguk grows quietly confused, his nose scrunching in concentration and cheeks burning as he’s probably imagining something too explicit for his own good, Jimin finds it in his way to pull him closer by the nape till their chests meet.

“Why are you so fucking adorable sometimes?” He whines, and with a quick kiss, tugs at his pajama sleeve, beckoning him onward. “C’mon, Guk. Dance with me!”

“I’m going to regret this so much.” Jeongguk says as Jimin wraps his arms around his neck. They both tiptoe past flying papers, laptops, and coffee mugs until they reach a vacant space beyond them.

“Aw, don’t say that.”

“This desk was designed by my great grandfather who had gifted me this as my first staple of business when I was, like, five.”

“Very touching.” Jimin resists the urge to roll his eyes, but the younger shakes his head.

“No, fuck that. The only reason why it means so much to me now is because you and I are dancing
in our pajamas on it at ass o’clock in the morning. That’s all that matters.”

Jimin can’t help but falter in his steps, his heart pounding wildly against his ribs as Jeongguk grins down at him with crinkled eyes and a crooked smile. He ends up asking in the slightest whisper, “Will you really regret it? Is it such a bad thing to regret?”

Jeongguk quiets him with a soft, fleeting peck on his forehead. “I’ll regret it since I was already thinking of throwing this piece of shit away, but now I can’t ’cause it’s a part of our—our history together.”

It’s this moment, in the midst of vocals fading into adlibs overheard in a dimly lit room peppered in city lights and bokeh during midnight, that Jimin decides he’s completely, irrevocably, head-over-heels in love.

And although it pains him to do so, he stops the words from slipping out before things complicate. He stops because as insistent as they are, saying them would only extinguish the flame burning between him and Jeongguk. Confessing the truth will merely twist the lie they’ve agreed to live by.

The most he can do is kiss and tell. He can attempt mouthing the words through their kiss, with every whisk of their lips, every stroke of their tongue, every breath being taken away.

If Jimin could make out the letters being whispered from each sigh and heartbeat as they hold each other tightly in the center of this table, he hopes to spell three words that he can only dream of being told one day.

The songs continue, transitioning one after the other by the time they break away. Knowing that he’ll end up blurring something meant for later, Jimin closes his eyes and tucks his cheek against Jeongguk’s chest as Jeongguk buries his chin into his hair, arms resting at his waist, fingers gently caressing his back.

He won’t remember how long they’ve danced after tonight, but it’s long enough to last a lifetime.

Chapter End Notes

ok so the more i think about it, the more i feel like i should've referenced a GCF song like there for u or best of me, but at the same time, take u down covered by 3J was so hot that fuck the romantics, i'm down for some grind. (*´u´*)

what do u think so far tho? the slowburn is finally taking that turn it needed, and for the better. we're a step closer to true, passionate love. + smut scene coming sooner or later. one day, my friends.

thank you for reading, and until then!!

find me on twitter, tumblr, and insta. |O__O|
Chapter Summary

things will turn out fine, he figures. maybe not as great as he would’ve hoped, but as long as he takes advantage of the lemons the lush life throws at him, things will ultimately fare for the better.

Chapter Notes

in honor of our angel, our world, and bangtan's guardian fairy, park jimin. ♡
happy birthday, my darling boy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Prepping for the benefit dinner SKSB was hosting that evening honestly felt no worse than a child dolling up for a national beauty pageant. And while Jimin had grown used to the excessive, unnecessary preparation, even he knew a boundary when he saw one.

Not only did Sejun and Sooyeon dress him in an outfit he’d never want to be caught out in public with, but they also insist he learned the art of table etiquette in two hours, including the proper way to drink tea. Despite being familiar with the basics like cutlery and manners, Jimin didn’t expect a whole course dedicated to tea parties. As if sipping and holding pinkies out weren’t enough.

He’s read enough literature to know that tea party etiquette has been over centuries ago. Why did it matter whether the sugar cubes were put before the milk? How was the method of pouring and receiving refills more important than a guest’s comfort? It shouldn’t be a big deal as long as it’s polite and satisfies everyone at the table. And, frankly, Jimin’s sure he won’t enjoy suffering in these stiff pants any longer than he has to.

The only person that’s currently keeping him anchored is Sejun. Enthusiastic, appreciative Sejun who reassures that society and order in life is the key to happiness. Jimin would’ve called bullshit by now if it weren't for his assistant’s personal positivity.

“I look like—”

“For the last time, hyung, you don’t look like your History professor from hell.” Sejun pauses his pacing around him and leans forward to rearrange the tie tucked in between the lapel of Jimin’s blazer. They’re standing in front of his reflection for final touch-ups before Jaebum arrives with the car.

Sejun steps back with a smile. “You look wonderful in this refined, antique way.”

“So, a History professor from hell.”

“You look fine, Jimin.” Sooyeon sighs, gesturing towards the double-breasted suit she put him in.
“Like, sure, you look like an honorary prick from the Board, I’ll give you that. But at the same time, you’ve got your signature twist that screams your name.”

To be fair, he does give off a sophisticated vibe with his ridiculously expensive tie, fitted windowpane blazer over his white dress shirt, exclusively from Versace and Saint Laurent, respectively. The ensemble—along with his hideous Berluti—met the required dress code, but at least he’s able to keep his favorite pendant, rings, and threader earrings on, even if it seems controversial. Not that it’d stop him in the first place.

The three of them planned the details beforehand and spent the last week making minor adjustments. Although Jimin technically had the right to order Sejun and Sooyeon around as he pleased, he trusted handing his situation over to them as a friend first before a boss. Besides, his little experience was nothing compared to the vast work they’ve been doing in this scene. The most he cooperated with were the suit and tie.

For someone who normally has a lot to say, Jimin kept the invitation discreet in case things went downhill at the banquet. And according to the intense churning of his gut, it certainly will. The fewer people involved, the easier it’ll be to deal with the aftermath.

He sucks in a breath as he turns around and faces the team. “I guess this is the part where I hope they consider my last name a reason why they shouldn’t kick me out before dinner starts.”

“Don’t say that. You’ll do great.” Sejun picks the gifts they wrapped earlier. He hands it over, adding, “Just remember to think before you speak. Make sure you run everything in your head first so that it won’t come off as weird.”

“Got it. And no clanking while stirring. Five stirs max, no slurping, and whatever I do, no licking the utensils. Be generous with the sugar.” Jimin peers up at Sejun. “Anything else?”

“Nope, you’re good to go. See? You’re a natural. You’ve got better manners than half the people around here.”

Jemin squares his shoulders in response. “Please, I hardly fit their damn requirements. I’ll just half-ass the stuff I’m bad at anyway.”

Sooyeon stifles a laugh. “Alright, Mr. Honorary Board Member. Swearing won’t earn you the brownie points you want, so try keeping that to a minimum, okay?”

“Right.” He flushes. “Right, okay.”

“It’s a good thing you’ve memorized everyone’s profiles beforehand. That way you can easily strike a conversation and act interested.” Sejun reminds when he leads them out the door. “After all, this is a pretty important dinner you’ve been invited to. They’re revealing the new chairman today, typically a notorious member well-liked within the group. Then they hold the official ceremony and press conference a week prior to the banquet before announcing the new members of the board.”

Jemin can’t help but wince at the mention of the board members, considering one of them happens to be Kim Seokjin—potential candidate and inconveniently best buds with Kim Yugyeom.

According to the database Sejun compiled regarding the Board, Jimin had learned that not only was Yugyeom the youngest member to date but that his brief relationship with Choi Youngjae, one of Seoul’s hotshot lawyers, earned him a place in the organization regardless of his marital status. In fact, his membership was the last thing revoked when they later called the engagement off. Apparently, Yugyeom is inactive due to the launch of his own business, but that doesn’t guarantee
whether he’d show up today.

There’s still a high chance that the model won’t make it to the dinner, and that relieves Jimin only slightly, if not completely. He just hopes the best friend isn’t a nutcase since he’s sure they’ll inevitably cross paths. Jimin had asked Jeongguk about Seokjin earlier but was answered with a half-hearted shrug instead. Jeongguk claimed he barely knew Seokjin outside of social functions and that being acquainted with such a person was a feat nowadays. Besides, Jeongguk’s fling with Yugyeom was confidential and because they weren’t seen out in public often, he wasn’t very familiar with Yugyeom’s friends. He did, however, promise Jimin he’d handle any further cases of Yugyeom’s misbehavior if it ever rekindled.

*Which is why they say he’s your prince in shining armor.*

Ever since that subtle confession they shared back in Jeongguk’s study that night, there had been a few dips in their relationship that Jimin detected to be faint but changes nonetheless. Their marriage has grown quite domestic lately, to the point that it’s almost like living in an effortless trance. Nothing is planned anymore; everything comes into flow just the way it is.

Their mornings begin with the two of them lounging around the kitchen in their sweats as they eat an early breakfast before either heading off to work or to Sangguk’s house. The elderly man has been under a nurse’s care at his own place after being discharged a while ago. The Jeons welcomed him back home with a barbecue arranged by Taehyung, along with the newlyweds who joined them for the weekend.

Jeongguk may have returned to work the following Monday, but Jimin still made an effort to switch between visiting Sangguk and handling his excessive emails, as well as preparing for the banquet. Despite the differences in their schedule, Jeongguk somehow finds the time to take him out during lunch hours and come home early for dinner. In fact, their cooking is so consistent that even the housekeeper rarely comes over now that Jimin is in charge.

And of course, their evenings end with steamy makeout sessions hot enough to rile Jimin more than he would’ve liked. Jeongguk tends to leave him hanging in lieu of the sweet, romantic night he promised him later that week. Just like the honeymoon, his lips are sealed for the weekend, so the most Jimin can do is pray that Friday comes around soon.

*God, I’d take the hot chunk of a husband over insufferable socialites any day.*

“You ready?” Sejun’s voice startles him, effectively pulling him out of his reverie.

“More than I’ll ever be,” Jimin answers stiffly as he follows his assistant to the car.

He wonders whether he should beg for Sejun’s company throughout the duration of their car ride. They drop Sooyeon off first before heading to the Park Hyatt, a luxury hotel famous for its remarkable architecture and location near the heart of Seoul. Apart from being a tourist’s dream escape, it also plays the official role of the Board’s headquarters since the owner is a founding father of their organization.

“We’ll pick you up at eight, but text me if you wanna leave earlier or later than that.” Sejun flashes him an encouraging smile once Jaebum pulls over by the entrance, where a monotonous doorman awaits them at the front. “Good luck, hyung. Show them what you’re made of.”

Gulping, Jimin scrambles out of the car the second Jaebum opens the door and is escorted to the front. The doorman takes the gift bags and leads him down the lounge towards an enormous banquet hall, where sets of cantilever chairs circle several glass tables that are draped in white linen and
topped with wine glasses and fine china. Small crystal vases of pink and white chrysanthemums adorn each table while the tiny shrimp wellington pastries and blue cheese tartlets fill every attendee’s plate to the brim.

