Summary

Jinho’s face was an astute representation on how he felt on the inside. Tired. Humiliated. And fucking terrified. He had bags the size of Russia underneath his eyes, and he’d rapidly lost weight in the few days since the incident, too nervous to bother eating properly. He survived on a poor diet consisting of a few bites of overcooked ramen and several bottles of water and energy drinks.

or, the one where Jinho goes through too much and needs a fucking break

Notes

Comment and tell me if I should continue this or stop and never write again.
PS: This is my first time writing a solo angst story so, please be kind
Chapter 1

Jinho sluggishly walked down the white, spotless hallway and sharply took a right turn, and nearly bumped into two women. He moved back in time, avoiding a near collision, before bowing quickly, and apologizing profusely. He cursed softly for not looking where he was walking, and bowed once more, before sidestepping the two and walking down the hallway to the Chairman’s office.

The two women watched the short male walk away, and one of them turned to continue walking on to her office a while after Jinho had rounded another corner. She’d already moved on, but the second woman, her friend, hesitated and cocked her head to the side. She swore she’d seen Jinho before but couldn’t remember where she’d seen him from.

Turning around and not seeing her co-worker beside her anymore, she hurriedly jogged over and asked when she fell in step, “Hey, have you seen that kid before?”

“Who? The one who nearly bumped into us?” Her friend glanced at her before looking back at her phone. “I don’t think so.” She said distractedly, “He looked like a trainee, though. You probably recognize him from one of their files.”

“Hmm…” Her friend hummed thoughtfully and grasped her chin delicately. “That might be true, but I don’t think that’s where I’d seen him from…” She murmured to herself and tried to recall where she’d seen Jinho’s face from.

She fell silent after that, and the two walked in peaceful silence that was occasionally disturbed by the clicking sound of fingernails tapping against a glass screen. The first woman suddenly exclaimed and excitedly grabbed her friend’s shoulder, halting her movements and making her look up from a device with an eyebrow arched. “I remember him! I remember where I’ve seen him before!”

“Really?” She said and looked back at her phone, saying, engrossed in the activities occurring in her mobile device. “That’s good then.”

She didn’t seem to mind -or care- about her friend’s absent-minded responses and said loudly, “He’s the trainee who was caught up in a scandal!”

That caught her interest and she locked her screen before looking up, confused, “What scandal? I’ve not heard of anything like that.”

“What do you mean you haven’t heard it?” Her friend looked shocked, aghast even, by the revelation. “It circled around the company like wildfire.”

She looked back at where she almost bumped into Jinho, and said, “After all-” She looked at her friend and leaned close to whisper, “-He was caught in bed with another trainee.”

“And the worst part-,” She continued on, “-is he wasn’t with a girl, but rather another man. One of his fellow trainees.”

Jinho’s face was an astute representation on how he felt on the inside. Tired. Humiliated. And fucking terrified. He had bags the size of Russia underneath his eyes, and he’d rapidly lost weight in the few days since the incident, too nervous to bother eating properly. He survived on a poor diet consisting of a few bites of overcooked ramen and several bottles of water and energy drinks.
Jinho knew the poor diet would bear its repercussions later, but he had no other way to calm his nerves. There was no one who wanted to be seen associating with him, let alone talk to him, and he’d been forcefully confined to his house located away from the company, unauthorized to go outside for fear of rumors.

Jinho was apprehensive but knew he had to obey the strict rules set out for him by CUBE, and sat in his house like a good boy, anxiously waiting for the day the Chairman called him back into his office for a final verdict. He desperately wished for the verdict to be in his favor, but a part of him knew it was wishful thinking.

Based off on the evidence alone, Jinho’s future career will be severely damaged, if not permanently ruined. There was no chance the verdict would rule in his favor and overlook him being caught with his ass in the air and another man’s penis buried inside it. There was just no way.

Jinho came back to the present, but his mind tried to flash back to when his prospective career came crashing down, but he managed to stop it in time, completely unprepared to relive such a demeaning moment, and focused on the fact that he’d somehow reached to the Chairman’s office, and could see clearly through the glass doors. The usually kind, and energetic Chairman sat on his custom-made leather chair, fingers tucked beneath his chin, and a sombre look on his aging features.

Jinho could almost smell the tension in the room and seriously debated turning around and never coming back. But before he could turn on his heel and leave CUBE, never to return again; the door opened and the secretary to CUBE’s Chairman stood in front of Jinho.

Jinho’s face lost even more color when the stone-faced man moved aside for him to enter, holding out his hand and practically beckoning Jinho inside. Unable to escape when the room occupants were alerted to his arrival, and turned to watch him enter; Jinho shakily walked through the door, and glanced at the small audience gathered around for his execution.

There was the Chairman sitting at the very front of the long table, and to his right were some of the teachers hired by CUBE. Jinho recognized the Dance, Rap and Vocal teachers, but couldn’t tell who the other two, sitting beside one another were. On his left were a handful of women and men, Jinho had never seen before.

Jinho was suddenly reminded of the words the Chairman had said to him, after his shameful news had been discovered and spread around the company like gasoline over a bonfire.

The old man had warned him about his career, and how he had such great potential, but mistakes like those could ruin the 8 years he spent working. The old man had eventually let him leave after a length lecture and a warning that explicitly said, he was not to go anywhere, or interact with anyone other than the staff. Jinho was also told to return after a week’s time which, by then, the Chairman would have discussed it with the board members and came to an agreement.

Jinho looked at them again and assumed they were some of the board members the Chairman had mentioned. He purposefully avoided making eye contact with anyone of them, too ashamed to meet their steely, judging gazes. The room’s occupants carefully observed him as the Chairman graciously pointed him to a seat at the very end of the table, facing him and the mock-jury.

Jinho walked over and sat down, anxiously looking down at his twiddling thumbs. He felt like vomiting from nerves but forced his stomach to hold it in and wait till later. The last thing he needed was to vomit in front of such important people. Jinho doubted he’d ever be able to recover.
The Chairman didn’t beat around the bush and got straight to the point. “After much discussion and some conflicts, we managed to reach an understanding, Jinho.” Jinho tentatively raised his head to look up at him, a volcano of moths quietly erupting in his gut. “You are not going to be removed from CUBE. You will continue your training, and continue working hard till the day we decide you’re ready to debut.”

Jinho could have sworn he’d heard wrongly, but looking at the Chairman’s serious expression, without a hint of deceit or cruel amusement; Jinho knew he’d heard it loud and clear. His eyes widened to comical proportions and he opened his mouth, about to say something, but no words came out.

He closed his mouth and tried again but the result was the same as the first time, and unable to form a word, he sat there gaping at his elders, unconcerned by his foolish appearance.

“You look like you want to ask why we’re letting you stay after your little...outing experience.” The dance trainer said with a hint of amusement, and Jinho slowly turned to face him.

He closed his mouth and nodded slowly. “Yes, I would like to know why.” He croaked out and swallowed thickly.

“Well,” The vocal trainer was the one to speak instead of his co-worker, “You have plenty of talent for such a young kid. You have a good voice, and you’re not bad at dancing. Your rapping skills need some work, but if we kicked you out…” He paused and thought on his next words, “It’d feel like such a waste. Not to mention, if you were, by chance, picked up by another company, it’d be pretty bad for us.”

Jinho was about to speak when a woman from his right side spoke up. He recognized her as one of the executive employees who occasionally came downstairs to check on the trainee’s progress, or to discuss something with one of the teachers.

“But, there is a condition.”

“You will be under probation.” She said coldly and Jinho felt his muscles tense. “If you break another rule, or create another scandal, or you get involved with another male, regardless of their social stature, and it gets out,” She looked him dead in the eye and said, “Your contract will be immediately terminated and you will no longer be represented by CUBE.”

Jinho felt like he was suffocating.

He was happy they were giving him a second chance, ecstatic actually, but...the price it came with seemed... He wanted to debut as an artist, a singer actually, but the thought of having those heavy chains wrapped around him, tying him down, a constant reminder of the humiliation he was enduring made him uneasy.

“Do you have a problem with these demands?” The same woman asked, noticing Jinho’s faint greenish color, and Jinho lifted his head to look at her, to look at all of them. These were the people that determined his future. They were the ones that determined whether he was worthy of debuting or not. They were the ones in charge of his career, and subsequently, his life. Jinho couldn’t describe the feelings inside of him but chalked them up to being conflicted. He did want to succeed in his career, desperately so, but not at such a heavy cost.

Jinho took a few minutes to properly think about his probation and decide on whether he wanted to stay as a trainee for CUBE, or leave and never know the joy, exhaustion and thrill that came as a
packaged deal for an idol.

“No.” He looked directly at the Chairman while saying in a strong, sturdy voice, “I have no problems with that. Thank you for giving me a second chance.”

He bowed deeply and waited to be excused. The Chairman did so and Jinho stood up, about to walk out of the room when he remembered something important. He turned and politely asked the Chairman, “The other guy...the one I was with...what’s going to happen to him?”

“Who?” The Chairman seemed lost for a second before realization shined in his eyes. “Ah, well, he denied being in any relationship with you, and said you forced him into it.”

Jinho’s mouth fell open once more.

“We obviously knew he was lying but that didn’t stop him from spreading rumors that you forced him into it by threatening him with some sort of dark past.” The old man said and scratched at his neck, “We removed him from the company as he seemed too much of a hassle to deal with.” He said, oblivious to the growing ache in Jinho’s chest. “At this moment, we don’t know or care where he might be.”

Jinho picked up his jaw from the floor and nodded numbly before walking out of the office. He went down the hallway, and went the way he came in. His body seemed to function automatically and he soon found himself walking into one of the unused recording rooms and locking the door behind him.

Jinho fell ungracefully to the floor, and curled his knees to his chest. He grasped his shins and held them tightly, trying hard to fight back the tears pooling in his eyes.

'I love you, Jinho.' The man rubbed circles into Jinho’s thin waist and leaned down to gently kiss his exposed forehead. ‘Do you love me?’

‘Yeah.’ Jinho gently touched the other man’s cheek and pulled him in for a soft kiss, ‘I love you too.’

Time passed by quickly after that day. Jinho tried putting that moment in his life behind him but the first few months were harder than anything he’d ever experienced. His fellow trainees avoided him like the plague, but held nothing back when it came to bad-mouthing him, or silently bullying him.

Jinho bottled up his emotions and tried to live his life as normal, ignoring the way the higher-ups sneered at him when he passed by, or when he found his gym clothes in a tattered, filthy mess on the floor, just underneath his locker. He also ignored the way the teachers noticed the cruel, and unfair behavior yet acted like they didn’t, and faulted Jinho for it.

But against all odds, Jinho had managed to become excellent in his vocal skills, and pass the other talent bars with flying colors. He held in his excitement as he went up into the office of the secretary to the CEO and was told to sit down. Jinho masked his excitement behind a casual, cool facade of disinterest and looked up at the nicely-toned man.
“Your teachers all say that you are beyond ready to debut, is that right, Jinho?” The man used polite speech and addressed Jinho formally. He used the honorific normally used for young males and or people of a higher stature than their own. Jinho felt embarrassed by it but tried not to show it.

“Yes, I did.” Jinho affirmed the man’s question and tightly twisted his forefinger around his middle one, trying to channel all his excited energy to that one point.

“That’s good then.” The man said without a hint of a smile and glanced down at the several papers laid out in front of him on the glass table. Jinho took a peek but couldn’t make out what was on the pages from the distance. He hastily rearranged himself on the chair once the man looked up, and acted like he’d been waiting patiently for the man to talk.

“Well, what I have been instructed to inform you is that, we’re not letting you debut solo, but rather in a ten-man group as the main vocalist.” He said.

Jinho had no response or reaction to the news. He thought he would be furious, after all his efforts they wouldn’t even let him debut alone, but rather with nine other unknown members. He thought he’d be anguished. He thought of many things, but none of them had a proper, or even one, response to what the secretary just said.

“They had been training in a separate building in one of CUBE’S sub-buildings but we decided to form one of the largest group in CUBE’s history with you in it.” He began explaining everything, but Jinho tuned him out, abruptly worn-out by the news.

“Is that alright with you?”

“Ah!” Jinho snapped back into reality and flushed brightly before looking up at the secretary. “Yes, it’s perfect.”

“Good.” He stood up from his seat and said, “Well then, I will be going now, Jinho. I will send my assistant to pick you up tomorrow at 8 a.m.” He packed up the files into separate documents before clutching them tight to his chest and walking out, leaving Jinho to wonder what the hell he’d agreed to.

“Jinho-ssi! Jinho-ssi!” A voice called out, and Jinho groggily cracked an eyelid open. He heard the voice call out to him once more, and he groaned loudly before turning to his side and using the pillow as a muffler.

The pillow was practically useless once the owner of the irritating voice waltzed into his bedroom and ripped the covers straight off his body.

“I’ve been calling you for quite a while now, Jinho-ssi. Did you not hear me?” It was a different man unlike the one he saw yesterday at the company. He was in Jinho’s room, dressed immaculately in a casual dark blue suit that made the darkness of his hair and his sharp handsome features pop.

Jinho, on the other hand, was dressed in the raggiest shirt in his entire closet and a short pair of dark green shorts. He had jostled up once the covers were ripped back and his warm skin was exposed to the cold air of his apartment. He looked up at the man and squinted up at the man. It was obvious the young man was still in a daze, and directly from sleeping, but he didn’t care and began moving around, preparing things for Jinho before they left.

He considered screaming for the burglar to get out, but the man anticipated his reaction and quickly explained who he was.
“Hey,” Jinho wiped the sleep from his eyes and slowly counted the pile of food resting in front of him. They were more than four slices of bread, dressed nicely with a small salad and little fattening additives. There was also a steaming mug of coffee by his head, and Jinho looked at it furtively before looking up at the assistant with a questioning look.

“You need to eat before we go.” He said once he noticed Jinho staring. “Hurry up, and get into the shower. We have less than ten minutes before we’re supposed to be at CUBE.” The assistant turned and began flipping through Jinho’s closet, tossing various items over his shoulder. The few lucky ones landed on the very edge of the bed, while the rest fell to the floor in a disgraceful heap.

Jinho wasn’t fully comprehending what was going on and just followed the older man’s orders, eating a few bites of the sandwich and swallowing it down with a sip of coffee before getting out of bed and sluggishly walking into the bathroom for a shower.

Jinho took less than five minutes before he was out and back in his room, only to find a pair of neatly ironed clothes on his bed. He held the towel around his waist tighter and came closer to see what kind of clothes the assistant had chosen for him.

The man had chosen a pair of black, thinly ripped skinny jeans that loosely held onto his legs, and a light gray hoodie with a thick, fern-colored overcoat that swallowed him up completely. Jinho quickly wore the clothes and exited his room and apartment before running down the stairs to find the assistant waiting for him in a slick, black Mazda.

Jinho entered and not long after he sat and buckled himself in; the older man started the car and drove them speedily towards their company.

A few minutes later, they were pulling up into the underground parking space of CUBE. The older male exited the car once he had parked properly, and Jinho hurried to follow. Jinho followed after the assistant as he went into the elevator and clicked their usual floor. Jinho kept quiet and fiddled with his hoodie as he waited in awkward silence for the elevator to stop.

A ding resounded in the metal box and the two males exited it before walking at a rushed pace to the office they had been in yesterday.

“Ah good, you’ve finally arrived.” It was the man from yesterday. The CEO’s secretary. He sat at the head of the table while the remaining six seats in front of him were occupied by six other males. There were still three males left standing and they all leaned into each other, for comfort or support, Jinho didn’t know.

“These are the people I was telling you about, Jinho. Your fellow members.” The man pointed to the nine males and Jinho took time to carefully look at each one. He was surprised to see three rather tall men, roughly a good head taller than him. The tallest was the shy-looking male dressed in a grey hoodie that would have been completely and utterly over-sized on Jinho, and tight black jeans. He refused to make eye contact with Jinho when he entered and instead focused on picking out invisible specks of dust from the material of the dark-haired male’s sweater, sitting below him.

Jinho couldn’t estimate the other three men’s height but he figured they ranged the same. They were all roughly around the same height, and most likely towered over their fellow group mates. Jinho looked at the males sitting down and couldn’t help but notice how three of them, the ones sitting to his left looked stone-faced, and blank, while the ones on his right looked and probably felt how he had when he was called to the Chairman’s office, several months ago.
“Please sit down, Jinho.” The eldest male said and nodded at his assistant. The male bowed and silently walked out, shutting the door softly behind him. Jinho did as the man said and tentatively moved forward before sitting down on the head chair facing all of them.

