The One After Ten Years.

by darlingjongin

Summary

After ten years, nine people are put into a compromise when they meet again. And they all know that reuniting can only cause mayhem.

(Sequal to previous work: The War)

Notes

A special celebration of EXO CBX’s comeback after 1 year and 5 months.
Chanyeol doesn’t know what he’s doing in a prison cell at two o’clock in the morning with a burning throat and an aching head. He didn’t think he’ll be back in town, let alone inside the local police station. It seemed smaller than he had remembered, albeit, he didn’t remember much from his younger days, most of his youth being spent on the other side of town where the old community centre was, he never sought to actually travel downtown to where all the shit happens – the bad shit – the not very family friendly shit. But now at the ripe age of twenty-eight, he might as well experience what it’s like to be jailed for the night – it’ll be a good story to tell his grandkids one day, he supposes…
‘Why am I stuck here with this dickhead? Put me in another cell, you jerks!’

Of course, Chanyeol would’ve sufficed being stuck in a jail cell on his own for the night, but why, oh why did he have to be stuck by non-other than Kim fucking Jongdae.

‘Keep it down! I’m trying to sleep!’

‘Go fuck yourself Baekhyun! You don’t deserve sleep!’

‘I should be in Fiji celebrating my sixth-year wedding anniversary! And because of you nutcases, I’m in jail!’

‘Mate, I’m a police investigator. My job is to be on the other side of this cell, not rotting in it!’

‘Shit, there’s paparazzi outside. Quick, Xiumin hide me’

‘Great, that’s what you’re fucking worried about? My fucking shirt is ripped wide open you fucking shithead!’

‘Can’t we all be calm about this situation. Sehun is working on trying to get us out’

‘Get us out my ass. He’s a lawyer, not our parents. He’s the devil reincarnated!’

‘Now, now, D.O, that’s not very nice’

Chanyeol is contemplating homicide. Genuinely. If he doesn’t make these fucktards keep quiet soon, his head will most likely explode along with his stomach.

‘Why does this always happen to me’, he murmurs, closing his eyes in hopes to get the noises out of his head, ignoring the argument waving around before him, voices raised and arms flailing, blaming each other for the reason why they’re not at home and in bed without a criminal record. But as per usual, even without the need to say his name, it was all down to Park Chanyeol. Of course.

12 hours ago.

‘You mind telling me where you were going, Mr Lee?’, voice, deep and grovels in appearance, eyes glaring down, fingers tapping intimidatingly on the rusted metal table which occupied the centre of the investigation room, blocking the police investigator from the man who sat so peacefully despite the situation he was in, his smirk still plastered on his arrogant face.

‘You tell me boss’, he responds, eyes playful as always, his elbows leaning on the table, ‘Why don’t you play the good cop and I may play nice too’

The police bang his clenched fist on the table, breaking it in half, his eyes deepening in a glare,
looking down at the man with a scar on his cheeks with anger. Before the man could make a move, he is thrust up from his seat, a wave of wind blowing as he is thrown into the wall, back clashing with the hard cement, his head banging with the impact, his breath taken away as the police nears himself, fist punching the wall, creating a crack in the wall.

‘This is me being nice’, he growls, the fisted hand still leaning on the cracked wall, head tilting as he closes the space between him and the criminal, ‘Tell me where you’re hiding the drugs and maybe I won’t punch you in the face’
morning but never bother to get rid of.

‘I’ll have some nuggets then’, Junmyeon gives in, as he usually does ever since Kyungsoo came into his section, odd since his once lawyer friend is now a police investigator but glad that he finally has a normal human as a colleague and not one of those twats who cut their toenails inside his office during the day.

‘Atta boy’, the duo walks out of the police station, ignoring everyone who tries to call out for them, not caring about anything since it was their break and no one was going to force them to work during their break.

‘Sir!’

‘Sir, I don’t think I understand this’

‘Sir!’

‘Mr Byun! I don’t get the question!’

‘Oh my god! This is a classroom, not a market! One at a time people!’, the teacher ejected at the front of the class raises his voice to the response of his students whining over the work he had set them for the hour, high pitched complaints and groaning being heard so early in the morning, making the teacher roll his eyes and contemplating resignation.

‘Help me, sir! I’m still stuck on the first question!’, a girl calls over from the back calls over, hair long and pass her shoulder, her hands completely raised and patient compared to the other students. Baekhyun sighs, rolling his eyes once again as he gets up from his desk, putting his book down as he walks over to the back of the class.

‘Let me see, Eun Bi’, he looks down, grabbing down the girl’s question sheets and seeing the stains of lead writing paragraphs worth of answers on each question, messy but still readable, almost finishing the first page of the sheet despite her exclamation of not even getting past the first question.

‘So, when are you coming over to our place?’, she asks, sliding her paper out of the way despite the teacher’s proclamation.

‘Eun Bi, if you don’t need help, then please don’t ask me. I have other students I need to help out’, he sighs, standing up from his bending position, sliding the paper back to his student.

‘But Kyunggie’s staying over at our parents’ place for the weekend. Join us for dinner’, she calls him back, almost as intimidating as her older brother, her eyes seething the same glare her brother has. It’s been ten years and Eun Bi’s still just as outspoken as ever, but this time, there was a menacing tinge in her voice – Baekhyun blames the influence of Kyungsoo – her question sounding more like an order.
‘I don’t think I feel like coming over to dinner’, Baekhyun hisses back at her, trying to keep his professionalism intact, ‘Now please get on with your work. We are at school, not the market’

‘Why do you always say that?’

‘Because it’s true’, Baekhyun ends the conversation, coughing aloud and asking if any other students need help, his eyes looking around to see five or more so hands raised up. What a great start in the morning. He’s already up to his wits and lunch isn’t until for another hour.

‘Right, what don’t you guys get about Sociology? If you actually read the textbook maybe you’ll find this all easy!’

‘Mr Byun, we’re not nerds like you’

‘Mind you, I was not a nerd when I was at school!’

‘Then why are you a teacher?’

‘So the next generation doesn’t end up being stupid, now Jinyoung, what do you need help on?’

‘Hello, it’s nice to see Jia again’, Chen walks through the kitchen, after coming home from work, tie loosened and face finally relaxing to a smile once he sees food set on the table – ordered of course, since he and Xiumin didn’t have time to cook anymore – Lay and Luhan sitting on the dining table with little Jia resting on Lay’s lap, laughing as soon as Chen skips towards her, rubbing her chubby cheeks.

‘Hey, how was work?’, Xiumin calls over, setting up more plates with the extra side dishes he ordered from the Chinese delivery place down by the neighbourhood.

‘Tiring as usual. My dad wants to quit and give me the company to manage myself and of course I said no’, Chen informs his husband, walking over to where Xiumin continues to lean on the kitchen counter, smiling as he feels Chen’s arms reach out to him, pecking his cheeks as he walks back to where their guests are.

‘How’s the move going?’, Chen asks the couple, looking at how Jia reaches her arms wide, trying to reach for Luhan, still giggling like she’d seen the funniest thing in the world.

‘Well, I’m holding it out fine since I know this neighbourhood and area’, Lay informs him, nibbling on the bread which laid on the table, waiting for Xiumin to finish up so they can start dinner, ‘But Luhan still misses China’

‘How can I? Permanently moving to Korea is a big deal and I still need time to heal’, Luhan defends himself, making sure to cradle Jia softly in his arms, rocking his knees in rhythm motion to try and tame the hyperactive child.

‘Well, I’m glad you’re both back and this time for good. It’s so long trying to visit you in China and vice versa’, Xiumin finally makes his way by the dining table, setting the remaining food,
smiling as he hugs Lay and waves at Luhan, ‘Plus, Jia will love her Kindergarten’

‘And if you stick around long enough, maybe Baekhyun might be her teacher when she grows up’

‘I’d rather home-school her’, Luhan and Lay simultaneously murmur, cutlery clanking as they dig themselves into the food, Jia finding her way onto the floor where she crawls her way into the living room.

‘Don’t judge, he’s a good teacher’

‘I don’t doubt that he is. I doubt his professionalism’, Luhan points out, stuffing fried chicken as he talks with his mouth full.

‘What do you mean?’

‘What if Yixing pissed him off and in return, he messes up Jia’s grades?’

‘Baekhyun is not that petty’

‘You never know’

‘Babe, have you got your luggage packed by the way?’, Xiumin ends the conversation about Baekhyun there, turning his head to see Chen munching on his salad, looking at him with wide eyes but not replying, just giving him the sweet smile he always makes when he’s trying to sweet talk his way out of trouble, ‘I am not packing for you, that’s all I’m going to say’, he groans, giving his husband a glare as he warns Chen, ‘Our flight leaves early morning tomorrow’

‘I know, but I’ve been speaking to Baekhyun about the ten-year reunion our old high school is doing. He said if we don’t go, he’ll cut our balls off’

‘Oh yeah, I got the e-mail for that too’, Lay chirps, scrolling through his iPhone Z, looking at the e-mail which was sent to him a few weeks ago from his old high school, an invitation of a reunion from the class of 2018, ‘I guess since you’re all going, I’ll be going to. It’ll be awesome to see everyone else’

‘I think it’s just us and Baekhyun. We haven’t kept in touch with the rest for quite a long time’, Xiumin looks down, seeing his contact list change so drastically. Five years ago, the top names on his frequent contact list would’ve been the same eight idiots he spent his youth with, but after so many years have gone by, he sometimes forgot how the rest looked or even spoke.

‘Yeah, I haven’t seen anyone else apart from you two and Baekhyun…’

‘D.O and Suho live on the other side of town, so I see them once in a while, but the rest…’

It seemed inevitable that the group would part ways, so often the vast majority of opportunity being outside of Korea, it was to be expected that the rest would fly off to god knows where to do what they have to do to live a fulfilling life. It still hurts like a bitch, especially for Chen to send off his best friend only to be ignored whenever he tried to contact him, so often giving up whenever he gets sent to voicemail. He now opts in leaving him a few lines of an e-mail every Christmas and on his birthday as a way of showing respect for their friendship, but other than that, he had not seen Chanyeol for almost six years.

‘Maybe they might turn up, who knows?’, Lay, optimistic as ever, gleams at the two couple who looked at the situation as hopeless.
Incheon Airport was slightly busy since it was the beginning of summer, families and young people walking in masses with short breathes and hot mouths, shouting about how excited they were to finally leave the country and have a well-deserved break in another. Amongst the hugging friends and whining, toddlers stood a man, a very tall man, waiting inside the airport for his taxi to arrive, the heat being too immense this deep into the afternoon, his hoodie already entrapping the summer heat. His phone was cracked through the middle, the colour of the screen changing since the phone had been abused over the years – too bad Chanyeol’s bank account wouldn’t let him purchase another phone – but he was sure his sister would buy him a new one once she finds out the predicament he was in.

‘Park Chanyeol, are you telling me you are unemployed?!’, his sister screams over the phone which glitched slightly, making the boy flinch in fear of his life. His sister was thousands of miles away from him at the moment, but why did he feel like she can be right behind him with a knife ready.

‘Yoora, calm down-’

‘You calm down! You don’t have a job! What are you going to do? Do you even have a house to live in?!’, he can hear his sister continuing to freak out on his behalf, making him roll his eyes since he knew this was coming but he was still not ready for it, ‘Come to America. Come here now! I can’t have my little brother homeless!’

‘Yoora, calm down. You just had another kid, I don’t think your house will be able to fit all of me’, Chanyeol chuckles, being all too calm and peaceful despite his current situation, ‘Plus, dad gave me their old house before moving off to China’, Chanyeol explains, looking at the old address of his parents’ house, the same house he’d been dying to break free ever since he was young and now he’s coming back to it. Since his parents’ inevitable divorce, the past ten years had been easier for him which seemed odd since most kids would hate for their parents to separate. Chanyeol would visit his dad the most since he stayed over in Korea and his mother leapt off to Japan to spend the rest of her days overworking until a sudden heart attack took her. It was a rather peaceful funeral – a funeral he and his sister didn’t bother to attend – but their father informed them, most of his stories being about their mother’s side of the family being pissed that her own children didn’t attend her funeral, but all in all, his family life, despite looking tragic on the outside, had improved rather vastly since he visits his sister almost every other month and does so with his father as well who had started making more of an effort to get closer with his son despite being a good fifteen years late – it’s the thought that counts – so Chanyeol forgives and forgets.

‘Oh yeah… Dad spoke to me about that… I thought he was going to sell it?’

‘Not yet. He’s entrusting me to fix it up a bit and make it look presentable before putting it on the market. It’ll take me about three months give or take and maybe then I might find myself a job’, Chanyeol responds, making a move once he sees a taxi nearing the pick-up section of the airport, the license plate is the same as what was in the text message he received once he called for a lift.
‘I can’t believe you’re unemployed at your age’

‘Sis, I’m still in my twenties, unlike you, your grandmother’

‘Shut up! I’m being serious Chanyeol, how are you going to get a job at this rate? And in Korea? Where everyone is fighting for a job’, he can hear the change in tone in Yoora’s voice, the sudden high pitched of worry striking a chord in Chanyeol, making him want to hug and comfort his sister.

‘Don’t worry about me. I’m Park Chanyeol. I’ll find a job. I promise’, he comforts her whilst having to deal with stuffing his heavy bags inside the boot of the car without so much as a help from the taxi driver who refuses to even get out of his seat.

‘Hhmm. Maybe this is a blessing in disguise… If you stuck with your job until the end, then maybe…’

‘What? You think I’m going to die?’

‘That’s not funny Chanyeol’

‘Throughout the ten years I’ve worked at my old company, I’ve only ever been hospitalised twice. One since a building dropped on me and another of me falling from a tree because I was trying to save a cat. Trust me, I was safe’

‘Then why did you quit?’

That’s a good question. Why did Chanyeol quit?

‘Byun Baekhyun’

‘It’s Mr Byun to you, Eun Bi’, the teacher informs, dragging his folders which rested on his arms, his shoulder bag already heavy with three different textbooks and four touchpads he’d suspended earlier on in the day, Eun Bi, with her loud mouth and dress flowing softly behind him, taunting him every second of every day for the past year.

‘Just come to dinner tonight, huh? Huh? It’ll be fun, I promise’

‘I can’t. I have the ten-year reunion party I need to organise’

‘You’re actually coming to that?’

‘What, it’s not like I have an excuse now. I work here’, Baekhyun points out, turning another corner and past the students’ locker hall, seeing the touchscreen locks the Principal set up two years ago to make it easier for students to access their lockers. Baekhyun felt old seeing the touchscreens, remembering the time when his locker only had a stupid dusty lock which barely opened and you had to constantly kick it.

‘Well then… If you’re going to the reunion… Then I’ll just have to force Kyunggie to go to’
‘Oh my god, is that what this is all about?’, Baekhyun sighs, combing back his overgrown hair, twisting his body right in front of the teenager, blocking her from seeing the staffroom which he was about to enter.

‘About what?’

‘Look, me and your brother… We’re…’

‘Meant to be?’

‘No. We are not. We were a thing, then we weren’t a thing. So please, hold off on trying to set us back up, it’s not going to work’. Baekhyun tramples over Eun Bi’s ideas once again, stepping inside the staffroom and shutting the door right in front of her face, but not without protest.

‘Love is love! It will prevail!’, she screams at the closed door, kicking it before walking away.

‘What is Eun Bi up to now?’, one of the other staff members ask, laughing as they watch Baekhyun retiring over one of the sofas, closing his eyes and murmuring prayers for him to get himself through the day.

‘Don’t tell me you and One Punch Man are back on?’, it came rather as a shock in the staffroom once they found out that Baekhyun used to date the new fresh cop who just got hired in their neighbourhood, so often teasing him about him whenever they can.

‘Why are people calling him that? His name is D.O and no, we are not a thing’

‘Baekhyun, he once punched my neighbour so hard for drink driving, he lost four of his front teeth and fractured his jaws’

‘Well, it sucks to be him’, Baekhyun points out, eyes closed and using this time to catch up on sleep that he lost due to all the marking he’s been doing over the weekend.

‘Oh, and Baekhyun, I expect the ten-year reunion of class 2018 to run smoothly. All is in your hands’, one of the receptionists calls over from the coffee room.

‘Great. Fucking fantastic’

Their high school had always done it. A ten-year reunion gets together in which old classmates see each other for the first time in years, catching up with what life each had in store for them, going over their youthful memories, old hopes and dreams and nostalgia of recreating their best moments from when they were all dumb and stupid.

Baekhyun didn’t know why he had to be the one welcoming back the twats who made his life miserable.

True, he didn’t have the worst life as a high school student, but he remembered the aching pain of having to listen to stupid people, his fellow classmates breaking their bones and dignity trying to be
popular. He looks around the hall, refurbished and looking better ever since the new Principal came into the school and flipped it over, firing incompetent teachers and training new ones along with redesigning the whole school building – it’s basic structure and layout was still pretty much the same – but Baekhyun nodded an approval with how clean and crisp the new halls and classrooms were. The wheels in the sound system, looking around to find the DJ booth already in place by the centre of the stage, rolling his eyes for what seems to be about the infinite time, as he sees Eun Bi hanging up some balloons by the walls, smiling and waving at him as soon as the doors bang open, announcing his arrival.

‘Eun Bi, you better go home before I call your parents’

‘Oh, so you still have their phone number?’

‘Oh, for fuck sake’, Baekhyun whines, opting to just ignore the teenager as a whole, wheeling the speaker at the edge of the stage.

‘Look, Kyunggie is going to the reunion and I need you to look sharp. My brother is no longer easy to please and it’ll be a miracle for him to start dating again…’, Eun Bi, in all her full glory, continues to poke at Baekhyun. Some might think, what the actual fuck? Baekhyun and D.O actually dated? Why, when and how? Well, Baekhyun had one perfect word to explain the situation they were both in.

Rebound.

That’s right. D.O and Baekhyun happened to be heartbroken and alone around the same time when Chanyeol took off to Fiji, ending their relationship and Kai also took off to become an idol after being scouted during one of his shows. D.O, who was still studying for his bar exam and Baekhyun who had just received his teaching diploma sought comfort in moving back in their parents’ home, therefore spending more time with each other. Push came to shove and they found themselves in Baekhyun’s bed after one drunken night out. Their relationship literally lasted less than three months before they both admitted that they were using each other to get over their previous relationship and they decided to end it there, D.O moving to an apartment further in the city after passing his exam and becoming a lawyer in some law firm in Gangnam and Baekhyun deciding to stay and apply to become a teacher at the local Kindergarten before realising he’d much rather teach high school level education. Till this day, Baekhyun didn’t know why D.O came back to become a police officer two years ago, but it was when Eun Bi’s harassment started, the little girl trying to get her brother to get back together with her favourite teacher.

‘Eun Bi, you do realise that your brother and I didn’t technically like each other like that’

‘Oh, so you’re admitting that you two were just fuck buddies?’

‘No!’, Jesus, why did this girl have to be so vulgar all the time? She was only seventeen years old and she already sounds worse than when Baekhyun was at that age – okay, that’s obviously a lie – but she was getting there.

‘Then you did like each other’

‘God, you are so stubborn’, Baekhyun gives up, setting up the sound system and checking the lighting, lifting his hands to control the brightness, dimming it down to a much cooler atmosphere.

‘You’re better than the other guy’

‘What another guy?’
'The one who shall not be named'

'What? You mean Kai?'

'Shh! I said not to name him!'

'Kai was not that bad'

'He abandoned Kyunggie… For a fucking job! I mean, who does that?'

Baekhyun can think of one more person who would do that.

'It’s very normal for people to prioritise their jobs'

'I don’t care. He’s a dick'

'He’s also your friends’ current obsession'

'Just because he’s been in films does not make him cool'

'His latest film was a box office success'

'I don’t care. He’s a twat in real life and that’s all that matter’, Eun Bi argues, stomping on a balloon, popping it in an instant and also making the ground shake.

'Shit. Let’s hope no one breaks your heart any time soon’, Baekhyun grips onto the railings by the open doors at the sudden shake of Eun Bi’s frustration.

'They better not, otherwise I’ll use my powers to snuff them out'

'Gosh, I think you’re scarier than your brother'

'Where did you think he got it from?'

'Where are you going?'

'Eun Bi wants me to pick her up from school. Says she doesn’t like walking in the dark'

'Eun Bi? Not walking in the dark? Are you sure you were talking to your sister?’, Suho chuckles, earning a small hit from the smaller officer, his white shirt stained with ketchup due to their earlier lunch.

'Don’t be stupid. She’s still a girl and I wouldn’t want her walking around by herself this late at night'

'D.O, she has the power of force too you know. She can run you over with her powers’

'Now that’s just offensive. I’m also pretty strong’
'Yeah, but she’s tactical’

‘Whatever. Come with me. We’ll have proper dinner at my parents’ place anyway’

‘Oh, yes! Maybe I can make my parents’ let me sleep at their place again, my apartment is a wreck’

‘That’s because you don’t fucking clean it, you monster’, D.O jokes, bowing to the rest of their team as they walk off, their footsteps closing in on Suho’s car, a rather modest car for a chief officer, but a car which everyone can see Suho riding in. The two best friends make themselves comfortable in Suho’s messy car, D.O laughing at the state in which Suho leaves everything in, ‘And to think you used to be organised’

‘I was a school president, I had to be organised’

‘What changed?’