The chattering fades when a nervous Jimin lingers at the doorway, a bright, fake grin plastered on his face as he studies the many faces staring at him.

There’s only a handful of people, now that he takes a closer look, but given from the professional dress code everyone’s so keen on following, he wouldn’t have known better. Their lavish, but tedious attire hardly complement the colorful room they’re dining in, yet the first thing Jimin focuses on is Kim Yugyeom’s designer suit vest.

Yugyeom’s stunned expression is almost laughable as Jimin struggles to keep his mouth shut. A saccharine voice soon distracts him and he glances at his left to find a tall, gorgeous blonde—whom he instantly recognizes as Kim Seokjin—smiling at him.

“Oh, hello there.” Seokjin greets. He looks rather young as if his delicate face structure and porcelain skin were any indications. Dressed in a crisp, white tuxedo, he would’ve come off as an angelic beauty if it weren’t for the discrimination glazing his eyes as he surveys Jimin’s appearance.

“What, do I not look boring enough? Or is it because they still see me as the grubby diner kid even with the new name and getup?”

“A pleasure to have you here, Jeon Jimin-ssi,” Seokjin continues for the crowd. “We were wondering whether you’d make it considering we started about an hour ago.”

Jimin glances at his watch with a frown. “The invitation said six p.m, and it’s currently five-fifty. I’m perfectly on time.”

There’s something in the way Seokjin quirks an angled brow that warns Jimin how nasty one can truly be. “The ceremony was scheduled for five. I mean, it must’ve been correct if everyone else showed up then. Although, I’m sure you were held up with something worth the late entrance, of course. We understand. One couldn’t possibly miss such an important banquet otherwise, would they?”

“I’m not late.” He retorts. “I’ve got the invitation here if you wanna look at it.”

Seokjin lets out the dismissive laugh he’d been biting back. “Oh, please. S’not a big deal. We don’t bother with the minimal things here. Besides, it shouldn’t matter anyway since you aren’t an official member, right? And like I said, we completely understand. No need to apologize.”

It takes all the perseverance Jimin can muster from whirling around and walking straight out the door right then and there. “I don’t recall apologizing in the first place, so there’s no need to call me out for something I didn’t do. Are you sure you’re following?”

The banquet halls fall into a state of eerie silence, and the fact that it’s quiet enough to hear a pin drop isn’t comforting, especially when Seokjin’s voice hardens.

“Keep the swearing to a minimum. Same goes for insults.”

Jimin sneaks a peek past Seokjin and notices how awkward the other members are being. Some of them avoid his gaze, including Yugyeom, who opts for more wine instead. Others reciprocate the
same hostile glare Seokjin is beginning to sport.

Lifting his chin up, he smiles sweetly and says, “Congratulations. You’re on your way to big things, aren’t you, Kim-ssi? You’ve already mastered the art of politics—charm, manipulation, not to mention pathological lying.”

With that, gasps erupt the hall as blood rushes up to Seokjin’s pale face, his horrified expression now morphing into one of blatant anger.

Jimin couldn’t bother giving a shit. Not when his patience is being drawn out and played for too long. Intentionally sending out the wrong invitation in order to humiliate him is one thing, but there’s only so much mistreatment he can handle. If the Build thinks they can trample him over with their intimidation and petty threats, then he’ll be happy to teach them a lesson worth remembering.

Eyes never leaving Seokjin’s, Jimin slips a hand down his pocket and retrieves the invitation from earlier, slamming it onto the table and sliding it forward for good measure.

“You know what eventually happens to pathological liars? They get caught sooner or later. Don’t try denying it when you clearly signed this up for yourself, Kim-ssi.” His smile flattens to a smirk. “Shame that you’re a little too predictable for my taste.”

He turns around and flashes a sunny smile at the other members. “And like the generally nice person I am, I’m assuming none of you lovely folks had anything to do with this poor excuse of a prank, so let me reintroduce myself. I’m Par—Jeon Jimin. It’s my pleasure meeting you all and a complete honor to be here today. To be clear, I’m very much interested in the work that you do when you’re not busy instigating petty fistfights, and I’d be more than happy to lend you my assistance when needed.”

“You’ve got some nerve to berate us like that,” Seokjin snarls from behind him, and Jimin responds by glancing over his shoulder with a roll of his eyes.

“You’ve got some nerve to berate us like that,” Seokjin snarls from behind him, and Jimin responds by glancing over his shoulder with a roll of his eyes.

“Shouldn’t have exposed yourself then.”

“I’m the leader of this organization.”

To his surprise, Yugyeom and the other members start growing restless. They exchange similar expressions of shock and disbelief with each other, save for one brunette whose crinkled eyes give away his hidden amusement.

The fact that someone else found the situation hilarious instantly made Jimin feel better, so he grins and says, “Looks like Kim-ssi here still can’t believe his new position, given from the way he keeps repeating himself. Might have to reassure him of his new role now, don’t we, gentlemen?”

“Listen, Jimin.” An old man in his late forties—Yang Hyunsuk—pipes up from his seat. He sends Jimin an admonishing glare. “We only invited you out of courtesy to the Jeons, but Seokjin had a feeling you wouldn’t fit in. We can clearly see with that now with your insolence and disrespect.”

“With all due respect sir, but courtesy my ass. Isn’t smacking your obvious dislike towards me right on my face disrespectful enough? While you may have invited me out of obligation, you’re not doing anyone a favor by trying to tolerate me. And no offense, but at this point, you can’t blame me for my ‘insolence’ if you’re the one who started it first.”

“We are an esteemed group of male philanthropists, Jeon. I suggest you keep that in mind.” Lee Sooman speaks this time. “You’re lucky your marriage with Jeongguk-nim brought you a seat here because we usually don’t consider gold-diggers who sleep with rich men an option otherwise.”
It’s only then that Jimin realizes his effort—from the invitation to his preparation—was nothing but a trap to hold inaccurate evidence against him until he succumbed.

He thinks of how disappointed Jeongguk would be in him for screwing up such a prestigious offer, but at the same time, Jimin knows, as he fights back the tears pricking his eyes, that his husband would never encourage letting people trample over him.

Sucking in a breath he wasn’t sure he was capable of taking, Jimin scrutinizes every stare sent in his direction. “Funny how your esteemed generosity is only limited towards lavish fundraisers and the people who can afford it. If your charity doesn’t reach out to ones with lesser backgrounds, then what’s the goddamn point? There’s only so much you can fake with your philanthropy aside from looking like angels and earning the tax credit.”

“And you,” he snaps when Seokjin sputters in protest. “I feel sorry for the people who actually believe in your potential to make a difference around here, especially since all you care about is your status.”

It’s funny how Yugyeom hasn’t uttered a single word yet, only flushes darker when Jimin throws him a sideways glance. He expects Yugyeom to justify Seokjin’s actions since his petty jealousy is obviously the reason behind most of his friend’s crass behavior. But when met with silence, Jimin just sighs.

“If this is about Yugyeom, then I’m afraid you’ve got it all wrong,” he continues telling Seokjin. “I didn’t steal anything of his, and if I did, then it wasn’t his in the first place. I never wanted to have beef between us, okay? And although I hoped better from you, I should’ve expected the shit you’d give me for coincidentally marrying Jeongguk. Jeongguk doesn’t define even an ounce of who I am. Whether my name is Jeon or Park and whether I sleep on the streets or fifty stories high—I’m still the same Jimin who does not tolerate being taken for granted. So I suggest you kindly drop your fucking act before I give you a taste of your own damn medicine.”

Heart pounding against his ribs from the sudden rush of adrenaline, Jimin quickly recovers and smiles half-heartedly.

“I might be up for your offer once you all grow a pair and improve yourselves, but in the meantime, don’t bother contacting me again.”

And with that, he spins on his heel and makes a beeline for the exit, storms down the hallway, and past the lounge until he finds himself wandering a few blocks near downtown.

Once Jimin is sure he’s steered clear of the hotel, his straightened shoulders slump and he feels the excitement instantly deflate out of him.

Although he stands true to his words back at the banquet, he’s lost more than what he’s gained by blowing this opportunity. It stings worse when he figures he was never given a fair chance, to begin with. Jimin knows he should’ve expected an ambush after searching up gossip on their past havoc beforehand, but he believed otherwise. And now all he can do is admit that the blows not only wound his pride but also gave him a taste of the Board’s true colors. Despite the generous motives behind the organization, the members themselves were arrogant, misogynistic assholes. And although he was very well aware of this, Jimin’s tendency to dismiss even the crudest of people got the best of him.

*The only problem with giving these ignorant dickheads a chance is that they’ll never return the fucking favor.*
He wonders how he’ll break the news to Jeongguk. And more importantly, Sejun, who had completely placed his faith in the Build because of his high hopes for them. He’d be devastated for sure, and Jimin isn’t ready to face Sejun’s disappointment now that he’s failed the only thing his assistant has ever asked for.

*It was definitely worth it, though. Teaming up with a group of condescending tyrants would get me nowhere.*

Determined to forget everything that’s happened in the past hour, Jimin runs a messy hand through his hair, slips out of his blazer, and hooks it over his shoulder. *Loosening* up after a tight situation feels more than just good; it brings back memories of when he was just a plain old kid. He aimlessly wanders around downtown until he decides to try Sejun’s favorite pick me up—shoe shopping.

Believe it or not, Jimin’s grown fond of the Berlutis lately. They’re pretty comfortable even when they bring his feet misery. Still, walking around them for more than an hour helps him realize that they may not be his go-to after all. So he drops by a nearby Nordstrom, the same one he used to linger by and stare at the display cases on his way home since he couldn’t spend a single penny.

An employee greets him when he’s looking through a rack of sneakers and asks if he needs assistance, but due to his habit of declining things, Jimin quickly says he’s browsing despite coming with the intent to buy. It’s the first time he’s ever walked in this freely—back then he’d never bother the clerks unless he was sure he could afford it. Everything feels foreign, from the way the employee gives a reassuring nod to the way he stares at Jimin’s shoes in what seems like longing.

“Berluti, right? Saw them on Vogue, Esquire, and a few other magazines. They’re mad expensive with how they’ve been trending lately.” He beckons towards Jimin’s feet.

Jimin feels himself flush at the remark. He’s not sure how to reply since all he did was pick them from Sooyeon’s extensive shoe collection without knowing their worth.

The employee doesn’t seem to mind his reaction. “Anyways, I thought I’d mention it, since, you know, it deserves the compliment. I know we sell a pretty limited range that’s nothing near those, but let me know if you wanna try something on.”

Jimin points to the rack above the one he was surveying. “A pair of these black high tops in men’s size eight and a half would be great, thanks.”