“Now that you’re all gathered here, let’s begin with introductions.” He said, and turned to his left, raising an eyebrow and silently prompting the three to begin.

One of them cleared their throat and moved the chair back so that he could stand. “Hi. My name is Yang Hongseok, but you can call me Hongseok. I’m the Lead Vocalist, and I enjoy reading.” He bowed before sitting down and turning to his right.

The blonde male stood up and followed in Hongseok’s example. “Hi. My name is Kim Hyojong, but I go by E’dawn. I’m the Lead Rapper, and my favorite color is black.” He sat down and next was the male with the dirty blonde hair turn.

“Hi, my name is Lee Hwitaek, but you can call me Hui. I’m the Leader and the Main Vocalist, and I can play the piano.”

It went on like this with each male introducing themselves with their names, their roles, and a random fact about themselves. Jinho learned one of them, Shinwon, is a former model, and Yeo One -or Changgu- is a great swimmer. He also learned two of the three tall males were foreigners from China and Japan. Yan An was from China, and despite his struggle with the language, Jinho couldn’t help but notice how good-looking he was. Yuto was rather...reserved and didn’t say much. He only managed to introduce himself before he went back to clinging onto Kino’s shoulder. Jinho found the action quite pure, and frankly speaking, adorable.

“Alright, it’s your turn, Jinho.” The secretary turned to him, and so did the other nine males. Jinho felt his heart rate increase from the sudden attention and he licked his lips nervously before standing up and introducing himself.

“Hi, my name is Jo Jinho, and I’m a former trainee of SM entertainment. It’s nice to meet you all.” He bowed before quickly sitting down and looking at everything but his soon-to-be members, oddly embarrassed by his intro.

“Well, now that you all have brief understanding of each other. Let’s get to the main point.” The older male said and glanced down at his papers. “You all passed your trainee stage, some with flying colors, and the Chairman thought it would be best if we combined all ten of you into one group. This group will be the largest in the history of CUBE.”

“And as you’ve just heard positions have already been assigned to each one of you. Hui, is the leader and one of the main vocals. Jinho is the other main vocal, while Hongseok is the lead vocal with Yeo One. E’dawn, Yuto and Wooseok are the rap team and Shinwon and Yan An are the sub vocalists. Kino is the main dancer, vocalist and is the face of the group.”

“The name for this group is yet to be assigned, and so, the Chairman requested that you come up with a name amongst yourselves and the meaning behind it.” He looked at them and gathered his papers before standing up, and saying as he walked out. “You will be thoroughly informed later, but as of now, get to know each other, and become friends.”
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Shinwon lifted his head as well and looked at the difference between Jinho’s small serving and his gigantic one. “Well, we are growing boys, hyung.” He said with an playful smirk. “Unlike you.”

P.S: I'M NOT FUNNY.

Chapter Notes

Okay a few explanations on this plot line.
1. PTG Maker never happened. It does not exist, however the info learned during that time and some of the scenes will be used here.
2. Jinho was in a separate building unlike the other 9. The buildings are located around each other, but the trainees of either buildings never meet to maintain their focus.
3. Jinho here is gay and people -not PTG- know of this. Any more info will reduce the point of the story.
4. The only couples here are listed in the tags but some more might be added.
5. This story is derived from the show HISTory. I took some scenes from the show and decided to make it into a multi chapter, slow af burn PTG story. I wanted Honggu to be the couple but Jinseok fit the story line better.
6. The 'Gwanju models' part is a joke on Shinwon's birthplace and cause he's a model, for the ones who didnt know.

And like i said before this is my first super angst fic of PTG, so even if it's criticism (remember im human tho) I will accept and read ALL your comments. The fact that this has reached 150 hits is really surprising since i thought i was the only one who would enjoy such an angst story, but im really really happy with the hits but i would seriously appreciate some comments cause im just working on my own passion and dedication to the story.

Oh and BE SURE TO BE HYPED FOR THE COMEBACK ON 2/4/18~~

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As soon as the secretary was gone and the door closed behind him, the tension and unease surrounding the room lifted and all ten members let out a collective sigh of relief. Yuto didn’t let go of Kino and somehow came even closer, practically nuzzling his body into Kino’s, while Wooseok moved away from Shinwon and went to sit where the secretary had been sitting, seemingly exhausted by having to stand for over half an hour.

Yan An was also tired and went to use Wooseok’s thighs as a chair. His weight was too heavy for any of the other members to comfortably bear, but Wooseok could manage as they practically weighed the same.
Hyojong got off the chair and went to kneel beside Jinho, looking up at him with sharp, intense brown irises, as he tried to silently decipher Jinho’s personality. Jinho was unnerved by Hyojong’s intense stare but tried his best not to show it.

“Come one, E’dawnie,” Hui chided and went to physically pull the short rapper back to his seat, “You’ll scare him if you keep glaring at him like that.”

Hyojong let out a whine and pouted his lips slightly. “I’m not scary though,” He leaned past Hui to look at Jinho, and asked, “Right?”

Jinho was saved from answering by Wooseok’s cheeky response behind Yan An’s lengthy frame. “But you are, hyung.”

“Remember how you scared Kino and Yuto back when we all first met?”

Shinwon laughed and enthusiastically smacked Changgu’s arm. “I remember that! They were so scared, they could barely move!” He cackled again and began retelling the story, with different inputs from Wooseok, Changgu and Hongseok.

Jinho watched the interaction, puzzled beyond words. He waited for the story to end before bringing the mood back down to a somber, serious level. “Aren’t you guys curious about why we were grouped together?” He asked, and Hui turned to him, waiting for his elaboration.

“I mean,” He looked at each member, and said, “We’re from two separate buildings and we all have our different talents. Thinking on it, there’s really not any chance we’d ever meet outside or even inside of CUBE, so why make a team from us ten?”

None of the boys had a response and looking at their expressions, Jinho worried he’d said something unnecessary. Hongseok looked just like how Jinho felt, and was trying to reassure Wooseok and Yan An. The former male looked scared after Jinho’s words and while Yan An hadn’t fully understood what Jinho was saying, he’d gotten the basic gist and his expression was vacant, barely letting on to what he truly felt.

Yuto and Kino were still in the same position only this time, Kino’s thumb was rubbing reassuring circles into the palm of Yuto. He didn’t say anything and neither did Yuto but his hand didn’t stop and kept with the motion. Shinwon -who sat beside the two- looked upset and hesitant, as if he wanted to say something but wasn’t sure of the right words to use.

“I don’t think that’s quite right, Jinho.” Hui said and all nine heads looked at him. “I mean, there is a chance we would have never met or interacted outside of CUBE, but I think our different talents are our charm points.”

“I mean, look at Changgu, he’s a good dancer, has a good personality and sings really well. Then there’s Woosookie, who can rap but can also sing seriously high notes like an opera singer. And then Hongseok who can speak three languages, and not to mention, Yuto who can speak Japanese and Korean and Yan An who can also speak Chinese and Korean.”

“All of these skills will contribute immensely to our fans across the globe since we can speak different languages and we can understand some of it.” Hui said, and Jinho couldn’t find a response to that, because he didn’t know any of those details. He knew about Yan An and Yuto but not about Changgu, Woosoke or Hongseok.

“Yeah...you’re right...I’m sorry for saying that and getting everyone’s mood down.” Jinho apologized and bowed his head once. His downcast expression was wiped off by a hearty smack
from Hui on the back, while Hyojong went over and hooked his hand over Jinho’s slender shoulders.

“It’s alright, don’t be so down.” Hui said encouragingly. “This is something new to all of us, and we know it’ll take some time to get used to, but first-,” He grinned childishly and looked at all of them, “let’s try coming up with a name.”

They spent nearly two hours inside that room, trying to think of a name, but failing as it always ended up with one of them fooling around and trying to combine all their names to form a group name. Suffice to say, JHEHCYYKW did not seem like a suitable name.

Hui suggested they try forming a name from the talents they had, and naturally, that spiked another problem with Wooseok and Shinwon as the two began combining their respective talents to form a name.

Jinho laughed outright when Wooseok said, “Gwangju models.” and they all fell into fits of laughter and nearly collapsed onto the floor. Hui was practically in tears when he gathered his giggling carcass from the floor and sat down. Hongseok, Yuto and Kino were still howling in laughter and didn’t seem to be stopping anytime soon.

“Ignore-” Hui chuckled again and cleared his throat, “Ignoring that, I meant like combining our dance, rap and vocal talents.” He looked around but all of the other boys faces were blank, “Does anyone have anything we can go with?”

“No…” Kino shook his head and the rest agreed with him. Hui bit his lip and tried thinking of something that fit perfectly with their personalities.

Hyojong felt the light-hearted mood lessen and immediately pounced on Hui. He latched onto the older male’s back and rested his chin on Hui’s shoulder. Hui was barely fazed and turned to Hyojong questioningly.

“Let’s leave that for later.” Hyojong looked at the younger boys and continued, “We have some time before we have to think of a name, so we can do that later and focus on what we want to do right now.”

“And what might that be?” Yan An spoke up and Jinho took a few seconds to properly look at him. Yan An was roughly five years younger than him so his features were still soft and babyish. His cheeks still held some baby fat and gave him an innocent and cute appearance. The soft look he unknowingly portrayed was increased with the sweet, baby-like voice he had, but Jinho could tell, with a few more years, Yan An would end up being very manly and his cute, child-like features would give way to a manlier appearance. He was a bit excited to see it.

“I don't know.” Hyojong said and nearly all of them sighed exasperatedly. “What do you guys want to do?”

Hui turned to Jinho and Jinho, suddenly on the spot, didn’t know what to say and said the first thing that hit his head.

“I’m hungry.”

The others murmured their own words of agreement and it was unanimously decided that they were to get food first then think about the other stuff later. Hui and Hyojong -who was still latched onto the former’s back- stood up and walked out, with Changgu, Shinwon, Yuto, Kino and Wooseok and
Yan An following behind. They strangely split up and walked in groups of two.

Shinwon was with Changgu. Yuto was, predictably enough, with Kino, and Wooseok was walking with Yan An with Hui and Hyojong leading them. Jinho was automatically paired off with Hongseok and the two, unaccustomed to each other, walked in silence, their gazes focused on their fellow members.

“Um…” Jinho hesitantly spoke up and Hongseok turned his head to look at him. “Are you all usually this close?”

Jinho meant Hui and Hyojong specifically but gestured towards all of them in general. He was rather startled by how casual they all were in each other’s presence. Hui and Hyojong were the most comfortable, if the way Hui was casually carrying Hyojong on his back and laughed out-right at whatever Hyojong whispered in his ear.

“What do you mean?” Hongseok was puzzled by Jinho’s question and it was freely shown on his face.

“I mean,” Jinho pointed to the way Kino was practically clambering onto Yuto while they walked, their fingers intertwined and held between them.

“Oh!” Hongseok suddenly exclaimed and Jinho looked up at him, “You meant that. Yeah. That happens a lot.”

“We’re really used to being around each other, so we kind of just became affectionate with each other. It’s normal.”

Jinho didn’t think it was but kept it to himself and kept walking. Hongseok didn’t try starting up a conversation after that and neither did Jinho. The two walked in a sort of tense silence till they reached to the kitchen and began serving up food.

Jinho served a small amount and went over to sit on one of the tables located on the opposite side of the kitchen. He was joined by Shinwon, Changgu, Yuto, Wooseok and Kino. They unconsciously split into two with the older ones sitting on one side and the younger ones sitting on the other side.

Jinho reached down to scoop some rice into his mouth when he caught sight of Wooseok’s plate. The young male had three times the rice he had and nearly four times the amount of vegetables. He felt his eyes bulge out at the sheer mountain of rice and quickly looked at the other males plates. Changgu’s and Kino’s were relatively medium-sized, however, the same couldn’t be said for Yuto and Shinwon. The two males plates put up a good fight against Wooseok’s mountain but fell short by a few centimeters.

Wooseok looked up and caught sight of Jinho’s astonished expression. “What?” He asked with a mouth full.

“How can you eat that much and not vomit?” Jinho asked incredulously.

Shinwon lifted his head as well and looked at the difference between Jinho’s small serving and his gigantic one. “Well, we are growing boys, hyung.” He said with an playful smirk. “Unlike you.”

Wooseok snorted while Yuto, Kino and Changgu outright shrieked. The sound was rather similar to
“Hey!” Jinho said, mock-angry, “I’m growing too!”

Shinwon amidst all the laughter managed to croak out, “Hyung, I think you stopped growing when you were six.”

That only fueled their shrieking and the kitchen became a complete ear-hazard. Jinho rolled his eyes and hurriedly scarfed down his meal. He knew they were just fooling around, but Jinho didn’t want to sit near them anymore. He was basically pouting.

“No, hyung~” Changgu called when Jinho stood up and tried running away. However, he was caught by Hongseok, who took his arm and stopped him from bolting out of the kitchen.

“What’s going on?” Hongseok asked as they were joined by Hui and Hyojong. The latter male had gotten off of Hui’s back and was holding his own plate of food. He had a curious expression on his face as he stood close to Hui who was standing at the front of the table with his own plate of food.

“Nothing,” Wooseok snorted again and turned away, leaving the other boys to elaborate the story.

“They made fun of hyung’s height.” Kino fessed up and ignored the defensive exclaims from the members sitting around him. “Jinho-hyung got angry and was about to leave and then you came and stopped him.”

“In my defense,” Wooseok turned and held up a hand as if he was addressing a teacher rather than the nine members he’d end up spending half his life with. “Shinwon was the one to call him short. I just laughed.”

Kino began laughing at Wooseok’s failed attempt to defend himself, and instead ended up digging himself into a deeper hole. “He just laughed…” Kino repeated and leaned into Yuto for support.

“Being short is not a problem, Jinho.” Hui turned to the short male and said, “I mean look at Hyojong, and me.” He went over and clasped a hand over the short man’s shoulder. “There some people who were born with the genes of trees, and those people…” He paused for dramatic effect, “…aren’t us.”

Hui’s words had the entire table howling in laughter -Kino and Changgu especially. Wooseok, Yuto, Yan An -who had been attracted by the noise and came to see what the fuss was-, and Shinwon began denying Hui’s statement but Hui wasn’t listening and kept trying -and failing- to reassure Jinho.

Jinho found himself trying to conceal a laugh after hearing Hui’s ridiculous statement. The act was made harder by the complete straight face Hui held when he said that. Jinho couldn’t hold the laugh back any longer and ended up covering his mouth with his hand, and freely laughing into it.

The atmosphere surrounding the two tables after that was relatively relaxed, and casual. It was still noisy, and filled with plenty of energy stemming from the horrible puns Hongseok randomly dropped mid-conversation, or the lame jokes Hui would make that would make all of them laugh pitifully.

Jinho found himself engaging in the conversation more than he would have expected. There was something about the nine of them that made him want to open up and try to live as carefree as they all did. He laughed, made jokes, and teased each member good-naturedly. He found himself enjoying their company so much so that he nearly missed the people who entered the kitchen and did a double-take once they saw him.
“Isn’t that…” The young woman whispered to her friend’s ear, subtly pointing to their table.

Jinho felt his mood instantly take a dip and he suddenly kept quiet and lowered his gaze onto the table. The members obviously noticed the sudden change in attitude and turned to him, eyebrows raised and curious gazes fixated on him.

“What’s wrong?” Hongseok asked and reached out to touch his arm.

Jinho instinctively slapped Hongseok’s hand away before it could even brush the small hairs on his hand. Jinho hadn’t fully understood what he’d done and had just reacted in the moment. He didn’t want the two people carefully watching them from the sink to begin associating strange rumors with the Hongseok or the others.

He was fine with the rumors, having been through the worst of them all before, but he doubted he’d be able to forgive himself if the guys, the sweet, kind, loving guys who knew next to nothing about him yet welcomed him warmly and treated him equally, were suddenly swept up in Jinho’s shameful past. He didn’t doubt he’d be able to forgive himself. He knew he wouldn’t.

A sudden silence overcame the kitchen. Even the two workers on the side kept quiet and watched the scene play out.

Hyojong was the only one to notice the two people watching them and subtly nudged Hui. He casually indicated towards the two once Hui looked at him questioningly. Hui followed Hyojong’s direction and finally took notice of the two. He looked back at Jinho, and his suspicion was confirmed when Jinho nervously looked in their direction before looking away and down at his lap. He looked positively uncomfortable.