‘My graduation speech which took me years to prepare and years to achieve being bombarded and ruined by a bunch of twats getting high’

‘Right. I forgot about that, haha’

‘Park Chanyeol?!’

Chanyeol turns around, closing the taxi door as he finds himself right in front of his old house, a house which he hadn’t stepped foot on in years, peering at the man waving at him on the lawn next to his house. He had a beard and long hair, his stomach was sticking out and he looked oddly familiar yet still strange to Chanyeol. Did he know this weirdo?

‘Um…’, he sees the man running up to him, arms reach out and engulfing him in a bear hug.

What the fuck?

‘It’s so good to see you! How have you been?!’, the man screams, spinning him around and conversing with him like an old friend would. Chanyeol must have had amnesia or some shit, for the life of him, he could not remember this guy at all.

‘Um…’, he sees the man running up to him, arms reach out and engulfing him in a bear hug.

‘It’s Jae Woo man. How can you not remember me, we were best friends?’

Jae Woo?!

‘Jae Woo?!’, Chanyeol shouts, eyes widening and jaws dropping to the floor as he scans the man one more time, from head to toe. This could not be rich boy rival Jae Woo he once hated during high school. It couldn’t be. Why was he… So old looking? They were still in their twenties
goddammit he looked like he just reaches his forties. Chanyeol thanks the lord almighty that he did not look like that, albeit, you can tell that he’s aged, but thank god, he’d aged gracefully.

‘Yeah, it’s me, man! So, you must be here to come to the party’

‘The what?’, does Jae Woo still host parties to this day?

‘The high school reunion the school is having for us tonight. Didn’t you get the e-mail’

Chanyeol didn’t have an e-mail.

‘Uh…’

‘Oh, come on. Let’s go together! Just like the old times’

What kind of old time was Jae Woo talking about? In Chanyeol’s memories, they couldn’t stand each other.

‘Uh…’, Chanyeol has just been on a fourteen-hour plane ride and he just didn’t have the time to revisit his embarrassing past, so he guesses he’ll give it a miss.

‘I heard Baekhyun’s been planning it for months, so it’s bound to be good, eh?’

*Baekhyun?*

‘Yeah, sure. What time does it start?’

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Kim Jongin. He goes by his real name now, sat on the front seat of his newly purchased car, voice controlled and auto driving down the streets of Gangnam, his sunglasses pursed up and lips pouting as he sees traffic ahead.

*Kim Jongin has released his new album which had skyrocketed to number one, being his third album in a row to debut first place –*

Jongin switches the radio off, opting to listen to his music playlist instead, which mostly included throwback songs and movie soundtrack. He wasn’t much of a pop guy, which was ironic since he was an idol, but having to listen and perform pop music for almost six years, it was to no surprise that he was getting sick of it. Life as it is for Kim Jongin changed one night during his early twenties when a music manager scouted him after one of his shows at Theatre school. He objected to saying yes, but after being persuaded one more time by said manager, he gave it a go and was immediately thrust into the studio to debut as a solo artist.
Rookie Star, Kim Jongin strums every girl’s heartstrings with his new single.

Former ballet dancer turned idol, Kim Jongin, dances his way to the front stage.

Viral video of Kim Jongin’s debut performance hitting 100 million today.

Kim Jongin to debut as an actor in a new drama with Twice’s Momo.

Kim Jongin celebrates his sixth anniversary, being the first idol with no scandals.

Kim Jongin had always been a diligent idol, mostly because he didn’t have anyone to fool around in, hiding his relationships quite well and most of the time just staying at home and playing games when he didn’t have schedules. Over the past years, he had gotten used to living a quiet life in between work, the stage is the only opportunity where he can truly be himself.

[+234, -12] Six years and no scandal? Heol, Jongin is really something…

[+321, -16] He may be the perfect idol, but his songs are still mediocre and don’t get me started on his voice…

[+222, -15] Kim Jongin is one of the best artists this generation has released and I don’t care what anyone else says. If your idol has over 23 daesungs then we can talk. Until then, don’t even try to get to Jongin’s level’

‘Kai’

‘It’s been a long time since anyone’s called me that’

‘It’s been a long time since you’ve called’, a familiar, yet disinterest voice talks to him over the phone, Jongin’s fingers grazing over the number he stole off his manager’s phone, looking at the name.

‘Oh, come on Xiumin. Can’t you just treat an old friend?’, Jongin hadn’t kept in touch with much of his old friends from before he was famous, but he knew one person who he ended up meeting since they work in the same industry. Kim Minseok, most notably known for his pen name, Xiumin, songwriter for musicals and movies. They’ve passed by each other during award shows and after parties, so often Xiumin being the one to call Kai’s manager the moment he showed signs of being drunk.

‘What do you want?’

‘I need a place to crash’

‘Why?’

‘Sasaengs’

‘They tried to break in again?’

‘What can I say, they just love me’, Jongin laughs, although he didn’t really mean it since he was
still slightly pissed off at finding a girl trying to climb through his windows.

‘Look, I need to be somewhere, so I don’t know if-’

‘Where do you need to be?’

‘The high school reunion. It’s happening tonight-’

‘Oh shit. Do we have a reunion? Well, why didn’t you say so? All the more reason to drive to your place. It’s close to the school isn’t it?’, Jongin gleams, making a U-turn as he passes by his usual hotel that he crashes at once in a while, typing the address of Xiumin’s house once the boy had given in on Jongin’s request.

‘You don’t have to go-’

‘Oh, come on. It’ll be fun to see everyone again’, Jongin drives quicker, eager more than ever to arrive at his old neighbourhood.

‘Well… Yeah, I guess so…’, Xiumin turns around, mouthing to his husband a quick help me as he continues to fake a friendly tone at Jongin on the other side of the phone, ‘It’ll be nice to see you there…’

‘Cool, I’ll see you soon then’

‘Yeah…’

Chen walks in, now in his pyjamas and warm socks, gliding his way to where Xiumin was, the kitchen tiles being his own ice rink.

‘What is it, babe?’, Chen whispers, bringing his arms around Xiumin’s waist, feeling more like happier since he can finally kiss his husband after sending Lay and Luhan off after dinner, waving a goodbye to cute little Jia.

‘Kai’s coming to the reunion’

‘What? Why?’

‘I don’t know why…’, Xiumin sighs, ‘Please tell me D.O isn’t coming’

‘Why would he?’

‘I don’t know. I just had this nasty feeling that if Kai’s coming, then the possibility of everyone coming is an option’, Chen giggles, watching his husband’s face furrow in worry, turning his around so that they’re facing each other, leaning in for a quick kiss.

‘I doubt that’s ever going to happen baby’, Xiumin smiles, seeing how Chen closes his eyes in adoration every time he gives into his kisses. Even after five years of marriage, they’re still like this – like a couple of high school sweethearts. Xiumin must’ve saved a country in his previous life.
'You what?!' 

'Kyunggie! You need to stay!' 

'No, I’m not going inside. I’ll wait in the car until you’re finished’, D.O couldn’t help but want to slap his sister right then and thereafter she explained that she so ‘coincidentally’ was asked to volunteer to help during the reunion party, begging him to stick around till the end to help her. 

'I cannot believe my own brother is ditching me in a hall filled with old people! What kind of brother are you?!' 

'First of all, they are not old, they’re my age. And second of all, I do not want to attend a reunion where I meet a bunch of idiots I could barely tolerate back then!’’, D.O whines, trying to force his sister to just follow him and ditch the whole reunion thing. 

'Kyunggie! I’m going to tell mum you stole her money to buy ice cream!’, Eun Bi threatens him, stomping her foot and causing the parking lot to shake. 

'First of all, I was like sixteen and second of all, that ice cream was for you!’’, D.O’s voice raised to match the size of his sister’s fury, tiptoes to make himself look bigger, even though Eun Bi was still shorter than him, he was still well aware of her growing stature and he would never admit it aloud, but it made him more wary of his devil of a sister. 

'Just go, geesh, it’s one night and you haven’t had a break in months’, Eun Bi tries one more time, displaying her change in expression, soft and pitiful – D.O was immune to this – shaking his head and grabbing hold of her wrist. 

'We’re going home and having dinner at mum and dad’s place. That’s final’, D.O presses his authority as the older brother, about to turn in the direction of Suho’s car when he finds that the car has lost its owner, the driving seat completely empty, Suho nowhere to be found, ‘Where the hell is he?’, he mutters, looking around to find the empty parking lot, cars aligned one after the other, but no signs of people passing through. 

'I guess we’ll just have to go inside and find him’, Eun Bi calls out and even though D.O wasn’t looking at her, he can already feel the smirk playing on her lips as he turns back about to where she is, her arms crossed and lips parted to a grin. 

'Five minutes’, he gives in, pointing an intimidating finger at her, ‘Five minutes and we’re gone. Got it?’ 

'Suho?’ 

'Lay!’’, Suho’s eyes widen to see the boy who he hadn’t met up with in almost two years, running off from his car to pull back his old friend.
'How have you been?', Lay perks up, his expression mirroring Suho’s shocked yet ecstatic ones, arms already hugging and grabbing hold of him, ‘It’s been a while!’

‘Yeah, work’s been a bitch so I couldn’t find the time to go on holiday’, Suho informs him, apologising for his lack of updates and meetups, but ever since his promotion, Suho had been on a whirlwind ride of stress and midnight rants.

‘No worries. We all know how that can be’, Lay comforts the man, and it’s like not a day had gone past between them, her conversation flowing with no awkward stops, eager to share their anecdotes to an equally attenuative listener, Suho forgetting about his parked car and his very pissed partner looking for him.

‘So, you moved permanently to Korea?’, Suho gleams the moment Lay informed him of the house he and Luhan purchased just around the corner of Chen’s.

‘Yeah, so now none of you can have an excuse to cancel dinner plans, okay?’, Lay playfully pokes at Suho’s stomach, the two making their way inside the school building where other former classmates have found their way, different shapes and sizes, emos turned into businessmen, nerds turned into engineers and idiots turned into thankfully someone with a job at least.

‘Where are we going?’, Suho finally recollects his surroundings, turning his head to find himself in the middle of the school corridors, lockers all bright red with touchscreen locks on the sides, scattering students who had evening classes making their way out of the building to make room for the annual reunion which had become a tradition.

‘What do you mean? We’re here for the high school reunion party’, Lay laughs, patting Suho’s shoulder as he reaches his hand out to open the doors to the auditorium, ‘Although, Chen didn’t say that you were coming’

School Reunion? Ah shit, that’s right. Suho remembered getting an e-mail about it, but just like any other e-mails that weren’t about work, it was thrown in the trash within a second.

‘Ah…’

‘Shit, Baekhyun!’, Lay screams suddenly, the excitement reappearing on his face once he sees another familiar face, a slim figure by the far end, his hands entangled over the bunting which fell due to Eun Bi’s sudden disappearance and abandonment in decoration, ‘Baekhyun!’, Lay was the first to tackle the teacher into the ground, the rest of the crowd looking to see where the odd screaming noises where coming from, Chen and Xiumin already Baekhyun’s side with a bottle of beer, laughing at Lay who was hit rather harshly at an already irritated man.

‘Baekhyun, how are you?’, Suho smiles, reaching his arms out to hug Baekhyun once he escaped the hold of Lay, ‘It’s been a while’

‘Yeah, it has’, Baekhyun replies, embracing the police officer. Despite not seeing each other for months on end, the feeling still remained between them, the comfortable presence of being with someone you’re okay to be yourself around it. Yes, Suho and D.O would often cancel get together and meetups, more often than they come, but one thing was for sure, it seemed as though time hasn’t changed when they did get together.

‘Where’s D.O?’, Xiumin asks, looking behind Suho to see if the other police were present, looking over at Chen who sighed in a heave of relief once they find that D.O was nowhere to be seen.

‘I have no idea, probably on his way to pick up Eun Bi?’
‘Chanyeol, you look so smart. This is going to be great!’, Jae Woo shouts the moment they turn a 
corner, Chanyeol’s eyes falling on an old familiar building. A gush of old memories piles through 
his mind as he looks across, the school gate and parking lot not changing one bit, the bricks 
eroding due to time, the standstill of the place he once used to call his safe haven. Chanyeol fixes 
his white button shirt, oddly feeling out of place with his suit and Jae Woo’s plaid shirt and denim 
jeans. He swallows his saliva as he looks around the parking area, seeing a crowd of people 
rushing in and out, certain faces which trigger old memories and others faces he struggled to 
remember.

‘Park Chanyeol?’, he hears a voice ahead of him, making him squint his eyes to see a small figure 
walking towards him, his casual hoodie and jeans making it even more evident that Chanyeol 
overdressed – extremely.

‘Do Kyungsoo?’, his voice turned up an octave once he sees the familiar face of an old friend, his 
hair shorter than he’d ever seen, his eyes round and wide as they meet again for the first time in 
five years.

‘What are you doing here? You’re in Korea?’, his questions fly out of him before he can give 
Chanyeol a proper greeting, his hands in his pocket and awkwardly smiling at him. Seems like time 
had strained their once relaxed relationship as Chanyeol brushes his hair back, glasses resting on 
his nose, ‘And you’re wearing glasses?’

‘Yeah… Optic nerves and…’, Chanyeol looks down. He didn’t feel the need to explain his health 
to D.O, he didn’t need a pity party, ‘So… You going to the reunion too?’, he tries to change the 
subject, smiling at D.O and acting shy which freaked D.O out since Chanyeol had never acted shy 
before. The two figures stay standing, Eun Bi already inside the school building, Jae Woo nowhere 
to be found.

‘No. I’m only here to pick up Eun Bi who’s…’, D.O turns around to see that his little sister was 
nowhere to be found, ‘Who’s inside the bloody building again. Goddammit’, D.O whispers the last 
part to himself, turning around to walk towards front gates, ‘Looks like I’ll have to get going inside 
again. I’ll see you soon’

‘Wait!’, Chanyeol calls out, racing his way over to where D.O was, ‘Let’s go together’, he 
suggests, sliding an arm on D.O’s shoulder, trying to relax but they both feel his stiff arms looking 
awkward on D.O. Chanyeol lets go immediately, ‘Go ahead’, he coughs out, gesturing for D.O to 
take the lead.

‘Yeah. Sure’, D.O awkwardly whispers to Chanyeol, walking a few steps ahead but feeling 
Chanyeol’s shadow following him. Surges of questions race through his mind. Why was Chanyeol 
here? When did he come back? And does Baekhyun know?
‘So, where’s D.O?’, Xiumin asks, laughing as Lay clings onto Baekhyun, the group making small conversation as the reunion takes full swing, the student volunteer helping with the music and food, looking bored and forced since some of them are spending their detention passing food around for the older former students than sitting down in an empty classroom. The five of them looked around the hall which had started to grow over the hours since the reunion started, Suho coming over to see old swimming teammates and Lay having a small emotion group hug with all the other friends he’d made during the short time he had in school.

‘I remember Lay coming during Senior year, yet he has more friends than every single one of us’, Chen comments, holding Xiumin’s hands as he takes a sip of the cheap wine, Xiumin leaning his head on his suited shoulder.

‘Lay was much more likeable than me’, Suho points out, grimacing at the bitter taste of the cheap wine Baekhyun offered him, trying not to show too much in his expression just in case Baekhyun gets offended.

‘That’s true’, the teacher replies, gaining a glare from Suho, ‘What? You were the most infuriating School President’, Baekhyun holds his hands up in surrender.

‘I’m the Chief Officer in this neighbourhood. Be careful with your words’, Suho points out, gesturing on the badge he has pinned on his jacket, trying to get rid of the glass wine before he’s forced to finish the whole thing, looking around to see a plant pursed by the corner of the room near them, He quickly reaches his hand out and poured the remains of the wine.

‘Still can’t believe that you became a Chief Officer’, Baekhyun points out, the rest of the group nodding their head in agreement, ‘Weren’t you supposed to be a judge or whatever?’

‘Sitting around all day and reading paperwork isn’t as fun as actually catching the bad guys’

‘Wait… Did Suho just say that… Reading isn’t fun?’, Chen overdramatically points out, hand on his heart and expression looking like he had just been shot right in the chest.

‘Don’t play’, Suho threatens, ‘I still like reading’, the rest of the group follows in streams of laughter and jokes as they continue to make fun out of Suho, being the only people to do it since now Suho’s reputation has changed from easy target to ‘don’t mess with me’.

‘Xiumin! My boy!’, another scream joins them, the hall silenced at the sight of a celebrity entering the hall, eyes clouded and mouth gaped at the sight of Kim Jongin walking through the entrance, his sunglasses perched up, a smirk playing on his lips as his gaze falls on not only Xiumin but four other people he hadn’t seen since Xiumin and Chen’s wedding, ‘No fucking way. The whole gang is here!’

‘What the fuck is he doing here?’, Baekhyun whispers to Xiumin, eyes glaring at both Chen and Xiumin who looked uncomfortable in his gaze.

‘He kind of… Invited himself last minute?’, Xiumin whispers, faking a smile as he waves at Kai who busies himself conversing with the rest of their former classmates, giving out signatures and pictures.

‘Are they honestly asking for pictures? From Kai?’
‘It’s Kim Jongin nowadays’, Xiumin corrects Suho as they continue to stare at the arrogant actor and singer who had grazed their television and phones over the past five years in corny romantic dramas and ballads that can have them puking for days.

‘Kim Jongin my ass. What’s he playing at trying to come here? Doesn’t he get enough fans?’, Baekhyun grimace, seeing Kai dancing in the middle of the hall with admirers surrounding him nonstop.

‘Stop being a hater. He’s just being himself’, Xiumin defends the celebrity, the rest of the group judging Kai from a distance, but he kept his stance. Kai had been nothing but a lost bunny in a tiring industry and he, out of everyone knows exactly how it feels, so he cuts Kai some slack, even when he cancels their plans and lost contact with everyone else.

‘Being himself? Because that’s definitely what I see when I see him on TV. His genuine nature just *seeps* out’

‘Baekhyun, why are you hating on Kai so much? Did he piss you off at one point?’, Suho turns around, curious as to why the teacher had a sudden ache of hatred towards their old friend. Suho remembers the two of them getting along quite well even during Kai’s debut as an idol.

‘What the hell is he doing here?’, Eun Bi cries out the moment she walks back into the hall, her eyes falling on the crowded area by the centre of the hall, scrunching her nose at the sight of flashing phones and loud chatter as Kai continues to converse with others, arms resting on someone’s shoulders, ‘Baekhyun!’

‘How many times do I have to remind you, it’s Mr Byun!’, Baekhyun calls out, reaching his hand out to slap Eun Bi’s head, the whole group smiling at D.O’s little sister but keeping a distance the moment they see her furious expression, foot stomping on the ground, leaving cracks behind which will most definitely get Baekhyun into trouble.

‘What is he doing here?’, she asks again, folding her arms together, already getting ready for a tantrum.

‘Eun Bi, leave your teacher alone. It’s a school reunion and Kai happened to be part of this year too’, Suho points out, trying to save Baekhyun after seeing his pleading eyes, holding onto her shoulder and pulling her back but the girl was persistent and pissed, ‘Eun Bi, calm down’

‘No! Kyunggie is going to come in any minute now and I don’t want him to see *that*’, she whines, her eyes looking up to Suho, pleading and upset that her plan is going to be ruined if her brother even sees a flash of Kai’s hair, ‘I worked months getting these two together and this is the first time they’ll be in the same room! I can’t have him mess it up’

‘Set who up?’, Lay asks, the whole group sighing in frustration the moment she points to Baekhyun.

‘Eun Bi…’, they all sigh in unison, their eyes moving from Kai to Baekhyun then back to Eun Bi. The whole group had a vague idea of what’s going on since Baekhyun had not stopped complaining about it to Chen ever since Eun Bi started, the rest of the group finally knowing once D.O also found out about Eun Bi’s games a few months ago. It didn’t help that they all now lived in the same neighbourhood, making things even more awkward for both D.O and Baekhyun as they pass each other by the supermarket, Baekhyun once spinning his trolley the other way once he spotted the two siblings walking in the market, hitting an old lady in the process which made him look like an absolute dickhead.
‘Eun Bi, why don’t you let your brother drive you home now’, Xiumin suggests, seeing that Eun Bi was far from okay, the rest of them looking at each other, each of them trying to tell each other to step up and do something before she does something Baekhyun will most likely get fired for.

‘But…’, she looks at Baekhyun, turning around to glare at an oblivious Kai, ‘I hate him…’, she whispers, but loud enough for the rest of the group to hear. Baekhyun eyes Suho, this time desperate since Eun Bi’s frustration is slowly being built the more she stays and watch Kai.

‘Come on, I’ll take you to your brother’, Suho finally steps forward, holding onto Eun Bi’s arms and guiding her out of the hall before anything happens, breathing a sigh of relief as Kai was too busy with entertaining the group to see Eun Bi walk past him, ‘Come on, why don’t we go and buy some ice cream whilst we-‘, Suho stops in his tracks, pulling Eun Bi along with him much to the teenager’s dismay. His eyes falter on the two-figure walking inside the hall, his stomach dropping to the ground as he spots D.O walking in. As if that wasn’t enough to freak him out, the person he’s walking next to was the next big thing to a nuclear nightmare.

Suho quickly turns back, checking to see if Baekhyun’s gaze had fallen on to the front and thank the lord that he was too busy conversing with a highly excited Lay.