Half an hour later, he strolls out of Nordstrom in his new Chucks with both his previous shoes and blazer tucked inside his shopping bag. The employee looked a little confused as he scanned the sneakers but thankfully didn’t bother commenting on it.

There’s still an hour left before Sejun picks him from the Hyatt, so Jimin decides to head somewhere that doesn’t require a ride. That way he’d put Sejun’s questionnaire regarding the banquet off for longer. Right now, all he needed was a friend to confide in.

He fishes out his phone and texts Jeongguk.

*wyd goo*

**G.G.G (husband)**

*trying my damnedest to not fall asleep in the middle of this big ass meeting abt possible strategic partnerships*
like seriously it’s been going on since morning tf

wbu? how’s ur party?

hey listen, can i come over

done

figured i’d drop by since im in downtown anyway

Jimin can’t help but feel a little guilty at his blunt response. In retrospect, he shouldn’t be bothering Jeongguk midway through his meeting, but at the same time, he’s anxious for a green light.

G.G.G (husband)

yeah sure, why not?

ok but like im still in the middle of the meeting and it’s ending in an hour, so u might have to wait a bit

feel free to raid my office if u want tho, and after that we can dine out bc im fucking starving

mmk, thank u

btw how many ppl are u meeting w

G.G.G (husband)

brb counting

eight

why

just wondering (´

anyways, i’ll see u soon!! mwah

G.G.G (husband)

*proceeds to send u hundreds and thousands of kisses n smooches n snuggles*

ew

G.G.G (husband)

*and one more kiss for good measure* (εー@)

why are u like this

get back to work chief

G.G.G (husband)
Trust Jeongguk to goof around and send lovesick emoticons in the middle of his own meeting. Jimin grins at the thought, pocketing his phone and heading towards the direction of the Jeon Headquarters.

He first grabs a dozen bulgogi burgers and soft drinks from a nearby restaurant on the way. Years of working shifts at Vene’s had awarded him with remarkable strength, but Jimin’s still panting by the time he reaches the office, four bags weighing his sore arms down.

It isn’t until he stumbles through the front door and past the reception desk that he remembers it’s his first time visiting the place without a means of identification. The last time Jimin tried proving his identity without an ID nearly cost him his phone and a leg, so he doubts searching himself up will do the same trick.

Instead, he gives the receptionist the most innocent smile he can muster as he tucks a paper bag underneath his chin. The receptionist—tall, tired, and intimidating—warily observes the mess he’s made on the desk.

“I’m sorry, but deliveries aren’t allowed upstairs. You need to contact the customer who ordered this; they’re required to come down and pick it up themselves.”

Jimin’s grin falters as soon as he registers what the receptionist means. To be fair, he might have mistaken his disheveled outfit for a delivery boy’s, but given from this guy’s attitude, Jimin could’ve been dipped in gold and it wouldn’t have made a difference.

“Hi, um—” Jimin spares his name tag a glance. “Doyoung. Yeah, I’m not exactly here to deliver this—like, as an employee.” Doyoung’s frown deepens. “Er, what I mean is, I’m here to visit someone?”

When Doyoung does nothing but pins him down with another unimpressed glare, Jimin takes the liberty to try again. “I’m here to see my husband,” he blurts. “I think he’s still in his meeting from morning so I figured I’d drop by and surprise him with some food. Except I don’t where his office is ‘cause I’ve never been here before.”

“And your husband’s name, sir?”

“Jeon Jeongguk.”

Doyoung squints at him for any signs of lying, but the most Jimin offers is a stoic expression. Finally, he leans back with a sigh and warily says, “Can I see some ID, please?”

And really, if Jimin had actually cared enough, he would’ve found it strange that the employees around here weren’t aware of their boss’s marriage. People must come over and claim identities often enough if Doyoung is so cautious about it.

“Sure. Give me a sec.” He sets the bags down and digs into his wallet.

Since he doesn’t have a license and had left his passport at home, Jimin pulls out the credit card Sejun provided him with instead.

“Here you go.” He hands the card over to Doyoung, who narrows his eyes further after examining it.
Jimin bites his lip. “Yeah, well, I just got married a few weeks ago and haven’t gotten a name change yet. My assistant's working on it though, so it’ll be processed by the end of this week.”

He doesn’t look the slightest bit convinced. “And it’s a credit card.”

“It’s a black AMEX,” Jimin argues. “Isn’t that what all rich people use? I wouldn’t have one if I were a delivery guy now, would I?”

“Dunno. Depends if there’s a rich Park Jimin out there missing their card,” Doyoung retorts, returning the card. “You’re gonna have to do a lot better than that, buddy, but in the meantime, no food delivery beyond this point.”

Defeated, Jimin groans and nearly smashes his forehead against the glass counter. Unless he finds a way to gain access without interrupting Jeongguk’s meeting, he and his cold burgers are screwed.

It’s a lame idea, but Jimin still pulls his phone out and scrolls through his gallery of pictures he’d taken of Jeongguk earlier this week. There’s a candid shot of his husband in a striped tee, nibbling his fork outside of a cafe they were dining at. As casual as the photo may seem, it’s the only one with a clear angle as the rest of them are either pixelated, ugly, or downright personal—including videos of him walking around the house shirtless and drooling in his sleep.

“Hey—hey, look at this.” He waves the phone in Doyoung’s face, shoving it closer and pouting when the receptionist turns his head the other way.

“Listen, sir. When I asked for an ID, I meant an actual ID. Not photos and credit cards,” Doyoung explains impatiently. “I’m not checking anything other than that.”

_Goddamn it._ “Okay, then why don’t you give Yoonoh a call? He’s Jeongguk’s assistant. _He_ knows me.”

In reality, he’s met the guy only a handful of times, and apart from the nicer attitude and tendency to steer clear of Jeongguk’s way, Yoonoh is basically another version of Doyoung.

Doyoung shakes his head. “I don’t disturb Jung-ssi unless directed, and he hasn’t given me a memo upon your arrival, either.”

“Well, obviously not! What part of ‘surprise’ did you not understand?”

When the latter’s expression merely hardens, Jimin sighs and sifts through his contacts, thumb endlessly dragging across the screen before it hovers above a name. “I hate to do this, but you leave me no choice.”

Yoonoh picks up after a few rings to Jeongguk’s office number. “Jeon Jeongguk’s office, how may I help you?”

“Yoonoh! God bless. It’s me, Jimin.” He greets a little too loudly, shooting Doyoung a look. “Hey, so listen. I’m currently down here at the front lobby but I can’t get through because I don’t have an ID on me. I don’t wanna be a bother, but do you think you can pull a few strings for me? The food I brought Jeongguk is getting cold.”

“Oh, Jimin hyung.” Yoonoh eches in surprise. “Of course, of course. Sorry about that; we haven’t updated our facilities lately, but I’ll let them know right now. Just hold on for a sec while I page the receptionist.”
Keeping the phone a safe distance from his ear once the background music comes into the fold, Jimin gives Doyoung a triumphant smile. It was never his attention to come off as a showoff, but in his defense, Doyoung should’ve notified the staff or inquired more instead of completely denying the request.

The front desk phone rings and Jimin watches him take the call almost nervously.


Yoonoh’s voice returns after the call and informs, “You’re all clear, hyung. Again, I’m sorry if he gave you a hard time. I’m filling the staff in with your info so you won’t have to go through that again.”

“Nah, it’s cool. Don’t sweat it. He was only doing his job, but I’m heading in now. See you in a bit, thanks.” Jimin hangs up and beams at Doyoung. “I’m glad we got that over with. Sorry for being annoying. It’s just that I couldn’t think of anything else.”

“I should be the one apologizing, Jeon, sir,” comes the awkward reply. “I, um.”

“It’s Jimin, and relax! You’re fine. I won’t get you in trouble.”

“Thank you.” Doyoung sighs in relief and redirects him towards the open turnstiles. “By the way, do you need help finding the office? I can find someone to carry all these for you too.”

“No thanks. I got this.” Jimin gathers the bags in his arms. “I used work at a diner so I’m used to it. Where’s Jeongguk’s office again? I forgot to ask Yoonoh.”

“Twenty-fifth floor, first hallway to your left. It’s labeled. You’ll see it once you get there.”

There are people filtering in and out of the elevator by the time Jimin arrives at the lobby. Two people hold the door open for him before it closes. If a disheveled guy carrying a shit ton of paper bags swimming in a school of businessmen seems weird enough, no one thankfully comments on it.

Eventually, the elevator clears and soon Jimin’s left to make the rest of the way up alone.

Upon Doyoung’s instructions, he navigates through the hall once he steps off and finds a door left ajar. Figuring that this must be the office, he slips inside and spots Yoonoh hunched over his desk.

“Long time no see, kid.” Jimin greets as Jeongguk’s assistant, a gorgeous young man who is no older than Jeongguk, gets up to help with the bags. “It’s a good thing you were here or else I would’ve been outside waiting till Guk’s meeting was over.”

“I had just stepped out when you called.” Yoonoh explains and sets the stuff down on a nearby coffee table. “Jeongguk didn’t mention anything earlier so I wasn’t expecting you. I did run it through him afterwards and he just agreed. He’s probably distracted; it’s a pretty long and tedious meeting.”

Stepping back and stretching his arms over his head, Jimin surveys the airy lounge, particularly the large glass windows that provide a breathtaking view of downtown Seoul. “I figured I’d drop by since I was in the area. I’ve never been here before. It’s super nice, damn.”

“Jeongguk’s office is right there.” Yoonoh points a thumb towards a large mahogany door at the right. “You can wait inside if you want. His conference room is a few doors away.”
Jimin starts unpacking the bags, stacking the little boxes together and propping them open. “I was thinking I could pass the burgers out if that’s okay. If not, we can leave them here and let people help themselves. Guk said he was starving, so.”

“Yeah, their lunch wasn’t exactly a nice one. Just a few cucumber sandwiches from hours ago.” Yoonoh admits. “Well, there’s no harm in trying. I’m pretty sure we’d be doing them a favor by delivering them some better shit. How ‘bout you take the bags and go on? I’ll be right behind you with the drinks.”

Of all the features Jimin appreciated best about Yoonoh, his calm assertiveness takes the cake. Not once had he ever called him out for his strange antics during their encounters. In fact, he was probably one of the very few people who liked him for who he was.

“Just letting you know that I’ll take the blame in case we piss ‘em off,” Jimin whispers when they pause by the conference door.

Yoonoh flashes a genuine, fleeting smile. “After you.”

The first thing Jimin faces after poking his head into the conference without a second to spare are nine scowls sent his way.

He offers a smile and a wave. “Hello.”

Jeongguk is stationed at the back, jaw stiff and eyes trained in on the man currently leading the presentation. His gaze breaks away and once it meets Jimin’s, the frustration he initially wore instantly melts into a huge, delighted grin.