“So,” Hui turned to the nearest member, which unfortunately for him, was Yan An. “Have you thought of out name, Yananie?”

Yan An had his mouth full and turned to Hui with his brows raised and a surprised look in his mocha-colored orbs. “What?” He asked with a mouth over his mouth.

Hui grimaced in disgust and began chiding the boy. The sudden change in topic had the guys looking towards Hui and Yan An. All except Jinho, Hongseok and Hyojong. The latter two kept a watchful eye on the former, elder male but barely tried to hide it. Hyojong kept his looks subtle and low-key, while Hongseok, oblivious to the main causes of Jinho’s discomfort, watched him freely and like a hawk, unknowingly showing off the ‘mom’ in him.

Eventually, the other members finished their meals and Hui was quick to chase them up and out of the kitchen. He didn’t want any of them to stop and try interrogating Jinho. Jinho had the same look on his face ever since the two people walked in. Hui doubted Jinho knew about it, and didn’t want the other members to suddenly ask him about it. So, in a sudden and slightly unreasonable rush, Hui physically pushed them all out of the kitchen and left Hyojong, Hongseok and Jinho.

Jinho lifted his head and was surprised to see the remaining seven seats empty. He asked Hyojong where the rest were and he was taken aback with the response.

“Why didn’t you guys go as well?” Jinho stood up and took his plate back to the sink, along with Hyojong’s and Hongseok’s.

“We were waiting for you, hyung.” Hongseok followed in his example and took the remaining
utensils with him, leaving Hyojong to sit there, silently observing Jinho’s every move.

“Oh, there’s no need for that. You should have gone ahead with the rest.” Jinho gave Hongseok a weak, flimsy smile and took the dishes from his hand. Things were still very awkward after the slap Jinho delivered, and Jinho had no idea on how to break the ice and apologize for it.

“It’s fine.” Hongseok stood by and watched as Jinho began clearing up their mess, all the while completely and utterly oblivious of the searching gaze Hyojong had as he watched their interaction.

“I...also wanted to apologize for earlier...I shouldn’t have touched your hand like that...You’re not yet comfortable around us and I pushed you too far…” Hongseok ran a hand through his dark brown hair, styled neatly in a bow cut, and ruffled the chocolate colored locks, leaving them in complete atrocious state of disarray. “So, I wanted to say that I’m sorry for that. And I completely understand why you pushed my hand away.”

Hongseok’s tone was kind and soft, gently trying to persuade Jinho into forgiving him for something he never did. Jinho focused his eyes onto the water slowly getting swallowed down the drain instead of looking into those warm orbs, knowing full well that he would end up yielding and forgive Hongseok, even though he did absolutely nothing worth forgiving.

“It’s not your fault, Hongseok.” Jinho said and rinsed his hands off of the soap. He turned the tap off and went to pick a cloth to dry his hands. “I didn’t mean to slap your hand like that. It was just an instinct.”

“Even then, I’m still sorry.” Hongseok was adamant and moved forward. He stopped when there were a few feet of space between him and Jinho, but the latter male’s back was turned and faced the wall. “I’m really sorry, hyung.”

“Okay, okay.” Jinho turned and plastered a smile on his face, stronger and more believable than the first one. “I’ll forgive you, Hongseokie.” Jinho added the extra words for a cute effect and was stunned at how effective it was. Hongseok immediately stopped pouting and smiled widely, proudly displaying his entire set of amazingly straight teeth.

Hongseok moved forward once more, about to sweep Jinho for a hug, when he remembered and stopped, letting his arms fall back to his sides awkwardly. “Let’s go then.” He said instead and led the older male out of the room, carelessly unaware of the eyes that watched them walk out.

Chapter End Notes

I'm on tumblr as well and i make medium quality gifs. @yuto-ibida REquests are completely accepted and encouraged.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

yeah this is basically a filler but it does build up the flooring for the fic so...yeah. uh, by them not listening/taking wooseok's ideas seriously i mean like they dismiss them because they're usually silly or irrelevant, and not at all because they think wooseok isn't smart. the same applies to kino. the arrangement during the end is jinho is sleeping on hongseok's stomach with shinwon and yeo one above them and kino to jinho's left, curled around wooseok who's using Hongseok's thighs as a pillow and same to yan an. hui and edawn are at the bottom of jinho sleeping together.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, what did you manage to come up with?” Hui abruptly asked, looking at each member with his eyebrows raised. “Wooseok,” He looked at the youngest male and gestured for him to talk.

Wooseok was flustered from suddenly being in the spotlight and took a few seconds to turn and clear his throat. He stalled for a few more minutes before blurting out the first thing that came from his head. But just as he was about to speak, he was cut off by Hyojong, who raised his hand and said, “What if we name ourselves after a geometrical shape?”

There was an awkward silence after his suggestion and Hyojong hurriedly went on to explain his idea. “I mean, like, we’re ten people, right?”

They all nodded.

“Well, instead of thinking of a name that would end up being too hard to remember, what if we called ourselves after a shape? That way it won’t be that hard to remember and we can have a meaning behind it.”

“Ah!” Hui suddenly exclaimed and grasped Hyojong’s hand. “I think I understand what you mean.”

“Oh really?” Wooseok asked with Kino, Yuto and Shinwon bobbing their heads in agreement. “I didn’t get it at all.”

“What he means is-,” Hongseok said, and went on to quickly break down the concept to the younger members. “If we go by a name, for example ‘Decagon’, it could represent all ten of us. We’d all have a side and we’d be representing it with our respective talents.”

Hyojong, Hui and Jinho nodded as well, agreeing with Hongseok’s statement.

“But calling ourselves ‘Decagon’ is a bit…” Yuto spoke up and Jinho got slightly surprised at how deep his voice was. It wasn’t quite as deep as Wooseok’s but it came very close.

“I agree.” Shinwon chimed from his seat next to Changgu. “It sounds lame.”

The younger males nodded in agreement, and even Jinho had to agree being called ‘Decagon’ sounded unbelievably lame. He doubted he’d ever be able to proudly call himself a member of a group called ‘Decagon’, even if ten or twenty years went by.
“Well,” Hongseok’s lips were drawn together tightly, directing his question to Shinwon and Yuto. “What do you suggest then?”

There was a brief moment of silence as Yuto and Shinwon tried thinking of an appropriate title, but it was soon shattered by Jinho voicing out an idea that had been nagging him, hovering at the back of his head since the ‘meeting’ began.

“What about ‘Pentagon’?” He said nervously glancing up at his members. “I know it doesn’t fit all of us like ‘Decagon’ but it sounds...nicer.”

“And,” He continued, “We can make the shape with our hands so our fans, during concerts, or live shows, would be able to make it with us as well.”

When Jinho caught on to the members puzzled looks, he lifted his hands up and demonstrated the shape with his fingers, shyly putting them back under the table when the other members caught on and began trying it out.

“I like it.” Wooseok said after a lengthy pause and Jinho felt more relieved than he thought possible. “It’s easy to say, sounds cool and has a nice shape.”

“Yeah, I agree. It’s a nice name.” Changgu said and compared his penta-shape to Shinwon’s. “It’s really easy to do since it’s just touching the tips of your fore and pinky fingers together. It’d be really nice to see our fans do this with us at concerts.”

“But,” Kino pointed out and they all turned to him. “What will it mean? I mean the ‘Decagon’ represented all of us, but the ‘Pentagon’ has five sides, what will it represent?”

Apparently he was the only one to be thinking on that line as his seniors abruptly quieted down and paused to think. Kino followed their footsteps and also began racking his brain for a way to make the five sides match with their ten different personalities. He kept coming up empty but that didn’t dissuade him and he pushed on, thinking so hard till his head began aching.

“Talents!” Hui startled them by shooting up from his seat, hand clenched in a fist and raised to shoulder-length.

“Huh?” Hyojong replied, brow raised in confusion.

“Think about it!” Hui flushed lightly and sat back down, embarrassed. “I mean, we are ten people of different personalities, tastes, and talents. What I can do, Wooseok can’t, and what he can Hongseok can’t.”

“Yeah, so?” Hongseok cocked his brow and slowly shook his head. “I don’t understand where you’re going with this.”

“Me neither.”

Similar responses followed after his statement but Hui went on regardless. “I mean our name could mean representation of our different talents. Like, Song, Rap, Dance and things like that. We all can sing-”

Yuto furiously shook his head but they all ignored him.

“-dance, and rap.” Hui addressed the others and took a few seconds to maintain eye contact with each one, valiantly trying to convey his message. “We’re all talented in those aspects, so why can’t they be the meaning behind of our name rather than having to split into groups of five with two
members holding one side of the ‘Pentagon’?"

“So, what you’re trying to say is,” Changgu was the first to respond. “-we have to find five talents?”

“Yeah. Song, Rap, Dance are already there so we need two more. Something that we all have.”

“Well, other than those, we only have skills and mind.” Wooseok chimed in, wholly expecting to be dismissed.

However, he was taken aback when they did to him just like what they did to Kino and began considering his suggestion. Wooseok took a few moments to process and wondered if that was how Kino had felt. For the first time his suggestion wasn’t dismissed because it sounded silly, or because he was the youngest but was actually taken into consideration. It left a fuzzy feeling in his belly.

“That…” Hongseok paused for dramatic effect once the members turned to him and dodged away from Hyojong’s hand, a few milliliters before it made contact with his shoulder. “…is actually not a bad idea.”

Wooseok was conflicted between shaking Hongseok’s hand or whacking him for low-key insinuating all of his other ideas were bad.

“I know. I was thinking the same thing.” Changgu said and Shinwon nodded in agreement. “It’s a pretty good idea.”

Yeah,” Kino said and interlaced his fingers to Yuto’s larger one. “I like it.” Yuto nodded and gave Wooseok a thumbs up. The younger male gave a nod in return.

“Then it’d be ‘song, dance, rap, mind and skills?’ Hui questioned

“Hmm…” Yan An spoke after a while, and Jinho was slightly unnerved by how he’d forgotten Yan An was in the room with them. “Skills sound weird.” Wooseok’s expression crumbled.

“I suggest we replace it with something else because being known for our song, dance, rap, and mind sounds fine but once you say skills, it just sounds like we’re summarizing all of it rather than showing off an individual skill.”

“How about, Vocal, Dance, Mind, Talent and Teamwork?” Hui said after a lengthy pause. “Rap would fall under the category of vocal so it’s not left out.”

They all agreed and came to an agreement that their official name was ‘PENTAGON’ and the meaning behind it was any idol needed to have talent, dancing skills, vocal abilities, a healthy and active mentality, and be able to cooperate with their teammates during their career.

Hui stood up and went to talk it over with the appropriate company staff, leaving the younger members in Hongseok and Hyojong hands, the third and fourth eldest respectively.

Weirdly enough after Hui’s departure, the members began breaking off into smaller groups and discussing amongst themselves. Jinho watched the change and wondered if Hui’s presence made them comfortable enough to interact with each other without the awkward, slightly strained air.

He guessed it was because the other members weren’t quite accustomed to having more than family and friends from their hometown in their life. He guessed the sudden change must be hard for all of them to get used to, more so on the foreign members.
Jinho found the pairing not only awkward, but incredibly weird and slightly scary. Hongseok was a nice guy, Jinho knew that, but he was unnerved by the sharp gaze Hyojong held. The younger man barely said anything and just watched them talk, but it was enough to have the hairs on Jinho’s neck rise.

“Stop that! You’re scaring him!” Jinho was pulled out of his thoughts when Hongseok smacked Hyojong’s thigh with his palm and got him to stop. “Just talk to him, you weirdo.”

“No, you really don’t have to…” Jinho protested but it was weak and barely either male heard him over the sound of eight other boisterous teenagers.

“I wasn’t scaring him…” Hyojong said and Jinho could almost say he was pouting.

“Yes you were! Look at him,” Hongseok pointed to Jinho and Jinho wished he had a mirror so he could see the ‘scared’ look he apparently had on. “He’s scared of you!”

“Are you?” Hyojong directed his question to the older man and looked at him. “Are you scared of me?”

Jinho didn’t know what to say, and briefly debated on telling Hyojong the truth but the distressed, slightly anxious look he had on made Jinho really think his words through before he said anything. He had no proof and it felt rude to ask, but Jinho felt Hyojong had had a tough past. He felt that past involved a lot of miscommunication and misunderstandings, and he was hit by the oddly desperate urge to soothe the dark-haired man’s worries.

“No. Not at all.” Jinho said and grabbed Hyojong’s hand from his thigh and held it tightly. “You don’t scare me at all.”

Hyojong seemed to exhale relief and tightened his grip on Jinho’s hand, silently thanking him. Jinho smiled weakly and waved his hand around. Hyojong’s hands were only of a moderate size. The act was hindered by the table they sat around but Jinho didn’t seem to care and neither did Hyojong.

“But hyung,” Hyojong began and stopped Jinho from swinging their appendages around. “You’re hands are so tiny. They’re like for a baby.”

Jinho immediately pulled his hand away and turned to talk to Hongseok. He ignored Hyojong’s weak, barely concealed snorts of laughter masked as an apology and talked to Hongseok instead. He barely managed to hold back his own laugh when Hongseok cracked up and muffled his laugh on his sweaters sleeve.

“It’s cute,” Hyojong laughed again when Jinho turned even further and left his back to Hyojong’s front.

The other members were once again drawn by the noise, and once Hyojong briefed them on the situation, they all began comparing their palms to Jinho’s moderately sized ones. The comparison wasn’t all that bad in the beginning when his hand was placed, palm on palm, onto Kino’s. Then Hongseok. Then Changgu. Then Yan An. And then Shinwon, Yuto and Wooseok were the last ones.

Jinho calculated the size of his palm to Shinwon’s would be equal to that of his and Yan An’s and had guessed Wooseok’s hands were to be the same. However, he was sorely mistaken for when
Shinwon placed his palm against his, Wooseok’s palm ended up being twice his.

“Why are your hands so big?” Changgu asked incredulous. He removed Wooseok’s hand and placed it against his own, astounded at the sheer size of Wooseok’s palm. “They’re like a bear!”

Hyojong laughed and compared his to Yan An and Yuto’s. “Aren’t they the same size though? With Yan Anie and Yuto?”

“No, no.” Changgu furiously shook his head and brought Wooseok closer to Hyojong. “His are far, far larger. And wider.”

Hyojong placed his hand against Wooseok’s and marvelled at the size of it. “Jesus, Wooseok,” He looked up at the teenager. “What have you been eating? Why are your hands so huge?”

“Not only his hands, look at his legs.” Shinwon stated, “They’re so long. They’re even longer than mine.”

“Yeah, but Yan An and Yuto are pretty tall too.” Hongseok said and pointed to the two foreigners. “Not quite like Wooseok, but they are pretty tall.”

“Well, I’m glad to have such tall members around,” Changgu said again and threw his hand over Yan An and Wooseok’s shoulders. The act looked incredibly uncomfortable and awkward considering Changgu was no more than 5 feet 10 inches tall, while Yan An and Wooseok were pushing past 6 feet. “It makes it easier to get things on the top shelves.”

“That’s all we’re good for?” Wooseok asked, looking down on Changgu. “Taking things off the top shelves?”

Changgu’s response was cut short when the door opened and Hui walked in, briefly explaining how the conversation played out and informing them that they could go back to the dorms or go do whatever they wished on the company grounds.

Wooseok and Shinwon cheered and presumably went back to the dorm to either play games, or sleep. Hongseok followed after them with the promise of making dinner and Yan an was not far behind. Yuto went with the Chinese male and so did the other members, the thought of food enough to make their stomachs growl and Jinho vaguely remembered he hadn’t had the chance to eat breakfast that morning.

“Well, as you know we can’t have ten guys in one dorm.” Hui stated, in between bites and casually ignored the disgusted look Hongseok sent his way. “Not only is it impossible, financially; it’s also impossible to fit ten guys under one roof.”

“Which is why,” He paused to take a sip of water, “We are going to have to split up into groups of two, consisting of five members each.”

There was silence for a second before all ten boys began talking. They were speaking in tandem but Hui could barely hear what any of them were saying and signalled for them to keep quiet for a second.

“Let me finish.” Hui lowered his hand and said, “They told me that we had to decide who were going to where. The choice is ours but if we don’t make one on our own, they’ll decide it for themselves and we wouldn’t be able to change it.”