‘Eun Bi, get your brother out of here now’, he whispers to Eun Bi, pushing her to the direction of where her brother stood, right next to the front door, avoiding all eye contact with Chanyeol by his side.

‘Who’s that next to him?’, Eun Bi asks, curious as to why Suho was suddenly fidgeting like a high school boy, awkwardly rushing himself with little to no words being said. The tall man looked familiar to Eun Bi but he didn’t know whether he was a colleague of theirs or an old friend. The crowd begins to grow as the hour’s tick by and before anyone of them realises, the whole class of 2018 had made their way inside the old auditorium where they all last saw each other in their graduation gowns and hopeful diplomas.

‘Chanyeol’

‘Suho?’

‘There you are. Where were you?’, D.O calls out, oblivious to Suho’s stressed state, glaring as he tries to grab hold of Suho, grateful that Eun Bi is right beside him, ‘I have been looking for the two of you’

‘Shit. Is that your little sister?’, Chanyeol asks, seeing D.O’s hand quickly grip Eun Bi before she can get away, Chanyeol seeing a rather tall girl, almost the same height as D.O, hair long and wearing skinny jeans with an oversized hoodie. Despite not trying on her appearance, Eun Bi had definitely grown, her face mature and stature even more so. Chanyeol couldn’t remember the last time he saw her, but it was definitely before puberty had hit her.

‘Yes. And who are you?’, she replies, her tone bitter and angry, which confused Chanyeol since he just got here so he had no idea what pissed her off, ‘Are you my brother’s boyfriend by any chance?’

‘Oh god no’

‘Then step away from him’

‘Jesus. What’s gotten into her?’, Chanyeol whispers to D.O, feeling Eun Bi’s glare becoming evidentially intimidating, stepping behind D.O for protection.
Beats me. Come on Eun Bi, time to go home. Now'

'My pleasure’, she responds, fluttering her brother as she so easily abided to his orders which contrasts her prior actions, ‘This was such a waste of an opportunity’

‘You better come with me too’, Suho finally butts in, grabbing hold of Chanyeol’s arm, pulling him away before anyone noticed the tall guy with the suit looking around the hall as if he was searching for something.

‘Hey, Suho. I know I haven’t seen you in ages and I’m sure you wanna catch up, but…’, Chanyeol tries to pry his arm away from the desperate chief officer, not knowing the strength Suho had to acquire overtime, finding it easy to pull Chanyeol away. Chanyeol attempts to look back to the hall, his eyes scanning each face, not really caring until his eyes fall upon someone standing at the corner of the hall holding a glass of wine, his eyes looking far away from him.

‘I don’t want to catch up with you’, Suho snorts, turning a corner and following D.O along with his sister who continues to complain, ‘Ten years. It’s been ten years and you still think people want to prioritise you’

‘If you’re not curious about me, then why are you dragging me out? I came for the reunion’, Chanyeol whines, feeling the cold wind touch his skin, looking ahead to find that they were already at the front entrance and on their way out of the school building, ‘Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’d like to get back’

‘No. You are not going back’

‘Yes. I am’

‘Kyunghie! I forgot my bag!’

‘For fuck’s sake Eun Bi. I’ll get it’

‘D.O, help me out. Suho’s being a bitch’

‘Come back here Chanyeol!’

‘D.O, is Suho always like this?’

‘Eun Bi, why did you let them go?’

‘Grab them now. We can’t let them go back inside’

The pair slips away from Suho and Eun Bi’s fingertips, Chanyeol holding onto D.O in case Suho grabs hold of him again, turning back to where they came from and walking straight into the hall.

Baekhyun sees him. He sees the tall giant the moment he walks in, banging on the doors, ruffling his hair and adjusting his glasses back up to his face. A wave flashes through him, making him
freeze, his fingers tightly gripping the wine glass.

‘Fuck, Baekhyun, your skin is lighting up’, Lay points out, touching Baekhyun’s arm and feeling the warmth of his skin, ‘Have you had too much to drink?’

Baekhyun ignores, his eyes fixated on Chanyeol in a suit with glasses, his height still overwhelming, even from afar.

Chanyeol looks ahead to where he is. They stood on the opposite side of the hall, the crowds blocking their view from each other, but their contact was still with each other. And for a moment, they stood there, frozen in time as Baekhyun tries to recollect himself, his feet glued to the floor.

And then Chanyeol smiles.

‘Fuck is that…’, Xiumin breathes out, watching his husband’s eyes widen at the sight of someone they hadn’t seen in years. Slowly, Xiumin nervously holds Chen’s hands, giving him a reassuring look, trying to calm down the frustration riling up from Chen.

‘What is he doing here?’, Chen whispers through gritted teeth, his lips stiff and eyes glaring in slits.

‘Don’t be like that babe. He probably got the e-mail’, Xiumin replies, but this brings Baekhyun back to reality, ripping his contact with Chanyeol, turning to face both Xiumin and Chen.

‘I… Didn’t send him an e-mail…’, he announces, making the group even more confused, ‘He didn’t have one in the files…’

‘Well, this dick is probably stalking one of us… Who is it?’

Baekhyun didn’t know. He didn’t how Chanyeol found out or where he came from. But he turns around, looking at the spot by the door, and quickly finding that Chanyeol was no longer there, just an empty lit doorway.

The glue on his feet is gone as he feels himself walking, no, racing towards the other end of the hall.

‘Eun Bi… You have got to be kidding me…’, D.O turns to where his sister is, glaring at her the moment he hears the screams of a man with a familiar voice. Kim Jongin, right in the middle of the hall, crowds gathered all around, even his music is playing from the sound system.

‘That’, Eun Bi points at the celebrity, ‘Was not part of my plan’, she defends herself, raising her hand in surrender when her brother hits her on the arm, ‘It was actually supposed to be him’, she points at the teacher running to the centre of the hall, his hair swaying behind him, ash brown and long.

‘That is even worse, you idiot’, D.O growls, pinching Eun Bi’s ears as a punishment as she attempts to wave at her favourite teacher, but it seems like Baekhyun was distracted by something.
And with that, Kyungsoo took this opportunity to turn around, dragging his little sister by the ear, ‘We are going to the car and I swear I’m going to—’

Before D.O can successfully retract himself from the reunion, he is stopped in motion by a loud bang which came from inside the hall, Eun Bi pushing her brother and running straight back in due to her curiosity.

Baekhyun, in flight and without thinking about anything, continues to spin around, bumping into his former classmates, quite harshly, but not caring. He swore he saw Chanyeol by the end of the door, so where could he have possibly gone to?

‘Hey, watch it!’, someone forms behind him scream, a hand grabbing his forearm, spinning him around harshly, his gaze brought to a man, taller than him and sporting a moustache, his hair cut short yet there was something scruffy about him.

‘Byun Baekhyun?’, the man gleams at the teacher in front of him, although, there was still a glint of anger in the man’s eyes, a smirk playing on his lips, one which did not sit well with Baekhyun.

‘Who are you?’, he calls out, trying to get the tight grip of his arm off the man’s hold, but it seems like the man wasn’t going to budge.

‘It’s Jae Hyun, how can you not remember me?’, the guy smirks again, bending down so he's facing inches closer to Baekhyun, making the teacher uncomfortable, ‘Or are you just playing hard to get’

‘I don’t know what you’re talking about, but you better get off me before I punch you in the dick’, Baekhyun spits back, this time, adding force to his push, surprising Jae Hyun for a moment.

‘Damn, you’re one tough nut to crack’, Jae Hyun cracks, combing his hair back, his eyes changing expression, more immense, taking a slow step back towards Baekhyun, ‘It’s kinda hot’

Baekhyun takes another step back, but before Jae Hyun can reciprocate, a hand grabs him on the wrist, twisting him around, the force spraining his wrist as he is brought face to face with Park Chanyeol, his height, compared to his, is more intimidating, his eyes glaring at him.

‘Didn’t he tell you to stay away from him?’, Chanyeol’s voice was hinted in venom, the moment he sees Jae Hyun grab Baekhyun like that, ‘Or are you just asking for a death wish?’

Baekhyun takes another step back, watching Chanyeol’s grip tighten on Jae Hyun’s collar, freezing once again, but this time he feels an arm holding onto him, Lay protectively by his side, pushing him further away from the growing tension between the two men in front of him.

‘Oh, well, if it isn’t Park Chanyeol. The Park Chanyeol. Where have you been? I heard you’re still powerless’

‘This doesn’t look good’, Xiumin whispers, hurrying towards Lay and Baekhyun, ‘Lay, get
Baekhyun out of here, I’ll try and break them up’, Xiumin orders the doctor, Lay nodding his head and dragging Baekhyun away, Xiumin stepping closer to where Jae Hyun is, reaching his hand out to calmly separate Chanyeol’s grip from Jae Hyun’s clothes.

‘I may not have my powers, but I can still punch you in the face. So, I recommend you stay away from Baekhyun’, Chanyeol threatens once again, ignoring Xiumin’s attempt in breaking them up, but once he sees Xiumin’s hands trying to break the two away, he complies easily, stepping back and retreating from the argument.

‘Chanyeol, step away and come with me…’, Xiumin instructs, pulling Chanyeol away by the sleeve, ‘Why don’t we have a drink and catch up instead?’, his voice was soft spoken, almost like a mother trying to calm her crying child. Chanyeol closes his eyes, giving in and walking with Xiumin.

‘That’s right. Follow your little mama’, Jae Hyun calls out, which in hindsight in probably the pivotal point in which the evening turns into a shitfest since Chanyeol turns back and away from Xiumin, running to Jae Hyun and throwing a big punch which sent the man flying towards the sound system, falling on the floor along with the huge speaker landing on him, the ground cracking at the impact.

‘Shit… Chanyeol?!’, Jongin shouts the moment he turns his gaze to the loud bang, seeing Chanyeol standing over a bloodied Jae Hyun, the music coming to an abrupt stop since the speaker had now combusted.

‘You did not just…’, Jae Hyun spits out blood, wiping his nose and seeing the blood decorated on his hands, ‘Oh, you are going to get it!’, and with that, Jae Hyun reaches his hand out, glaring at Chanyeol as he levitates the boy up in the air.

‘Chanyeol!’

‘Someone stop him!’

‘What the fuck is going on?’

‘Chief Police coming through!’

Jongin runs towards where Lay and Baekhyun is the moment his eyes land on the familiar pair, Chen also meeting up with them.

‘Lay, go get help!', Chen shouts, pushing Lay out of the hall as he and Jongin stood in front of Baekhyun, the expression in the teacher’s eyes being enough to force the two to grip hold of him, not wanting anything stupid to happen.

Jae Hyun clenches his fist in anger, still holding Chanyeol in the air before pulling his arm harshly, forcing Chanyeol to hit the wall, the loud cracks being heard as the wall breaks, the rubble landing on Chanyeol.

‘You fucking dickhead!’, Jongin feels someone screaming from behind him, and with that, he felt something burning his skin, flinching away from the sudden heat, turning back to see that Baekhyun was now glowing, not just glowing, but steaming, literally, Chen also having to flinch away from the sudden heat which radiated from Baekhyun.

‘Baekhyun, no!’, Chen shouts, but it was too late, Baekhyun races himself to where Jae Hyun is, picking him up with his heated hands, the sudden temperature already taking effect with Jae Hyun’s polyester clothes, small flames emitting around.
‘Suho, come with me. Now!’, D.O rushes to his partner, pulling Suho with him the moment he turns to find that the bang was being caused by nonother than the group of people capable of burning a whole building down. The rest of the crowd stood around the chaos, a flash of déjà vu before them as Baekhyun punches Jae Hyun, setting the man’s clothes on fire.

‘Baekhyun! No!’, Suho screams, pushing Baekhyun away from Jae Hyun, using his water to flush the fire before it damages Jae Hyun’s skin, drenching the man from head to toe.

‘He fucking started it!’, Baekhyun shouts, pushing Suho out of the way and punching Jae Hyun again, but not before getting a punch back from the man, his jaw flying back at the impact.

‘Shit, shit shit, Chen what do we do?’, Jongin freaks out, ruffling his hair as he moves in, only to move back once he spots Chanyeol standing up, recovering from the hit and running back to the fight the moment he sees Jae Hyun throw another punch at Baekhyun, ‘Chen, you go and stop them…’, Jongin pushes the man beside him forward, too scared to mix himself with the fighting men.

‘Enough!’, D.O screeches, turning around to see the Eun Bi was still inside the hall, terrified and hiding behind a table. He glares at the irresponsible men before stomping his foot harsh, shaking the whole building, cracks on the newly refurbished school being the result of his anger, his eyes glistening red, forcing everyone to stop and turn to him.

‘My little sister is in here and I do not want even a tiny scratch seen on her, got it?!’, D.O threatens the whole crowd, stomping his way over to where Jae Hyun and Chanyeol were, ripping the two away from each other.

‘Guys! Guys! I called the police! They’re right here!’, Lay informs the silent crowd who was too busy in awe at the mess that was made, the wall and floors cracked, sound system on fire, the rest of the hall wet due to Suho’s attempt to stop an arson – which in hindsight – failed miserably.

The police walk straight at the moment Lay announces their arrival, looking around the mess made and eyes landing on the group of men by the centre where the heart of the fuckery seemed to have started.

‘I need the nine of you to come with me. Now’

‘Lay, you motherfucker. Why did you call the police?’, Xiumin hisses the moment he sees the police eyeing even him and Chen – who matter of factly – had nothing to do with this stupid fucking situation.

‘I said all of you! Don’t make me say this again!’, the police urging on, the rest of the group following the Police’s orders, every single one of them glaring at the pair at the front, one whose skin is still glowing whilst the other was holding his broken glasses, squinting as he tries to follow the police.

‘I’m going to get into a scandal…’, Jongin breathes out, his life flashing before his eyes as a police officer pushes him to follow the rest, ‘I’m going to have my first ever scandal and it’s because of these dickheads…’
Night in a Jail Cell.

Don’t you dare
Chief?
Do it
Hoe, don’t do it

barenaked ladies - one week

Night in a Jail Cell
‘Call Oh Sehun’

‘Fucking hell’, D.O bangs his head on the metal bars in frustration, looking over at the other cell where Suho is, telling one of their colleagues to call the devil himself. Chanyeol and Chen stayed inside Suho’s cell, not looking at each other, Chen trying his best to not punch the giant in front of him.

‘Xiumin and I missed our flight. We missed our flight and now our anniversary in ruined’, Chen spoke out with clenched teeth, making sure that everyone heard his frustration and how he should be sitting in a plane in first-class than to be sitting in a jail which smelt of pissed and with the fucking idiots.

‘Babe, don’t worry, I’ve refunded our tickets and we’ll go another time’, Xiumin raises his voice since he was on the other side of the room, in a different cell with D.O, Kai and Baekhyun, the celebrity out of the four wearing his sunglasses indoors like a dick, leaning on Xiumin’s shoulder as he sleeps through the night, ignoring everyone’s argument which started inside the police car and carried on till they were all thrown in jail.

Kim Jongin’s manager is going to have one hell of a time fixing this mess.

‘Where were you guys heading off too?’, Chanyeol asks, his hangover slightly subsided along with the concussion he’d had getting here. Chanyeol over the years had lost his youth and along with it, his drinking ability, so his only excuse for punching Jae Woo was the fact that he was drunk – which no one believed since he only had two shots of vodka when he entered the hall – but it was written in the reports anyway.

‘None of your goddamn business’, Chen bites back, turning to face Chanyeol, his shirt unbuttons and hands holding on an empty plastic cup after downing his third cup of water which Suho and D.O’s co-workers gladly gave to him.

‘It was just a question’, Chanyeol raises his hand in surrender, putting the cup down and leaning on the wall behind him, his body already aching from the impact of Jae Woo’s throw.

‘We were on our way to Fiji’, Xiumin shouts from across the room after he hears Chen being difficult to Chanyeol, informing the giant of their planned holiday since last year which obviously didn’t go the way they wanted.

‘Oh, I used to live there. We could’ve passed each other’

‘I’d rather not if every time I see you, this shit happens’, Chen whispers underneath his breathe, but since Chanyeol is sitting right next to him, he heard every word.

‘This wasn’t my fault’, Chanyeol defends himself, ‘May I remind you that Jae Hyun was the one harassing someone’

D.O, amongst the few who opted to stand, bangs on the metal bars, shaking the cell and forcing everyone to be quiet, their eyes landing on D.O who continues to glare at his partner.

‘Sehun. Really?’, D.O was frustrated already at how embarrassing it was for his own colleagues to lock him up a jail cell, but now Suho had to add fuel to the fire by calling him, ‘He’s the enemy’

‘He’s just a lawyer’, Suho points out, the rest of the group swinging their gaze as if they were watching a tennis match, D.O and Suho’s words going back and forth to each other.

‘He took up three of our cases as the criminals’ defendant and won them all. Do you have any idea
how long it took to arrest those dickheads?’

‘Of course, I did! I had to piss in a cup for three days straight during the stakeout!’, Suho shouts back at D.O, stirring Kai awake due to his loud voice, his face nuzzling on Xiumin’s shoulder whilst his glasses made a dent on his face.

‘Dude… Suho just said he pissed in a cup’, Chanyeol whispers to Chen, stifling a laugh which the latter did not reciprocate.

‘Please stop talking to me’

‘Then why did you call him?!’

‘Because he’s a goddamn good lawyer!’, Suho responds and stomping his feet, releasing a wave of water from beneath, the rest of the group, including the police officers on night duty groaning at the sight of the police office flooded.

‘Really Suho? You piss yourself when you’re frustrated?’, Chanyeol points out, lifting his feet up and crossing his legs on the bench instead, trying to avoid wetting his slacks.

‘It’s not piss, you dickhead’, Suho turns around from his argument with D.O, getting himself with another argument with Chanyeol, ‘Plus, if it wasn’t for you, we wouldn’t be here’

‘I don’t see you defending Baekhyun when he was practically being harassed!’

‘Baekhyun doesn’t need defending you dumbass, he’s Byun Baekhyun, or have you forgotten that?’, Chen blurts out, awkwardly silencing Chanyeol who stares at him for a moment, before staring back at the other cell, seeing that Baekhyun was wide awake but not saying anything anymore, just holding the bag of ice on his swollen face, his eyes slightly puffy due to the bruise.

All of a sudden, he remembered looking up from the floor, seeing Baekhyun pushed back and lose balance due to Jae Woo punching him.

‘Baekhyun…’, he calls out, shocking everyone in the room as they stare at Chanyeol, then back to where Baekhyun is, just staring in the distance, not really here and only Chanyeol’s voice bringing him back down, ‘Are you okay?’, he asks, Baekhyun looking ahead and staring straight back at him. They were both brought back to the time earlier on that night, Baekhyun’s eyes falling on the giant for the first time in nearly six years.

‘I’m fine’, he calls out, barely a whisper, but the silence which the group finally provided made it so that everyone heard. It resulted in an awkward silence between the rest of the group, everyone avoiding eye contact, D.O sitting down on the floor instead, giving up his argument with Suho.

‘I suggest we all sleep, since it’s going to be a while till Sehun comes’, Suho points out once his colleague gave him a message regarding Sehun’s availability.

Jongin looks ahead of him to where D.O was sitting on the floor, cross-legged and leaning on his
hands whilst he falls asleep in such an awkward position. Jongin was too ashamed in getting inside the police car to notice the short boy following behind him, but now that his awake and less embarrassed, he remembered the way the ground shook beneath him, D.O red eyes piercing around the room, his lips grimacing in a menacing way.

‘Stop staring at him, He can cut your dick in half now’, Xiumin whispers, observing the way Kai’s gaze stayed on the man in front of him, not really moving nor fixing his posture.

‘What are you talking about?’, Kai whispers back, trying to look unfazed but it obviously didn’t work on Xiumin – he often wondered how Kai become an actor. The bastard was still shit at lying.

‘Surprised that D.O still had it in him to break the school again?’, Xiumin jokes, being the only one to see the humour in all of this. How could he not? Park Chanyeol, the boy who flew to Fiji without so much as an explanation throws himself back into their lives along with idol Kai – oops, sorry – Kim Jongin, who had not even bothered to invite them to his first award show. Xiumin found it funny that in just one night, all of them got dragged straight back into square one.

That school must be cursed.

‘I’m surprised that he’s a policeman… I thought he became a lawyer?’, Kai whispers, leaning his lips further in to try and avoid D.O from listening and like a strong radar, Chen felt an instant threat, turning his gaze to where his husband is, leaning ever so close to Kai, conversing in hush tones and – was that – was that a smile on both their faces?

‘You still look like you’re taking a shit whenever you’re jealous’, Chanyeol giggles, looking towards the situation which attracted Chen’s attention, folding his arms and leaning his head back.

‘Didn’t I tell you not to talk to me?’, Chen points out, for the millionth time, to Chanyeol who continued to talk to him as if nothing has happened, as if six whole years of waiting for an explanation or even a postcard from Chanyeol had not only tired him out but had completely made him resent his best friend.

‘Gosh, so edgy. If you’re that pissed about Fiji, I have a friend who owns a beach house. I can ask them for a favour’, Chanyeol offers, but that didn’t help suppress Chen’s anger, in fact, that only made it worse.

‘I am a CEO’, Chen declares, punching Chanyeol’s shoulder, ‘I can fucking afford three of those beach houses!’