“Jimin!” He exclaims, scrambling to his feet and rushing towards him.

First impressions are the least of Jimin’s concerns, not when Jeongguk holds him by the shoulders and presses a soft kiss against his forehead, his lips ghosting down the bridge of his nose before they settle on his mouth.

“Missed you,” Jeongguk mumbles into his cheek and then turns back to his staff. “Gentlemen, this is my husband, Jimin. He was just in the area and brought some food over, so why don’t we take a fifteen-minute break right now? We’ll wrap things up later.”

It seems that no one can turn down a good burger, because soon the refreshments are unpacked and littered across the conference table as Jimin and Yoonoh hand everyone a plate.

Jimin’s introduction with Jeongguk’s coworkers is brief, thanks to his husband quickly dragging him out the door, down the hallway, and straight into his office, where they are now enclosed in privacy.

“You’re so annoying,” he complains as Jeongguk locks the door shut behind them. “I hadn’t even gotten their names yet and you’re already—mmm.”

The remaining traces of his annoyance wash away when Jeongguk wordlessly closes his mouth over Jimin’s in a softly spoken kiss, similar to the one they shared back at the conference room. Only this time it doesn’t deepen, even when their tongues come out to greet each other in between gentle nibbles of their lips, and the little nips Jeongguk gives leave Jimin smiling against his teeth.

They’re still hovered by the wall, awfully close to the entrance where they’re bound to be heard, but Jimin doesn’t care. Instead, he curves a hand over Jeongguk’s neck, fingers twisting their way through his fringe and smooths it back. Itching to fit in between Jimin’s thighs, Jeongguk bends forward and slots his face right along the older’s neck, his palms expanding across his rear til they
pick him up by the legs.

Jeongguk misses a step while walking them over to the desk, causing Jimin to pull away with a gasp as his back meets a glassy surface. It takes him a second to register their surroundings, including the floor to ceiling windows he had collided with. He glances down and finds Jeongguk blinking up at him through long lashes, his lips quirked adorably.

“Ohops, sorry,” he says sheepishly, not sounding the slightest bit apologetic.

He leans in before he can think about it, relishing in the effortless way their swollen lips easily meld together. Hitching one leg over Jeongguk’s waist in attempt to hoist himself up, Jimin rolls his hips underneath and slips out a groan as Jeongguk spreads him against the window.

In all honesty, he isn’t one to initiate, but something about the younger flares an urge to smother him in kisses until the end of time. Maybe it’s the way Jeongguk tastes like a combination of bittersweet coffee and hazelnut creamer. Or maybe it’s the way Jeongguk looks at him as if he’s some miracle—some deity that created the universe with his own hands. And maybe it’s the way Jeongguk easily parts his mouth open, pretty sighs and breathy laughter seeping into their soft pants.

Whatever it is, Jimin doesn’t realize just how much of a catalyst Jeongguk truly is until they settle on the chaise lounge. He slowly climbs his lap then, straddling him, puts his arms around his shoulders and rubs their noses together. They grin at each other—flushed, breathless, but elated nonetheless.

Why the fuck is he so good at this? Picking me up, kissing the shit out of me, lifting my mood with that contagious smile that instantly makes me feel better? How is he the best happy pill in the world?

“Thanks for saving me out of that hellhole,” Jeongguk says after they finally catch their breath. He slumps his head against the backrest, placing his hands on either side of Jimin’s hips. “And thank you for the food.”

“More like you dragged me out.” Jimin snorts and fiddles with the silk tie loosened around the latter’s throat. “Long day though, huh?”

Jeongguk’s eyes crinkle shut as he yawns in response. “Ugh, tell me about it. Things have been tripling ever since Dad’s discharge, and now that he’s taken a hiatus off the executive board, I have to sit there and make a majority of the decisions myself. It’s so damn tedious that I either zone out or fall asleep through the meetings. And lately,” he shyly adds. “All I’ve been thinking about is coming home to you.”

Fireworks. That’s how Jimin’s heart feels at the sight of Jeongguk’s sweet smile as he tucks in a stray lock behind his ear and strokes a thumb across his burning cheek.

“You know, I never used to be bored at work until you waltzed in.”

“Must be ‘cause you’re aging. Heard the whole hotshot power executive thing is only a phase.”

“Very funny.” Jeongguk retorts. His grin flattens to a knowing smirk—specifically the one where his tongue rolls between his lips in a certain way that threatens Jimin more than anything. “You know what isn’t a phase though? This obsession.” Hands digging past Jimin’s thighs and cupping his ass, they draw back when his knuckles brush the insoles of Jimin’s Chucks.

He twists to the side and surveys the shoes confusedly, turning back to Jimin and asking, “Did you, uh, wear sneakers to the banquet?”
The mood sours at the mention of the disastrous evening.

Jimin lowers his gaze. “No, I went shopping afterward.”

“Shopping.” Jeongguk echoes, brightening up again. “What else did you get? Please don’t tell me you have a whole stash of shoes hidden somewhere.”

“What? No. This is it.”

And apparently, that’s a tough case to believe, because Jeongguk’s eyes widen comically. “You seriously went on a shopping spree for sneakers? That’s it? You’ve got money to splurge and that’s all you got?”

“What else was I supposed to spend it on, crack?”

The only reaction he receives is endless snickers, much to his displeasure. “You’re killing me here, Jimin.”

“Don’t tempt me,” he snaps.

“Hey, come on now. Don’t be like that,” Jeongguk cooes. “I never thought I’d say this but I really dig your fashion. I’m just surprised since it’s not every day you see a person content with sneakers. I mean, Dad would always panic whenever Hyung and Noona were off to the mall.”

His laughter, however, subsides when Jimin glances away and mumbles, “They’re my comfort shoes, okay? Sejun mentioned how shopping was his favorite pick me up so I figured I’d try it. Kind of like how comfort food makes you feel better.”

“If you needed a pick me up, that means you weren’t feeling good, to begin with. What happened, Jimin?”

*Your scatterbrained ex and his dickwad of a gang ruined my chances with the Build. Now I’ll never be a member and although I couldn’t care less, I know I should’ve tried harder because that’s what a Jeon should be. That’s what you’d want me to be. They make me feel shitty and insecure even though I have no reason to, and all I want to do is forget about it.*

The words die on his lips, so Jimin quietly shakes his head before burying his face into Jeongguk’s chest. “Nothing.”

“Jimin…”

“Not in the mood, Guk.” He murmurs against his shirt.

Jeongguk doesn’t take this for an answer and hooks a gentle finger under his jaw, lifting his chin up with a kind, tender expression. “Jimin, baby. I won’t understand what’s going on if you don’t tell me what happened. At least give me a hint. Please?”

Chewing his bottom lip in deliberation, Jimin contemplates over which bits to include and which to leave out. Eventually, he exhales through his nose and says, “Let’s just say the Build and I realized that we weren’t so compatible after all, and we decided it’d be best if we didn’t work together.”

“Yugyeom was there, wasn’t he? Did he do anything?”

Jimin laughs dryly. “Oh, he was there all right, but he didn’t do shit.”

“Was it Seokjin?”
“Doesn’t matter who it was. SKSB itself isn’t my cup of tea. I’m afraid we have too many differences between us, so I doubt a Jeon will be on board with them anymore. I’m sorry. I just don’t think I can do it.”

“I don’t give a damn whether you join them or not.” Jeongguk frowns. “And I hope I didn’t make you feel inclined to do so. I don’t want to force you into things you aren’t comfortable with. I figured that spending time with them would help you out and gain you some friends since they’ve been in the game for so long. But if they’re only going to bring you down and make you miserable, then I would pull you out myself.”

Jimin gives his husband a timid smile in return but is thrown off when he angrily continues, “In fact, I’ll make sure we’re no longer associating with them anymore. We’re done for good. See how much they’ll need the Jeons once they’re broke.”

_The Jeons. Like, the two of us. Fuck, I love him._

“It’s okay, Guk, really.” Jimin cups his face in his hands. “You shouldn’t withdraw your support from a charity regardless of their attitude. Stuff like this happens all the time. Besides, I ended up cussing them out instead of talking it out rationally, so I wasn’t exactly playing nice either. Still, I’m glad I got out of there. I thought about it during my walk here.”

“You walked here? All the way from the Hyatt?”

“Yes, I walked. Don’t give me that look,” he rolls his eyes. “I used to walk downtown all the time. How else did I get by before our engagement?”

Groaning, Jeongguk rolls his head back and kneads his temples. “Sejun and Jaebum have no idea you’re here, do they?”

“Shit, I forgot. I’ll text Sejun soon,” Jimin admits. “I was so upset that I, um, just wanted to see you.”

There’s a moment of complete silence as their gazes hold before Jeongguk sits up, lures him close by the collar, and presses kiss-swollen lips to his skin, mouth briefly latching onto his. He pulls back an inch, hand curled around his nape, foreheads pressed together and their lips so close that Jimin can taste the damp air when Jeongguk murmurs, “Promise me you’ll come over and see me whenever you’re having a bad day.”

“It can’t just be _whenever_, dumbo. I know you’re busy.”

“I don’t care.” Jeongguk kisses the space between his brows. “I’ll never be busy enough for you. You don’t even have to be upset—you’re welcome here anytime, baby. Promise?”

“Promise.” Jimin nods and loops his arms around Jeongguk’s waist, caging him into a tight, warm hug. “Thank you, Guk. You seriously made my day.”

He caresses his back. “I wish I could’ve done more, but I gotta get back to work. We’re leaving as soon as I wrap that stupid meeting up, and then it’s your night. We can go somewhere, do stuff, eat out—whatever you want.”

“Feel free to raid my mini fridge while you wait. Or you can explore around, that’s cool too. There’s a recreation room in the basement if you wanna check that out. Just make sure you have your phone on you. I won’t be long,” Jeongguk says when they get up and spruce up in the wall mirror upfront.

“Take your time, hotshot,” Jimin teases, smacking the younger’s ass on his way out. “Go do whatever multi-millionaires do. I can wait.”
Once Jeongguk leaves, he walks over to the panel glass windows and stands by the frame, drinking in the magnificent view that overlooks Seoul. The city has never looked this glorious before, and Jimin can’t help but marvel at the beauty of it all—from the fairy lights starkly outlining the streets to the cloudless night blending into the skyline like watercolor.

*Everything looks different up here, especially your life.*

Today’s fiasco with the Build is only one of the many obstacles Jimin had yet to face as a member of the Jeon family. And while Jimin has already accepted the fact that he’s nowhere near the ideal socialite, he’d try his best to fill in the crevices and make his marriage to Jeongguk worthwhile in other aspects.

Sure, the general public loved him solely for his plot twist in a modern fairy tale, but the upper class will always view him as their inferior; the basic uncultured commoner who’s nothing but an obstacle, no matter how many brand names he dons or how exalting his new surname is.