“That is why,” Hui leaned forward and rested his elbows on the table and intertwined his fingers
together, all thoughts about food discarded into the wind. “I suggest we talk about it and decide which members will be going to the first dorm and which ones will be staying in the second dorm.”

“Are we going to be sleeping together on bunk beds?” Shinwon lifted his hand and asked as if he were in class.

Hui turned to him and answered his question seriously. “Bunk beds. I think it’ll either be four in one room or two in one room.”

“Wait,” Hyojong said and Hui turned to look at him. “That means there’s going to be a member with one room to himself.”

There were murmurs of agreement as the other members realized this as well and Jinho felt the air getting thicker. The members, even Yuto and Yan An, the two most silent people he’d ever met since becoming a CUBE artist, looked eager to have their own bedroom. Jinho idly wondered if having a lone bedroom was as great as they thought it was.

“Yes. There will be a single room, but I won’t be the one to take it.” Hui graciously silenced his members again when they began speaking at the same time so that he could explain his reason for doing so. “I don’t want to be the one taking the single room simply because I’m the leader.”

Hui’s gaze filtered from member to member, pausing every so seconds to make sure they understood what he was trying to say.

“I want everyone to have a fair chance of getting the single rooms. There could be members who aren’t comfortable sharing the same space as someone else and I don’t want them to lose the chance because of hierarchy.” “Everyone deserves a shot at the room, and I’m not going to take that away. I refuse to do that.”

Jinho was impressed by Hui’s words. He was truly impressed by how impossibly selfless one man could possibly be to nine other boys he didn’t know that well. Jinho knew if it was him, he would have offered the room to the others as well, but he wouldn’t have had such a nice reason behind it. Jinho knew he would have done it because it was the right, courteous thing to do.

“Saying that only reinforces our decision to make you the owner of that room, you know that, right?” Hongseok said, voicing the thoughts they all shared.

Hui looked stunned by Hongseok’s words and the emotion furthened when the rest nodded, agreeing with Hongseok’s statement. Hui blushed and laughed nervously. He held his hands across his chest in a ‘X’ motion and shook his head, refusing to accept what Hongseok and the rest seemed to unanimously agree to.

“No. I didn’t say it to do that.” Hui tried to weasel his way out but Hyojong and Hongseok were not letting it happen. “I genuinely mean it. You all should be the ones to get the room instead of me.”

“Just accept it, okay?” Hyojong said and knocked his ankle against Hui’s calf. “The room is yours. End of story.”

Hui tried again but the conversation had already carried on to the rooming arrangements. Jinho was the only one not focused on blatantly ignoring Hui’s refusal of the room and thus, was the only one who saw the wide smile and faint shine in the younger man’s eyes as he looked to his members. There was nothing but gratitude and appreciation in those dark-brown irises.
“So, I’ll be rooming with Shinwon,” Hyojong stated and went on to list the room arrangements agreed to by all of them. “Then, Kino is with Wooseok. Yuto with Changgu. Yan An is with Hongseok and that just leaves Jinho…”

“Well, Jinho is obviously going to the single room as the eldest,” Hyojong didn’t leave any room for discussion and continued, just like he did with Hui. “But before anything else is decided, do any of you want to switch with someone else?”

“We’ll be rooming with each other for a while until we get permission to freely change the setting between one another, but none of us know when that time will come, so if you have any complaints, voice them now before anything is finalized.”

“I personally don’t want to room with Shinwon.” Hyojong said and voiced his reasons as to why. “It’s nothing against you personally, Shinwonie.” Hyojong added, interrupting Shinwon before the man could even begin voicing his complaints. “It’s just...you’re not very clean, or organized and you always leave things lying everywhere. I don’t think I’d be able to live with that for God knows how many months.”

“You’re not very organized either!” Shinwon remarked but it was too weak and petty to make much of a difference. “I’ve seen your clothes strewn over couches or carelessly thrown to the floor. Not to mention, the plates of food I found at the previous dorm.”

“That’s true.” Changgu confirmed Shinwon’s argument and added, “But, hyung, Hyojong-hyung’s clothes or plates were less than a day old.”

“Yours, on the other hand, were usually over a week old. Both the clothes and the discarded pieces of food.” He laid a hand on Shinwon’s shoulder, silently telling him to give up before he made it worse. “Hyojong-hyung is definitely better off than you.”

“So, who wants to trade?” Hyojong looked around, and predictably enough, none of the members raised their hands. None of them wanted to endure living with Shinwon, so Hyojong decided to switch things up.

“Okay who wants to trade their roommate for another member?” There was still some hesitancy so Hyojong added, “That is not Shinwon.”

A few seconds passed and Hyojong was sure he’d have to bunk with Shinwon when Wooseok lifted his hand and said, “I want to switch with Changgu.”

“So you want to room with Yuto?” Hyojong asked, brow raised.

“Yes.” Wooseok said firmly and turned to Kino. “There’s nothing wrong with you, hyung. I’d just prefer Yuto.”

Hyojong looked to Yuto for any sign of discomfort but the man looked casual and unbothered. “You okay with this?”

“Yeah. I’d like to room with Wooseok. He’s funny.” Yuto replied shortly and nodded at Wooseok who nodded back.

“Okay, anyone else?” Hyojong waited for the rest to speak up and they slowly did. Each member wanted to switch their roommates for another and Hyojong remained silent until they were done and satisfied with their roommates.

The order was completely turned around and now Yuto bunked with Wooseok, while Changgu was
with Yan An and Hongseok was with Hyojong and Kino with Shinwon, leaving Hui and Jinho to their individual bedrooms. There had also been suggestions for leaders in the dorm and were chosen through a random vote. Unsurprisingly, Jinho and Hui ended up as the two leaders of the two dorms. Jinho lead the dorm with Yuto, Wooseok, Yan An and Changgu while Hui was in charge of the other one.

“Alright,” Hongseok clapped his hands and stood up. He took each member’s halfway finished plate and began clearing up the table. “Can we please get some sleep? Especially since we have a schedule tomorrow at eight?”

Not a single complaint was raised as they all stood up and helped Hongseok clear up, and wash the dishes before slowly filling off to their beds. Hui told them the move would be tomorrow and that this was the last time they’d be sleeping under one roof. For Jinho it was his first time, but the thought of being separated from the other five members had something crawling up his throat.

None of the members slept in their own beds but rather gathered in the largest space they could find (which was the living room with the couches pushed back) and huddled together. It was awkward and painful and uncomfortable, but none of them thought of going back to their own beds, because as much as they hated the painful positions they had to assume to be comfortable, none of them hated it as much as they hated the dorm split.

They weren’t children and fully understood they were and could see one another at any moment, but there was something about having the freedom of seeing someone close to you, living under the same roof as you, rather than having to drive to go and see them. There was a bond there that the dorm split tested.

Jinho futilely tried to ignore the thought and forced himself to be as comfortable as possible. It was a bit hard, considering he was halfway lying on Hongseok and had his legs near Hui’s chest. Jinho shuffled up so that he didn’t bother Hui’s nostrils and rested more of his weight on Hongseok’s abdomen.

“I’m sorry,” Jinho whispered so as to not bother the others. “I can’t find any other way to sleep.”

“It’s fine.” Hongseok whispered back and shuffled to the side, trying to make more space for Jinho. “I can’t either. Wooseok.” He kicked out and Jinho heard a grunt before a sound that resembled a hand smacking against skin was heard followed closely with another grunt, some shuffling, and then silence. “Wooseok won’t get his heavy head off my legs and Yan An is using my thighs as a pillow.”

Jinho leaned to the left and confirmed Hongseok’s words. Yan An was lying vertically facing the wall and had his legs stretched out while Wooseok was on the opposite side and was facing the opposite direction and his legs were curled slightly to make space for Kino. Jinho wondered how they managed to form a...Jinho couldn’t name what shape their bodies made and didn’t even believe there was a verb that could accurately describe the order they were sleeping in.

Shinwon was somehow above him and Hongseok and had Changgu resting peacefully on his chest, just like he did to Hongseok. Jinho noticed some members just chose to cuddle rather than sleep normally, with their limbs spread out.

Some of those happened to be Hui and Hyojong and apparently Kino and Yuto as Jinho turned to see Kino grumble lowly and walk over Wooseok’s body over to where Yuto was sleeping peacefully. Kino slipped under the blanket and snuggled on to Yuto who almost immediately expected and opened his arms for Kino to settle in before wrapping the blanket around them and
falling back asleep.

“They really are close, huh?” Jinho wondered out loud, not really expecting a response.

“Yeah…” Hongseok yawned mid-sentence and Jinho felt bad for keeping him up so late. “He wasn’t very sociable when he arrived here but somehow he managed to talk to Kino, so the two have been together ever since. Yuto’s grown a lot since then. He’s able to keep a conversation in Korean now, so I guess-” He yawned again, “-Kino’s influence has been rather productive.”

“Really?” Jinho looked at the two young males and wondered how tough it must have been for both of them to overcome the language barrier and communicate not only with words but with their actions and gestures as well. “He must have had a hard time.”

Jinho mumbled lowly but didn’t get a response. He craned his neck to look at Hongseok and found the man asleep with his mouth slightly open and face pointed directly at the ceiling. Jinho snorted and turned to his side, drawing his blanket over his shoulder, he snuggled into Hongseok’s warm abdomen further and fell asleep, almost as quickly as Hongseok had.

Chapter End Notes

oh and the dorm arrangement is designed so that they are given the freedom of choice but with caution since they’re still new and are rookies. the company does decide 70% that happens here so them not being able to change dorms comes in there.

oh and dark past means like people misunderstood dawnie for being a drug addicts or some BS there, but that is what it means
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

“It’s hard trying to learn a foreign language and living inside a foreign country alone, but if you get lonely, or if it gets too hard, don’t hold it in, and come to us. I speak for all of us when I say we’re in this together. If one of us is struggling or in pain, then we all are. So, do your best, but don’t overdo it and take breaks when you need it.”

Chapter Notes

Uh...when the mini-speech part reaches, try to imagine a 17yr old boy having to be an idol and go to school and be far from his friends who knew him best, i tried to capture that feel but i think ii failed so try to imagine something liek that. Their rooms are pretty ordinary cause im using my own house as a reference. in the old dorm the pairs were, ED with JJ, HS with SW, Hui with CG, YanAn with Kino and WooYu. the current dorm pairs are the same as of current time, but remember this is around Gorrila era.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning found all the boys awake and bustling around before the sun was fully positioned in the sky. Jinho was accustomed to waking up early during his years as a trainee but the brief relaxation period he’d gotten as an official idol in a group had him feeling sluggish and slow.

“Come on,” Hongseok patted his back and helped him to his feet. “We have to get going.”

Jinho groaned but followed Hongseok as he went upstairs to the bedrooms and began choosing a casual outfit for the day. Hongseok would have preferred something more comfortable, like a pair of loosely fitted jeans with a long sweater, but he knew the stylists would immediately change his entire outfit, regardless of whether he wore what he wanted to or not. So, he settled for a pair of jet-black ripped jeans, the kind that gripped his defined thighs and calves, and a shirt with an abstract drawing on it.

“Did you already shower?” Jinho asked, mid-yawn. He blinked blearily and tried to focus on Hongseok, standing in front of his closet, searching for a jacket to wear.

“Yeah.” Hongseok turned back to his closet and pulled on a dark blue sweater from his bed and took a pair of dark brown boots and went to sit on the bed. “We all did. You’re the only one left, hyung.”

Jinho’s eyes snapped open and he nearly cussed out loud. “Seriously? I’m the only one?”

“Yeah.” Hongseok nodded and shoved his foot through the hole and began tying up the laces. “I think I heard Shinwon was in there a few minutes ago but he must be out by now.” He looked up at the older man and added, “You might be able to brush your teeth and shower very, very quickly if you hurry.”

Jinho barely heard the rest of Hongseok’s sentence and sprinted , to the bathroom. He burst through
Jinho didn’t care if there was anyone in the room and hurriedly dropped the towel, oiled his skin and grabbed the first clothes his hands landed on. He stopped to grab one of E’dawn’s black beanies before sprinting out of the door, down the stairs, to reach the first floor far more sweaty and tired than when he’d woken up.

“Dude,” Shinwon was too amazed to bother addressing his elder properly. “Did you just shower and dress in less than ten minutes?”

“I took that long?” Jinho was panting and held onto the wall for support as he tried to catch his breath. “I meant to take five minutes. I’m sorry if I wasted your time.” Jinho looked up at his members and their faces mirrored Shinwon’s exactly.

Even Yan An was surprised.

“That’s so cool. How did you do it?” Wooseok asked, amazement and respect shining in his near-black irises. “Did you just duck under the water and run out?” He began mimicking ducking under a shower, briefly scrubbing his body and running out. The mimic was weird on its own but with Wooseok’s incredibly height, it resembled an ostrich trying to drink water and run before it was caught by a predator.

“No-!” Jinho protested but before he could explain, the doorbell rang. He watched as the members stood up and Hui went to open the door while the others grabbed their things. Jinho realized their managers had arrived and were waiting to take them to whatever schedule they were on today.

Jinho bowed respectfully as he passed the elder males and unknowingly made the others do it as well. He went down the steps and stopped awkwardly in front one large, black, heavily tinted van. He stood there, unsure of which car to board when a hand grabbed his bicep and pushed him into the car he stood in front of. Jinho turned and saw it was Hyojong.

Hyojong nudged him into the van and climbed into the seat next to his. “Don’t be so dazed, hyung.” Hyojong teased and went silent as the other members - Wooseok, Yuto, and Yan An- boarded the van and the door shut behind them.

Jinho was awkwardly squished between Wooseok’s long body and Hyojong’s. The van wasn’t overly spacious, or equipped to handle three young teenage boys with legs longer than any river Jinho had ever heard of.

“I can’t believe we’re moving today.” Wooseok suddenly said, voice lower than Jinho had ever heard it.

Jinho’s chest ached for the teenage boy. It must have been hard for a young boy, especially one still in school, to manage his studies and his future career. The change of dorms couldn’t have been easy, especially on him since he’d gotten used to having eight guys around him, and now he’d have to get used to having only four.

“It’s not so bad, Wooseok.” Hyojong sat to the left of Jinho while Wooseok was on the right, but he still reached past Jinho to pat Wooseok’s head affectionately, effectively squishing Jinho onto Wooseok.
“It’s not like we’ve moved to another continent, we can still come and see them. Plus, we’re about to debut soon, you’ll see them everyday till you get sick of them.”

Jinho doubted he could ever get tired of being around such nice people but kept his mouth shut and his gaze on the youngest member, despite the awkward angle his neck was in. Hyojong ruffled his hair and leaned back and settled in his seat when their manager entered the van and told them to buckle up.

Just as the car was driving off, following behind the first one with the other members inside, Jinho slipped his hand in Wooseok’s and gave him a reassuring squeeze. He tried to convey in that one squeeze that he wasn’t alone, and that he had members, people who cared for him and loved him. He tried to convey that even though they were going to be separated, they still cared for him deeply and would always try to be there for him.

“Okay,” Their manager began and clapped his hands to gain the members attention. “For today, you have a short but hectic schedule. We need to get you to the studio to begin recording, then to the dance choreographer, and then to a photoshoot to begin promoting your debut.”

“It’s not very long but it will take time, and you also have to be moved from your current dorm to two separate dorms. But that’s for later, right now,” The man looked down at his watch and said, “We go to the studio first and then to the practice room.” The man ushered the boys into the van, barely giving them time to process what he had said before they were driving off again, away from the cafe they’d stopped at to get food, and towards CUBE.

Two hours later found Pentagon exhausted and panting on the practice room floor. They had been practicing the dance their choreographer made for them for over an hour non-stop, and were all surprised at how hard dances meant for actual stages were. The hours spent in training were a literal walk in the park compared to what they were doing.

“Five minutes, guys, then we’re back to it.” The choreographer said and clapped his hands as he walked away to get a bottle of water for each member.

He returned and began distributing the bottles to each one, saying, “I know it’s hard, but this is what you signed up for. It’s your debut stage, you have the dance being too weak or too easy. It has to be powerful and strong.” He finished handing the last bottle to Yan An and straightened, looking down at the group he was in charge of. “You have to make sure you capture people’s attention and hearts or else your career as idols will be even tougher than it is now.”

He looked at them for a short while before walking off and getting a drink for himself as well, leaving the boys to breathe and rest.

Hui wanted to say something encouraging to help lift the mood and their tired spirits, but couldn’t find the words to do so, too overwhelmed by the dance to properly articulate his sentences. He did, however, turn to look at his members and was moved to see their determined faces.