‘You finally took over your family company?’, Chanyeol gleams, patting Chen on the back, ‘I’m really glad for you and all, but let’s be honest, your family company isn’t Samsung, so… I don’t think you’ll be able to afford three beach houses….’, Chanyeol points out, ‘But maybe, with enough invest, you can buy one?’

‘I am going to punch you in the face’

‘Just telling the truth mate’, Chanyeol laughs, raising his hands when Chen attempts to push his hand away from his shoulder, his laughter emitting around the quiet cell, Baekhyun lifting his eyes, gazing at the way Chanyeol’s eyes closed when he laughs, his hands clapping together like a seal.

‘Cat got your tongue?’, D.O points out, making Kai and Xiumin freeze from their conversation as they see D.O stand up, stretching his arms before making his way and sitting down with Baekhyun after waking up from his nap. It wasn’t awkward between them per say, it was just a little bit weird – D.O blames Eun Bi for that – so often that if they pass each other on the street, both of them
would rather ignore each other, but that didn’t stop D.O from giving the high school teacher a small wave and the latter to give him his usual goofy smile.

‘I have no idea what you’re talking about’, Baekhyun points out, pouting his lower lip once D.O grabs the melting ice pack from his hands, holding it instead, slowly pressing it on his swollen eye.

‘Gosh, we need to get Lay to heal this fast, can you even see?’, D.O laughs once Baekhyun slaps him, trying to grab the ice pack back but D.O didn’t back down, giving Baekhyun a warning look before pressing the pack on his forehead again.

‘What’s up with them two?’, Chanyeol points out, whispering to Chen in curiosity, his eyes flashing in confusion when Baekhyun laughed back at what D.O was saying. Last time he remembered, D.O wasn’t very funny, so what exactly had he told Baekhyun that he’d be in stitches? Chen on the other hand looks over at Chanyeol, a glint in his eyes playing the moment he sees Chanyeol watching the pair ahead distinctly.

‘Oh… You don’t know, do you?’, Chen whispers back, his playful smirk back on his face once Chanyeol leans in to hear what Chen had to say.

‘What?’

‘They used to go out’

‘What?!’, the cell is once again shaken awake the moment Chanyeol stands up in utter shock, his eyes wide and mouth even wider, ‘Baekhyun and D.O went out?! In what fucking universe?!’, Chanyeol screams, forgetting that the two was in the same room as him, D.O laughing the moment he sees Chanyeol’s eyes dilate, but Baekhyun had a different expression on.

‘In the universe where you left me, you dickhead!’, Baekhyun finally breaks free from his awkward silence, seeing Chanyeol mention his and D.O’s name from the other cell, ‘Which seems to be the reality as of right now!’

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Xiumin knows exactly what that tone of voice is. Byun Baekhyun is finally coming out. And the moment he looks ahead to make eye contact with Suho, he knew that Park Chanyeol had come out too.

‘Okay, fine, no need to be rude about it’, Chanyeol shouts back, ‘I was just asking’

‘Well, why didn’t you ask me instead? Why are you running off to Chen like a lost puppy?’

‘Hang on a minute, why am I getting dragged into this?’

‘I am not! You chose that cell! It’s not my fault you wanted to be with D.O! If you truly missed me, then you should’ve chosen this cell instead!’

‘Missed you? Who do you fucking think you are thinking that I’ve missed you?!’, Baekhyun stands up, pushes past D.O, gripping tightly on the cell bars as he glares ahead of him, ‘I forgot what you even looked like!’

‘Oh, really? What a fucking lie!’

‘I’m not lying! I don’t care about you in the slightest to even miss you!’
‘Then why go running to punch Jae Hyun, huh?’

‘Because he was being a dick to me!’

‘Is it now? Or is it because he hit me?’

‘Park Chanyeol, don’t rile me up. I have the power to set you on fire and you don’t!’

‘Right, that’s enough of that’, Suho barges in between the new argument which had started, grabbing Chanyeol to step back.

‘I dare you to set me on fire!’, Chanyeol shouts back whilst Suho was busy trying to set him back down next to Chen.

‘Oh, you don’t think I’m capable? Once we’re out of this cell, I swear I’m going to get you!’

‘Oh, how the tables have turned’, a foreign voice interrupts them, a tall man in a sleek suit and sunglasses which matched Kai walks inside the police department, his hair blonde and swift back, holding a cup of coffee due to being called this early in the morning.

D.O grimace at the sight of the cocky lawyer standing right in front of them, a smirk playing on his face as he stares at his elders, all with dead eyes, ripped clothes and even bruises from the looks of things.

‘Oh Sehun’, D.O calls at him, Sehun bringing his down his glasses and looking down at them.

‘God, you guys look like a fucking mess’

Six o’clock in the morning. It was six o’clock in the morning, everyone awakes, but tired, looking ahead as Sehun converses with the police, looking over at the report made during hours of interview and a lot of screaming from the boys who tried to explain what really happened after they received quite an inaccurate account of what happened from Jae Hyun himself who was probably resting well in the hospital.

‘Chanyeol initiated a fight with Jae Hyun only for Baekhyun to join and set arson on the school with the use of his powers’, Sehun read the report aloud, ‘Jesus, aren’t you two a pair’, he chuckles, Chanyeol in full shock that Sehun would speak in that manner. He was such a soft-spoken human being last time they met.

‘What the fuck happened to him?’, Chanyeol whispers, Chen, nodding his head in the same shocked expression.

‘Probably last-minute puberty’, Chen replies back, earning a glare from Suho.

‘Do Kyungsoo to have damaged private property with the use of his powers, Suho, Xiumin, Chen and Kai reported having helped damaging property…’
'I’d like to point out… I did not damage private property… I was just in the midst of it all’, Kai reaches his hand out to stop Sehun from reading further, ‘But no one seems to understand the fact that I was just a mere bystander in all this mess’

‘But it says here you ran straight to Baekhyun and Chen when the fight ensued, unfortunately, there is video evidence’, Sehun charismatically announces, taking everyone one back except Suho and D.O who was used to Sehun’s bullshit.

‘You’re supposed to be defending us, not nit-picking what actually happened’, D.O points out, shaking the cell bar and creating another earthquake inside the station, ‘Now can you hurry it up?’

‘Patience Mr Do. I need to get enough information before I defend anyone’, Sehun points out, licking his lips and smiling as he reads on the report, ‘God, I’ve missed you guys’, he laughs, sipping on his coffee as if he’s reading a novel instead.

‘Sehun, can you please get on with it? D.O and I have a meeting in about…’, Suho looks down his wrist, reading his watch which read 6.25am, ‘Three hours’

‘Fuck… That’s right…’, D.O whispers to himself, denting the metal bars as he gripped tighter to it, ‘Dammit, I forgot about that meeting’

‘Okay, okay’, Sehun points out, laughing as he walks up to the head of the station – well – second head since Suho was inside the cell, ‘Just give me a moment’

‘Guys! I bought my family van! Who wants to get dropped off?’, Lay shouts the moment he sees a crowd of boys walking out of the station like zombies, looking degraded and down with life, Xiumin holding onto Baekhyun tightly the moment the policemen finally set them free, trying to pry him away from Chanyeol just in case they create another reason for them to be locked up again.

‘If it weren’t for you, we wouldn’t even be in this mess’, Chen points out, pretty much-blaming everyone around him, cranky as fuck and about to throw a fist when Chanyeol leaned on him, ‘You owe me three full dinner’, he points to Lay, pushing past him and getting inside the back of the van since his and Xiumin’s car was still parked in the school parking lot.

‘Baekhyun, oh my god, look at you’, Lay walks pass Xiumin and Kai, who had made their way behind Chen, following him as they slide inside the car, Kai glad that there was no paparazzi outside.

‘I’m fine’, Baekhyun calls out, but his cheeks were already being pressed together by Lay’s hands, his lips pouting as Lay squeezed tight.

‘Why did you let him punch you?’, Lay coos, brushing back Baekhyun’s hair and healing his black eye and bruises, ‘Next time don’t go around getting into fights’, he warns the boy, dragging him inside the seven-seater family van Luhan bought for them, ‘Come on, I’ll drop you off’
Chanyeol stays standing, a bit further back from the van which had started to fill up with people, hands in his pockets as he watches Lay taking care of them, smiling as he hears Chen’s whines even from afar. He starts to walk back, making his way out of the station and finally getting the rest he needed.

‘Hey, Chanyeol!’, Lay calls out, waving his hands for the giant to see, ‘There’s room for you in here, do you want me to drop you off?’, Chanyeol turns around, seeing Baekhyun sitting by the window seat, looking out and staring at him. The moment they made eye contact, he smiles again, seeing Baekhyun’s face, free from the bruises and scar, his eyes drooping due to sleepiness, his cheeks puffed together as he leans on his hands. Baekhyun doesn’t look away, but he does give Chanyeol the middle finger which only made the giant laugh more.

‘No, I’m good. I’ll just walk home’

‘You sure?’

‘Yeah, I think my legs need it with all the sitting I’ve been doing’, and with that Chanyeol gives a small wave to Lay who made his way to the driver’s seat, turning back around and walking away from the group who silently slept inside, Chen hugging Xiumin and using him as a human pillow.

Baekhyun continues to watch Chanyeol walking away from them, even when Lay starts the car and turns the other way.

He noticed how slow Chanyeol was walking and the limp he had.

‘Mr Do? Mr Do?’, a colleague taps D.O’s shoulders, awakening him from his sleep, his cheeks pressed on the desk and mouth opening.

‘What?’, he murmurs, rubbing his eyes together and releasing a high-pitched noise whilst he stretched his arms. It’s been a relief that Sehun managed to set them free with nothing more than a temporary criminal record which lasted for approximately six months – which wasn’t so bad in the grand scheme of things – it just meant that they had to delay international travels which were fine with everyone – except Chen and Xiumin, of course.

‘The meeting is about to start soon’, he informs his superior, D.O standing up immediately once he is reminded that he’s officially back at work and not inside a jail cell. God, this day was confusing him and it’s not even the afternoon.

‘Right, thanks’, D.O coughs out, breathing on his hands and smelling his breathe just to check if it still stuck after eating a whole tub of extra minty fresh gum, ‘I’ll get going now’, he announces, his hair messy and he can feel that weird buggy thing in between his eyes but he didn’t have time to clean himself up. Fuck it, he had no one to impress, his superior and boss being Suho who looked twice as worse than him.

Just before he can make his way inside the meeting room, he flinches away as soon as the storage door opens right in front of him, nearly hitting him due to the tight space of the corridor.
‘Um, do you mind? People are trying to-’ before D.O can even finish his sentence, his mouth is sealed shut the moment Suho walks out of the small storage room with his hair so messy it looked like he survived a twister, his shirt slightly opened and his lips heavily bruised, ‘No fucking way…’, he whispers the moment his eyes gaze down at something moving right behind Suho, Oh Sehun combing his hair back and fixing his jacket.

‘D.O…’, Suho breathes out, and it irked D.O of how breathless the Chief Police sounds, ‘Um…’, Suho turns back to where Sehun stood, the boy’s lips looking just as swollen as Suho’s.

‘I’m going to throw up…’, D.O gags, looking back and forth between the two before pushing Suho back into the storage room and shutting the door, ‘Guys! Guys! The meeting is cancelled!’
Happy Birthday to our maknae, Oh Sehun. (ノ≧∇≦)ノ

THE ONE AFTER TEN YEARS.
AFTER TEN YEARS, THEY FINALLY REUNITE.

A BOOK BY DARLINGJONGIN

5 seconds of summer - gotta get out

Aftermath
Kim Jongin wakes up in the afternoon, his hair messy and eyes puffy after having a one-hour argument with his manager when videos of him attending his high school reunion turns viral, the video of him running to Baekhyun and Chen, watching the fight ensue right next to him. He saw an HD clear version of the way Jae Hyun nearly annihilated Chanyeol and Baekhyun and for a moment, he had wished he’d stepped in.

But he knew it wouldn’t help his situation. He had already gotten in a lot of trouble with his company for going somewhere without their knowledge, plus, the video of him being ushered by the police had already been mistranslated and taken out of context, which means Kim Jongin was at the beginning of his first ever scandal…

Which felt relaxing oddly enough.

Jongin wakes up with a text message which said that all his schedules got cancelled and that he’d be going on hiatus, his album promotions being cut short so he can lie low for a bit.

"Watching Jongin being ushered by the police looks so weird, as if it was staged or something. Jongin would never do something like this."

"Looking at the videos, it looks like he just got caught in the mix. I mean, you wouldn’t want to go and check out what was happening? Any normal person would want to take a closer look."

"Y’all defending him like there’s no tomorrow. I’m just disappointed that he didn’t help the people out. Gosh, he just stood there gawking like an idiot when someone could’ve gotten hurt."

"I used to go to the same school as Jongin and there were rumours that he and his group of friends would always cause trouble – it seems like his old friends are influencing him to go back to his reckless days, tut, tut."

Jongin smiles, stretching his arms wide as he turns off his phone, throwing it to his bedside table as he makes his way out of his bed, walking passes the beautiful view of the city. He doesn’t regret moving in his penthouse a couple of years ago when his manager forced him to live nearer the city so that travelling to music shows wouldn’t be as troublesome. He’d always love looking out and watching the city come to life before him, looking down at the small ant-like people walking on the street, along with cars which zoomed pass. It relaxes him from the stress of his life.

‘Baekhyun and D.O used to go out’

Jongin knew that he was going to be thinking about that statement. Unlike Chanyeol, he didn’t give out a huge reaction from the news, but it did take him back, especially when Baekhyun and D.O showed no signs in their relationship is more than platonic, but times have changed and if D.O was able to change his course and become a police officer, then he can go out with whoever he wanted. He also knew that D.O was going to move on from him rather quickly, which is why he never bothered to check up on him. He thought it’ll be more painful to watch D.O move on from it with his own eyes, so he was glad it all turned out well for the both of them.

Walking into his kitchen, he opens the fridge, taking out a carton of milk and swaying his body to reach for the cereal in one of the drawers above him. It’s been a long time since he’s had this much time to himself, so he’s overwhelmed at the fact that he’s taking his time to eat his cereal when he
usually doesn’t get much time to eat a breakfast bar. He sits in silence for a moment, just relishing in the peace and eating his food, looking out at the window and to the grey skies outside. Just staring, not talking much.

‘Mr Byun’, the principle’s voice evokes fear in the high school teacher, Baekhyun hanging his head low in guilt and embarrassment as he looks at the amount of damage last night had entailed, ‘I entrusted you to keep everything calm last night… It seems as though you’ve failed that’, the Principle tells him off, his hands held together, sitting down on his desk and glaring up at the Sociology teacher.

‘I’m sorry sir. I didn’t mean for it to go this far…’, Baekhyun responds, his voice low and fragile. He knew that he was going to get fired. He just fucking knew it. He practically tore the newly refurbished school along with nearly setting someone on fire. His license will probably also get evoked… Baekhyun was going to be unemployed and homeless and broke and –

‘Suspension for a week is the punishment I can give you’, the principal sighs, rubbing his forehead with his fingers, massing it, ‘I cannot afford to fire one of my best teachers here…’

Baekhyun looks up, shocked at the principal’s decision. Suspension? Is he not going to lose his job?

‘You’re lucky that a student had informed me of what really happened. We could use that as a valid excuse’, the principal alerts him, ‘I expect you to clean up during your self-reflection, do you understand me, Mr Byun?’

Baekhyun straightens his posture, smiling at his principal as he bows at a 90-degree angle, thanking him continuously.

‘Yes! Yes, I will! Thank you so much, sir! I promise this will never happen again!’, Baekhyun bows once more, walking backwards as the principal dismisses him, ‘Thank you, sir! You won’t regret this!’ Baekhyun announces to him – or to the world – depending on who can hear his screaming right now, closing the door behind him, smiling in celebration that he hasn’t lost his job yet.

In front of him, sitting by the chairs next to the principal, is Eun Bi, chewing her gum and waiting for her favourite teacher.

‘Eun Bi…’, Baekhyun sighs, ‘Aren’t you supposed to be in lessons?’

‘It got cancelled so everyone’s in the library instead’, Eun Bi explains herself, standing up, her backpack on with both straps on her shoulders, her hair in a ponytail, ‘Come on, I’ll drop you off at the main entrance’, she smiles, condescending for her age, making Baekhyun wonder how she got to be so innocently evil – he knew for a fact that it wasn’t from her brother – although he can tell she’s been rubbing off on him.

‘I’m not a child and you clearly aren’t my mother’, Baekhyun, dropping his professionalism –
which he shouldn’t be doing right outside the Principal’s office – pushing pass Eun Bi and walking out of the school on his own.

‘No, I’m not your mother, but I am your future sister in law’

‘Save it, Eun Bi. Not going to happen’, Baekhyun replies, his voice monotone and bored already, combing his hair back and away from his eyes.

‘You need a haircut’, Eun Bi points out nonchalantly, ‘You’ve got more split ends than that dick when he played a homeless man’, Baekhyun tries to hold back his tongue, biting the inside of his cheeks and praying for inner strength so he won’t end up punching Eun Bi, who is a girl and his student.

‘Which dick are you talking about?’

‘You know exactly who I’m talking about’

‘You need to give that guy some slack’, Baekhyun looks at Eun Bi, turning a corner and making his way to the entrance of the school.

‘I don’t know why you’re defending him. You hate him too’

‘I do not’, Baekhyun itches his cheeks as he pushes the doors open, Eun Bi standing by the entrance and watching Baekhyun walk away, ‘Kai is a respectable artist and I applaud him for his artistry’

‘Fake!’

‘Eun Bi, you should be glad D.O’s your brother or I would’ve suspended you a long time ago’, Baekhyun shouts before turning back to walk home, Eun Bi shouting at him since she can’t leave the school building.

‘Babe, wake up, you have a meeting’, Chen wakes up to the sound of his husband’s voice, lips kissing his cheeks, Xiumin’s hands waking him up as he stands over his sleeping husband, already up and showered.

‘In a minute…’, Chen whispers, hugging his pillow and mumbling nonsense as Xiumin continues to shake him awake, ‘Let me sleep for five more minutes’

‘It’s up to you… You’re going to be late’, Xiumin warns the latter, kissing his cheeks again before walking down the stairs, in his joggers and shirt since he mostly works at home in his own personal studio Chen had made for him the moment they bought their first house, Chen instantly renovating the basement to be Xiumin’s workspace.

‘Did you make these yourself? These are actually good’, a voice from the kitchen shouts as soon as they hear Xiumin’s footsteps running down the stairs, Xiumin folding the clothes which laid around the house since Chen had a habit of shedding his clothes like a snake sheds its skin.
'I’ve had quite a lot of practice’, Xiumin calls out, laughing when he walks into the kitchen, seeing Chanyeol stuffing his face with the food he’d made during lunch, his cheeks puffing out like a puffer fish. Unlike Chen, Xiumin felt somewhat glad that Chanyeol was back in town, albeit a sudden surprise and out of the blue, but it seems like Chanyeol still possessed his childlike personality – which Xiumin needed since everyone around him was too busy being an adult.

‘I don’t think you have, Chen’s not a picky eater, he’ll eat shit if it’s made by you’, Chanyeol points out, rice flying out of his mouth as he speaks, being told off by Xiumin who wipes his kitchen counter from the mess Chanyeol’s making.

‘Well… Thanks. Is that suppose to make me like Chen more?’

‘No, not really. Just wanted to remind you that you married your stalker’, Chanyeol raises his spoon, leaning his elbows, looking like he’s just about to give a lecture, ‘You know, you never heard this from me, but… He totally spied on you during high school. Obsessed is an understatement’, Chanyeol explains, waving his hands around in explanation, making Xiumin chuckle. Chanyeol goes back to eating, reaching for the kimchi on the side, munching along with the rice.

Xiumin continues to stare at the tall man in front of him, suddenly being reminded of his husband.

‘Hey, can I ask you a question?’, Xiumin asks, knowing that he’s treading on water here, but he tries anyway, not getting the curiosity away from him.

‘What?’

‘Why did you leave for Fiji?’, this forces Chanyeol to stop eating, his chopsticks in midmotion, grilled beef resting between it. Xiumin watches Chanyeol looking down at the meal, a silence between them as Xiumin waits for the latter’s answer.

‘I got offered a job at this environmentalist company’, Chanyeol smiles, getting rid of the blank stare he expressed only moments ago, smiling at Xiumin, ‘It’s a company which helps clean the ocean of our pollution and is branched with a tech company to try and make environmentally friendly techs like washing machines and shit like that’

‘Oh… Okay…’, Xiumin nods, not really sure why he was explaining his job to him, ‘And… Was it hard for you to explain to us that that was what you were doing?’

‘What are you talking about? I told everyone that I was leaving for a job’, Chanyeol points out, tilting his head in confusion, continuing with his eating.

‘Yeah, I guess you did…’, Xiumin scratches the back of his head, watching Chanyeol’s glasses sliding down, ‘Why didn’t you bother to keep in contact with us? I understand if you didn’t want to contact me or anyone else because of the whole Baekhyun thing, but why not Chen?’

Xiumin is met yet again with another silence, one which Chanyeol didn’t know how to break. He couldn’t tell Xiumin how much it killed him not knowing how they all were, even Baekhyun.