He doesn’t have to worry about Jeongguk shunning him, based on his reaction to this evening’s incident. Member or not, his husband wasn’t going to expose him anytime soon—at least, for the duration of their marriage. And it’s better that way. He can still work for charity’s cause without joining some obnoxious clique. It’s hard to admit that at this point, Jimin would do anything for Jeongguk’s approval.

He wouldn’t have at first. Their situation was different back then. It’s funny how Jeongguk initially set a high price for the perfect, socially adept, and docile spouse, but little did he know he was bargaining with the wrong person. Somewhere along the way, he accepted the reality behind their deal and was miraculously okay with it.

Jimin swoons at the memory of the younger’s anger when he announced their withdrawal from the Build. That quick wit and fierce determination lowkey melt him into a gooey mess.

Things will turn out fine, he figures. Maybe not as great as he would’ve hoped, but as long as he takes advantage of the lemons the lush life throws at him, things will ultimately fare for the better.

“Where are we going?” Jimin asks, slinging an arm over Jeongguk’s neck while the other clasps his wrist. They stride past the reception desk, where an awkward Doyoung acknowledges Jimin’s wave. “Where’s your car?”

He receives silence for an answer as they walk down the front steps and pause by the ceramic fountain. Jeongguk nuzzles the tip of his nose into Jimin’s hair before mumbling, “It’s somewhere. We’ll pick it up when we feel like it.”

Jimin raises a brow. “Um, okay. Why though? What's up?”

“We’re going on our first date!”

The exclamation throws him off guard to the point that he skids to a halt and gawks at Jeongguk’s excitement. “Our *what* now?”

“Our first date,” Jeongguk shrugs despite the shade of pink tingeing his cheeks. “We haven’t gone on an official one yet.”

“I mean—” Well, obviously. *Our marriage is literally a business agreement. Business partners don’t do dates.*
Except he doesn’t say this out loud since they agreed to be exclusive for the year so that naturally meant they’d go out.

Jeongguk gazes at him in what seems like hope. “Would you?” He asks nervously. “Go on a date with me?”

There goes his heartbeat again.

“Are you kidding?” Jimin flashes an ear-splitting grin. “Of course I would! I’d love to!”

Relief floods the younger’s expression as he laughs and lifts Jimin by the waist, twirling him around in broad public.

**Jeon Jeongguk. Asking me out. Who would’ve thought?**

And what a date it is.

To be fair, Jimin doesn’t have a standard set considering he’s never been on one before, but crepes and gelato definitely sound like a good start.

They order two large biscoff crepes and a tub of coffee-flavored gelato to share from a European cafe down the street before going over to Cheongdam, a ward Jimin isn’t familiar with. He buys a few knitted scarves and hats off one shop while Jeongguk comes back empty-handed.

It’s a quarter past nine when they decide on dinner. And by dinner, Jeongguk means a full course meal served at a high-end, classy restaurant near Gangnam, but Jimin suggests that they wade deeper into Seoul and see what’s in store.

So that’s how they end up at a plaza full of outdoor pojangmacha stalls lining up the streets of Myeongdong. Jeongguk isn’t too keen on eating street food at first, but after sampling the odeng soup broth the cook offered them, they order a large array of dishes, including dalkbal, stir-fried pork, and kimchi with tofu.

“Y’know, when you said we should look around more, I wasn’t expecting this.” Jeongguk remarks as he takes a tentative bite of the bacon wrapped hot dog.

Jimin smiles through a mouthful of rice cake. “I don’t think dates have to be expensive and thoroughly planned. They just gotta be fun.”

Jeongguk sips at his soju—yet another thing Jimin would be trying for the first time tonight—and smiles back. “If I did have time to plan this, though, I would’ve reserved a whole theater for us. Maybe a theme park while I’m at it. Something all on out and amazing so that you’d never forget.”

*I know. You and your childish but romantic heart.*

He leans forward and carefully wipes the corner of Jeongguk’s stained mouth with his thumb. “I know, baby. But you don’t need to go that far for me. I’m just an ordinary person who likes simple things.”

The messy kiss Jeongguk leaves on Jimin’s cheek is sticky and pretty gross, but sends butterflies in his stomach nonetheless. “There’s nothing ordinary about you, Jimin. That’s all I can say.”

And although Jimin is flattered by the compliment, he doesn’t ask for a clarification and decides to enjoy the moment instead.
They walk around the district after dinner, arm-in-arm like a real couple. Jimin enjoys tucking his cheek onto Jeongguk’s shoulder as they swing their hands back and forth. They spend the rest of the evening skipping stones and taking turns on the swings in a park near the pojangmacha.

By the time Jimin and Jeongguk leave the park and cross the street to where their driver is waiting, they’re a stumbling, tipsy mess with their endless giggles and tangled hands.

Later that night, once they’re preparing for bed, Jeongguk steps out of the closet and dangles a small pouch above his head.

Jimin glances up from the face mask he’s tearing. “What’s that?”

“Something I bought from Cheongdam earlier,” he says, crouching down and setting the pouch in the older’s palm. “The artist delivered it an hour ago, actually.”

Jimin does remember seeing him go downstairs for something, but he’d been so caught up in a phone call with Jinyoung that he forgot to ask what that was about.

He runs a finger across the suede fabric, trying to determine the contents by its texture and size. “Can I open it?”

“Go ahead.”

Loosening the tie before widening the pouch open, Jimin catches a glint of silver inside. Jeongguk takes the pouch from him and slowly slides the items into his outstretched hand.

There are two narrow white gold rings with a stripe of black and gold lining the rim. It’s a simple design, aside from the tiny diamond encrusted in the center, and when Jimin holds them up to the light, he notices the script engraved across the bands.

You are my love.

That’s all it says, but it’s enough to surge a hurricane of emotions raging in his chest, drowning spectacularly when he rolls a ring with his fingertips and reads the Korean translation written inside and sealed with a heart.

Suddenly, love isn’t a term that Jimin was alone in using.

Love is you and Jeongguk if things work out.

“Um, I’m guessing you like it then, given from your silence,” Jeongguk says softly. He takes the gold-rimmed band and slips it over Jimin’s right ring finger. “And you’re crying, too. Kinda makes me think you love it instead.”

I do love it, is what Jimin wants to blurt. Just as much as I love you.

Unable to say anything coherent other than what’s lingering on his tongue, he wordlessly slides the other ring onto Jeongguk’s finger this time, sniffing in the process.

“I know today was really shitty for you,” Jeongguk continues, circling his arms around his waist and placing him on his lap. “But I still hope you remember this day. Not because of all the crap that happened earlier, but because it was our first date n’ we had a lot of fun.”

“I wouldn’t forget it even if I wanted to, Guk.” Jimin murmurs, lips trembling upwards. “Thank you.”
“Good, because this is only the first date of the rest of—”

He kisses him then, swallowing Jeongguk’s remaining words with something that is almost desperation, between languid strokes of his tongue and the sweet nothings whispered into his mouth. And if Jeongguk is upset by the interruption, his only response is tightening his grip and pulling him in closer.

Out of all the wars he waged and battled in his life, it’s only now that Jimin feels he’s finally won something worth fighting for.

Chapter End Notes

you know i had to do it. what exactly did i do, i'll leave that for you to figure out. (´-ω-`) all you gotta know about kim seokjin is that behind that bitchy exterior is a mixture of insecurity, a rotten life concealed by luxuries, a secret, and the potential to become a kinder, wiser person. in other words, he and yoongo will definitely improve. (´∀´ ¯\*)

ALSO THANK U SM FOR PUTTING JAEHYUN IN THAT OFFICE BC BOI THAT’S JUST MORE MATERIAL FOR ME TO FEED OFF OF

thank you for reading, i love you guys with all of my heart ❤ but until the next chapter!!

find me on insta, tumblr, and twitter.
untold

Chapter Summary

the fact that a few truthful words mended them together within moments tells jimin a lot about their progress. that there's nothing to hide.

Chapter Notes

okay, okay. it's been a long, unpredictable while, my lovelies. five or six months to be exact. i'm sorry for my sudden hiatus but i've had a few things going on during the duration of my disappearance. i've been hospitalized for pneumonia, went overseas for six weeks, caught typhoid just a week prior to returning home (which lasted another three weeks) and in the midst of that, i got accepted and enrolled into the dream college of my choice. so, that's been a ride. ＿(´▽`)

i'm glad to be back and about with a very much deserved explanation and chapter. i don't like thinking about the future of this fic simply because i know i will finish it. like most authors, i started this fic with the intent to complete it all the way and i plan to keep it like that for as long as i can. i just hope everyone understands that with writing comes other responsibilities. this is just a hobby, a pastime, a privilege. if i can't make time for it, then that's that, but i try my best to keep tie the knot in mind whenever i plan a schedule. i read, reread, and revisit every chapter, post, review, and comment about TTK as motivation to continue. so far, it's helped me a lot and plays a major role in the lengthy writing process.

i also apologize for being unable to return everyone's comments, but as always, i read them, cherish them, and think about them in times of need and in times of joy. i'm so lucky to have you guys watching my back. (￣v￣)

btw, this is sort of a filler chapter, but at the same time, i find it important because in it contains another puzzle to the current plot. plus, i revealed another member and i love him to bits! i'll also leave an author's note answering some frequently recurring questions, one of them being if i'll drop this fic anytime soon. i assure you, even when uni starts and things get busier, i'll still continue. if others can do it, so can i. this fic remains my baby even during the most difficult of times. sometimes it physically pains me when i can't make the deadline either lmao.

thank you for your patience and loving messages during my hiatus. now, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Listen, the smoked ham might be easier to roast since they’re precooked, but I’m telling you, they can’t beat some freshly grilled shish kebabs. All we gotta do is prepare and marinate it beforehand, stick it in a bag for the trip, then pop it in the fire. Simple.”

Dubious, Jimin tosses the package of sausages back onto the cooler shelf with pursed lips. “You sure
you know how to build a campfire? I doubt some divine lightning will strike one for you.”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes for what seems the fifth time as he pushes the shopping cart further down the aisle. “Of course I do, but I ordered a special flint as a backup anyway. It’s a traditional fire starter.”

The two are spending their Friday morning at the local supermarket to stock up on supplies and food for the camping trip in Jeju Jeongguk had specifically planned as their special weekend extravaganza.

Yes, it’s nowhere near the romantic honeymoon in Tokyo, but Jimin’s excited either way considering he’d never gone camping before. Not even once.

Bizarre as it sounds, it really isn’t much of a shocker. In his defense, he hardly had parents, much less loving, interactive ones. With his mother out of the picture by childhood and his father busy making poor decisions, they didn’t experience the outings Jimin would hear other kids brag about.