Hui saw, and felt, how tired they were, how tired they all were, but the resolve on their faces was so strong, Hui lacked the words to properly describe it. It was then Hui felt unbelievably proud to be the leader of a group with such strong members, filled with the passion and the desire to make their voices heard. He knew the road to where they wanted to be was far, and long, and tiring, filled with mistakes and several opportunities, that would be missed or gained, but Hui swore, right then, he’d
make sure they all reached to that flowery road together.

The choreographer returned and they, as if sensing Hui’s sudden conviction, stood up and practiced harder than they ever did before.

After their practice, they were immediately sent to the showers and then into the vans on their way to their first photoshoot. They were all nervous and excited, but they all managed to do well during the shoot and most were done during the first time. It was when Kino, the last one to do have his photo taken, that it hit Jinho.

“Alright!” One of the staff called out and Jinho’s attention was drawn to her. “That’s all for today. Thank you for your hard work!”

They bowed their heads and thanked the staff for their help. Hui made sure to bow down to them all before gathering his members and bowing once more. The staff nodded and clapped before going to gather their equipment and put them away. Hui took that opportunity to gather the boys and briefly converse with them. He had a few things he wanted to get off his chest before their managers came for them, so he directed them towards a more secluded and private area and began talking.

“Uh…” Hui cleared his throat nervously and focused on his members. “I know after this we’re going to different dorms, and it’s not that big of a deal because we’ll see each other the next day during the schedule but-,” His next words were meant for the youngest member, and Hui turned to him.

“I know it’ll be a hard adjustment for you, trying to manage school and work, but we are here for you. If you want to vent or complain, as your seniors,” Hui gave Wooseok a wide grin, the kind that crinkled his eyes to small slits. “It’s our duty to listen and help you, so don’t be shy, and feel free to ask for help, okay?”

He turned to the two foreigners. “This applies to you two as well. If you want to talk, or you’re feeling tired, we’re here for you. You don’t have to struggle alone, okay?”

“It’s hard trying to learn a foreign language and living inside a foreign country alone, but if you get lonely, or if it gets too hard, don’t hold it in, and come to us. I speak for all of us when I say we’re in this together. If one of us is struggling or in pain, then we all are. So, do your best, but don’t overdo it and take breaks when you need it.”

The younger members nodded and Jinho was amazed at the strange talent Hui possessed but knew nothing of. He had, single-handedly, managed to ease the tension circulating around them with a short speech, and had not only addressed the struggle of the two foreign members, but comforted them and assured them that they weren’t alone even if their family and friends were waiting for them back home.

Jinho was sure Hui knew nothing of the strength and power his words had when it came to his nine younger members, and that made it even scarier. Jinho wondered if he was in the position of leader, just like Hui, if he’d be able to ease his friends worries with a few words just like he’d done. He doubted it. Jinho knew he lacked the depth and emotional connection to the other members to ever have an impact on their mental state, let alone how they felt.

“Pentagon!” Hui chanted and placed his hand in the center. The others quickly caught on and laid their hands on top.

“Fighting!” Hui shouted loudly and the other males grunted loudly in response. Their hands bounced once before falling down and splitting up with each member going their own separate ways.
“Are we really in our own dorm, right now?” Changgu asked, eyes curiously searching around the wide area. “It’s so big.”

“Yeah…” Jinho’s eyes briefly wondered around but didn’t linger on anything in particular. He was still trying to adapt to the the sudden changes thrown his way since being a trainee to now moving into a separate dorm with four of the members he’d never really talked to. It was alot to take in. “It’s nice.” He weakly said but none of them noticed.

The dorm they were located in wasn’t as large as Changgu made it out to be, and was rather average sized. The first floor had enough space for a three-seater couch, a two-seater and a single couch with a table in between and a space located at their right where the TV was supposed to be.

There was a turn a few meters in front leading into the kitchen where a simple gas cooker, microwave and basic utensils sat. There was a secondary door that led to a much smaller room with a few basins and a washing machine. Jinho walked out and closed the door, off to explore the upstairs where the bedrooms were.

The first room he encountered on his exploration apparently belonged to Yuto and Wooseok who decided to room together, while the second one on the further left belonged to Yan An and Changgu. When they had decided the roommates, Jinho had wondered if the four had chose each other out of personal preference or simply because they were more comfortable around people of their own age, but he hadn’t been curious enough to ask and let the thought drift away.

Meaning the last room at the far right belonged to him and Jinho walked over and opened the door, surprised at the vast amount of room he had. His bedroom was rather similar to the ones of his members but Jinho thought it looked bigger. There was a an average sized bed placed in the center of the room and at the foot of the bed, positioned on the wall, was a large closet that could comfortably hold his and every other member in the dorm’s clothes.

There was a simplistic bathroom adjoined to the room with a sparkling white tub and toilet. There was a small cabinet for storing his bathroom needs located just above the mirror above the sink. Jinho roughly gauged the distance between his height and the handle and wondered if he’d have to call the other taller members each time he wanted to switch his towel.

Jinho walked out and went to flop, face-down, on the bed, exhausted from their first ever schedule. He wanted to get up and take a shower and eat something but the soft feel of the cotton blanket on his cheek and the bouncy, yet comfortable mattress lured him and he fell asleep with the promise of a shower faint on his mind.

Chapter End Notes

I'm going to be focusing on my other stories that i kept on hiatus to do this since it had such good response (thank youuuuu~~) but i'll write this if i get any ideas. It is NOT on hiatus, just the next chapter will be later than usual.
Chapter 5

The following day, Jinho woke up with a headache and a stinging pain behind his eyes. He groaned and tried soothing his head by rubbing at his temples but it barely made a difference. He groaned again, tired even though he was just from sleeping, and got out of bed, heading downstairs to the kitchen to grab a glass of water and a painkiller.

On his descent, Jinho was surprised to find Wooseok and Yuto, sleeping together on the couch downstairs. The two were squished together in what looked and had to be incredibly uncomfortable. Yuto was lying down with his back pressed against the cushions while Wooseok was to his left and was pressed against the other part of the couch. Yuto’s leg, hand and most of his right side were leaning out of the couch, barely grazing the floor, while Wooseok’s legs were completely out of the chair and were half-dangling in the air.

Jinho glanced at the time displayed on the TV in bright, white bold letters and wondered if he should wake them up. After briefly deliberating, Jinho decided not to and went to get what he actually came for. He took a glass and filled it with water before getting the pills he needed and going back to the living room and seating himself down on the couch opposite theirs.

Left alone in, frankly, such a large house, Jinho could fully appreciate the view that came with it. There wasn’t much to see in terms of outdoor sights, but the house was decorated in a way that was plain and equipped with the mere basics but at the same time was incredibly prettier and less lonely than the rooms they all shared when he was a trainee.

At least here, he had people to talk to.

Remembering his days as a trainee brought back some memories Jinho never wanted to remember and he tossed the pill into his mouth and took a large gulp of water as a weak distraction, ignoring the small lump trying to form in his throat. He swallowed them all down and placed his glass down on the table and turned to the long-legged duo.

Jinho didn’t know why but he found himself smiling fondly when he looked at the two, sleeping peacefully, completely oblivious to them and their surroundings.

“They look so innocent…” Jinho wondered out loud, and was suddenly overwhelmed with a feeling he couldn’t really describe. It was vaguely similar to the kind one got when they were faced with something so small, and so innocent that need all your protection and love.

He couldn’t describe it yet but he thought it was something like a mother’s love; protective yet loving. He didn’t understand why he felt like that since he just met them less than two weeks ago,
but Jinho couldn’t stop from feeling that way.

It was right then that Yuto decided to groan and try shaking Wooseok’s heavy body off, to no avail. He tried swatting his hand in the assumed direction of Wooseok but ended up smacking his own thigh instead.

“Heavy…” Yuto breathed out and Jinho held back a snort. The younger man’s face had scrunched up like he’d smelled something sour and his bottom lip was folded in a way that exposed the inner lighter pink part of his lips.

Jinho figured he should wake them up and bent down to shake Wooseok awake and repeated the action to Yuto. “Yuto-ah, Wooseok-ah,” He said, still trying to shake them both awake. “Wake up. It’s almost sunrise.” It was a lie but they didn’t need to know.

The two, despite the latter’s complaint, refused to wake up and shrugged his attempts off. Jinho tried even harder by shaking them with all his strength and increasing his volume. It still didn’t work, and the two continued sleeping peacefully.

Jinho tried several other tactics but they all proved ineffective. It was when he resorted to using their leader’s name as a threat was when they both woke up and shot up straight, narrowly avoiding a collision between their heads from how fast they both rose.

“Why did you wake up from that?” Jinho asked, sweaty and panting from all the effort he exerted trying to wake the two giants up.

Wooseok may have shot up faster than a lightning bolt but he was still dazed and a bit dizzy from his very recent nap. Yet he managed to mumble out a few incomprehensible words out.

“Hui’s…sleep…late…scary…angry…”

Jinho paused mid-pant. “Huh?”

“He said…” Yuto took an unnecessarily long pause to rub at his eyes before continuing his original statement. “Hui-hyung’s scary…when he gets mad…”

“How scary do you have to be to wake someone up?” Jinho’s brow shot up but he didn’t say anything.

“Hyung-” Wooseok stopped rubbing his eyes and looked at the shorter man through squinted eyes and glanced behind him at the closed, very dark, curtains. “I thought you said it was sunrise.”

Their managers arrived hours later when they were all awake and ready to go. They filled into the car and were soon driven towards their day’s schedule. They were taken to the studio to record first before they went to their next schedule. The recording was over five hours long and almost everyone was tired from constantly singing and switching with the next member, but none of them raised a complaint and bore through it all.

“Alright, let’s get going.” Their manager said and directed them out of the studio and office, down the steps and back into their respective vehicles. They were driven to the same dance studio they went to yesterday and began practicing their choreography, while the managers went to grab them lunch despite the fact that lunch had long since passed.
In between practice, their choreographer gave them a thirty-minute break to rehydrate and eat something small before they continued practicing. Jinho, even more exhausted than yesterday, grabbed a packed salad and a bottle of water and went to collapse on the wall facing the mirror.

He leaned his head back and took a moment to catch his breath. He lifted his head and looked at his sweaty reflection in the mirror and wiped away the sweat dripping from his face with his hand.

Jinho rested his back on the wall and opened his packaged salad before taking small uneven bites of it with the occasional sip of water. Too preoccupied with his food, Jinho failed to notice Hongseok coming closer until the younger man flopped down in the same manner he had, next to him.

“Hyung,” Hongseok asked, eyes glancing down at the small portion the older male held in his lap. “Are you okay?”

Jinho turned to Hongseok and gave him a weak, barely there smile. “Of course. I’m just a little tired, that’s all.”

Hongseok sipped his own bottle of water and kept silent as he swallowed the water. He turned to look at Kino as he laughed at some joke Woosok cracked that left not only Kino but Yan An, who was sleeping down on the floor, laughing.

“Can I say something, hyung?” Jinho was surprised with the sudden question but he nodded and turned to listen to what Hongseok had to say.

“We’re all tired, hyung. And I don’t mean to say this in a bad way, but we’re all tired. We all want to sleep for longer than 5 minutes and not record for over eight hours. I can’t speak for them,” He subtly pointed to the other members spread out across the room, “-but I’m tired. This is so much harder than being a trainee ever was.”

Hongseok looked back at Jinho and said, “Just yesterday, I actually wondered if this was all necessary. The hours spent in the studio, be it recording, or dancing. I wondered, why are we doing this? I really thought it wasn’t necessary and it was a waste but,”

“I looked at the others, you, Kino, Hui, Yuto, all of us. I knew I wanted to stay with you all and debut as ten, and not four, or five, or even as a solo artist. That’s why, even I’m tired and I think of giving up, I remember what we all went through to get here and I suck it all in. So, hyung,”

Hongseok reached out and squeezed Jinho’s thigh, trying his very hardest to express his emotions through his eyes, he said, “Please don’t give up. Even if you’re tired and you want to give up, or when it feels like it’s too much, please don’t give up, and remember we’re here for you. Remember that I’m here for you.”

Jinho was spared from a response when their choreographer returned from wherever he went and signalled for them to stand up. Jinho closed and kept his salad and water bottle aside before standing up and following Hongseok to line up beside him, his words still ringing in his head.

“Okay, so I want to try something new this time.” He said and looked at each member. “I’m going to pair the ten of you together.”

At their confused looks, he went on to explain. “I mean, I want to start a short, one-week long project in which two members will be paired together and the objective of this project is to have each pairing play as a mirror to the other one.”
“What do you mean?” Hui raised his hand and voiced the thought on everyone’s mind.

“I mean, like you and let’s say Kino, will practice together and you two are supposed to act as a mirror, and repeat every movement he makes. So whatever he does, you’re supposed to mimic it. When he leans to the right, you do it as well, and when you jump, he’s supposed to jump as well.”

“At the end of the week, you all should be able to see and understand what’s wrong in your performance and fix it accordingly.” The man seemed satisfied with his explanation but it only made it worse for the others.

“So, like,” Hyojong was the one to speak this time. “We’re going to be mirror dancing with each other?”

“Yes. It will help you and your partner to notice the details that are off in his and your respective performance and will help you improve those details, no matter how small.”

“But that’s enough chit-chat, it’s easier to have you try it than try to explain it.” He ended their still unanswered questions with a swift clap and walked off, leaving them to choose their own pairings.

He stopped mid-walk and turned to say as an added afterthought, “I’d suggest you pair up with members who don’t have the same build as you, but the choice is yours.”

He went off to give them a short moment to pair up and all ten set of eyes looked at each other. None of the members were sure on what to do and simultaneously looked to their leader, Hui, for assistance.

“Okay, how about we do as he suggested and pair up people with a different builds together? I’m not too sure on that cause pairing someone like Wooseok and Jinho together doesn’t seem like it’d turn out well, but what do you guys think?”

There was a brief second of silence until a member Jinho never thought would voice his thoughts, raised his hand.

“Hmm…” Yuto bit his lip nervously and looked at the members, saying, “I’m not sure about this but wouldn’t that make us cooler?”

Most of them cocked their heads to the side, wondering what on earth Yuto was going on about. “I mean, if someone as tall and lanky as Wooseok-,”

They all ignored the mildly insulted ‘Hey!’ that came from the tall and lanky male.

“.Could dance just as good as Jinho-hyung, wouldn’t that make us really cool? If me, Wooseok, Shinwon-hyung, and Yanan-hyung could dance as well as any of the smaller members, wouldn’t it look really cool? We’d be able to show off that the tall members can dance very well despite being over six feet tall.”

It was silent a while after Yuto spoke and Jinho genuinely thought the young man’s great idea was about to be dropped but then Hui nodded and vouched for his idea. Naturally that made the other members vouch for his idea and soon enough, the idea was unanimously agreed upon and the members were paired up, tall to short.

The order was lined up with two pairings in the front and the remaining three at the back. The choreographer returned and briefly looked at the pairings before starting the music and watching
each pairing carefully.

Hongseok was paired with Jinho, Shinwon was with Hui while Yuto was with Kino, Woosok was with E’dawn, and Yan An and Yeo One were paired together. Or as they’d dubbed themselves Jinseok, ShinHui, Yuno, Woodawn and YeoYan.

The choreographer nodded, agreeing with their pairing and clicked play on the remote, starting the music and consequently, the practice as well.

“Jesus Christ!” At that point, none of them knew or cared who had said that but they all grunted, sharing the same sentiment. The practice was the hardest one they’d done yet, comfortably surpassing the first one they did and the ones they had to undergo as trainees.

This one was worse because the choreographer made them (whichever pairing that missed a beat) start over again and again till they got it right. This was made harder because each time a pairing messed it up, the others were meant to continue but the music kept being restarted, so they all had to start from the beginning each time. It was basically a repeat dance session where none of them really made it to the second verse, or if they did, they were cut short, and the song started all over again.

Suffice to say, they were all stressed out and tired when midnight finally rolled around and they were sent back to their dorms.

Jinho’s body walked around automatically. He was no longer the one controlling it, too exhausted by the activities to even bother eating or replying when he was spoken too. He went into the shower and finished in there as quickly as he could before walking out and changing into a loose pant and shirt and slipping under the covers.

Jinho fell asleep almost instantly, while elsewhere, two people stayed up talking despite being just as tired as Jinho was.