*Especially Baekhyun.*

‘Well, I got busy. You know how it is. Work is a bitch’

‘Yeah… It sure is’, Xiumin responds, not really believing in what Chanyeol was saying, but if the boy was not comfortable enough in saying anything, then he has no rights forcing it out of him, ‘So, are you going to be staying in Korea permanently or not?’
‘Hopefully permanently. That’s if I get a job here’

‘Good’, Xiumin replies, smiling at Chanyeol.

*Then he’ll have all the time in the world to explain himself.*

‘D.O, come on, talk to me’, D.O walks pass the Chief Police, sipping his coffee and reading over his report before filing it on the main desk, ‘D.O, don’t be like that. At least say something’, Suho collides with D.O as the latter unexpectedly stops in his tracks, twisting his body around.

‘Do you really want me to say it? Right in front of everybody?’, Suho looks around, seeing their colleagues writing more paperwork and interviewing newly arrests. His best friend had a point, so Suho reaches his hand out, grabbing D.O’s wrist and dragging him away from the main office, walking down the corridor and opening the storage door, stuffing the both of them inside.

‘Right, now we can talk-’

‘Really? You wanna talk about it here?’, D.O snorts, his hands on either side of his waist, ‘This place is contaminated of your betrayal and other things I’d rather not think about…’, D.O looks around, his nose scrunched in disgust and his lips twitching.

‘We did not have sex in here’, Suho points out, slightly offended, ‘Who do you think I am? I have more class than that’

‘Clearly not, since you were so busy sucking faces with the enemy’

‘D.O, you are overreacting. You know Sehun, almost as much as I know him’, Suho points out, ‘He’s not a bad guy’

‘He gave me a wink when the judge dismissed my case and acquitted the bastard that took me three months to arrest! That dickhead is probably out on the streets dealing drugs again… Ergh! God, I hate that lawyer…’, D.O growls, crunching his coffee cup, his Americano spilling all over his hands.

‘Sehun’s just a little competitive, that’s all’

‘Don’t start making excuses for that dickhead. I’m not going to hear it’

‘Okay, fine. Fine! I’m not here to make excuses for him… I just want to know… If you’re okay with this’

‘With what? You and Sehun fucking?! Of course, I’m not okay with it! What if you start spilling all our information to him? He can use you as his bait to continue to set those scums free’

‘I am a professional, do you really not trust me to keep my status that way?’

‘No! Not with Sehun!’, D.O yells, Suho reaching his hand out and blocking D.O’s mouth from
saying anything else that might escape the storage room. D.O pushes his best friend back, dropping the now empty and abused cup, ‘You’ve always had this big softie for that kid. Well, guess what Suho, he is no longer a kid and you can’t keep babying him! He’ll only abuse it!’

‘You watch too much Law and Order’, Suho randomly points out, which didn’t help subside D.O’s frustration, ‘D.O, please trust me on this, I won’t do anything that will affect our team, you know that’

D.O breathes out, trying to calm himself down before he breaks another private property – he’s lucky he got away with being suspended from his job – D.O is reminded once again why that was the case, Sehun pleading for his suspension to be narrowed to a simpler punishment of a fine instead.

D.O points a threatening finger at his best friend.

‘If I ever find out that you’ve been spilling the beans with Sehun, I’ll break both of your skulls, got it!’, D.O hisses, gritting his teeth as he closes his eyes, not believing what he’s about to say next, ‘I’ll keep it a secret from everyone’, D.O offers Suho, his best friend gleaming in glee once D.O gives in, shaking his head in disbelief at his own words, walking out towards the door, but Suho holds him down.

‘So… Are you okay? About me and Sehun?’

‘Of course, not’, D.O points out, shrugging Suho’s hold on him, ‘But… I’m not going to stop it… Do whatever you want. I’m not stopping you’, D.O ends their conversation, opening the door of the storage room and walking out with Suho right behind him, earning a judgmental stare from the cleaning lady who strolls in with her cart, looking at the pair walking out of the small storage room conspicuously.

Jongin walks around his apartment, bored from staying inside the whole day, his phone turned off since he didn’t feel the need for his self-esteem to be lowered if he opens his social media, having binge-watched all the shows he’s been meaning to catch up, but after four hours of endless watching and a lot of buttery popcorn, Jongin was going to go nuts if he doesn’t do anything soon.

He wears his denim jacket, which matched his jeans, his Levi’s shirt underneath – yes, they’re all sponsored clothes – but for a bunch of designer brands, he had to hand it to them, they were making clothes that actually felt comfortable for once. He looks around his apartment, rearranging his frames and the antiques his mum bought for him whilst his parents were on a business trip in England.

Maybe, maybe if he uses his powers to somewhere nice…

Shit, but Jongin hasn’t used his powers for years, not properly anyway. He only uses it when he needs to get from one room to another in his apartment due to his laziness but in terms of disappearing and appearing to his wished destination… He can only recall the last time he did that, which was a long time ago.
‘Let’s see if I’ve still got it’, Jongin breathes out, closing his eyes as he begins to stretch, doing star jumps and screaming obscenity as he tries to prepare himself. He almost forgot how to do it, but he feels his skin sizzling once he thought of one destination, a rooftop with a view of an old neighbourhood, old furniture along with fairy lights hanging by an old lampshade hoisted up.

He jumps and zaps out of his apartment.

‘What the fuck?!’, Baekhyun screams the moment something jumps right in front of him, making him tumble straight out of the sofa and onto the cement floor. He looks out to find whatever eagle came rushing at him, only to find that it wasn’t a bird, but a human being in the shape of Kim Jongin.

‘Kai?! What the fuck are you doing here?!’, Baekhyun screams in anger, frustrated that the man had managed to scare the living shit out of him, glaring up as he huffs the hair out of his face.

‘Kai?’, the man standing in front of him says in a questioning tone, ‘Oh right…’, he smiles once he figured it out, ‘You still call me by that?’

‘What else would I fucking call you? A dumbfuck? Do you want me to call you that instead?’, Baekhyun yells out, standing up and rubbing his jeans from the dirt which he had collected on his way down to the floor. Jongin just laughs at him, looking around to find that the rooftop hasn’t changed other from the furniture. It wasn’t the same sofa nor was it the same lampshade and lights, but it was almost like a replica, the green old sofa from ten years ago being replaced by a rotten leather one, but it was placed exactly where the old one was, almost like someone was trying to preserve the past with the new.

‘You’re still your usual chirpy self’, Jongin points out, chuckling when Baekhyun continues to glare at him, ‘You still mad at me?’

‘Of course, I am’, Baekhyun blurts out far too passionate that he got surprised himself, ‘You broke my nose’

‘You called me a dick’

‘You broke up with D.O’, that stopped the argument between them, Jongin turning to face the landscape instead, hands inside his pockets, feeling free for once. God, he needs to use his powers more often.

‘That didn’t mean you had to confront me and start a fight’, Jongin points out, but there was a calmness in his voice, he wasn’t angry for Baekhyun that day the boy came raising to his house before he leaves for America to record for his new album, the boy instantly having a go at him, shouting about selfishness and all things stupid which Jongin didn’t have time for, ‘I do have to admit… The punch was a bit much… Sorry about that’, Jongin calls out to Baekhyun who was behind him.

‘You’re six years a little late’
‘Better late than never I supposed’, Jongin points out, hearing Baekhyun walking towards him, standing right next to him, at the edge of the rooftop.

‘I supposed so’, Baekhyun whispers, copying Jongin and reaching his hand down to his pockets.

‘So… Speaking of you and D.O…’, Jongin reaches out on the elephant in the room, gazing at Baekhyun who just chuckles at his old past.

‘Yeah… That was such a weird time in my life…’, Baekhyun continues to laugh, remembering waking up with D.O by his side one night.

‘So, you and D.O have a history together?’

‘I wouldn’t call it much of a history… We kind of just… Went out on a couple of dates a few years ago’, Baekhyun explains, still laughing at the situation, ‘I wouldn’t even call it a date since all we did it talk about things we would just as friends’, Jongin nods his head, looking down to his feet, kicking a small rock which rested at the edge, watching fall from above.

‘Who broke it off then?’

‘Huh’?, Baekhyun finally turns to look at Kai, looking at his smooth skin, his strong jawlines and refined body which seemed to only get better as time passes by – this dickhead probably goes to the gym, ‘Well, no one actually… We both of just knew we weren’t interested in each other that way so when D.O had to go back to the inner city, we kind of just… Left it like that I supposed’

‘So, the two of you didn’t break up?’

‘We were never really a thing, to begin with. Just two people trying to distract each other from… Other things in our lives’, Baekhyun says the last bit in a whisper, hoping Kai wouldn’t dig too deep into his statement.

‘Okay’, Jongin responds, not really knowing what else to say, ‘It’s nice to see you by the way’, he points out, making eye contact and smiling at Baekhyun, the latter smiling back when he sees an old glint of Kai smiling back at him.

‘Funny, it seems like we reunite in between our lives, don’t we?’, Baekhyun points out, laughing as they both recall the first time they met, which was not in high school but even further back when they were barely potty trained.

‘First as your crush, then as your friend and now your rival’

‘Rival? Since when are we rivals now?’

Kai ignores Baekhyun’s question, laughing at him as the two reconcile over their petty fight, Kai patting Baekhyun’s back and the latter welcoming him back with a quick hug.

‘Since when did Baekhyun give hugs?’

‘It’s my way of apologising’

‘For what?’

‘I… Maybe… Made an anti-café about you…’, Baekhyun confesses, raising his hand in surrender.

‘Don’t tell me… Is it the ‘Fucking Cunt, Kim Jongin’ one?’, Jongin raises his voice, pushing Baekhyun back away from him when he noticed that Baekhyun hadn’t responded, just smiling
innocently.

‘My bad? I didn’t think people would join it…’, Jongin sighs in defeat, brushing it off and patting Baekhyun on the back.

‘Whatever, don’t worry about it’, Kai leans on Baekhyun’s shoulder, giggling as he whispers to Baekhyun’s ears, ‘I’ll just sue you later’

Lay walks side by side with Luhan, little Jia inside the pram, taking in the fresh air, the family walking in the park after the pair came back from work, Lay filling his husband on what happened last night.

‘I knew something was just going to go wrong’, Luhan points out, ‘Whenever you hang out with them, something always happens’

‘Can’t blame them. It was a bit of a shock seeing Chanyeol and Kai walking in’, Lay defends them, strolling little Jia next to a park bench, the both of them sitting down, Lay reaching out to grab Jia and rest her on her knee. Jia stirs awake, looking up at her two dads and smiling, reaching her tiny hands to try and hold them. Lay felt slightly guilty that they had to leave Jia with a childminder since he and Luhan were busy with work, but he promised that after he finished his thesis for his Research team, he was going to take a break and spend as much time with Jia.

‘Lay?’, a voice calls from ahead of them, tall legs running over to them as Chanyeol ignores Luhan and bends his knees straight down and in front of Lay, peeking at the chubby little baby who gurgles as she sucks her whole fist, ‘And who is this cutie?’, he coos, smiling when the baby turns around to stare at him, her wet hands reaching out to hold on Chanyeol’s noise.

‘Hey Chanyeol, nice to see you too’, Luhan waves, Chanyeol waving back at him and giving him attention for five seconds before turning back to the baby, ‘Whose is she?’

‘What do you mean? She’s ours, of course’, Lay points out, shaking his knee where Jia sat, holding onto her tightly.

‘Oh, I didn’t know you guys adopted’, Chanyeol gleams, chuckling once the little girl got used to him, smiling whenever he tickles her cheeks.

‘Her name is Jia’, Luhan introduces her, making space on the bench so Chanyeol can sit down properly, Lay trusting Chanyeol, giving his little girl for Chanyeol to carry.

‘What are you doing here anyway?’

‘Well, my house kitchen is being renovated right now so I thought this will be a good time to look for work’, Chanyeol answers, although he wasn’t paying much attention at the two adults, too busy trying to make little Jia laugh.

‘You don’t have a job?’
‘No, I currently quit my old one in Fiji’, Chanyeol mentions, ‘Planning to maybe get a job here… I mean, that’s the plan anyway’

Lay instantly looks at Luhan, his eyes widening at the mention of a job seeker sitting right next to them, Luhan also widens his eyes, warning his husband not to go there, shaking his head vigorously so his husband will get the picture, but even if Lay knows, he chooses to ignore him.

‘You know… Whilst you’re looking for a permanent job, we’re actually looking for a new childminder’, Lay points out, feeling Luhan’s hands gripping tightly on his wrist, trying to make him stop, but he breaks Luhan’s grip from his arm.

‘Oh, is it?’, Chanyeol utters, responding but too busy laughing when Jia spat bubbles, her cute little fingers wrapping tightly around his pinky finger.

‘Yeah… I was hoping… Maybe… You can take up the job for the time being?’, Lay offers, making Chanyeol turn to him, ‘We’ll pay you, of course’, Lay points out, reaching out to hold Luhan’s hands, emphasising on the ‘we’ but they both know it will most likely be just Luhan paying.

‘Um… Me?’, Chanyeol points to himself as if he heard wrong, ‘I’m… Am I allowed? I don’t think I’ve taken care of a baby before…’

‘Oh, don’t worry. Think of it as babysitting until we get another childminder’, Lay points out, trying to persuade to Chanyeol – which isn’t hard since Jia had already started to get used to Chanyeol, her chubby short arms stretching out, wrapping itself around Chanyeol’s neck.

‘Babysitting…’, Chanyeol mumbles whilst trying to keep hold of Jia, in case she falls down, ‘I guess I can do that… Why not?’, Chanyeol takes his offer, nodding his head in agreement, hugging Jia close to him as the three adults continue to converse with each other, Lay and Luhan filling in on Chanyeol about how they adopted Jia and when they decided.

‘Hey, I’m going to go now, my parents’ wants me to spend dinner without because last night was a bust’, D.O explains, knocking on Suho’s door of his office, looking ahead to see his best friend typing out a rather long e-mail by the looks of it.

‘Huh? Oh, okay. Have fun’, Suho calls out, looking up to D.O for a moment before turning his gaze back on the screen.

‘Well… Do you wanna come?’, D.O offers, waiting for Suho to thank him for offering to feed him proper food and ditch work early, but Suho just shakes his head, declining his offer.

‘We got in a lot of shit today. I have a lot of work to make up for that’, Suho explains, ‘But enjoy yourself’, he responds once D.O nods, waving at the Chief Police before walking out the office, leaving Suho by himself to finish up whatever he’s doing – probably doing the reports due in for tomorrow so the higher-ups won’t kick his ass for last night’s situation.
Suho continues working minutes, maybe hours after D.O leaves, closing his eyes and taking a rest every few seconds, yawning since he didn’t get any sleep at all last night. Looking at the files in front of him, he turns the pages, retyping the whole thing as he sees new information which needed to be added.

He hears a soft ping coming from his phone, distracting him from his work as he sees a notification.

*Come to the storage room.*

Suho reads the text message from the pulldown bar, smiling once he looks up to see who the person is. He didn’t want to leave his work, but he looks down on the small time pasted by the side of his screen which read out 11.23pm, nearing midnight.

Fuck it. He needed this break.

He quickly opens his drawer by the side of his desk, pulling out a small box which he had purchased a couple of days ago, stretching his arms out whilst he walks out of his office, closing the door behind him and walking towards the empty corridor where the small storage room is. He opens the door to find a tall lawyer sitting on the floor, a small birthday cake rested on his lap, his head looking up the moment Suho walks in.

‘How did you get inside the police station?’, Suho pretends to be angry, folding his arms across his chest, tapping his foot but there was a smile plastered on his face, stifling a chuckle when Sehun combs his hair back, leaning on the wall behind.

‘This station just lets anyone walk in, did you know that? I find that highly dangerous, and I should probably report that to the authorities…’, Sehun speaks out, trying to look serious, but just like Suho, there’s a smile on his face, one which somehow resembles Suho’s.

Suho bends down, sitting right in front of Sehun who continues to hold a small birthday cake, one small candle placed in the middle, already lit up and melting.

‘Happy Birthday, Sehun’, Suho whispers, leaning and kissing Sehun, his eyes closed and hand stroking his cheeks when he feels Sehun smiling beneath him.

The candle’s flames blow out by the winds of Sehun’s fingers as he reaches his hand out and drags Suho closer to him, feeling the Chief’s Police arms wrap tightly around him, the small box landing to the floor as Sehun drags the both of them on the floor.

‘Fuck…’, Suho whines the moment he feels something squishy landing on the floor, the cake smashed between him and Sehun, both their shirt decorated with the vanilla icing, Sehun giggling when Suho curses at the mess they’ve made.

‘Oops. I forgot I had the cake on my lap’, Sehun apologises, looking at how Suho grabs a paper towel roll from one of the shelves, cleaning his shirt and passing the rest of the role to Sehun to who obediently started cleaning his button-down shirt, even though he didn’t mind getting it stained. Suho wipes some of the icings which landed on Sehun’s arms, licking the icing which also landed on his hands.

‘Why don’t we keep things vanilla, shall we?’, Suho jokes, forcing Sehun to hit him.
‘Please don’t start with those again’
‘You know you love it’
‘No, I don’t actually’
‘Lawyers are such liars sometimes’
‘And police officers are always so persistent’

D.O walks towards his car, the night already taking a toll, the night sky a dark shade of midnight blue, the chilly night forcing D.O to quicken his pace to where his car is, desperate to get inside and go to his parents’ house which was farther away from the station than his apartment. Glad that the day has come to an end, he unlocks the door to his car, yelling in fear as he sees flashes of orange exploding at the sudden distaste, where the alleyway towards the high street is.

Out of instinct, D.O locks his car doors, walking towards whatever the explosion was, hoping it was just a bunch of teenagers playing around with some fireworks. He turns another corner to be led to a dead-end alleyway, dumpsters lined up against the walls along the walls. He sees ashes flowing through the winds, the stench of burning coming from further down the dark end.

‘Hello? Anybody there?’, D.O calls out, reaching for his phone and turning off his flashlight, the light flashing a silhouette of what D.O can be sure of as a vampire, a tall lanky vampire hunched at the end, small whines coming out of his mouth. ‘What the fuck…’, D.O whispers, reaching out for his pepper spray as if it was going to do anything, but it was only his self-defence weapon he had on him right now.

‘Mphfstmph’, the person from afar wails, flashes of orange beaming out of their hands and pretty much every else in their body. It was only then doing D.O get a good look at the vampire-like monster’s face as it glowed, his hair turning into fire.

‘Park Chanyeol?!’, D.O runs straight towards Chanyeol the moment he recognises him, reaching his hand out only to be pushed back by the man himself.

‘Stay away!, Chanyeol shouts, drinking what seems to be water to D.O, ‘Give… Give me… A… Minute…’, he stutters in between the pain, coughing out small balls of flames which shocked D.O – a lot. What the fuck was wrong with Chanyeol? Why was he throwing up flames? Why is the hell he on fire?

‘Chanyeol… What the fuck?’, D.O yells out, trying to look around to see if he can use something to get Chanyeol to stop flaming away.

‘I said… I… Give… Me… A minute’, and with that, another flash of orange explosion emits from Chanyeol, D.O having to run back from the heat of the explosion, D.O runs back to his car, as fast as he can, opening the door and grabbing a jacket he knew he left lying around the back seat, tripping his own shoelaces as he tries to go back to Chanyeol, breathless once he’s back, seeing
Chanyeol laying butt naked on the floor.

‘You sicko. What are you doing looking like a vampire gone high? In the middle of the night?’, D.O yells at him, in total panic mode as he throws the jacket at Chanyeol, the taller one grabbing it and wrapping it around him – too bad that D.O was obviously a couple of sizes smaller than Chanyeol, which means Chanyeol was still pretty much exposed, ‘You better have a reason for scaring the living daylight out of me!’

‘Yeah… Do you mind if I get some water first…? I beat… Tired…’, Chanyeol whispers before collapsing to the floor, freaking D.O out, even more, his basic instinct was to run and ask for help, but another part of him thought this may be a stupid idea, so instead, he steps forward, feeling Chanyeol’s warm skin, quickly dragging him out of the dark end and towards his car.

He must be dehydrated.

God, D.O didn’t actually know what’s going on, but all he knows is that if he doesn’t get Chanyeol some water, he might be framed for murder.

‘Park Chanyeol, what the hell happened to you?’
D.O braces himself, looking into the lit window of his parents’ house, tiptoeing to the front entrance, his keys by his side and another pain on his other hand.

Chanyeol. Yes, Chanyeol, all in his naked glory and half unconscious, with nothing but his flimsy
jacket wrapped around his waist to cover his remaining dignity. D.O regretted bringing him here
the moment he slowly twists the spare key his parents gave him into the lock, slowly opening the
door, trying not to cause too much attention.

_I should’ve dumped Chanyeol straight into my apartment before coming here._

It was too late for D.O to back down now, not when Chanyeol’s already stirring awake and have
one foot on the other side of the door. He can already hear Eun Bi’s dreadful singing all the way
from the living room – which means everyone is probably downstairs in the kitchen.

D.O devices a plan for them to quickly run up the stairs before anyone spots him carrying another
human being inside the house – a rather naked one.