In addition to his background, he often couldn’t afford the international trips granted by his high school. In fact, he was only enrolled in that particular school because it offered schedules compatible with working students. Even with the extra cash he’d scrape from tips and raises, Jimin dismissed using it on ridiculous things like hikes. He found the idea of spending money on a brief, inconvenient trip outdoors weird, but in reality, that was his excuse to make himself feel better over things he couldn’t have.

When you’ve lived majority of your life pressed up against display windows for luxuries out of your league, you naturally convince yourself that whatever’s behind the glass isn’t a big deal and that you’re not missing much after all.

To his surprise, Jeongguk caught hold of this trivia because when Jimin questioned the motive behind his idea, he said his dad might’ve mentioned something somewhere.

The thing with having Sangguk as a father-in-law is that Jimin hadn’t thought he’d ever be his father-in-law, so he probably spilled far more than he would’ve liked. Not that it was an issue.

“I know it’s a traditional fire starter.” Jimin retorts. “Learned it back in history class during our Java men unit. You know, the dudes who’d smack two rocks together to start a fire? I just dunno why you’re suddenly pressed on copying them in this time and era.”

“Because it’s lit,” Jeongguk declares. “Also, it’s your first time camping so I gotta make sure everything is right—I want us to do this right.”

“Well, I sure hope this shitton of stuff is doing it right ‘cause I doubt any of it will fit in the car by the time you’re done.” Jimin gestures at the overflowing cart. “How do I know you’re not actually preparing for an apocalypse and using me as a hostage?”

Jeongguk answers with a pout, reeling Jimin in by the waist when they exit the aisle. “I just like being prepared, okay? Nothing—and I mean nothing—will get in the way of our weekend.”

The certainty in his voice lets Jimin know how well his seduction skills have played off and further inflates his ego. He glances up at his husband, lips curling into an innocent smirk. “Oh, I’m sorry. Has this week been exceptionally torturous for you?”

Jeongguk’s pathetic whine might leave Jimin cackling, but it doesn’t stop him from tightening the grip around his midriff and pulling him closer till his mouth meets Jimin’s nape.

“My dick is literally gonna fall off if I can’t have you by tomorrow.” He murmurs against the curve
of Jimin’s ear, lips closing over the shell in a teasing nip. “I deserve a reward for my endurance. You haven’t been helping either, you lil’ shit.”

Obviously not. Nothing’s gonna stop me from getting fucked. Yeah, I’m thirsty, but can you blame me? I’ve already married the kid and fell for his ass — might as well ain for the dick too.

It’s amazing how Jimin can still mask the effect Jeongguk’s smallest actions have on him. He manages a shrug despite the dangerous way his body is ready to fall apart at the close proximity of the younger’s warm breath hot against his skin, the shiver that runs down his spine sending hairs prickling all over. “I beg to differ. I’ve been helping you by showing you what’s in store for the weekend, thus familiarizing you with your prize. I’m simply giving you a demo of slow torture.”

“I’ll show you what a demo is,” Jeongguk grows playfully before tilting Jimin’s chin up and kissing him square on the mouth. Jimin giggles into their kiss, hands skidding off the handle and grabbing fistfuls of his shirt as Jeongguk’s cup his cheeks.

And they would’ve continued making out in the corner of an aisle, oblivious of their surroundings if it isn’t for someone clearing their throat so loudly Jimin almost thinks there’s a bull behind him.

The two break away to face an elderly couple paused in front of them, their cart adjacent and stares scrutinizing.

“We didn’t grop our ladies at the supermarket back in our day,” the man says disapprovingly, shaking his head before frowning at Jeongguk. “We’d court them in private under a guardian’s supervision and shower them with flowers and gifts. Only then we’d ask their fathers for their hands and marry them properly at church.”

Jumin tries to maintain a straight face but it’s not easy watching Jeongguk’s wide eyes bulge and cheeks darken without laughing. The tiniest giggle slips out of him and he bites it back, only for the younger to grab his wrist and shove their intertwined hands in the couple’s face, wedding bands glistening under the fluorescent lights.

“We are married, for your information. Newlyweds, to be exact.”

“It’s been two weeks.” Jimin sweetly informs. “My husband is a very intimate, affectionate, physical person, you see. He just can’t keep his hands to himself.”

He feels a faint squeeze of his fingers and glances up to find Jeongguk wearing a smile equally as sunny as his. “Yes, well, it doesn’t help that my husband’s adorableness is out of this world. Excuse me for my indecency, ahjussi. You two look young and fresh and still very much in love—I’m sure you’d understand.”

There’s a delicate tug at his heart at the word adorable but holds his gaze with the couple, stiffening when they exchange dubious, almost suspicious looks.

Eventually, the man grunts and pushes the cart forward. “Still don’t see why you can’t seduce him at home instead,” and pushes the cart away with his wife in toll. Jimin and Jeongguk wait for them to disappear down the aisle before silently snickering.

“See, darling?” Jimin scolds. “You’ve been slacking on those marital duties lately. It’s been two weeks and you still haven’t shown me this so-called ‘art of dissolving panties’.”

“I know, I know.” The younger flashes him a cheeky grin and suddenly slides his arms underneath, scooping Jimin up and dumping him into a small space between the granola bars and cartons of banana milk where his hips barely fit and legs draped over the cart.
“Wait, what the fuck—Jeon Jeongguk! Get me out of here!” There’s hardly any space to lift himself up due to his knees being bent higher than his waist. Jeongguk makes no move to help him either; he simply resumes pushing the cart.

“I’m serious, you dickwad. People are watching!”

“You know, Jimin.” Jeongguk says, completely ignoring him. “Sometimes I really wish you didn’t mention your virginity to me that night. I could’ve gone without knowing.”

Irritated by his senseless behavior, Jimin tries sitting up and upon flopping back onto the railing, hisses, “That sounds like a you problem, asshat, especially since I don’t remember asking you to be so chivalrous.”

“Oh, but chivalrous would be the last thing you’d call me if you knew what’s going on in my head right now.”

“You’re making a scene, Guk.”

“But s’all good,” he continues, the corner of his lips tugged into a mischievous smirk. “’Cause we’ll get down to the dirty I’ve been dreaming of real soon.”

The naughty promise intrigues Jimin more than he would’ve liked and soon his body cranks up a few degrees. Cheeks flaming, he fights the urge to glance away and musters enough courage to meet Jeongguk in the eye instead of covering his face.

“Oh, but it doesn’t change the fact that the entire store is looking at us now. Besides, how can I take you seriously when you’re all bark and no bite? Come back and talk to me when you actually deliver.”

He expects his husband to falter but to his disappointment, the humor in Jeongguk’s eyes grows to a vicious feeling Jimin doesn’t want to name. “Very tempting, but two can play at this game. Consider this,” he pats Jimin’s knee for a brief moment, “revenge for all the shit you put me through so far.”

“Excuse me, sir? Adults are not allowed in the cart, please.” One employee calls out as they glance up from their stockpile to see the two strolling down the frozen foods aisle. Jeongguk walks past them and replies with, “Don’t worry, I’m buying the cart too!”

“Nuh uh. Not on my watch. If you try saying that this cart reminds you of us, I’m gonna smack you,” Jimin interrupts even though he can’t contain his impish grin. “You can’t just buy every single thing that holds sentimental value to you. You’ll end up owning the entire Seoul by the end of the year.”

“Wow, two weeks into marriage and you can already predict my next move. I’m almost offended.”

“It’s called spousal instinct, baby. Prevents your husband from being a dumbass and potential hoarder. Try it sometime.”

Jeongguk helps him out of the cart when they reach the register. He pauses at the front display as they unload their groceries onto the conveyor belt. “Oh, crap, we forgot the chocolate for the smores. Didn’t you say you wanted Pocky too?” The little frown etched onto his face would’ve been adorable if it isn’t for his ignorant question. “Why can’t we just make smores the normal way?”

“Where’s the fun in that? Picture this: warm gooey marshmallow drizzled with melted chocolate on top—oh wait, where’s that flavor dipped nutty crunch coming from? You know, the source of your foodgasm? Yeah, that’s the almond-covered Pocky.”
Jeongguk narrows his eyes. “Okay, okay, I get it. Stop talking about foodgasms, or any ‘gasm’ for that matter. Hurry up and get your Pocky.”

Jimin flashes a triumphant grin before scurrying to the candy aisle. He picks up a family size pack of almond and matcha Pocky but stares at the row of candies, eventually deciding that gummy bears and mini Twix bars felt like a happy combination.

He returns to the checkout area on light, bouncy feet till he spots the cashier beaming at Jeongguk. She’s a petite, slim brunette with earrings are big as her face, but what’s bothersome is the fact that her friendly demeanor is growing more flirtatious and suggestive by the second.

Jimin knew very well that jealousy wasn’t a good look on him, yet he can’t stop the acidic, gruesome feeling from pooling in his stomach. He slowly approaches them now, lit expression dimmed to something more impassive.

Jeongguk and the girl—Hyunjin, according to her nametag—quiet down when he interrupts their conversation with a calm, “Hey, what did I miss?”

Jeongguk points at the pack of turkey slices with a sheepish laugh. “I couldn’t ring this one up myself because the label was misplaced. Took us five tries to get it. Apparently, this isn’t pork salami, but beef.”

“Oh, right.” Jimin’s smile thins. “Thought everything was categorized under the same name: dead meat.”

It takes Jeongguk a while to understand the bitterness behind his words, but he takes it lightly and wraps an arm around him, eyes glittering in amusement. “She was just helping us, mochi,” he says as he acknowledges the gawking cashier. “Hyunjin, this is my husband Jimin, a dead meat specialist. I like to avoid his experiments.”

You could’ve gotten down on your knees and yell your undying love for him out loud in public and you still wouldn’t have been any more obvious than you are now. Good job portraying yourself as a jealous, clingy psycho. Of course the girl’s gonna drool over your husband. Your fucking grandpa would drool over him.

Even in a white oversized sweater paired with mismatched sweats, his locks layered in soft waves, and a face mask tugged over his chin, the guy looked worthy of worship.

An awkward tension was bound to happen after that embarrassing moment and the girl makes it clear when she quickly checks them out and moves onto another customer.

“You’re jealous,” Jeongguk remarks once they’re out of her sight. Before Jimin can protest, though, he quickly reassures him with a crooked, toothy smile. “It’s kinda cute.”

Jimm scoffs. “Right. Jealousy implies I care, which we both know I don’t.”

He instantly regrets letting those words slip because as soon as they hit, Jeongguk’s face darkens and his lips slowly purse, jaw set.

What the fuck is wrong with you, Jimin? Couldn’t you just admit that you love him instead of saying the complete opposite?

Realizing his mistake, Jimin’s first instinct is grabbing the crook of Jeongguk’s arm as the younger turns away.
“Hey, I’m sorry.” Jimin steps in front of him and gently takes his arm. He swallows around a dry throat. “I don’t know what came over me.”