“He still hasn’t told you anything about it?” Hui asked and crossed his legs over one another and turned to face his closest friend.

“No.” Hyojong shook his head and burrowed his head deeper into the blanket wrapped around his shoulders. “I haven’t really tried asking him about it though. There’s no easy way to bring up a topic like that.”

Hui sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “I know but-,” He fell back onto his bed and looked up at the ceiling. “I’m worried about him. He’s been alone and in the industry for so long, and now we learn he was being bullied.”

Hyojong didn’t know how to comfort his friend and fell back onto the bed as well, taking the chance to throw the blanket over their bodies.

“And he won’t talk to us about it. He definitely looks like the type who’ll lie and say they’re fine even when they’re not.”

Hui sighed again and covered his face with his hands, and began rubbing the heels of his palms into his eye sockets. He removed them and sighed again, suddenly feeling unbelievably drained.

“Then what do we do?” Hyojong shuffled closer and draped his head and most of his upper body on
the older man’s chest. “Do we just ask him?”

Hui paused for a long while. So long that Hyojong began suspecting the male had dozed off and left him talking to himself. That wouldn’t be the first time. But Hui shook his head slightly and tried running his hands through Hyojong’s thick, dark locks.

“No. That could make him shy away from us and that’s the last thing we need.” He worked through a knot tangled in Hyojong’s hair before saying. “Not to mention, neither me or you has actually spoken to him for more than a minute.”

“Yeah, but Hongseok has.”

Hui’s hand paused and Hyojong lightly pinched the skin just below his chest. The hands resumed again, albeit at a slower, hesitant pace than they originally had.

“Do we ask him?” Hyojong’s ear was right above Hui’s heart and he listened to his heartbeat slow down as he waited for a response.

“No. It could get too complicated. We have to solve this alone. The others can’t find out about this.”

“Got it.” Hyojong turned his head around and tried looking Hui in the eye despite it being two in the morning and there was not a single drop of light in the room. “Can we please sleep now? It’s almost three am and I can’t go through another dance practice with two hours of sleep.”

Hui snorted and smacked Hyojong on his back before grabbing the blanket and properly arranging it over them both. Soon enough, they both passed out.

The next day was the same as the one before. They woke up and were taken to record, then they were driven to the studio to spend most of the afternoon trying to perfect their dance. The only ones who’d managed to get past the first verse and almost into the chorus were Kino and Hyojong. No one was surprised by that seeing as the two were the main and lead dancers respectively, and both had been through a dance academy, unlike the remaining eight who had practiced dance when they first became a trainee.

The remaining eight had had a somewhat smooth progress but there were a few that were still struggling to master the mirror dance. Predictably the taller members fell underneath that list but Jinho was surprised at how well they seemed to be improving. He guessed Yuto was doing extra practice with Kino, and Wooseok with Hyojong. Yan An still had trouble with a few moves but was improving at a steady pace.

Jinho figured by tomorrow they would have been able to comfortably pass the first verse and chorus, but he wondered if he and Hongseok could say the same. Their progress was nothing like they’d both expected it to be.

Jinho had thought, since they weren’t complete strangers to one another and had some semblance of a relationship, that they’d get used to acting as a mirror to one another, but that wasn’t the case at all. Their movements kept on being either a second too early or a second too late and each time it happened, Jinho could see Hongseok getting more and more frustrated.

Whether the frustration was at him for messing the dance (majority of the fails originated from him), or at himself, Jinho wasn’t sure, and wasn’t sure if he wanted to find out.
“Alright! Take a break! We’ll resume in ten minutes.” Jinho sighed and nodded gratefully at their choreographer before going to get a bottle of water and collapse on the same spot as he did yesterday.

And just like before, he was too preoccupied with re-hydrating his parched throat that he didn’t notice someone trotting over till they were already sitting beside him. Only this time, it wasn’t Hongseok and was Kino.

“Kino!” Jinho tried saying and ended up choking on the water and nearly died trying to cough up a lung.

Kino panicked and tried thumping him on the back but that only made it worse. Jinho swatted the young man’s hands away and coughed a few more times until he was certain there wasn’t any water stuck in his throat.

“Are you okay?” Kino still hovered nearby and had his hands outstretched, as if trying to reach for his senior but unsure if he should or not.

“Yeah…” Jinho coughed again and knocked his fist against his chest. “I’m fine…”

Kino moved back slowly and sat back down on the floor with his feet stretched out in front of him. He looked at the members, trying to rest as much as they could before the break ended, and at the managers seated near the wall, either busy on their phones or asleep, and for a second, Kino took the time to properly absorb what was in front of him, to absorb what they were going to achieve.

“It’s hard, isn’t it? The dance?” Kino suddenly asked, surprising Jinho with the odd conversation starter.

Jinho looked at Kino and idly wondered if this was how all conversations involving him were going to start at.

Kino took Jinho’s silence as an affirmative answer and said, “The problem isn’t you, hyung, or Hongseok-hyung.”

“It’s just that Hongseok hyung likes to help people, especially the members, so when things don’t end up working out, he blames himself the most. That’s why, hyung,” Kino faced Jinho with a broad smile. “You need to be the one to help him this time.”

“You may not know him well but Hongseok-hyung can be very stubborn when he wants to and will refuse to listen, so I doubt he’d listen to me if I tried explaining the dance to him, but maybe if he sees how you’re struggling to get it right as well, he might listen to you. There’s no guarantee but you can try.”

Jinho didn’t understand why Kino was making it into such a big deal but he nodded his head, agreeing to what the younger man said even though he didn’t understand why he was being so serious.

“I’ll try.” Jinho said and the two were left in a silence that was awkward to Jinho alone. He soon learned that Kino meant for him to do it immediately. He hastily stood up and went off to find Hongseok, feeling oddly flustered.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Am I a bit biased to this? Just a little bit but I will work on the other. My life got a bit hectic but things are in control and the next performance, I'll work even harder. There is a scene where it might be hard for people who've never gotten into a fight seen to understand but basically try to imagine someone being paired with you in class and then being given a project only for the other partner not to take it seriously and treat it like a joke.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Hey guys,” Shinwon huddled closer to the group and looked over his shoulder at Jinho was focusing intently on tying his shoelaces and not at Hongseok who was also avidly trying to ignore him. “Is it just me or did their relationship suddenly get worse?”

The others also turned to look at the duo and though it wasn’t very obvious to anyone looking from the outside, to them, the tension circulating between the two males was practically tangible.

“I thought the same thing, but Jinho-hyung said nothing when I went to ask him if he was okay.” Hyojong looked back at their small circle and looked at Yuto. “How did it go with Hongseok? Did he say anything?”

“No.” Yuto shook his head and nervously bit his bottom lip. “He didn’t say much, other than not to worry and that he was taking care of it.”

“What does that even mean?” Kino asked, “Does that mean something actually happened to them?”

“We won’t know if we keep guessing without having any information.” Hui tried calming the eight boys down and making them see reason. “For now, it’s best if we finish with what we’re doing first and then we can try asking them separately. I don’t think either one wants to interact with one another right now.”

They were in luck because their teacher returned and told them their practice for the day was done. Hui and the members heading to the first dorm --Hongseok included-- gathered and bid farewell to the members heading to the second dorm. As they all expected, Jinho and Hongseok barely acknowledged each other and went to the car once they were done.

The members headed to the second dorm and entered the car. Yan An was subtly reminded to try talking to Jinho once they were away from their managers and the other members. It had been decided back at the studio that Yan An and Kino, the two members who were the hardest to get mad at, were to attempt poking the bears residing in their respective dorms and figure out what had happened between the two.

Kino was a bit nervous about the plan since he wasn’t well-conversed with Hongseok but bravely agreed to the plan and promised to do his part well. Yan An had trouble understanding what the plan was and had to have it repeated to him a few times before he could fully understand what his role in the plan was, but that didn’t make the members nervous. They all knew very well that the ‘Shanghai Prince’ as they’d so graciously dubbed him, charm's laid in his cute, sort of mumbling way of
speaking.

The only thing the other members could hope for was that Jinho and Hongseok took the bait and told whichever member what was wrong. For if they didn’t, they all silently feared a rift would grow between the two members and would leave them at an impasse of what and where to go.

“Hyung,” Yan An called out when Jinho was about to enter his room and the latter male stopped and peaked his head out of the door, surprised to hear his name being called from the Chinese male.

“I want to ask you something, if you don’t mind.” Yan An tried doing what the others had suggested and tried his best to be himself but that made little to no sense to him.

Jinho was taken aback at the statement and took a few seconds to process what the taller male had said before nodding and moving aside to let the taller man through. Jinho closed the door behind him and pointed to the bed. Yan An sat down and Jinho went to the bathroom to begin removing his sweaty clothes and change into cleaner ones after a hasty shower.

Yan An waited for the older man to finish showering and begin his nightly routine before speaking.

“Is everything alright between you and Hongseok-hyung?”

Jinho nearly scraped off his mouth with the razor and whirled around to look at Yan An. “What?” His voice came out extremely high, and though that was normal for him as a singer, in the current situation he was in, it only made him that much more suspicious.

“What makes you think that?” Jinho cleared his throat and turned back to scrape off what little hairs he had around his mouth and chin.

“You two were very awkward today. You barely talked to each other at the dance practice, and your dancing was tenser than it usually is.”

‘How straightforward.’ Jinho thought as he bent his head and washed the cream off his face, proud to feel the smooth baby skin underneath after two days of not shaving. He began cleansing his face and used that brief moment of silence to consider if he was going to lie to the man sitting on his bed or not.

“Yes. Something happened between us.” Jinho finally relented and decided to tell Yan An the truth. “We had an argument but that’s all it was. There’s no need to worry.” Jinho turned and gave Yan An a smile, albeit a weak one.

“Hyung…” Yan An began but Jinho waved him off before he could finish what he wanted to say.

“It’s fine, I promise. I’ll talk to him tomorrow and we’ll sort this all out.”

“That’s not it, hyung…” Yan An pointed to the mirror in front of Jinho. “You look weird with that on so please wash it off first.”

Jinho didn’t turn back to him again until he was done with his nightly routine and had changed into his sleeping clothes.

Elsewhere, Kino’s attempt at talking to Hongseok was starting out almost like the way’s Yan An
had. The former male asked if they could talk when they were inside the dorm and were about to separate to go to their own bedrooms.

Hongseok agreed and the two went downstairs to the kitchen while the members faked being busy upstairs.

“What is it, Kino?” Hongseok asked, tiredly blocking a yawn with the back of his hand.

“There’s something I want to ask you about...It involves you and Jinho-hyung…”

The mention of the older man’s name changed Hongseok’s attitude completely. He suddenly stood straight and his face, previously exhausted from the day’s activities, became blank and unreadable.

“What about us?” Hongseok’s voice also did an abrupt one-eighty and became colder than the Han River during winter.

“I…” Kino trailed off and tried again.

“We noticed you and Jinho-hyung were ignoring each other during the practice today.” Kino became flustered when he heard Hongseok’s voice and began wringing his fingers together, a habit he’d gained when he got nervous or anxious. “I just wanted to know if you two are okay…”

Hongseok saw how much the younger man was struggling to voice his questions and decided to give him a break before he collapsed from nerves.

“We had an argument, that’s all.” He said in between a sigh. “He said something I didn’t agree with and he didn’t agree with me either so there was a bit of an argument, but I promise to fix it tomorrow.”

“Ah, no,” Kino held his arms out and shook his head. “You don’t have to rush it. I was just curious, that’s all.”

Hongseok sighed again and passed Kino by, ruffling his head as he went by. He stopped to say over his shoulder, “There’s nothing to worry about, Kino. I promise to fix it tomorrow.” He was about to walk away and added as an afterthought, “Don’t tell the others about this. I promise I’ll fix what happened between me and Jinho-hyung, but don’t tell them anything.”

Kino didn’t know how to tell him that the others had already found out and let him head upstairs to his and Hyojong’s room.

“Hyung.” Hongseok called to Jinho and waited for the shorter male to turn and acknowledge his presence. “I want to talk to you.”

Jinho left his salad alone and went outside with Hongseok, heart thudding once more. He ignored the worried looks on his members faces and closed the door before they could stop them and try talking to either one.

Jinho stood there and said nothing, waiting for Hongseok to talk. He crossed his arms and then uncrossed them, afraid that it made him look overly unfriendly. He wanted Hongseok to understand where he was coming from and to try being more careful with his words but he didn’t want to seem like a complete dick.

“I’m sorry about yesterday.” Hongseok turned to Jinho and said, “I realized I was being insensitive and cruel. I wasn’t thinking of your feelings at all when I said you didn’t care, and for that, I’m
deeply sorry.” He bowed his head deeply in apology and Jinho suddenly felt embarrassed. He imagined how it would look to a stranger passing by and hastily made Hongseok lift his head.

Jinho’s cheeks were unrealistically hot as he said, “It’s fine, Hongseok. Really. It was just an argument. I know you didn’t mean anything bad by it.”

He calmed down enough to walk over to Hongseok and lay a hand on his shoulder. “But thank you. Thank you for apologizing. It means a lot.”

“Does this mean you forgive me?”

“There wasn’t anything to forgive, Hongseok. It was just an argument that got out of hand, but we fixed it and now we’re fine.”

Hongseok had a dubious look on his face and Jinho resisted the urge to roll his eyes. At this point, he could almost tell whenever he deflected a question or twisted his answer to fit the situation, Hongseok always seemed to notice and from the past few days, it seemed that must be one of the things that annoyed him greatly.

“Okay, okay.” Jinho held his hands up and snorted to himself. “I promise, we’re fine. You’re forgiven Hongseok.

Jinho mimicked the clapper used in films with his hands and said, “Our fight is officially over.”

Hongseok snorted and walked past the older man into the studio, shaking his head while trying to muffle his laughter. He felt oddly relieved and at peace with himself. It was as if an unbelievably heavy weight was lying on his back, weighing him down, and then it suddenly dissipated after his conversation with the older man.

They went back into the studio and found the rest of the members and their dance teacher waiting for them. Hongseok laughed nervously and was saved from a weak explanation by their teacher scolding them for wasting time and rushed them to join the class and partner up.

Jinho didn’t feel like having his back watched like a hawk by the others and led Hongseok to the very back. It was the first time their practice had ever gone that well.

“You know we have to talk about it, right?” Hui suddenly ambushed the two males after their practice and led them to the side, away from where their managers and teachers could hear.

“What was that all about?” Hui figured the other members deserved a right to hear what had happened and beckoned them over. “You two were in a really bad mood yesterday and now you’re suddenly okay?”

“Ah…” Hongseok trailed off and looked to his senior for help.

Jinho was of no help and looked back at him for help. Hongseok sighed and licked his lips and rubbed the back of his head before answering Hui’s question. “Ah... We just got into a small argument that lasted a bit longer than we thought it would. That’s all.”

Hui’s brows rose.

“You really expect me to believe that?” Hui’s voice wasn’t harsh but his words made all of them
flinch. They’d never heard him talk like that before. “You two got into an argument and you could have almost have created a rift between the entire group before our debut. You could have made this all vanish.” Hui pointed back to their dance room and looked back at them. “What if the company noticed things were off? What if our managers noticed you two were fighting and talked to the company? What would we do then?”

“Hui…” Hyojong laid a hand on his senior’s arm and stopped him from saying anything else.
“That’s enough…Look at them...they’ve had enough.”

Hui looked at his members and both males looked unbelievably scared and had their heads lowered, whether from fear towards their leader or towards their actions, no one could really know.

“You may think I’m overreacting, and it was a simple fight, but I want you, no all of you, to consider the position we’re in.” Hui ignored Hyojong’s grip tightening and said, “We’re at a very delicate moment in our careers. This is the start of our future. We have to be careful. We can’t risk anything, not when we’re this close to achieving our goal.”

“I’m glad you resolved the fight quickly, but please remember we’re being watched carefully, especially since we weren’t supposed to debut this late.” He paused again and looked at the two males in front of him. “Please, rethink everything you do and say, at least until we debut.”

He looked at all them when he said, “I know I sound mean right now, and probably cruel as well but I don’t want to lose any of you. You’re all very important to me and I don’t want any of you to not be there, so please, be more careful.”

Hui noticed their managers calling out to them and excused himself from the group. He went to grab his bag and wait in the car while the other members felt the weight of his words on their back throughout their departing moments in the studio and in the car.