‘Okay, Chanyeol’, he whispers, avoiding all the creaks he knew the house had, looking like he’s in
the middle of playing hopscotch, ‘We need to get you upstairs and straight in my room without my
parents noticing, got it?’, he whispers again, this time with Chanyeol’s co-operation, the both of
them walking ever so slowly towards the stairs, slowly taking the first few steps, stopping when
they hear a creak.

‘Kyungsoo?’, his dad calls out when they made a rather loud squeak by the fourth step, forcing
Kyungsoo to twist his body around, nearly falling down the stairs. He quickly walks down, turning
back and gesturing Chanyeol to turn left to where his old room is, tensing his neck as he mouths to
Chanyeol to run and hide, turning back around and screaming the moment his dad walked in the
corridor.

‘Hi!’, he yells, jumping up and down, raising his hand and giving his dad a tight embrace, turning
him so he doesn’t face the stairs, Chanyeol making a quick run, D.O’s screaming blocking his
heavy stomps from being heard.

‘Hey, son…’, D.O’s dad responds, slightly confused as to why his son was so hyper all of a
sudden, his brows raised. D.O continues to spin him around, yelling something about dinner and
work, ‘Okay, okay Kyungsoo stop’, he pushes his son off him, ‘Are you okay?’

‘Yeah… I’m fine… Why would I not be?’, D.O smiles innocently to his dad, dragging the both of
them back to the living room which was connected with the kitchen, Eun Bi flicking through the
channels of the TV with her hands, the sensors picking it up and changing the shows with every
wave of her hand.

‘Oh, look who came back from jail’, Eun Bi calls out the moment D.O walks in, his dark under
eyes being evident since he didn’t have time to sleep today, his mother running over to where he is,
squeezing his cheeks together.

‘Oh, just look at you. Look how tired you look!’, she whines, inspecting her son’s face, brushing
his hair back, his hair black and shorter since he got it cut after Suho started complaining about his
long hair.

‘No mum, that’s just how he looks’, Eun Bi yells out, D.O grabbing a pillow and throwing it at her,
‘Ow! Mum, Kyunggie hit me!’

‘God, can the two of you stop?’, his dad tells them off, walking past them and into the living room,
finishing up the meal that his wife had abandoned, ‘And to think that the fighting would stop after
one of you turns into an adult’

‘Yeah, but sometimes we need two adults to co-operate’, Eun Bi calls out, standing up and waving
her hand to turn off the TV, skipping over to the dining table.

‘You know, dad was talking about me when he says adult, right?’, D.O points out, walking to where his family is, seating himself on one of the chairs.

‘No, he isn’t’

‘No, I wasn’t’, both his dad and Eun Bi replies, D.O kicking the chair which flies across the kitchen in response.

‘Dad! Kyunggie’s being a drama queen’

Chanyeol walks straight into an empty room, it looked familiar since the structure hadn’t changed much, and he instantly recognised it as D.O’s room. He’d visited and even slept over D.O’s place once or twice before so he found it rather nostalgic to be back here, looking around to find that his figurines were all gone along with his posters and novel collection, his pokemon bed sheets being replaced with plain blue ones to match a more mature room.

Chanyeol hated it. It was too boring.

But he didn’t care right now. All he cared about was the jug of water which he saw on the bedside table next to a cup, racing his way over and pouring himself a tall glass of drink, gulping it in one go and feeling his skin loosen heat. His veins relax and he can feel his pores closing.

*That’s a close call.*

Chanyeol pours himself another drink, one after the other, until the whole jug is empty, his forehead leaning on the bedside table as he bent down, breathing as he finally feels his muscles relax.

He was still naked, which he should probably change, standing back up after he regained his energy, looking for D.O’s closet, raiding the spare clothes the police officer would leave behind whenever he spends the weekends with his parents.

‘Goddammit D.O’, Chanyeol whines, picking up the largest shirt he can find but still having to squeeze himself, ‘Ten years and you haven’t even bothered to grow’, he huffs out, his arms getting stuck inside the shirt, flailing around as he tries to get it off, his head also being too small to fit inside the hole.

‘Chanyeol? What the fuck are you doing?’, he hears a growling whisper, D.O walking into his room after he escaped his family for a few minutes, looking ahead to see Chanyeol, his jacket wrapped around his waist to hide his dick from showing, his arms tangled around each other and an old shirt he had in middle school practically strangling the giant.

‘You’re so small, oh my god, why won’t it fit?’

‘Because most twelve-years-old shirt won’t fit a thirty-year-old!’, D.O hisses, grabbing the shirt
and tugging it off Chanyeol, shushing the giant when he started whining again, trying to keep their voices low.

‘Oh’, Chanyeol realises the moment D.O lifts the shirt to find that it wasn’t the biggest shirt in the closet and that his eyes were just fucking with him, ‘Right…’, he squints, ‘Shouldn’t have broken my glasses…’, he whispers, struggling to read D.O’s expression in the dark and with his blurry eyesight.

‘Ergh’, is all D.O can muster, throwing the shirt back into the closet, separating the folded clothes before grabbing something from the back, a grey old shirt and tracksuit, handing it to Chanyeol.

‘Where are the boxers?’

‘And you think I’m ever letting you borrow mine? Go commando’, D.O orders him, turning back, ‘I’m going back out. You stay quiet. You can climb out of the window if you wanna go now but keep quiet. Got it?’, D.O points at the giant who finally looks decent, pulling up the tracksuit to find that it fit him, even though it ended up above his angle, it was long enough to accommodate most of his legs.

‘Hey, where did you get these?’, Chanyeol curiously asks, feeling how snug and lose the shirt is on him, a contrast to the hot mess that was the last shirt.

‘It was Kai’s’, D.O points out, opening the door and welcoming the light from the hallway inside the dark unlit room.

‘You still keep his clothes?’

‘Well, what else am I going to do with it?’, D.O points out, noticing how Chanyeol was finally moving normally, not hunched or in pain like what he’d previously seen.

‘Throw them in the dumpsters’, Chanyeol suggests, ‘Or give it to a witch doctor to curse?’

‘Why the fuck would I do that?’

‘Didn’t he dump you?’, Chanyeol points out, making D.O freeze in the stop, the man closing the door again so that the pair are in complete darkness, ‘Xiumin didn’t say much about it, but everyone sort of found out that Kai had to disclose a no dating contract and he pretty much leapt at signing it which bugged the shit out of everyone… And I do have to admit… A bit of a dick move’, Chanyeol recalls the catch-up session Xiumin gladly had with him earlier in the day, thanking Xiumin that he didn’t hang up on him when he called in need of someone to talk to.

‘It’s not a dick move. It was reasonable’, D.O sighs, ‘It seems like everyone was angrier at him than I was’

‘Who wouldn’t. He should at least have thought about it more before dropping you. Wouldn’t you be offended?’

‘Like you can judge. You did the exact same thing to Baekhyun’

‘I bed to differ’, Chanyeol whispers, his eyes reverting away from D.O’s gaze, the smaller folding his arms across his chest.

‘So, what’s your excuse then?’

‘Fiji is a paradise. Who wouldn’t want to live there?’
‘It’s about your powers, isn’t it’, D.O put the two and two together after he noticed the way Chanyeol would twist his body, his head looking down on his shoes – he can tell the boy was lying, ‘How long have you been having those episodes?’, he asks, not really sure what they were, but with Chanyeol’s medical history, he’s not remotely surprised that the boy was experiencing nerve spasms which might trigger his powers.

Chanyeol didn’t answer, not for a long time, and if it wasn’t for D.O’s father shouting for him, telling him his food was getting cold, did D.O gives up, sighing as he watches Chanyeol sit down on his bed, with no look of intention that he was going to tell him anything.

‘Just… Don’t set my room on fire’, D.O whispers to him, before walking back out of the room and leaving Chanyeol by himself.

‘It’s going to what?!’, Kai screams, Baekhyun flinching by his side at his raised voice, the two grabbing morning coffee together since they’re both jobless at the moment, Kai sporting sunglasses and a bucket hate which hides his eyes and platinum blonde hair.

‘Didn’t I tell you?’, Baekhyun informs, the neighbourhood street, quiet and empty apart from the odd people walking past them.

‘No!’

‘Okay, gosh, stop overreacting’

‘What do you mean? The community centre is closing and they’re most likely going to demolish it! That’s a huge deal!’, Kai screams, his voice is heard from a mile, which would cause another scandal if anyone recognises him, but Kai didn’t care, not when news like this is hitting him hard.

‘It’s just a building’

‘Just a building? Okay, Mr Byun Baekhyun, if it’s just a building, why do you still hang out there?’, Kai asks, his coffee long forgotten and lukewarm, ‘Why do you keep the rooftop in place?’

‘Because I hate eating lunch in the staff room’, Baekhyun tells the tall idol, turning another corner to where a block of flats are, Baekhyun feeling his back pockets for his keys, ‘I hate having to speak about my student’s grades and bullshit in front of other teachers’

‘Oh. Ew… I almost forgot you were a teacher’, Kai grimace at the fact which seems to always amaze him to this day.

‘Fuck off’, is all Baekhyun can say, hovering his oval-shaped keys over the censors of the apartment block, the personalised chip being read, the light flashing green as the door unlocks, ‘Teaching is an honourable job and unlike when we were at school, teacher’s get paid a shit ton of money nowadays’, Baekhyun defends his position, walking to the main hallway where a column of elevators are, pressing the button.
‘Yeah, whatever’, Kai brushes it off, going back to the main point, ‘But, about the community centre… What are we going to do about it?’

‘What do you mean we?’, Baekhyun snorts, walking into the elevator and pressing his floor number, waiting for the doors to close, Kai always following closely behind him, ‘We aren’t doing anything. The building is old and definitely overused. It’s falling apart and it’s best for it to be demolished and make space for other things’

‘Like what?’

‘I don’t fucking now’, Baekhyun, frustrated at Kai’s endless chatter and useless question, stoms out of the elevator once it opens, leaving Kai to follow behind him, his eyes falling on his door, reaching his hand out and placing his thumb on the device placed on the side, next to the door, the device recognising his fingertips and opening the door for him.

‘We can’t just let it go. That place is sacred’

‘That place is disgusting’, Baekhyun corrects him, placing his half-empty coffee cup on his kitchen counter, waving his hand up, the TV turning on and playing background noise of a variety show.

‘That place was our favourite spot to hang out, c’mon, you’ve got to remember that’, Kai whines, his lips pouting as he throws away his unfinished coffee, sitting on one of Baekhyun’s stall by the kitchen island.

‘Things change’, Baekhyun informs Kai, walking back inside the kitchen, opening the drawers to find if he can whip up something quick to eat. At those words, Kai stays silent but still whining, his index finger scrolling down his phone as he checks his recent update on his situation, the news articles overflowing with more videos and pictures his ex-classmates took of him, spreading it around forums. It frustrated Kai that some people sold pictures of him to newspaper articles, but it didn’t surprise him one bit, so he turns off his phone – which his manager is going to be annoyed about – sliding it down the counter, ignoring it for the rest of the day and turning back to look at Baekhyun.

The two are quiet, Kai waiting patiently as Baekhyun makes scrambled egg enough for two. Despite living alone for a good number of years, Baekhyun still had little knowledge in cooking and would so often use the means of takeaway as his way to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner.

His phone starts ringing from the living, his calls being connected to his house so his built-in speakers in the walls start blaring the obnoxious ringtone of the new Apple XXX. Baekhyun rolls his eyes, sliding to the end of the stove where a small device was built inside the wall, a touch screen which replicates his phone, pressing the green button and waiting for whoever is on the other side of the phone to start speaking.

‘Baekhyun! Red Alert! Red fucking alert!’, the voice screams, her voice shaking and in fits of anger.

‘Hello?’, Baekhyun calls out, looking at the screen and not recognising the unsaved number, but he recognised the voice almost instantly, ‘Eun Bi?!’

‘Baekhyun! This is bad news!’, she continues to yell over the phone, Kai perking up at the name which came out of Baekhyun’s mouth.

‘Eun Bi… How the fuck did you get my phone number?’, Baekhyun yells back, angry that the teenager had managed to grab hold of something she’s not supposed to have.
‘What are you talking about, I’m the school’s Student President’, she informs Baekhyun in an obvious tone, as if that was going to explain things.

‘God, even Suho’s rubbing off on you’, Baekhyun sighs, giving up and going back to his cooking once he sees the smoke coming out, quickly turning off the stove and stirring the eggs.

‘That’s not the point! Baekhyun…’, she whines, this time her voice is high pitched and she sounds genuinely upset. Kai noticed how her voice was a little bit deeper than when he had last heard it, he smiled at the sound of her whining, remembering the car rides he used to have with her whenever he picked her up from school when he got his driving license.

‘What is it?’

‘Baekhyun… I think Kyunggie has a boyfriend…’

Baekhyun and Kai both freeze, Kai in shock and Baekhyun in distress mode. The teacher feared for his life as he prayed to the heavens that Eun Bi would not mention her obsession with getting her brother together with him. Please, please….

‘What are we going to do now? He can’t have a secret boyfriend! It has to be you!’

Baekhyun didn’t want to look back, his shoulders tensing and his eyes shivering in absolute embarrassment, his skin glowing a green glow.

‘I saw Kyunggie acting all creepy and suspicious last night and I think I saw him smuggling some food in his room and even grabbing one of my dad’s jacket… He definitely snuck someone in at home last night…’

‘Eun Bi…’, Baekhyun whispers through gritted teeth, ‘I’m going to report you to the principle of having a teacher’s number if you don’t stop-’

‘I can’t believe I didn’t see it coming! Ergh, if only Kai hadn’t gatecrashed the reunion! If it weren’t for his stupid ass, you and Kyunggie would be together by now!’

‘Eun Bi!’

‘Whatever… I’m too upset right now. I’m going to order pizza. I’ll talk to you later’, with that, without even an explanation, Eun Bi hangs up, leaving Baekhyun alone with Kai, awkward and silent between them, the growing tension which was unspoken at first has now become the massive fucking elephant Baekhyun wanted to disappear.

Baekhyun turns around, laughing his fake laugh which he always does whenever he’s put in an uncomfortable situation, scratching the back of his neck and slowly turning off his phone, going back to cooking and ignoring Kai’s tense stare. Even with his back facing the idol, he can feel the laser eyes staring and burning a hole on him.

‘I thought you said you two were over?’, Kai finally points out, his voice calm, which surprised Baekhyun since his stare wasn’t.

‘I… We are’, Baekhyun states, turning off the stove and grabbing two plates, hoping to god that Kai wasn’t as strong as when he was doing the action movie that came out last summer, ‘Eun Bi is just a little bit obsessed with me at the moment… But don’t worry, it’ll past’, Baekhyun points out, finally gaining the confidence to turn, handing Kai’s plate of burnt scrambled eggs, sitting in front of him, ‘Don’t worry about it’
‘Eun Bi’s… Obsessed with you?’

‘Well, only a little. I took her to a funfair when she was upset once and she hadn’t forgotten since’, Baekhyun points out, explaining the story of a fifteen-year-old Eun Bi crying her eyes out the front stairs of D.O’s apartment block, probably waiting for her brother to comfort her on her first heartache, but all she got was Baekhyun walking towards the block after promising D.O to give back the shirt he borrowed a week ago.

‘I took her to Hawaii…’, Kai mutters to himself, munching on the scrambled eggs and crunching his nose when he tastes the bitterness, looking up in Baekhyun in disbelief at the abomination that he’d made. As if it wasn’t enough to find out that Eun Bi apparently is going goo-goo over Baekhyun, but now he had to be served poison.

‘I can’t cook’, Baekhyun points out.

‘Well, give me a heads up at least’

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‘Lay!’

‘Sorry, but as of right now, it’s Dr Zhang’, Lay informs the moment he sees Suho running to him, landing on him and making the both of them nearly fall to the ground, Lay’s paperwork still in his hands.

‘Whatever, have you got my text?’, Suho says breathless, his head turning from side to side like an owl searching for a prey, his hands gripping Lay’s arms.

‘The one about the patient’s reports?’, Lay asks, being reminded of a government official request to hand in a witness’s medical reports to the police by Friday, ‘Yeah, I was just on my way to get it-’

Suho sees someone walking from the other end of the corridor.

‘Give it to me! Now!’, Suho yells, dragging Lay with him and practically running to the doctor’s office with Lay’s guidance, the doctor making a turn and opening his personal office, Suho pushing him in and locking the door behind him.

‘What’s the rush? It’s only Wednesday’, Lay points out, confused as to why the Chief Police is in the rush, looking out of the window frantically as if he was watching out for a zombie invasion.

‘Fuck, hurry up!’, Suho shouts, turning back and running to where Lay is, by his desk and unlocking his drawers filled with his patient’s reports, files ordered in alphabetical order.

A knock on the door distracts Lay from handing the bulky paper to Suho, the pair turning their gaze at the door with the glass windows which showed a tall man with blonde hair swept back, his figure hugged with a white button-down shirt, a smart casual look with looked more smart than casual.
‘Excuse me, Dr Zhang, do you have a moment?’

‘No! He doesn’t!’, Suho yells in Lay’s place, grabbing the folder and stuffing it in his bag, shushing Lay as he goes back over to the door, opening it to find Oh Sehun standing there, his hands in his pockets, looking down the older who he outgrew, smirking when he sees sweat beading on his forehead.

‘Hey’, he whispers, his voice deep and too sensual for the bastard’s own good, Suho glaring at him a warning look.

‘Dr Zhang is busy at the moment, so I suggest you visit him another time’, he grits his teeth, pushing him out of the way and walking off, leaving Lay utterly confused since he’s never witnessed Suho treating Sehun that way before, albeit, Sehun doesn’t smirk with his brows raised before.

‘Um… So… Am I still needed or what?’, he calls ahead, attracting Sehun for a moment to turn around.

‘Maybe next time’, Sehun responds, bowing to him before walking out, following Suho’s direction, even though his car is parked on the other side of the building.

‘Suho’, he calls out, quickening his pace, his long legs easily catching up to the shorter Chief Police, hands still in his pockets as he leans in so their cheeks are touching.

‘Don’t even try’, Suho whispers, pushing Sehun away and turning a corner to the other exit, his hand tightly holding his bag, ‘I have work to do’, he walks even faster, pushing the door and walking out to the main entrance of the hospital, just about to turn a corner to where his car is parked, but he feels something tugging him back, a hand which wrapped itself around his waist, twisting him around until his face to face with Oh Sehun.

Sehun dives down before Suho can complain, kissing him softly on the lips, his hands gliding up slowly until it’s resting on his cheeks.

‘Didn’t I tell you I have work to do?’, Suho whispers once the kiss breaks, looking up at a smug looking Sehun, ‘No interactions doing work’

‘How did you know I was going to interview Lay?’, Sehun ignores Suho’s complaints, his hands still holding onto his cheeks.

‘D.O’

Sehun rolls his eyes.

Of course.

‘That man is obsessed with me’, Sehun chuckles, resting his chin on top of Suho’s head which pisses off the Chief Police who pushes him back, glaring at their height difference.

‘D.O is my partner and we are winning this case. You can bet on it’, Sehun finally retracts his hands away from Suho, folding his arms across his chest, the smug look on his face not disappearing any time soon.

‘Is that a challenge?’

‘This isn’t a game, Sehun’, Suho gives the lawyer a disappointed look, ‘She’s a murderer’
'Alleged Murderer’, Sehun points out, his professionalism finally seeping in, ‘Innocent until proven guilty’

‘Well, I’m here to prove her guilty’

‘And I’m here to prove her innocent’

The tension between them begins to build, Suho being reminded to hold onto his bag tighter, not that he doesn’t trust Sehun, but D.O’s words continue to seep through his mind in random moments, in which case, dictates him to take a step back.

‘Challenge accepted then’, Sehun mutters, bowing to Suho before turning back and leaving the latter, standing by himself in the middle of the afternoon spring.

Suho ruffles his hair in frustration, sighing as he turns back to where his car is, muttering profanities as he reaches down for his phone to call D.O.

‘Now, this is my number and this is Lay’s’, Chanyeol hears Luhan instructing him like a child for the millionth time, yawning when he sees the paranoid parent teaching him how to open the babyproofed drawers which had a lock on it for some odd reason. Jia can’t even walk yet so Chanyeol didn’t understand how she was going to reach over to open a drawer.

‘Luhan, it’s fine. I’ve babysat before’, Chanyeol informs Luhan, which wasn’t a lie since he did have friends back in Fiji in need of someone to take care of their children – the only problem is, the children tend to be at an age in which Chanyeol can strike a deal with them – a night to play games all day if they clean the whole house and do some of his paperwork. Unfortunately for him, Jia can’t even talk or understand the concept of audio communication other than crying, so Chanyeol had to suffice in googling how to babysit actual babies and not bratty thirteen-year-olds.

‘Okay, okay’, Luhan calms himself down, picking up Jia from her crib, the baby now awakes and eyes shining brightly up at her father, ‘I’m going to be late, so please feed her now. As we speak she needs to have her afternoon bottle and lunch’

Chanyeol can only chuckle at the way Luhan would constantly kiss his little girl’s cheeks, handing her over to the tall giant and fixing his suit.

‘Take care of her’, he orders in which Chanyeol nodded, promising that he will give her back in one piece.

‘Say bye bye to daddy’, Chanyeol coos, his voice high pitched as he points to Luhan, little Jia laughing at the sound of his voice, her little fingers reaching up to touch his nose, too busy in exploring and analysing the new man who had taken his father’s place.