“It’s okay, Jimin,” Jeongguk says quietly and pries out of his grip to tend to the groceries. Jimin watches him load the bags into the cart in a mechanical, almost robotic manner. He wants to say something to lift the atmosphere and possibly revive the goofball from five minutes ago but keeps silent knowing he and his mouth would make the situation worse.

The walk back to the car is eerily quiet and uncomfortable enough for Jimin to make a move.

“Look, I’m sorry, alright?” He blurts, stopping short in his tracks and staring at Jeongguk’s retreating back, fingers gripped around the bags to the point they lose feeling. “I seriously didn’t mean what I said there.”

Jeongguk slows his pace until he eventually stops in front of the Mercedes, yet doesn’t bother facing him. Not that it matters, because Jimin was willing to apologize anywhere, as long as he was listening.

“I care, Guk,” he continues. “Of course I do. I care so damn much that it almost hurts.”

Here he is, vulnerable and pouring his heart and soul out into a subtle confession he meant to keep to himself in the middle of a goddamn parking lot, in nothing but a graphic tee and ripped jeans. If he didn’t know any better, he’d think he was auditioning for an angsty teenage drama.

“Yeah, I didn’t like seeing you with that girl, only because it made me feel things that you shouldn’t be dealing with. It was easier denying it than admitting that I was jealous and felt incompetent.

“I know I say a lot of shit so I won’t blame you for not believing me when I say I really didn’t mean it,” Jimin rambles and wipes the corner of his wet eyes with his sleeve. He sucks in a breath, chewing his bottom lip and says weakly, “But I care about you more than I should—more than what’s needed.”

His heart races at the sound of the cart rolling to a stop and glances up to find Jeongguk striding towards him, his arms sweeping him into an embrace.

Tears dot his vision as Jimin laces his hands around his waist with a sniff, his cheek pressed against the younger's shoulder.

“I believe you, Jimin.” Jeongguk murmurs into the crown of his head.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt you with what I said.”

“It’s alright.” He kisses Jimin’s temple and pulls back to observe his face. “I’m sorry for reacting that way.”

“No, don’t be. You have all the right to feel upset. I didn’t realize the weight of my words.”

They continue hugging in silence, ignoring the few honks aimed at them before breaking away. Jimin notices that Jeongguk’s expression is now tender and the soft smile is back again.

“I get where you’re coming from, honestly,” Jeongguk admits shyly. “Cause I feel the same way too. But guess what? It doesn’t matter whether I’m being reckless or extra about it. I care about you because I want to. I care a lot.” Receiving a trembling nod in response, his grin widens, eyes crinkling at the corners. “You know you’re important to me, right, Jimin? If you don’t know that by now then I’m clearly doing something wrong.”
“Yeah, I know,” Jimin answers as Jeongguk leans down and presses a kiss to his forehead. “I shouldn’t have been jealous but I was.”

“It’s okay to be jealous. You should be jealous. It’s not every day that you land a fine husband who’s fine as fuck—”they both giggle at this—“it’s just you and me in this relationship, baby. I’d probably throw hands and get physical if I saw someone else near you.”

Jumin laughs out loud. “Yes, we’re aware of your violent tendencies, kid. You might as well go all the way and bury the body afterward.”

“Is this, perhaps, a proposition, Jumin-ssi?”

The fact that a few truthful words mended them together within moments tells Jumin a lot about their progress and that there is nothing to hide.

The ride home is a long, absurd debate about whether Jeongguk should buy an SUV specifically for their trip. According to his humble garage, he only owns a few sports cars and three Rolls Royces—all of which are apparently deemed unfit for driving country roads with. Jumin, on the other hand, calls him ridiculous since they’re taking the expressway and not rugged terrain.

They’re unloading their groceries onto the counter when the concierge calls them and informs there’s someone named Kim Namjoon downstairs asking to see Jumin.

“Who’s that?” Jumin asks.

Jeongguk furrows his brows in thought. “Kim, uh, Kim Nam—oh, yeah! The hotel Kim! I’ve seen him before. He owns the hotels named after his father, Namseon.”

Jumin runs through the profile database in his head, trying to remember if the name had ever been mentioned before. “Is he a socialite by any chance? Like, a member of SKSB? Wait!” He snaps his fingers in realization. “Is he a brunet? The guy with dimples and stuff?”

“Oh, I think so,” his husband replies dubiously. “I don’t know him that well, but it wouldn’t be a surprise if he is on board. All the Kims are ranked high on the social spectrum.”

Sure enough, the mental image of Namjoon’s appearance matches up with the profile Jumin has in mind. He’s certain that Kim Namjoon was the guy laughing during his argument with the board back at the benefit dinner.

“So why would he want to see me?” He wonders aloud as he rushes to the mirror in the hallway and attempts to pat his unkempt hair down. “Shit, I’m wearing an ugly ass shirt and jeans—I need a blazer or something. Maybe a suit. Quick, Guk, can you get me a tie?”

Jeongguk immediately beckons at his call. “Chill, this is your place, not an office. You don’t need to wear a tie to greet him.” Smoothing his hands down Jimin’s shoulders, he smiles at their reflection. “There is no dress code when you’re at home. Besides, you look so hot I could gobble you up right now.”

“Gukkie, please, now is not the time to get cuddly—hey, stop that, it tickles,” Jumin whines, struggling as Jeongguk hooks his chin over his shoulder and playfully nips at his neck. He manages to escape the tight hold by tilting his head away. “Get off, you overgrown bunny. This Namjoon guy’s coming in like a minute—”
“A second, you mean.” Jeongguk steps back and pats Jimin’s butt. “Okay, okay. Let’s go. I’ll just say hi before I leave you two to your thing.”

Kim Namjoon turns out to be all legs, dimples, and a healthy glow. He definitely exerts a superior aura and maintains the posture of a socialite—the only difference being that he’s missing a designer suit and opts for a baby blue button-down tucked in beige jeans and looped with a belt. There’s a pair of large, Gucci sunglasses hanging off the hem of his opened collar. His brown hair—which oddly reminds Jimin of caramel—is no longer parted but falls in short fringes above his eyes, giving him a gentler, more approachable look.

“Hello, Jimin-ssi, Jeongguk-ssi.” Namjoon greets warmly, dimples peeking through his smile. He steps forward and extends a hand. “Sorry for dropping by this late, but I heard you guys will be out this weekend, so I figured I’d catch Jimin before you leave.”

Jimin side eyes Jeongguk since he thought their plans were confidential, but his husband is already eagerly shaking hands with Namjoon.

“No problem! It’s a pleasure to have you here, Namjoon-ssi. We were just packing for our trip. The housekeeper’s not here today, but can I offer you some refreshments anyway?”

“I’m good, thank you. I wanted to talk to Jimin about something if you don’t mind.” Namjoon enters prior to the welcome. “It won’t take long.”

“Of course not. Go ahead and make yourself comfortable in the living room. Sorry about it being so messy, though.” Jeongguk strokes the underside of Jimin’s jaw before pointing towards the dining room. “I’ll be in the kitchen if you need me.”

Starting up a conversation is often tricky during first encounters, but much to Jimin’s surprise, Namjoon shakes his hand with just as much enthusiasm as earlier. “It’s wonderful to properly meet you, Jimin. Again, I’m sorry for barging in but my name is Kim Namjoon, the diplomat of SKSB. I’m not sure if you remember me though, we haven’t exactly spoken before.”

His amiability nearly throws the once skeptical Jimin off. Something in his passionate tone proves the sincerity behinds his words and actions.

He returns the handshake. “Yeah, I tend to remember the few members who didn’t want to rip my face and dignity off there.”

“God, don’t remind me.” Namjoon groans, furrowing his brows delicately. “I am so sorry about that day. Even though I personally laughed my ass off while watching you roast them, I should’ve said something as peacekeeper of the place.”

“Uh, I wouldn’t recommend pissing them off. Especially since you gotta deal with them on a daily basis.”

The brunet smiles wryly. “Trust me, it’s them who don’t want to piss me off. My great-grandfather, Kim Kyungjoon, founded the South Korea Society Build over eighty years ago. To be fair, I could have run for chairman without rigging the election plenty of times, but I choose not to because I don’t like being in the spotlight. I only joined on behalf of my grandfather’s wishes before he died. Although, I doubt he’d be happy if he knew about the current assholes we have on board.”

“Well,” Jimin snorts. “Let’s just hope your grandfather’s doing something more heroic in heaven than keeping up with a bunch of perverted old men equivalent to the Kardashians.”
Cracking jokes about someone’s deceased relation—especially if you met them a minute ago—is probably not the smoothest transition, so it startles him when Namjoon claps his hands in full on laughter.

Jimin grins. “I mean, hey, my grandpa’s probably playing yutnori up there.”

“Was he a professional player?”

“Actually, um, I’ve never met him before,” he admits. “My maternal grandparents were unheard of the moment my mom walked out on me and my paternal grandfather died when I was little. I only remember remnants of him, like his face and voice.” Glancing back at Namjoon, Jimin sheepishly adds, “I used to wonder where he was after his death as a kid, so I’d imagine different scenarios of him in the afterlife. It sounds childish now that I think about it, but the possibilities felt endless back then.”

Namjoon surprises him for the third time by squeezing his hand in reassurance. “Wherever he is, I’m sure he’d be proud of how you turned out.”

For some reason, the statement rubs him off the wrong way and Jimin smiles tightly. “I’m pretty sure marrying into a rich family wasn’t all that he’d want me to do.”

“That’s not what I meant, Jimin. I meant that he’d be proud to know his grandson is a strong, kind man who fights for what he believes in with a fierce spirit. Life isn’t always about making it big and flaunting your wealth. Money doesn’t build your legacy, rather, it’s the generosity and service you can put it to good use with.”

And it’s then that Jimin decides he likes Kim Namjoon more than he thought he would. It was really refreshing to finally meet another person whose ideology wasn’t limited to mere fame, wealth, and social status like the rest of the empire.

“You know, even though I ditched the benefit dinner this week, I’d still like to find a way to help with the resources I’ve got. Maybe I can work with the organizations the Jeons are already a part of.”

“That’s exactly what I came to talk to you about,” Namjoon replies, slipping a hand into his shirt pocket. “I might’ve pulled a bloodline card and convinced the board to share my sentiment.” He hands Jimin a familiar creme-colored envelope with the unmistakable golden logo printed at the center. “I’m officially inviting you onto the team. Forget about Seokjin and the others. They know better than to give you any more shit now that I’ve taken matters into my own hands. However, if someone continues bothering you, let me know and I will take measures.”

Jemin’s eyes widen. “How are you going to do that? Seokjin’s the new chairman. You’ve heard him say it a million times.”