Chapter End Notes

I'm half-alive writing this so excuse everything and consider a tired person trying to write a proper plot/
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Hmmm, I'm not sure what to say since this has more plot than the others but it might rub off some people the wrong way and I want to say that I don't mean to offend anyone or any gender with this. There's no violent homophobia etc. but I felt bad while writing this so I felt a warning was needed.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hui’s speech left them all in shock and snapped their minds back to what was at stake. They all knew he was right. Fighting was the last thing they needed under their belts when their debut was creeping up on them. Jinho and Hongseok, understandably took the scolding the worst.

“Don’t you think that was too much?” Hyojong asked when he entered Hui’s room. They had been dropped off at their dorm a few minutes ago and Hui had immediately gone to his room with Hyojong following close behind. Hyojong closed the door and moved further into the room and lifted his eyebrow as he waited for Hui’s response.

Hui lifted his head and looked at his closest friend. Hyojong was a bit surprised to see guilt and sadness swimming in the eyes he’d gotten used to seeing shining brightly no matter what obstacle came in front of them.

“I know.” Hui’s response was more of a sigh than actual words and he turned away from his friend’s gaze. “I didn’t mean for it to sound that mean.”

Hui ran a hand through his hair and looked at the neatly arranged shoes by the door. “I just wanted them to understand what’s at stake if we get careless, you know?”

“I do know.” Hyojong moved towards his senior and sat down beside him. “But, hyung, that was too extreme. Jinho-hyung looked like he was about to cry.”

“I know. I saw him.” Hui’s hand made another pass through his hair and fell limply on his thigh. “I didn’t mean for it to sound like that... I just want them to be careful. The company is watching us carefully. You know we can’t afford any mistakes or scandals, not with where we are now.”

“I get that, I really do.” Hyojong sided with his senior, because at the end of the day, he was trying to keep them together. It was why they chose him as the leader because the group’s relationship with each other was important, and Hui did everything he could to ensure that but even he had to agree that this time, it was too much. “But, hyung, there were better ways of saying it rather than ambushing them and humiliating them in front of the other members.”

“It’s not like I don’t understand what you were trying to do, hyung. I do. But you still went overboard.”

Hui didn’t respond and sighed deeply. He looked back at Hyojong and nodded slightly. “I know.”

“I should go apologize.” He stood up, about to head out the door but stopped when Hyojong’s hand held his shirt, holding him back before he could even take a step.
“I don’t think you should.” Hyojong said and licked his lips, feeling them to be oddly dry. “I mean, you do have to apologize but wait a couple of hours first, and then you can go and try..” Hyojong tugged on Hui’s shirt hard and stood up just as Hui lost balance and fell back onto the bed.

“I’ll go check up on them and see how they’re doing. You should wait here.”

Hyojong didn’t give Hui a chance to respond and left the room and headed out the door. Hyojong was thankful he didn’t have to walk very far to get to the second dorm since he’d barely remembered to grab a thick sweater or anything to protect him from the chilly wind blowing past him as he went down the sidewalk and took a turn.

Hyojong saw the building up ahead and lightly jogged towards it, unable to bear the brunt of the wind any longer. He stopped just before the door and rang the doorbell twice. It was silent for a while and Hyojong feared they’d already gone to sleep but he soon heard rustling and the jingle of keys before the lock clicked and the door slowly opened to reveal a red-eyed, bare face Jinho.

“What are you doing here this late, Hyojong?” Jinho asked as he handed a blanket to the younger man and went back to where his own blanket was. He curled himself into a small ball and tightly wrapped the blanket around him, sighing once his skin began heating up again.

“I wanted to talk to you.” Hyojong copied his senior’s actions and bundled himself up. He tossed the blanket over his shoulders and watched as it fell past his shoulders and pooled at his feet.

“This late?” Jinho reached for his phone and checked the time. “It’s almost two in the morning. What is it you wanted to say that couldn’t wait until the sun was back in the sky and it wasn’t like -5 degrees?”

Hyojong could see his senior getting sleepier with each word and decided to cut to the chase immediately. “I know what happened to you during your trainee days.”

Hyojong, as he’d been keenly watching his elder, didn’t miss the look of sheer terror that crossed over the other man’s face after his words registered in his brain. Jinho tried recomposing himself but it was too late. His reaction was enough to settle the uncertain questions running amuck in his brain.

“There’s no reason to look so scared, hyung,” Hyojong said as a way to break the tension that overcame them both. “I won’t tell the others.” Hyojong offered the older man a smile, albeit a weak one. “I know you don’t want to. If you had, you’d have told us when we first met and you wouldn’t have such a terrified look on your face right now.”

“H-” Jinho began but then trailed off and readjusted the blanket around his shoulders. “How did you find out? The company swore to not let it get out, so how? How did you find out about my past?”

“Calm down, hyung.” Hyojong glanced towards the stairs to his left, up where the younger members were comfortably tucked in their warm beds. “You’ll wake the kids up.”

“Actually don’t know anything.” Hyojong said after Jinho calmed down enough to sit down. “I just pieced the things together.”

Jinho’s knees sagged in relief. Or they would have, had he been standing.

“So you just guessed?” Jinho suddenly felt even more exhausted than before, the back and forth with Hyojong nearly skimming five years off his already delicate life-line.

“Yeah, basically. Was I right?”
“How would I know if I don’t know what you guessed?” Jinho almost threw his hands up in exasperation.

“Well, I basically figured out you were being bullied by the company, indirectly or not. And that the staff regarded you with disgust and pity. I just don’t know why.”

Jinho hadn’t expected anyone to notice the staff’s blatant bias and actually bring it up. “There’s a whole story behind it. A really long one, but I’m not in the mood to talk about it at this ungodly hour. You can sleep with me. There’s no way I’m letting you go back this late.” Giving him no time to reply, Jinho stood up and waited for Hyojong to follow him to his bedroom after making sure the doors were locked and the lights were turned off.

When Jinho walked into his room, Hyojong threw himself onto the bed and was already curled up to one side of the bed. He was slightly shivering despite being under a blanket and Jinho hurried over to try providing some warmth from his own body heat.

“Thank you, hyung.” Hyojong said and turned around to look at Jinho. Hyojong was silent for a long time and Jinho, thinking he’d already fallen asleep, also began to shut his eyes, but was woken up when he heard Hyojong’s voice.

“I don’t know what happened to you before but I like you a lot.” Hyojong’s voice sound half-asleep and Jinho was about to pass it off as sleepy rambling until Hyojong opened his eyes and looked at him.

“I really like you, hyung. You’re really nice, you don't bully or boss us around and the younger ones like you a lot as well.” Hyojong reached out and grabbed his hand, holding it tightly within his. “I don’t care what happened to you before but I know you’ll always be one of my favorite hyungs. So, don’t be afraid to talk to us. We’re here for you.” Hyojong intertwined their fingers and moved closer before snuggling into the pillow and falling asleep almost instantly.

And Jinho had never wanted to cry as much as he did then.

The following morning, the younger members were stunned to see Hyojong emerging from Jinho’s room. They all stared as he descended the steps and went to grab a glass of water. Then, they turned to each other.

“Why’s Hyojongie-hyung here?” Changgu asked and glanced past Yan An at the older male, casually prowling in their kitchen.

“I don’t know.” Wooseok responded and shrugged his shoulders. “Maybe he confused the dorms and came to our by accident?”

“That’s impossible. He was dropped off at their dorm. There’s no way he’d mix the dorms up.” Yan An refuted Wooseok’s suggestion and also glanced at Hyojong. “He must’ve come here late last night. That’s the only reasonable explanation.”

“But why come that late? Why not just wait till we all meet at the practice room?” Yuto fretted and chewed lightly on his bottom lip.

“...You know, if you wanted to know so badly, you could’ve just asked me.” Hyojong casually sipped on his water and waited for the kids to turn to him.

There was a loud scream and Hyojong snorted into his drink. Yuto turned around to look at him and had a hand over his heart, eyes bulged out, while Wooseok looked just as surprised if not more at his
presence. Yan An and Changgu were also flustered by his sudden appearance and the latter male held a hand over his heart like Yuto while YanAn blinked rapidly, trying hard not to show how surprised he too was.

“I came last night. No, wait, it was early in the morning.” Hyojong sipped his drink again and said, “I think around, 2? I was here around 2 and then I decided to sleep over instead of going back through the cold.”

“Why were you here at 2 am, hyung? Was there something you needed?” Changgu asked.

“Yeah. I needed to talk to Jinho-hyung but he fell asleep before I could.” Hyojong sipped his drink again and went to sit down, his legs aching from the past weeks spent dancing and moving back and forth between venues.

“I did not.” Jinho said as he descended the stairs and walked into the living room, dressed and ready. “You fell asleep first.”

“Besides that, shouldn’t you all be getting ready?” Jinho looked pointedly at their pajama-cladded bodies and at the time on his watch. “Our managers will be here soon if you don’t hurry.”

Several of them cursed and tried running up the stairs simultaneously. Jinho saw multiple people get trampled on or very nearly be trampled and yelled at them to be careful. He got no response and soon enough the four boys had occupied the two bathrooms.

“Is this how it always is?” Hyojong nodded at the loud noises coming from upstairs and took another sip.

“Most of the time, yeah. They’re a lot messier than I thought they’d be.” Jinho said and walked to the kitchen to make a light snack for him and the kids.

“They sound like it.” Hyojong eyebrows furrowed when he heard one of them curse at the other one.

“But it’s fine. They’re still really good kids. They do what they’re told and are respectful.” Jinho didn’t notice how his voice had become warm and kind simply from thinking of the four children he now raised on his own. (He also didn’t notice how he was smiling softly while making the sandwich for each member).

Jinho realized midway that he didn’t know what Hyojong liked on his food and leaned back to look at him.

“Hyojong-ie,” Jinho called out and Hyojong leaned forward to look at his hyung. “What do want on your sandwich?”

“Anything’s fine, hyung!” Hyojong replied and Jinho nodded at him before turning back to the food.

Jinho added the final ingredients to the sandwich and cut the crust out for Yuto and Yan An before placing them on a plate and leaning back to call Hyojong again.

“Yes?” Hyojong was incidentally walking towards the kitchen, after being done with his water, and stopped by his hyung’s side. “What is it, hyung?”

“Could you go get them? Sometimes, they take too long in the shower and we end up being late.” Jinho was in the middle of preparing their breakfast and looked over his shoulder at Hyojong. “If it’s not too much of a bother, that is.”
“No, it’s okay, I’ll go get them.” Hyojong turned and went out of the kitchen and up the stairs to drag out his four members before their managers arrived. He found Yan An on his way down and told him to go eat quickly, then went to get Wooseok, Yuto and Changgu.

Changgu was in the middle of combing his hair but Hyojong knocked on the door to get his attention and delivered the same message he had to Yanan. Changgu nodded and kept his comb away before descending the stairs and going to eat. Wooseok and Yuto were last and just like Changgu, they were in the middle of styling their hair. Hyojong did the same thing he did to Changgu and dragged them both downstairs.

Jinho’s timing was impeccable as a few minutes after they’d all finished eating and were lazing around on the chairs, Hyojong heard footsteps nearing the door and signaled the others. Jinho assumed his position as the dorm’s ‘leader’ and sat up straight while the younger members moved from having their legs lazily dangling in the air to them being firmly planted on the ground.

The manager didn’t seem to surprised at Hyojong’s presence and sent them to the car. He locked the door behind him and filled them into the van, and after shutting the door behind them, he went to the passenger’s seat and they were drove off to a repeat of their schedule.

Hui didn’t ask where he was when Hyojong walked into their practice room with the other half of their members. He barely acknowledged them and continued looking down at his shoes, fiddling with the laces to pass time until the choreographer got there. Hyojong could smell his curiosity from the other side of the room but he didn’t bother to walk over Hui. He wanted to see what he’d do on his own. He wanted to see if he’d actually go to Hongseok and Jinho like he’d been thinking about yesterday, or if he’d listened and given him the benefit of the doubt.

Hyojong watched his members carefully. He wasn’t blind to how tense they all were around Hui, Hongseok and Jinho. They were fidgeting around, nervous and unsure if they were allowed to talk to Hongseok and Jinho in front of Hui after yesterday’s outburst. Hyojong wanted to tell them to grow up and act like men but he figured it wasn’t the words required in the current situation. He had a feeling they needed to hear that from Hui. But Hyojong wasn’t sure if he would.

“H-hui…” Hongseok said softly to the older male but Hyojong had been paying keen attention to the trio and had subtly scooted closer to hear the conversation.

Hui lifted his head and looked at Hongseok, and Jinho who had cautiously walked over when he’d seen Hongseok approach their leader.

“Yes?” Hui acted casual and aloof, but Hyojong saw the way his fingers curled into his palm and the anxious expression that filtered over his face before he hid it underneath a mask of complete neutrality.

“We…” Hongseok looked at Jinho and the older male gave a sharp nod. Hongseok cleared his throat and looked back at Hui. “We wanted to apologize for yesterday. Jinho and I have both thought our actions through and we understand that we should try to be more careful. We know we were in the wrong, and wanted to offer our deepest apology.”

Hyojong was surprised with what they had said and his glance at Hui proved the older man was also stunned with their words.
He recovered quickly and hid beneath the mask once more. “I’m glad you thought your actions through, Hongseok, and Jinho-hyung. I’m glad you know the damage your actions can do to the groups growth and improvement and I’m really glad you two talked it through.”

Hongseok and Jinho literally deflated like a balloon that was rapidly running out of air. They almost sagged to the floor but tensed when they heard Hui’s next words, afraid they’d done something again.

“However, I also want to mention that I’m sorry for what had happened yesterday. I didn’t mean to be that harsh on you two. I went overboard and for that, I’m genuinely sorry.” Hui bowed his head and held it there for a whole ten seconds before lifting his head again. “I want you to know that even though I may be harsh and sound cruel, I still love you all as my members and I value you as my precious members.”

Hyojong glanced at the younger members and saw them all blatantly looking at the trio interacting. Some of them, -Kino, Changgu and Shinwon- had moved closer and had caught the entire conversation. Hyojong wasn’t surprised to see their eyes glistening from tears. They had always been separated from the group as the trio that cried easily and cried a lot. Hyojong looked back at the others and although most of them had tears in their eyes, he saw how anxious they all were and looked back at his hyungs.

Hui opened his arms and Jinho and Hongseok barrelled headfirst into him. Hui staggered back from the weight but stabilized himself before hugging them back and laughing. There was a lump in the throat and Hui couldn’t fully tell whether it was because of the fear and worry he felt building on his shoulder being released or if it was because his members, two of the ones he’d known as the most strongest and sturdy, were clinging to his shirt tightly, trying their hardest to not cry.

Hui hushed them and patted their heads comfortingly. He looked up and saw his other members, the younger ones especially, on the verge of crying and smiled widely at them. He saw the relief flash in all their eyes before Kino hugged Yuto and buried his face into his shirt while Shinwon held Wooseok’s hand. Changgu discreetly wiped a tear from his eye while Yan An slung a hand over his shoulder. Yan An didn’t cry but he felt relieved just like the others. He rarely showed his emotions but he had also been worried about their hyungs relationship and seeing them hugging and on the verge of tears lifted a weight he didn’t know he had.

It was then, in the middle of their oddly emotional reconciliation filled with tears and laughter, that their teacher walked in and started the class.

When the class ended, Jinho went to find Hyojong. He searched for the male in the practice room but couldn’t find him and was directed to outside by Kino once the younger man met his gaze and asked him what he was searching for. Jinho thanked the younger man and went outside to find Hyojong.

He found him standing in the same place Hongseok had been sitting when he’d found him. Jinho walked up to Hyojong and sat down on the steps. Hyojong didn’t react to his presence and continued staring at something only he could see.

“What is it, hyung?” Hyojong asked suddenly, and Jinho looked up at him. He was still looking at the sky and seemed absolutely fascinated with what he could see. “You look like you want to ask me something.”

“Yeah. I do.” Jinho answered and looked away. He stared at his intertwined fingers and tried to force the words out. “But it's more like I want to tell you something.”
“Is it about what happened to you during your trainee time?” Hyojong finally looked away from the sky and looked at Jinho, taking in account how his fingers couldn’t stop shaking and how nervous and sweaty his appearance became. Hyojong knew it had to be because of what he about what he was about to say.

Hyojong sat down and looked at Jinho, crossing his legs over one another, he leaned back onto the wall and waited patiently for his hyung to talk.

“Yes.” Jinho tugged at his intertwined fingers and looked up at Hyojong. He glanced back at the door as if to make sure none of the others were eavesdropping on them and looked at Hyojong again.