After finally departing, Chanyeol is left alone in a big house with Jia, his long legs walking around to explore the kitchen, in awe at how magnificent it all looks.
'Wow', he hangs his mouth open when he sees the stove, seeing the touch screen house command by the edge of the wall, ‘Your parents are filthy rich, aren’t they?’, he looks at Jia who was too busy fiddling with his faded red hair, curious at the odd colour, ‘You never have to worry a day in your life’, he whispers, accidentally turning on the touchscreen.

‘Hello’, the house invoice blares through the built-in speakers, shocking both Chanyeol and Jia, the adult looking around in search for where the voice is only to realise that it was just a machine.

‘Wow, they even have Hermes’, Chanyeol is more than impressed at the actual mansion Lay and Luhan had managed to bag for themselves, walking over to the kitchen island where Jia’s food is already prepared curtesy of Luhan, the bottle of milk placed at the edge, Chanyeol stretching out to grab hold of it, ‘Come on babe, how do you like to eat? Milk first?’

‘Lay would usually feed Jia with her food before finishing her lunch with the bottle of milk to relax her stomach and to help her digest’, the computer voice of Hermes blares out, freaking Chanyeol the fuck out, flinching at the sudden intrusion of the voice.

‘Jesus Hermes, you don’t need to scare the crap out of me’

‘I do not understand. Please rephrase’

Chanyeol rolls his eyes, going back to the task at hand and putting the milk down, grabbing on the small spoon instead, a small bowl of baby food already set up, Chanyeol placing Jia on the highchair, placing the plate on the small desk, Jia whining as her hands is no longer o the fire hair.

‘C’mon Jia. I have to feed you first’, Chanyeol coos at her, trying to get her to calm down, ‘Then we can play with my hair, okay?’, he promises, but he concluded that Jia still doesn’t understand basic Korean, so he bends down on his knees, face levelling with the baby as he grins, gaining her attention, his arms stretching far and wide.

‘Look Jia, it’s an aeroplane’, Chanyeol coos, his hand flailing around with a spoonful of food as he makes whooshing sounds which definitely caught Jia’s attention, her big round eyes widening, targeting the moving aeroplane food, her mouth opening once it draws closer to her, calmly eating her food with Chanyeol’s giggling in the background, ‘Good girl’, Chanyeol gleams, squeezing her chubby cheeks when she smiles back at him, her gummy teeth showing.

‘Dabapfht’, she makes a noise which seems to show happiness since she continues to open her mouth whenever Chanyeol does another aeroplane.

‘Aw, so cute’, Chanyeol observes the way Jia chews her soft food, some dribbling out to her chin, which Chanyeol carefully wipes with the kitchen towel, ‘How cute would it be once you start talking. Calling your daddies’

‘Playing song: Call me daddy’

‘What?!’, Chanyeol yells when he hears Hermes interrupt them again, the blaring noise of the most NSFW type of sensual music starts playing. Chanyeol races his way to the touchscreen, looking around to see if he can turn it off, but he’d never had a built-in the invoice in his apartment before since the manufacturing factory butted heads with his old one, which means he had no idea how to fucking turn it off.

Tonight, why don’t you call me daddy.

‘No!’, Chanyeol screams, hearing the lyrics being sung, ‘No! No, no, no, no! This is not appropriate! Hermes, turn it off! Turn it off!’, Chanyeol shouts, banging on the touchscreen, but
the song keeps on playing, ‘Hermes, turn it off! Now!’, finally the music stops before the verse gets worse, praying to god that Jia does not notice. He turns back to find that Jia didn’t give a shit, reaching her hand out and trying to eat the food herself, her hands dipped into the food, her tongue licking her hands, giggling when Chanyeol comes back, seeing the big-eared man that she had started to like.

‘That was a close one’, Chanyeol whispers, grabbing another kitchen towel and wiping Jia’s hands and face, setting the empty plate aside and picking her up, ‘Why don’t we feed you some food and take a nap?’, Chanyeol plans the day, which hopefully consists of Jia sleeping and Chanyeol trying to figure out how to delete Hermes search history – just in case Luhan decided to spy on them.

‘And then we can play with your barbie dolls, that’ll be fun’

‘Now playing: Nick Minaj, Barbie tingz’

*I’m a bad bitch, fuck the bitch*

‘Hermes no!’

‘What the hell are you doing?!’, D.O didn’t think he’d run straight out of his car when he was supposed to be on his way to his parents house to drop off some of Eun Bi’s clothes she left behind when she stayed over at his place, banging and locking his car door shut, crossing the road to find an awkward, skinny, tall giant strolling down the street with a pram and a baby.

‘Shh, no profanities near the baby’, Chanyeol tells him off as soon as the shorter made his presence aware, blocking Chanyeol from going anywhere, ‘You’re going to influence Jia’

‘Jia? As in… Lay and Luhan’s?’, D.O’s eyes grow wider than an owl’s, ‘What are you doing with their baby?’

‘Don’t look at me like I stole it. They asked me to babysit for them’, Chanyeol defends himself, swerving the pram around the police officer, but D.O was quick to follow along, pulling Chanyeol to a stop.

‘Not in your fucking condition you’re not!’, D.O yells, earning a few stares from bystanders, ‘What if you blow up?’

‘Language’, Chanyeol warns him again, bending down to cover Jia’s ears as she chews on her own foot, ‘And, you do realise, I’m not a bomb. I know how to control myself’

‘Oh really?’

‘Yes. With pills like these’, Chanyeol explains himself, pulling out a small pouch which consisted on his daily medication along with his injection if it was a particularly bad one, ‘I take one of these bad boys and I’m good to go’

‘Then why did you have an X-Men scene in the alleyway the other day?’, D.O asks curiously as he
grabs the pouch, looking at each of the pills in suspicion, still not sure if he trusts Chanyeol with a baby.

‘Simple. I ran out. But once I got out of my high, I went straight to the pharmacy for my prescription’, Chanyeol snatched his medical pouch back, feeling slightly embarrassed that he had a pouch on him, so he quickly puts it back.

‘Did you at least tell them of your problem?’, D.O asks and he begins to feel more worried when he was answered in silence, ‘Chanyeol, this is a child’

‘Look, I don’t want to shout my problems to everyone and Lay could tell anyone if I do’

‘They are entrusting you with their child’

‘And I promise that I’ll protect her with my life’, Chanyeol argues, ‘I won’t let anything ever happen to her. I’ve taken care of other kids before and there hasn’t been anything serious happening’

‘I don’t know… Why don’t I take it from here and I’ll text Lay’, D.O steps forward, trying to grab the pram but Chanyeol fights back, glaring at him.

‘Excuse me, but Lay entrusted me with Jia’

‘And I just witness you set yourself on fire’, D.O grips harder on the pram, ‘Now give it to me’

‘No!’

‘Chanyeol! Give me the pram!’

‘I said no! Jia’s my responsibility, now let her go!’, both of them grip tightly on the pram, Jia getting uncomfortable at the sudden shouting, the two adults having a glaring contest, too invested in trying to steal a child from each other – a child which didn’t even belong to them.

‘Chanyeol, hurry up’, D.O calls, already in line at the cashier with the baby diapers Lay texted Chanyeol to get which ended his and D.O’s fight, the pair forcing themselves to work together and stroll into the grocery store, D.O keeping a close eye on the tall giant, swatting his hands away whenever he wanted to hold Jia.

‘I’m coming!!’, Chanyeol shouts, pushing Jia’s pram, a sleeping baby holding onto a teddy bear the pair was forced to buy since Jia wouldn’t stop crying when the pair started arguing which brand of diapers they should buy.

‘Hello, yes, can we buy that teddy bear too? I don’t think I can snatch it off her so…’, D.O informs the cashier who gleams at the little baby girl hugging the teddy bear, her holographic scanner scanning the teddy bear from the distance, the price is added, D.O taking out his phone and scanning his e-card. Chanyeol is behind D.O, reaching out to take the diapers, holding onto it.
'Aren’t you all the cutest’, the cashier gleams when D.O turns around, giving Chanyeol the recent whilst the giant strokes Jia’s cheeks, checking to see if she’s okay since she’d been crying for a while beforehand.

‘Huh?’

‘She’s such a cutie’, the cashier continues to misunderstand the situation, ‘You two must be proud parents’

‘Excuse me?’, D.O looks at her with an expression which showed more emotion than he’d ever expressed, ‘We’re not…’, D.O didn’t have time to explain since the next costumer were waiting impatiently behind him, forcing Chanyeol to push him forward, the pair making a move on.

‘She just thought we were a couple’, D.O grimace, gagging when he turns back and looks at Chanyeol.

‘We are carrying a child with us. We do look suspiciously like a new family’, Chanyeol points out, letting D.O push the pram since he was holding the diapers, ‘Now pretend I said something funny’

‘Excuse me?’

‘Just fucking laugh’

‘Why the fuck would I do that?’

‘Because people think we’re a couple and if you don’t want people thinking we’ve just stolen a child, I expect you to laugh like your husband has just said the funniest shit in the world’

Without the energy to argue with the giant, D.O pulls the fakest grin he had ever made, laughing so loud, everyone around them heard, looking up and detaching themselves from their actions to stare at the couple with a baby, including a high school teacher in the middle of paying for his cheap bottle of red wine, the cashier having to click his fingers in front of him when his eyes didn’t leave the pair, a short man pushing the pram of a cute little girl along with a man who looked even more taller standing next to the other, his laugh loud.

‘You are so fucking weird’, D.O comments the moment their out of the grocery store, Chanyeol skipping right beside him in a good mood, ‘You haven’t fucking changed’

‘Isn’t that a good thing?’, Chanyeol comments, his eyes crunching into chubby crescent moon shapes when he smiles. He wasn’t wearing his glasses since it broke but thank god he had spare contact lenses he kept behind just in case, so he wasn’t as blind and he didn’t have to keep sliding his glasses back up through out the day.

‘Whatever, just…’, D.O didn’t know how to finish the sentence. Just what exactly? Just don’t cause havoc? Chanyeol’s personality is based on havoc. What was D.O going to say to him?

‘Do Kyungsso?’, the pair is once again interrupted, seeing a man in a blue suit, perfectly tailored just for him.

‘Damn Chen’, Chanyeol mumbles once he sees the man approaching him. The man has been doing good these past few years.

‘What are you doing with Jia? And with him?’, Chen comments when he turns his gaze to find Chanyeol looking like an awkward elf, waving at him with his childish grin.
‘We were just going to drop Jia back to Lay’s house’

‘Oh, well I and Lay are neighbours, why don’t I drop you off?’, Chen offers, holding onto his car keys and pressing the button, Chanyeol seeing an Aston Martin driving towards them due to Chen’s sensor key which allows the car to come to him instead.

‘Well, don’t mind if I do’, Chanyeol claps his hands together the moment he sees the sleek black beauty parking right beside them, pushing past D.O and Chen and opening the front passenger door.

‘Who the hell says you can tag along?’, Chen shouts the moment he sees Chanyeol throwing the diapers inside before attempting to set foot inside.

‘I, as of right now, is Jia’s guardian, so if you take her without me, that’s kidnapping and you can go to jail’, Chanyeol points out, his body already halfway inside the car with Chen giving him the death glares.

‘He kind of has a point’, D.O whispers to Chen, aware of the man’s bitterness towards the giant, ‘Just let him off this time’, D.O call out to Chen, pushing the pram towards the car and opening the back seat, pressing a button on the back which automatically makes a child seat so Jia can sit down.

‘Why did I bother to offer…’, Chen whispers to himself in defeat, looking down at his watch and noticing that he was already late coming back home since his meeting went over time.

‘So, when did you have enough money to buy this car?’, Chanyeol’s annoying voice blares through the car despite Chen switching on the radio.

‘Xiumin bought it for me on my birthday’

‘Oh, that makes sense’

‘What do you mean it makes sense? Are you trying to say I don’t have enough money’, Chen glares at Chanyeol, looking away at the road for a second.

‘No, I meant it would explain the customised carving on the stirring wheel’, Chanyeol points at the stirring wheel which had Chen’s real name engraved on it.

‘Oh’

‘Yeah. I know you’re not that narcissistic to engrave your own name in your car’, Chanyeol chuckles, looking back at D.O, urging him to laugh but the police officer just shook his head in embarrassment.

‘Yeah, well it’s something you would do’, Chen comments, turning a corner and looking at Chanyeol who nods vigorously’
‘You bet. And my whole face too!’, Chanyeol points his finger, gesturing to his face, ‘But I don’t think I can afford to do it right now. But maybe in the future?’, Chanyeol continues to talk, his voice not showing any signs of going away, Chen rolling his eyes in annoyance. He forgot how much Chanyeol spoke.

All of a sudden, Jia stirs awake, her small whimper turning louder as they drive on, the three adults looking at her with worry.

‘She’s crying’, Chanyeol points out, watching as the baby’s face scrunches up, her mouth opening and emitting wails of high pitched cries which sends the three of them in panic mode.

‘Duh, no shit Sherlock!’, D.O shouts, reaching his hand out and trying to stroke Jia back to sleep, lulling and humming soft tunes but to no avail, the baby was still crying.

‘Maybe she did a poo?’, Chen calls out, turning another corner, ‘D.O check’

‘I’m not opening her diapers’, the officer calls back in disgust, looking down to see that Jia is now in distress and it does look like she’s uncomfortable.

‘D.O, just do it. You wouldn’t like it if you were sitting in your own shit’

‘Chanyeol, shut up’, D.O yells at him, the three giving up on language since Jia wouldn’t notice if they were shouting profanities at her, not when she’s screaming herself.

‘Just do it!’, Chen urges, the cries getting louder and louder, forcing D.O to comply to their wishes, reaching out whilst Chen slows down for him, picking Jia up and laying her on his lap whilst he unstraps her diapers, seeing the instant brown stains on the white cotton.

‘Blurgh’, he gags once he sees it, turning his gaze away just in case he throws up there and then, ‘Guys, it’s poo, what do I do with it?!’, D.O yells, looking at the front for help.

‘Change her diapers!’

‘On a moving car? You must be crazy!’, D.O shouts, and with that Chen gives up, trying up his destination and pressing the auto drive, letting his car drive itself, pulling his chair back so he can turn to the back seat, reaching his hand out to the small baby bag that came with the pram.

‘I’ll give you the tissues and other shit, you do the cleaning and Chanyeol, pass us the new diapers’, Chen takes control, ordering everyone to do their job, his voice dominant and that of a CEO, Chanyeol and D.O being taken back for a moment, ‘Well? What are you waiting for?’

‘Right’, D.O is brought back to reality, grabbing the baby wipes from Chen’s hands and starting to clear the mess that Jia has made, Chen reaching out for a small plastic bag inside Lay’s baby bag, reaching his hand out so D.O can throw the trash inside, handing him the baby powder once D.O finished.

‘Do you and Xiumin ever… You know… Do roleplays in bed?’, Chanyeol suddenly blurts out, the shock of the question forcing D.O to squeeze tight on the baby powder, breaking the plastic and causing a huge fog of strawberry scented powder to fly all around the room, Chen coughing for air and D.O trying to block Jia’s nose from inhaling the powder.

‘What the hell?!’, Chen yells at the giant, slapping him on the back of the head, ‘We have a baby we need to take care of!’

‘I’m just asking!’
‘Chanyeol, just past me a new diaper and shut it!’, D.O shouts, coughing out some powder which had gone into his mouth, reaching his hand out, ‘C’mon Chanyeol, we don’t have all day!’

‘Okay, okay!’, Chanyeol shouts back, turning to pick up the packet of diapers, pulling it and pulling it but it seems like it wouldn’t budge.

‘Chen, can you move your chair?’, Chanyeol whines once he sees that it was Chen’s driver’s seat chair which had entrapped the diapers, ‘It’s stuck in your seat’

‘Oh for goodness sakes’, Chen whines, his dinosaur screams echoing in the small space between them, Chen trying to readjust his seat, but before anyone can successfully gain anything from this event, D.O sees something odd in front of his view which forces him to scream in a pitch he never thought he was capable of, arms flailing in the air as he tries to cover him.

It happened in slow motion, Chen’s eyes widening in free as he sees the fountain of pee which had started to fly up in his car, rushing away from the baby as he tries to save himself, Chanyeol’s mouth widening in shock and disgust, his arms flailing and hitting the top of the roof, his bone cracking and the diapers in his hands flying out of the open window and landing on the sidewalk.

The scene was made worse by the sound of Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21 Andante playing in the background, D.O having to take one for the team and wrapping his arms around Jia just in case the baby falls, the pee landing all over his arms, but not before the new angle redirects it towards Chanyeol who screams in disgusts when he feels something wet hitting his neck, the car continues to drive to its destination as if nothing was wrong, as if hell wasn’t taking place inside the car.

‘Xiumin!’, Lay calls out once he turns a corner and sees Xiumin walking in the same direction.

‘Oh, hey Lay’, Xiumin greets back, hugging the doctor as they continue to walk towards their houses which are on the same street, only a few houses in between them.

‘Where did you go? Aren’t you on a break?’

‘Well, I just finished up a meeting with my company about an English remake of one of the musicals I wrote for’, Xiumin explains, the pair peacefully conversing like actual adults, filling each other with how their days went, Lay informing Xiumin that Jia has a new babysitter who he for sure knows she’s going to love.

‘Oh, Park Chanyeol?’, Xiumin repeats once he finds out Lay has hired Chanyeol to take of Jia for a while, ‘Are you sure about that?’, he asks again.

‘Yeah. I feel like he’ll take good care of Jia’, Lay defends his decision, noticing the slight doubt in Xiumin’s eyes, ‘He may still be immature, but I trust him’

‘We all do’, Xiumin points out, the both of them finally stopping in front of their houses, just about to part ways when Xiumin sees a familiar car pulling up at his driveway, a smile on his face at the sight of his husband coming home to him after such a long day at work.
He needed to see Chen, give him a kiss and have the pair of them binge watch a marathon of Game of Thrones with a glass of red wine to end his evening. God, he misses his husband.

Now, of course, what Xiumin didn’t expect, is to find the back door of the car opening first, more than one person falling out of the car, Chanyeol landing on the floor in anguish, followed by Chen as if they’ve lost a battle, the pair screaming like drama queens, D.O the only one walking out, but why did it look like he’d been through more trauma than the other two with the dead expression in his eyes?

‘Chen? Chanyeol? D.O?’, Xiumin calls out, walking over to his husband.

‘No! Don’t touch me! I’m dirty!’, Chen screams, Xiumin and Lay looking up to find that D.O was reaching out his hands in despair, giving Lay back little Jia, clean and smiling, hugging her daddy back once Lay wraps his arms around her.

‘Take her. Take her and never return’, D.O whispers, his expression turning sour when he looks down to see that due to him flailing around, the used diaper had somehow turned over and landed straight to his shirt, ‘I have been shot…’

‘Wait…’, Xiumin finally realised, seeing Jackson Pollock-like stains all over Chen and Chanyeol along with D.O’s disgusted expression, the three men being defeated by one tiny baby.

Xiumin started laughing, clapping his hands together and snorting at the sight, his eyes tearing up when he looks back at his husband.

Jia has just managed to kill three birds in with one stone.

Chapter End Notes

I’ve noticed that some of you are uncomfortable reading the story since I’m using their stage names and I started noticing it during The War, but I decided to carry on using their stage names since it was a high school setting and nicknames were infamous when I was in high school so I thought it would add a youthful glow if they all went by a nickname. I made sure to add proper backstory to their stage names, like how Kyungsoo and Junmyeon’s friendship started because Junmyeon didn’t know how to pronounce Kyungsoo’s name or Minseok’s Chinese name that he preferred as a symbol of cutting his past with Minhyuk and Jongin’s attempt to try and be cool with a slick foreign-sounding name.

But now that they’re all grown up and out of that phase, plus since you guys are bugged by their stage names, maybe I’ll start writing their real names instead in the next chapter. If it really bugs you guys, I’ll change their names back to their real names. (Apart from Jongin since his stage/real name is important for his arc) – but it
seems like everyone else’s names aren’t that important anymore so… I don’t know.

If you guys wanna discuss anything else with me or just wanna say hi: twitter & ig: @/darlingjongin
Baekhyun is more agitated than surprised. More confused than angry yet not remotely discerning when he’s sat in front of the Principal’s office once more once the week is over, Baekhyun fiddling with his nails when another person is standing in the office, his suit and tie looking more formal than when Baekhyun had to dress up for his first job interview.

He knew something was up the moment he mentions his name.

‘Kim Jongin has what now?’, he asks, not quite understanding what the stranger had said.
‘Kim Jongin had recently purchased the community centre neighbouring this school and is looking for volunteers in this school to help with the refurbishing’, the man, who Baekhyun had concluded to be is the idol’s manager, ‘He had personally requested Byun Baekhyun of the Humanities Department to be in charge of the planning’

*Of course, he did…*

Byun Baekhyun could reject, if he didn’t just get a criminal record and a bad rep in his usual crispy clean teaching image, but now that he has, he had no choice but to nod his head, the Principal giving him a fatherly ‘I’m proud of you’ nod, which didn’t help Baekhyun since it made him feel even more stupid and like a child.

‘Good, then hopefully we’ll be seeing you soon’, the manager bows his head, departing from the office with only a pleased Principal and more than pissed Sociology teacher who is going to have a big massive word to Kai and maybe reopen his anti-café.