“That’s more of a titular role. He’s basically a spokesperson and ambassador for the Build. It’s the board that makes the decisions. Also, the chairman can easily be replaced through an election if they lose at least two votes from the board.”

“Not to burst your bubble, Namjoon-ssi, but the board despises my ass just as much as Seokjin does. They’re not going to impeach him anytime soon.”

“Then maybe they’ll start warming up to your ass if they don’t want me pulling the Park Hyatt under them.” The latter’s expression fades into a smirk. “The hotel may be SKSB’s headquarters and is under government protection, but it belongs to my family. My grandfather left it in my name. So technically, I can do whatever the hell I want if it means the board wants to stay intact. SKSB is
practically nothing without the Park Hyatt and the Kims behind it.”

“What about Yugyeom?” Jimin blurs.

“What about him?”

“Isn’t he part of the board as well? He won’t be entertained with the idea of betraying his friend if the time comes.”

“Yugyeom’s currently just a member, although we invited him to join the board a while ago,” Namjoon answers cautiously. “I understand that there might be some tension between you two considering he’s Jeongguk’s ex, but we’ve been keeping a steady eye on him for a year now ever since he lost half of his contracts. A lot of the poor guy’s philanthropic work’s been discredited too. I hope he isn’t stopping you from joining.”

As much as Jimin hates the idea of seeing the guy his husband slept with on the norm, he has to remember that all of that happened in the past before he met Jeongguk. Besides, Yugyeom may be an idiot in need of a backbone, but that doesn’t mean he hasn’t done charitable work before. Work that Jimin aspires to do himself.

Yet he shakes his head anyway. “That’s not it. Yugyeom and I were never enemies in the first place, nor will I dishonor a brilliant individual whom I know can make a difference towards this cause. SKSB and I share different morals, that’s all. I don’t think it flows well with my vibe, not because Yugyeom doesn’t kiss my feet.”

Namjoon grins. “That’s the spirit, Jiminie. For a bold, somewhat fanatical person, you’re pretty damn sensible when you want to be.”

Jimin counters with a smile that doesn’t reach his eyes. “I know, which is why I’m going to be sensible again and decline your offer. The organization is known to have a tricky acceptance rate and I don’t want to be an exception. If they don’t like me, they don’t like me. It’s not fair if I join on behalf of someone’s persuasion when there’s plenty of other candidates to go around. I may hate their guts for their mistreatment but they’re still helping people out, so I don’t want to be in their way either.”

He pats Namjoon’s arm in an effort to console him. “And while I do respect the lengths you took for my sake, I don’t think it’s a good idea to risk your integrity and blackmail them. I appreciate it, I really do, but please. I’m not that much of your time.”

Instead of protesting further, Namjoon simply chuckles. “I admire you, Jimin, and despite wanting you to join us for the hell of it, that’s not my initial reason. I want to recruit new members with better innovation and ideas than the old geezers mooching off of our funds. We need a change like this in our society.”

“No kidding.”

“I’m sure you’re aware of the traditional values SKSB holds and how archaic they are in most of their practices even if they’re incompatible with our modern ways.” Jimin nods vigorously in response, holding onto every word. “Don’t get me wrong, I love my forefathers and whatever, but we gotta admit their ideals are obsolete. There’s no way they’d make an impact now unless we tweaked them to our convenience. Whether you agree or not, the world is all about open trade and social media, not the silver spoon you were born with.”

“Anyone can make a difference,” Jimin concurs as he remembers something Sangguk had once said
when he was younger. “We live in an era where wealth is no longer the key to opportunities. Opportunities come to those who take chances.”

“Precisely,” Namjoon says. “If you look closely, this generation praises self-made billionaires more than trust fund babies. It’s a complete one-eighty from the previous generation, where the wealthy discriminated the ones who made a living.”

If Namjoon is trying to lure Jimin in with the belief that no man is greater than the other, then he’s succeeding so far.

“Having someone who believes in this principle is a crucial factor to this change. Which is why I want you on board with us, Jimin, because I know for a fact that you are one of the many elements we need into transitioning our organization for the better. You have the opportunity to make a real difference—one that people can feel. All you gotta do is seize it.”

Jimin chews his lip nervously. “I know, but I can’t do it at the price of our honesty.”

Namjoon raises a brow at this. “Are a couple of pissed, butthurt men really worth the revolution us ethical members can lead? We’re capable of turning this place to more good for once.”

“Okay, nevermind, you completely ruined my defense there. Damn, you’d make a seriously good politician, Namjoon-ssi.”

“I’m not sure if that’s a compliment,” he says wryly. “Last time I checked, politicians are artificially charming, manipulative, and downright pathological liars.”

Jimin flushes at the memory of his meltdown from the dinner. “You know I just said that to tick Seokjin off.”

“I know.” Namjoon beams, the sparkle in his eyes more prominent. “And that was the most eloquent bitch-slapping I have ever seen someone deliver during my time here. You, my friend, are a badass motherfucker.”

The two of them howl in laughter, with Jimin hardly being able to see when his eyes crinkle shut. “What are you talking about? That was everything but eloquent. I think I told them to grow some balls or something.”

“Fuck, yeah, you did. You should’ve seen the look on Sooman’s face. The old man was this close from having a coronary thanks to you. I’ve never felt so alive in an SKSB dinner than I had then.”

Jimin pretends to frown. “I hope you’re not recruiting me for entertainment.”

“I’m recruiting you because you’re a good-hearted ball of fun, Jimin,” Namjoon correct, subsiding into a gentle smile. “You don’t have to accept my invitation immediately. Take your time—discuss it over dinner. Our induction ceremony is this coming Wednesday, so let me know your decision after you come back from your trip this weekend.”

“Alright.” He glances down at the business card attached to the envelope and inhales sharply. “I’ll think about it and call you soon.”

Namjoon claps a hand on his shoulder. “Thank you for at least considering, Jimin. I’d be delighted to have you on board with us. I’m actually hyped to actively participate for once.”

“Thank you for having faith in me and giving me this opportunity,” Jimin responds, setting the cards down with a weak smile. “I have a feeling I won’t be able to say no to you, so I’ll try not to let you
“Wonderful. I’ll trust you’ll use my downcast reaction as motivation to join. Just don’t spoil your trip by overthinking it, though, okay? You’re still young and happily in love, so make the best of every star-crossed moment.”

As Namjoon rises from his seat, Jeongguk happens to poke his head into the room, a strip of bacon hanging from his lips. “Anyone hungry? We got cookies and pepperoni.”

“We’re going camping,” Jimin explains before Namjoon can inquire. “Jeongguk here cleared the whole supermarket earlier for snacks. I’m convinced he’s packing for an apocalypse instead.”

Jeongguk floats over to them and latches an arm around Jimin’s waist, snuggling him closer and smiling up at Namjoon. “He just doesn’t wanna admit that I’m luring him out for some well-deserved sex—I-I mean, rest. Jimin doesn’t think he’s a big deal when that’s exactly why I have to keep him all to myself for a few days.”

“Shut up, you’re so embarrassing.” Jimin groans and reaches up to pinch the younger’s cheek.

Namjoon snickers. “You’re right. The fact that he’s being dismissive about it makes it more of a big deal.”

“I’ll just have to continue convincing him otherwise.” Leaning in, Jeongguk ends his dramatic sigh by giving Jimin’s ear a wet, lip-smacking smooch, enjoying the way the older cringes below him.

“Alright, er, I’ll leave you lovebirds to your preparations,” Namjoon announces and heads for the door. “Thanks for sparing me some time, guys.”

“You too, Namjoon-ssi. Thank you for the visit and the lovely conversation. I enjoyed it.” Jimin says as he opens the door for him, but it caught by surprise when Namjoon leans in with a hug.

“Please, hyung is fine. We’re friends now, aren’t we? I’ve got a good feeling about this, Jiminie, and when was the last time I ever had a good feeling about SKSB?”

“Not sure. When?”

“Never. That’s how shitty it was before you came in.” He grins and waves goodbye. “Anyways, have a nice trip! Call me later.”

They stand by the door, watching him walk to the elevator at the end of the foyer until he steps inside. Once the elevator doors close, Jimin turns to Jeongguk. “He’s actually super fun, an intellectual kinda guy. Really nice.”

“I’m glad you got along.” Jeongguk sweetly smiles. “I’ve never spent a lot of time with him before but I will now. He seems really pleasant to be around. Sometimes I tag along when our dads go golfing together—boring, I know.” Jimin lets out a sound. “Namseon-nim speaks highly of him, which is rare for dads to do in this showbiz.”

“Speaking of which, I recently heard the Kims adopted their distant relative’s child after the parents died in an accident. He’s awfully young, probably a year old or two. He’s registered under a cousin’s family name, but I think Namjoon hyung and his sister will look after him together in the meantime.”

“I bet he’s gonna grow up to be a genius like his uncle,” Jimin remarks slyly. He slips his arms around Jeongguk’s neck. “It’ll be even funnier if the kid ended up looking like him, too. Tan skin and dirty blonde hair is always a look. I mean, black hair and eyes like mine are pretty basic, don’t
you think?"

Jeongguk presses their foreheads together, the tip of their noses bumping as he brushed his lips against Jimin’s. “Basic is the last thing I’d call you, you beautiful, stunning fairy.”

There’s something about falling in love with an angel that hurts and feels good at the same time.

Jimin giggles and tiptoes to give him a long, slow kiss before pushing at his chest with a soft shove. “Now let’s get packing, bun. I wanna get out of here as soon as possible.”

Chapter End Notes

spoiler alert: MINJOON ARE OFFICIALLY THE BEST FRIEND DUO god i love them
i’m happy to announce that jikook have moved from phase 1 of their emotionally constipated relationship to phase 2, something more open, clear, and hopefully romantic.
a lot of people ask (or sometimes complain) that the slowburn here is painfully long. i’ve added two more tags emphasizing the slow build so if you dislike how long it’s taking, my only advice is to ditch the fic and read something with a faster pace. (✿◠‿◠)

realistically speaking, it’s very unlikely that two people who have gotten on the wrong foot would easily fall in love and declare so in the span of a few weeks. it takes time and i personally enjoy the chase. while we know they’re whipped, they won’t be professing their undying love anytime soon. you know how mental and physical slowburn works. yes, i have the power to alter the plot and have them actually ‘married’ with ten kids by the next chapter, but no, i don’t see the need to. also, jimin is not tsundere, by the way. i just wanted to address these points before moving further into the fic. there’s a lot in store and i promise the wait will be worth it, if it isn’t by now.

with that aside, we’ve got one more member to go! jung hoseok’s gonna be the death of me, but let’s enjoy the (VERY SUPERIOR) comeback for now!

thank you so so much for reading, my lovelies. i love you all with my heart. until then!

my instagram, twitter, and tumblr.

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