“I know you might already know this but during my trainee time, I was bullied by my fellow trainees.” Jinho took a deep breath and looked at his shoelaces, unable to meet Hyojong’s intense stare.

“Back then, I used to be a favorite of the teachers. They’d praise my dancing skills and our vocal trainer used to choose my voice above all the other trainees. I didn’t know it wasn’t a good thing back then and thought the teachers were seeing the effort and time I invested into practicing.”

“The other trainees hadn’t liked that, obviously, and tried ganging up on me. They stole my dancing shoes and would lock me up in closest to make me late to practice.” Jinho said, “They never really went tried physical harming me and only did small, petty things.”

“I got into trouble with the teachers alot and was nearly removed from the company because they thought I’d gotten cocky from being chosen each time. I pleaded to let me stay through one more month and they conceded. I worked hard after that, harder than I’d already been working. I barely slept and spent all my mornings, afternoons and evenings practicing. My shoes wore out really quickly though.” Jinho said chuckling but there was no humor in his voice. “I managed to survive two monthly evaluations and was on my way to becoming a soloist, when things really went downhill.”

Jinho cleared his throat and exhaled deeply through his nose, as if he was preparing himself for what was to come. “During the times I was practicing, I managed to make a friend. He was a really good guy. He told me he’d been watching me since the bullying began and was seriously impressed with how much I’d improved. At that time, my parents hadn’t really approved of me going to ‘waste’ my life by becoming a singer, so I hadn’t heard those words in a really long time.”

“That was probably the first time I cried since I became I trainee.” Jinho’s lips pulled into a smile, recalling the memory and Hyojong idly wondered how he could still be smiling.

“After that, we began talking and we became close friends. We were always together and we even practiced together. I helped him in his vocals while he assisted me in my dancing. We both improved so much that our monthly evaluations were almost always a guaranteed success. The trainees and even the teachers were stunned by our progress. I had felt so happy back then. My hard work was paying off and I’d finally made a friend. It felt like everything was falling in place.”

Jinho untwisted his fingers and wearily wiped at his face, suddenly exhausted from remembering the past. He didn’t stop talking though and Hyojong wondered if this was what he’d seen in some of the books Hongseok had been reading about having to hold something in for so long and then suddenly the theoretical dam bursts inside them.

“Then, one day I realized something. It had been in the middle of practice. I’d gotten tired from dancing and had decided to take a short break and rest while my friend continued practicing. I was watching him dance, enraptured by his fast and smooth movements, when he caught my gaze from
the mirror and winked playfully at me.”

“I hadn’t understood what that meant at the time. I hadn’t understood why my heart suddenly skipped a beat when he winked at me. I hadn’t understood why I’d blushed and refused to meet his gaze until one day, I accidentally walked in him on the bathroom.”

Jinho chuckled at the memory and leaned his head back. He stared at the ceiling for a while before continuing with the story.

“I don’t remember what I’d been doing before but I suddenly wanted to go to the bathroom. I walked over to the restrooms and when I opened the door, he was standing there, in front of a mirror with his shirt off. He was checking his sides and ribs for something, I’m guessing a bruise, when I walked in. I don’t know why but I tried walking back out but it was too late. He’d already heard me open the door and had seen me from the mirror. He turned before I could close the door and called me inside.”

“I lost the chance to leave and walked inside the bathroom and shut the door behind me. He’d smirked and had lifted his eyebrows playfully, asking me if I liked what I saw. I was so stunned by the strangely flirtatious question and how flushed and hot my entire body felt that I couldn’t say anything and just stood there, motionless.”

“He took my silence as a yes and smirked even wider. He came closer and stopped with his hand beside my head, holding the door shut and making me press my body further into the door in a futile attempt to put any kind of distance between us. He leaned down and suddenly asked me, his mouth mere inches from my ear, if I was into guys. My mouth had gone dry and I couldn’t form the words to deny his question.” Jinho said. “I couldn’t defend myself and say that I wasn’t. I couldn’t say that he was delusional. I couldn’t tell him anything and he, once again, he took my silence as a yes.”

“After that, he narrated all the times he’d seen me looking at him with a ‘lustful gaze.’” Jinho indicated with quotation marks. “Half of them were things I hadn’t even known had happened but he had. He’d been watching me the entire time and was very aware of everything I did. I was scared of that. I was scared of how much he knew while I knew absolutely nothing. I was scared of how fast my heart kept thumping my chest. I was so scared of him and how I felt towards him that I pushed him back with all my might and dashed out of the bathroom, all previous need to use it forgotten.”

“After that...I avoided any contact with him.” Jinho said and popped his knuckles. “He kept trying to talk to me and get me to look at him but I strongly avoided contact. I knew I was being a coward and I was running from my problems but at the time, it felt like addressing how I felt towards him and how I’d felt in the bathroom was a sure fire way to disaster. It didn’t last very long though and he soon managed to corner me.”

"It happened when I was leaving the training rooms, late at night after a long practice by myself. I didn’t know he was there since I was so focused on the sheet I was reading. He startled me and used the chance to drag me into a closet room used for brooms and mops.”

“It was larger than the other storage rooms and had enough space for two people to be in there.” Jinho explained, using his hands to demonstrate the size of the room. “That was when he told me of how impressed he was with me, with my dancing and singing, and how he’d been in love with me since he first heard me sing.”

“It was the first time I heard that since my parents weren’t fully supportive of my career.” Jinho said as he bit his lip and looked at everything but Hyojong. “I was...easily swayed to say. He had sweet-talked his way into my heart and I completely fell for it....”

“After that, we began dating in secret and began doing things couples would only in secret.”
“It was when we were caught by one of the teachers that shit really hit the fan.” Jinho almost laughed at the memory now. He vividly remembered how he’d been laying with his lover post-make out and had overlooked the sounds of footsteps, thinking they’d just pass and go like they always did.

He remembered how foolish they must have looked, hands around each other, staring up at the door in horror as it slowly opened to reveal their teacher. He had keys in his palm and seemed to be on the way to finish locking up the building when he stumbled upon them.

Jinho could only freeze as his lover tried explaining the situation but the teacher wouldn’t listen and went to get additional help. After that, it was a history Jinho valiantly tried to forget. He sat back and finally looked at Hyojong, the story finally over on his part.

“And, that’s the story behind my giant scandal in the company~.” Jinho said with a smile but to Hyojong it resembled a grimace more than it did a smile. “It was long, right?”

Hyojong didn’t say anything and just reached over to hug Jinho. He squeezed Jinho tightly to his body and didn’t say anything. Jinho laughed and awkwardly patted Hyojong’s back.

“What’s wrong? Why did you suddenly hug me?” Jinho asked.

“It just felt like you needed a hug, hyung.” Hyojong said, his mouth half muffled into Jinho’s clothes. “You looked like you were about to cry, so I thought a hug was what you needed.”

Jinho hadn’t noticed he had actually been on the verge of tears until Hyojong pointed it out. He blinked and just as Hyojong had said, tears fell down his cheeks. Jinho reached up and wiped them off with his free hand but they wouldn’t stop pouring.

“That’s weird….” Jinho said as he tried wiping them off to no avail. “It won’t stop…It usually does. Why won’t it stop?”

Hyojong said nothing and hugged Jinho tighter. It was when Jinho was freely sobbing into his neck that Hyojong spoke up.

“It’s okay, hyung. I’m sorry you went through that, but you have us now...I promise that won’t happen to you again...I swear it won’t….”

Chapter End Notes

PS: Lost Eyes and Bloody Legs are still on and aren’t on a hiatus. I thought it'd be best iff i reminded my readers that L.E and B.L are still running. I’m still going through a writer's block and since their plot is harder to do it might take me some time to get it right. But in the time that I was trying to overcome my current problem, I decided to write about a new fandom that i barely know of well. So as a short spoiler, it's an NCT, yuwin, fic and has 10+k words. Please anticipate it!
Chapter 8

After that, Jinho and Hyojong went back into the room. Jinho was much calmer after his conversation with Hyojong unlike when he had called the man outside. He had wiped all traces of tears from his face before walking in and had briefly stopped Hyojong and told him not mention anything he’d said outside to the others. Jinho had nearly vomited up butterflies in his plight to tell Hyojong. He doubted he’d be okay if he had to tell nine other people about his past, and consequently, come out to them.

Jinho hadn’t even come out to his family, or to his friends from school, he didn’t know how he’d be able to handle his members, people he was meant to spend a long, long, long time with -if things went well- reactions especially if they weren’t open-minded about it. Jinho had plans to tell them, but not now. Eventually. Preferably when they had debuted and had cemented their presence in the entertainment industry. But for now, Jinho wanted to focus on his career, on their career. And that was what he intended to do.

“Hey,” Kino greeted as he bent down to finish his stretching. “You guys were gone for a while, is everything okay?”

“It’s fine.” Hyojong replied and waved a hand carelessly. “We were just talking. Hyung had something to tell me about yesterday, that’s all.”

“Ooh...Okay then.” Kino said and reached his fingers out, leaving most of his mid-section to lay on the ground as he stretched his spine and lower back. He also had his legs spread in a very, very near-split.

“But hyungs,” Kino called out and Jinho and Hyojong paused and looked at him. “The teacher said we better stretch out thoroughly from now on. He insisted that I make sure everyone is thoroughly stretched out since the dances we’ll be given and be working on from now will be harder and will require some flexibility.”

Hyojong, YanAn, Wooseok, Shinwon and Yuto all groaned unabashedly. Those five were known for being the most terribly stiff members, despite Hyojong being one of the major dancers in the group. He was decently flexible but he knew the thorough level Kino was referring to was far from where he was. Jinho was rather flexible as well so he didn’t mind the extra stretching, but the four tallest members in their groups would admittedly have the hardest time. Especially Wooseok.

“I know, I know. But it’s what the teacher asked, so we have to.” Kino sat up and pulled his legs in, bending back down to stretch out his hamstrings and back before standing up and stretching his upper body.

“I think it’d be better if we assign flexible members to the less flexible members. I’ll take Yuto, so Jinho-hyung please take care of Wooseok while Hongseok-hyung and Changgu-hyung will take Shinwon-hyung and YanAn-hyung.” He turned to Hui who was also in the middle of stretching. “And Hui-hyung will help Hyojong-hyung.”

They all nodded and moved to their assigned partners. Jinho went to Wooseok and made him sit on the floor and try to reach as far past his feet as he could without hurting himself. Due to his long hands, he reached far pretty quickly but could barely hold it for three seconds without screaming in agony.
Jinho glanced at the others and they were all the same. The four tall members were struggling the most, especially since they were paired up with four of the most flexible members in their groups. Two minutes barely went by without all of them screaming in pain and begging their partner to let them off. Jinho found this rather hilarious and a glance at the others showed he wasn’t alone.

Kino was laughing every two seconds Yuto would yelp in pain and smack his thigh, pleading for him to ease up. Hongseok couldn’t stop his half-snort, half-laughing sound every time Shinwon would yelp and try to run away when his hands brushed the tips of his shoes. Changgu was barely doing anything for Yan An as he kept on bursting out in laughter every time Yan An would angrily swat at him and scold him in his cutely broken Korean.

Hui was probably the only one who wasn’t dying from laughter, but that’s because Hyojong was instead. Funnily enough, instead of Hyojong being stiff and in need of proper stretching, it ended up being Hui. Jinho saw Hyojong dying as Hui tried to touch the floor without bending his knees and fail expertly at it, barely brushing the floor with his fingers.

“Why are you so bad at this?” Hyojong asked, mid-chortle. “I thought you were more flexible than me!”

“It’s not my fault I can’t touch the ground!” Hui retorted and yelped as he accidentally went down further, pulling at his tight hamstrings. “Ah!! That hurts!!” Hui rubbed at his sore hamstrings which sent Hyojong into another fit of laughter.

Maybe it was because of Hyojong, or Hui’s yelps of pain but Kino laughed even harder which caused a chain reaction with all of them and soon enough they were all laughing at each other, all previous thoughts of stretching thrown out with the wind.

They calmed down soon enough and just in time for their managers to arrive and take them back to their dorms. They gathered their things and went out of the practice room, thanking the teacher for their help as they went. Jinho, Yan An, Changgu, Yuto and Wooseok lined up in front of their van and waved good bye to the others as they boared their vans and were driven back to the dorms.

Upon arriving, they all filed into the house and separated. Some went into the showers, planning to take a quick shower before bed while some went to the kitchen to grab a bite of food. Jinho went straight to shower, leaving two-thirds of the maknae line downstairs eating.

Jinho exited the shower, feeling much more refreshed and went to get dressed in loose fitting but still comfortable pyjamas. He towel-dryed his hair as he left his bedroom and went downstairs to grab a small snack before bed. Jinho personally didn’t like eating before bed but he doubted he’d last the night with how harshly his stomach kept on growling.

Jinho reached downstairs to find Wooseok and Yuto eating cereal and bread respectively. Jinho looked around but he couldn’t see Yan An or Changgu so he assumed they’d already retired to their bedrooms.

Jinho walked past the two maknaes and went into the kitchen, inwardly grimacing at their choice of food. He opened the fridge and searched around before grabbing a container that had rice from two days ago and another container that had some stew and vegetables.

Jinho served up a small portion and kept the containers back before going to heat up his food in the microwave.

“Hyung, I’m going to sleep~” Wooseok called out from the living room. Jinho nodded and hummed
back a response before wishing them goodnight. Yuto walked into the kitchen to return their utensils in the sink while Woosok headed upstairs to their bedroom. Yuto bid him goodnight before exiting the room and going to bed, leaving Jinho alone with his freshly heated food.

Jinho took his food from the microwave and went to the living room to eat. As a sort of tradition or unspoken rule, they had begun leaving a blanket downstairs on the couch in case someone needed it but didn’t want to head upstairs for one. It was a truly wonderful idea and Jinho mentally thanked whichever member begun this trend.

He sat down and took the blanket, wrapping it around his mid-waist, and began eating his food. Jinho knew his members sometimes wondered how he dealt with the silence that came when he wasn’t around them. He unlike the other members, had not grown up around a lot of noise. His family was very calm and polite, never once being rowdy unless they were heavily intoxicated or at a party, and by default, Jinho grew up to be the same, preferring to stay in the calming silence of solitude on some days rather than be around his rowdier members.

But it wasn’t bad or lonely. Jinho rather liked it. Being in the silence for him meant his thoughts were less jumbled up in his brain and he was capable of organizing them as opposed to a more complicated and messy line of thought he got with the members. Even now as he ate, Jinho could recall his chat with Hyojong outside of their dance room.

Jinho had actually planned to never reveal his past to anyone, not only by the laws of the company but by his own laws. After having to deal with the blatant discrimination or side glances sent his way by his fellow trainees or the staff, Jinho doubted he could trust someone with that part of him ever again.

But yet, Hyojong had managed to not only find out about his past but also about who he was in the span of 12 hours. Jinho remembered how he’d began quizzing him about his life and how in the beginning lying was an option, a very real and capable option yet Jinho refused.

Maybe it was because he needed someone to talk to. Maybe it was because he’d held that in for far too long with nobody to rely on, or maybe it was even just because Jinho didn’t feel right lying to his members, whatever the reason was, Hyojong knew about him and even though Jinho knew he could trust Hyojong, he couldn’t help but get worried.

What if the news spreads? What if the company finds out I told someone? What if...What if....What if.....those kinds of thoughts wouldn’t leave Jinho’s mind no matter what he did. But his greatest worry was, what he would do if his members began distancing them from him. Jinho honestly wouldn’t know how to react or what to do. He’d been through a lot on his journey to fulfill his dreams, endured a lot of pain and survived a lot of situation, but Jinho didn’t know how he’d be able to recover if his friends, if his members begin acting strange around him.

Putting those depressing thoughts out of his mind, Jinho removed the blanket from his legs and went to the kitchen, taking his now empty plate with him. Jinho left those thoughts alone as he ascended the stairs to his bedroom. What he needed now was rest, not to obsessively worry about what was going to happen tomorrow before the day even ended.

Jinho had faith in his members, and tried giving Hyojong the benefit of the doubt this time. A part of him was screaming that this was a terrible decision, to leave Hyojong with such crucial information, but the other part of him was trying to coax him into trying to trust someone after that day. Jinho knew it’d be hard, hell, his entire life was chock full of hardships, but he wondered who he could trust if he couldn’t even trust the people he was supposed to stay with for a very, very long time.
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