‘You want me to do what?’

‘Get the Student’s President behind it, it’ll be good for her college applications’

‘Kai, I know exactly what you’re doing’, Baekhyun hisses to the phone, trying to hide his frustration as he sits in the staffroom, his fellow co-workers too busy marking work or going over their next lesson to truly pay attention to Baekhyun, but the high school teacher was still slightly wary.

‘Look, I’m not going to have our old spot be taken away from us easily and-’

‘If you’re trying to impress D.O than you better just stop. He barely visits the centre and getting his sister involved will only make him angrier at you’, Baekhyun informs the idol, not knowing the variety of extent in which the Kim Jongin had stopped giving a fuck about his celebrity image since he’d just teleported in Baekhyun’s staffroom, fuming and in his pyjamas, glaring down at Baekhyun.

‘I am not trying to impress him!’, his loud voice garners everyone’s attention, Mr Park who was busy pouring hot water to his mug drops the kettle the moment he lay eyes on the tanned skin celebrity with the messy blonde hair.

‘Kai!’, Baekhyun screams, standing up and looking around to see that the damaged has already been done, every single one of his colleagues has seen and are still staring at Kai, ‘Get out of here now! How can you even…’, Baekhyun pushes him, trying to get him out of the staff room before one of them gets the idea of pulling out a phone.

‘I’m not trying to impress D.O’, Kai reiterates, folding his arms and refusing to leave.

‘Yeah sure, whatever, can you leave now?’, Baekhyun asks, bowing his head to his colleagues, ‘Sorry about this, he was just about to leave’, he informs them, apologising for the sudden interruption in the staffroom.
‘Damn Baekhyun, first one punch man and now Kim Jongin?’, one of the teachers, the History teacher, calls out all of a sudden, drinking his mug and giving Baekhyun a small wink before walking out of the staffroom with his folder.

‘Oh, for fuck’s sake’, Baekhyun whispers, more to himself, since Mr Hwang had implanted in everyone’s head that maybe he and Kai had something going on, ‘Nothing is happening’, he points to the other teacher before spinning around and turning back to Kai, ‘Now can you please disappear?’

‘Dude, it’s not my fault. My powers get cranky when I do’, Kai informs Baekhyun, stretching his arms and yawning once his initial anger decreases, ‘I haven’t been using it often so it’s a little rusty’

‘I don’t give a fuck. Just piss off will you?’, Baekhyun whines, pushing Kai again in the hopes that he’ll disappear.

‘Okay, okay’, Kai rolls his eyes, bowing to Baekhyun’s colleague before departing, ‘Don’t forget dinner at my place tonight’, he calls out before disappearing without even contextualising his phrase, everyone raising their eyebrows in question before giving Baekhyun that look.

‘I’m… That wasn’t…’, Baekhyun tries to save himself from any rumours from running, everyone already judging him for causing a mess last week, ‘We have a meeting that we need to…’, before Baekhyun can fully explain himself, the rest of his colleagues goes back to whatever they’re doing, ignoring his explanation and probably concluding that Baekhyun and Kim Jongin were fucking.

*I’m going to kill him.*

‘I’m going to need for you to repeat your statement’

‘My client has every right to refuse your orders’

‘Sehun, piss off’, D.O glares at the smug lawyer sitting next to the criminal inside the investigation room, his hands trying hard not to rip apart the reported case resting on his hands, ‘Now, I’m going to repeat myself, what did you previously say last week during your first trial?’

‘I said that I was abused into saying something that was false’, the person in question says, his eyes shaking in fear at the sight of the small yet frightening man, looking for his lawyer for help, in which Sehun senses, standing up, all 6ft of him towering over D.O.

‘As you can see, my client is easily influenced by a threat outside the trial, which means what you need to be doing is catching someone else, rather than drilling my client into submission’, Sehun, his hands arrogantly still inside his pockets, approach Kyungsoo, ‘Don’t you think?’

‘What I think is that if one breaks the law, they serve their time for it’, D.O closes the report files, pushing pass Sehun as he walks pass the tall lawyer, throwing the files on the desk which emitted a loud thud before punching his hand on the desk, creating another knuckle dent onto the metal table which parts him from the criminal, ‘And as far as I know, murder is a crime worth years in prison’, he glares at her for the first time, the woman cowering in fear upon the gaze of the police officer.
‘Look, my client is—’

‘A murder, first and foremost’, D.O interrupts Sehun’s smug voice, looking back at him, ‘And no one’s going to change that. She pleaded guilty and there is CCTV footage showing the actual crime being committed, thus my job is to get her behind bars before she does it again’

‘I would never kill anyone!’, she shouts at the police officer.

‘Tell that to the victim’s family’, D.O growls at her before turning to the mirrors behind her, ‘Lock her up now’, he says to no one in particular, the rest of his team standing on the other side of the glass mirror, their eyes glaring at the lawyer.

‘What a dick’, they all murmur when D.O left the investigation room, seeing Sehun huff in pulling out his sunglasses before walking out along with him, leaving the criminal inside, ‘Sehun is really set on freeing her’

‘Not this time’, another officer joins in the conversation, ‘We have solid proof that she’s not part of a gang and that her relationship with the victim has always been estranged. The murder was probably down out of vengeance or something’

Suho looks across the clear glass, silent and serious, his expression poker face and lips stiff. He had always hated seeing his partner and Sehun colliding in fits of argument during trials and the shouting from across the hall can only deem to have worsened his mood as he hears D.O’s loud screaming along with Sehun’s stern voice rising. His fellow teammate turns their head to him, seeing him make a move of the room, rushing to the end of the corridor where the two people are butting heads again, his hands pushing Kyungsoo’s chest back once he sees the latter stepping closer.

‘D.O, stop’, he warns his partner, pushing him away from Sehun, ‘Let it go’

‘Let it go?’ , D.O turns to Suho, his eyes still furious, ‘Look at him! Suho, look at him’, D.O points his finger accusingly at the lawyer who stands his ground, his shades arrogantly hiding his eyes and hands still in his pockets, ‘How do you not feel the urge to punch him in the face?’, Suho didn’t know how to answer that question, he just looks at D.O, giving him a warning look, the presence of the Chief Police sending D.O back, silencing the vocal officer into submission to his superior, because at the end of the day. Suho will always get the last say.

‘D.O, I advise you to turn back and finish your report on the traffic accident earlier this morning. I’ll handle the rest here’, Suho gives orders to the police officer, his hand still on D.O’s chest, the police officer being taken back at Suho’s stern voice, one which he rarely uses on his best friend.

‘Fine. If you wanna be like that’, D.O spat out, raising his hand in surrender, ‘If this trial is dismissed, then it’s on you’, D.O hisses at him before exiting the area, walking at the other end of the corridor to where the offices are, banging the door on his way out. Suho sighs in defeat, his hands on his waist and turning back to face Sehun.

‘You need to stop doing that’

‘Doing what?’

‘Acting so superior’, Suho sighs, seeing the way Sehun brings his glasses down, putting back in his pocket, ‘You’re intimidating everyone in the room’

‘That’s the point’, Sehun points out, his eyes softening at the sight of Suho in distress, ‘I can’t have them thinking they can get to my client before going through me. You know me, I can’t have them
bullying my clients into submission’, Suho softens up a little, his hand reaching out and fixing Sehun’s collar.

‘I know… But think of it this way… Guilty until proven innocent’

‘Is that your policy here?’, Sehun asks, taking a step back and looking down at the Chief Police.

‘We’re police officers. Everyone we arrest are deemed criminals in our eyes until proven otherwise’

‘That’s fucked up’

‘The world’s fucked up’, Suho replies, his hand still resting on Sehun’s collar, his voice patience compared to when he ordered D.O five minutes ago, ‘I’m sorry Sehun, but my team cannot lose another trial’

‘And I can’t let her go to jail’

‘Why is that?’

‘That information is not for me to say out loud’

‘Sehun please…’

‘No’, the taller stops the conversation, bringing his hands up and holding onto Suho’s, ‘We are not going to discuss our jobs together. We promised each other that’, Sehun reminds Suho of the first time they decided to revise their relationship, their rules set out in front of the table, literally, since Suho wrote it all down one night in his apartment.

‘I know… I just…’, Suho looks down on the floor, staring at his feet for a moment, ‘Never mind, just go home and get some rest’, he finally decides to conclude their conversation, tiptoeing to fix Sehun’s hair which had started to stick out, ‘Can you please fix your hair, you’re always in the rush to do things, your clothes are messy too… Do you even iron them?’, Suho whines, looking at Sehun up and down, re-fixing his collar and straightening his shirt, seeing the creases on his shirt. Sehun chuckles, his face shyly looking down as he allows the Chief Police dote on him.

‘You know I don’t have time to iron my clothes’

‘I don’t care. At least make sure it looks presentable on you. You’re a lawyer’

‘And you’re proud of me?’

‘Of course, I am. I am proud of you’, Suho pauses, looking up as he sees a doubtful look on Sehun’s face, the young man’s gaze making him feel rather nostalgic to the times the lawyer once relied on him on everything, ‘I’m very proud of you’

‘Good. Because, technically, you created this’, Sehun gestures to all of him.

‘Call me Victor Frankenstein, because it seems like I created a monster’, Suho jokes, warning a small punch in the shoulder for his lame jokes.

D.O leans against the door, their conversation still in hearing shot from him, his eyes looking down at his hands as he fiddles with his lanyard, his I.D picture being scratched due to time. He sighs in defeat, his moral crisis only seemed to be getting worse as he hears the soft and happy voice from his best friend when he’s with Sehun.
Lay walks pass his patient’s room, looking down at his new report. His job was more stressful than any other doctor since his speciality was neurogenetic imperium which focuses on the part of the brain which controls and makes individual powers, also known as the area where most medical scientist and doctors barely explore due to its complexity.

Exploring the brain is already sensitive, most researchers still having a long way to go before they fully understand how the brain operates, but for him, being one of five doctors in the world researching about powers, he had it hard.

For once, his responsibility is always put into the spotlight, countless interviews, reporters and journalist always bombarding his office for questions, which he didn’t mind answering since the world did have the rights to know how his process was going, but it did leave Lay feeling a but downgraded whenever he comes up with nothing or his hypothesis is put on hold whenever the results turn out bad.

But the one thing that pained Lay to the core, was that none of his patients has ever successfully recovered. Neurogenetic imperium diseases have no cure and so for years, he had to sit with his patients and sing them to sleep, knowing that he couldn’t do anything t permanently help them. He has had to witness more death than any other doctors.

‘And what is she?’

‘A shapeshifter’, his assistant explains, the two medics looking out from the window into a room where a little girl laid, playing with her teddy bear whilst her mother strokes her forehead, looking at her with all the love a mother can have.

‘Has she been diagnosed?’, Lay asks, looking down at her files and seeing constant dates of hospital visits where she had to be comatose due to her constant episodes of uncontrolled shapeshifting which has taken a toll on her body.

‘When was the last time she shifted?’

‘Last month’

‘And into what?’

‘A lobster’, Lay sighs, looking down at the consequences the recent shapeshift has caused her. Since human anatomy is different with that of a sea creature, her spine has taken the most hit to shifting from an endoskeleton to an exoskeletal structure. Not only that but her lungs have collapsed for a brief moment when turning back.

‘She’s not going to make it, is she?’

‘Not if she can’t control herself’, Lay points out, seeing the countless of wires injected all over her arms and stomach, ‘I’ve not seen a case where a human has shapeshifted into another species… Not successfully anyway’

‘Do you think it has anything to do with her nerves?’
'No, that hypothesis was proven wrong with our previous case of the patient with the earth manipulating power’, Lay points out, his assistant nurse nodding her head in remembrance of the man with the lack of control of his powers. They had found his nerves to be slightly larger than normal, many researchers believing it to be the case as to why his powers were more prominent and uncontrollable, but their resizing operation did not work and in fact only seemed to heighten his powers.

‘What do we do? Shall I speak to the parents?’

Lay closes his eyes, feeling himself tear up for a moment when he observes the little girl, laughing as her father sings to her, her teddy bear still clutched onto her hand. The flashes of Jia come across his mind and he couldn’t help but feel a heavy force dipping down to his chest at the thought of a reversed situation where it was him singing to Jia whilst she’s plugged in the hospital.

‘No, I’ll give my team a few more weeks to come up with something’, Lay dismisses the nurse, ‘We can’t tear their hope just yet.

‘I hope we find a cure’, the nurse whispers, leaning her head comfortably on Lay’s shoulder, the little girl in the hospital room noticing their presence when she turns her head and waving at them, grabbing her teddy bear’s hands and forcing it to also wave at the doctors.

Chanyeol walks into the building with his resume after gaining a call back from one of the companies he applied for. It was a small construction site and he thought he was never going to get the job since he wasn’t the most built human being in the world, but the years of swimming and diving in the ocean to pick up trash did leave him with great stamina.

‘So, Park Chanyeol, it says here that you were diagnosed with neurogenetic imperium sclerosis?’ the employer looks down at his medical history, seeing the endless amount of medications he had to intake.

‘Yes, but don’t let the name fool you, it’s really not that bad and I actually only have a mild version of it’, Chanyeol points out, shaking his legs and sliding his thick glasses back up after it slides down.

‘It says here that you have vision problems, your legs tend to weaken from time to time, muscle spasms and…’, the employer looks down to read the last bit, ‘Reverting of powers… What does that mean?’

‘Oh…’, Chanyeol nervously scratches the back of his head, ‘That’s when my powers go back on me… Kind of when it doesn’t listen to what I say and just…’, Chanyeol gestures a small explosion with his hands, ‘But like I said, the medication keeps that under control’

‘Mr Park, we work on a construction site. We cannot have you exploding where there are oil and other things that can catch fire easily’, the employer points out, closing Chanyeol’s resume folder, ‘I don’t think your situation puts you in the safe zone to work here’

‘I can always work in your office. I can handle paperwork fairly well’, Chanyeol points out, his voice starting to look desperate once he sees his resume being put to the side.
‘I’m sorry, but we’re looking for labourers, not secretaries’, the employer bows his head, ‘I’m sorry Mr Park’

‘Chen, aren’t you supposed to be at work?’, Xiumin asks once he walked out of his studio after hours of working on new material, seeing his husband inside their kitchen rather than the office, cooking a meal, an apron over his suit.

‘I was, but there was a meeting which I didn’t feel like attending, so I told my dad to go instead’, Xiumin chuckles, seeing a bit of Chen’s father in Chen himself, so nonchalantly ditching his meetings to cook food.

‘And what are you doing here instead?’

‘You’ve been working long hours again. I can’t have you missing your meals’, Chen points out, turning around and opening the fridge, pulling out a container of homemade kimchi, ‘I’m making your favourite, so just sit down and wait’

‘You know, most young CEOs usually miss their meetings and go to clubs and bars’, Xiumin points out, giggling when Chen stops cutting the onions to glare at him.

‘Why would I do that when I have you?’

‘Cheesy much?’, Xiumin cringes at the line, stretching his hand and stealing a sliced carrot from the chopping board.

‘I’m being serious though’

‘Which makes it worse’, Xiumin says with his mouth full, walking over to where Chen is, giving him a quick kiss before letting him go back to his cooking, ‘But I love you for it’

‘To be honest, I should be more worried about you. You’re always working with ballet dancers and actors… Young and good looking’

‘And flexible’, Xiumin points out, which did not sit well with the latter, his knife being abandoned on the chopping board as he turns around, hands on his hips, ‘You know I’m only kidding’, Xiumin laughs, his arms snaking their way around Chen’s neck.

‘Yeah, I know you’re not going to but it still bugs me when you say it’, Chen pouts his bottom lip, his hands resting on his husband’s waist, ‘What if you’re not emotionally in love with me anymore?’

‘Shut up, you know that will never happen’, Xiumin whispers, leaning his head forward until his lips were just hovering Chen’s.

‘But what if you emotionally fall in love with someone else?’

‘They have to be better than you for me to do that?’, Xiumin whispers before dipping his head in and kissing Chen’ slow and soft, glad to have his husband around him after hours of being cooped up inside his dark studio, the smell of freshly cut vegetables and kimchi, the smell of home around
Ding Dong.

The sound of the bell interrupts their moment, Chen sighing as Xiumin if forced away from him, his husband laughing at the way he whines, pecking his lips once more before leaving the kitchen and walking to the main corridor where the front door is, opening it to find Chanyeol, wearing a green tracksuit, his hair short and messy, his big glasses resting on his face.

‘Chanyeol?’ he calls out in a questioning tone, the tall man just awkwardly standing right in front of him, his hand holding onto a folder and his head hung low, ‘What are you doing here?’

‘Um… Can I… Speak to Chen?’ he asks, seeing the way Xiumin’s eyes turn into pity, the both of them knowing the answer already.

‘Chanyeol… You know… You know he doesn’t want to see you’

‘But you’re cool at seeing me… Right? You don’t mind hanging out with me’

‘Of course, I’m not. We’re still friends and whatever you did in the past, I can forgive’, Xiumin explains, reaching his hand out and patting Chanyeol’s shoulder, ‘But Chen… It’s different with Chen… I can’t…’, Xiumin sighs when he sees the look of defeat in Chanyeol’s eyes, ‘He still hasn’t forgiven you yet and I can’t force him to do it’

‘Okay…’, Chanyeol responds, not knowing when the time will come when he’ll be able to speak with his best friend like the old times. He thought maybe coming back permanently will change Chen’s mind about him, but the night in jail definitely made it clear that Chen was not pleased to see him at all.

‘If you just tell him why you left us all those years ago… Maybe he’ll understand’, Xiumin points out, bringing back the conversation they had a week ago, one which Chanyeol refusing to speak about, ‘I don’t need to know why you did it. I’ve already forgiven you and I don’t need to know any more, but… Maybe… Maybe Chen deserves to know. Out of all of us, even between him and Baekhyun, he deserved to know’.

‘Tell him I said hi’, Chanyeol ignores Xiumin’s last words, turning back from the house and leaving instead of saying anything to Xiumin.

‘Chanyeol!’, Xiumin tries to call him back but Chanyeol was already out of their front porch and walking away.

He’ll hate me even more if he knew the truth.

‘Babe, who was that?’, Chen calls from the kitchen, hearing Xiumin’s voice shout but not knowing what he said.

‘Nothing’. Xiumin can only reply back, looking out of the door to see Chanyeol disappearing from his view, ‘It was nothing’
D.O sits alone in the bar, drinking his pint of beer as the night rolls in, looking dejected from the long hours at work. He saw Sehun coming back to the station, but this time in normal attire, a simple sweater and denim jeans and he knew he didn’t come for him.

It worried D.O to the bone about Suho’s relationship with the lawyer. If their team find out it will have dire consequences for the trust and relationship they had with each other. His credibility as a Chief Police will be highly compromised.

‘Why am I even worrying about a relationship that I’m not in’, D.O sighs, pitying himself as he sips his beer, looking around to see businessmen and women in groups, couples sitting in a table to themselves, conversing, laughing and complaining to each other, making D.O feel even more alone.

Suddenly, he hears the familiar voice of Kim Jongin singing from the speakers of the bar, a sultry R’n’B song which to his opinion, has been overplayed too much in radios. He rolls his eyes as he is forced to listen to the song again, chugging the rest of his beer and wiping his lips, pulling out a note from his pocket to pay for his drink before standing up to leave.

‘D.O’, a voice from behind him made the smaller jump, ready to high kick the shit out of whoever that deep voice belonged too.

‘What the fuck?’, he shouts once he turns to find Chanyeol standing behind him, the tall boy looking down at him as if he’d just heard the death of his mother, ‘Chanyeol? What the fuck are you doing here?’, he asks, but the day had been long, too long for the both of them and all he felt was Chanyeol’s arms wrapping around him, squeezing him tight, ‘Chanyeol?’, he asks again, his arms awkwardly trying to get Chanyeol from him but he stops when he hears a sniffle.

‘I didn’t get the job’, Chanyeol sighs, trying to suppress the angry tears which had threatened to spill from his eyes.

‘What?’

‘I didn’t pass my interview’, Chanyeol repeats, and this time, D.O stop moving, letting Chanyeol hug him as the tall boy pours his broken spirit, ‘They said I wasn’t fit enough to get the job’

‘Fit enough?’; D.O asks, ‘Is this about your fire situation?’, he feels Chanyeol nod against his shoulder, his chin dipping in, ‘Chanyeol, you have to explain to me and explain properly. What is up with you?’, D.O, finally gaining the strength to pull Chanyeol off him.

‘I just can’t control my powers from time to time… But like I said, I can still suppress it. Most of the time it works…’

‘Chanyeol, if this is just about your job I-’

‘Chen won’t let me see him’

‘What?’

‘I thought… I thought by coming back, maybe… Maybe I’ll have time to spend with him again, but I only saw him twice since I came back. Once is a fucking jail cell and another time inside his car when Jia peed on all of us’

‘Chen seemed okay hanging out with you in the car… Even though you were annoying…’

‘But Xiumin says he still doesn’t like me’
'That’s because you bailed out on him’, D.O points out, ‘It’s hard not to be pissed at your best friend if they don’t tell you to shit that’s happening to them’, D.O looks down, reminded that Suho did exactly just that, yet he felt no real anger towards his best friend, not to Chen’s extent anyway.

‘But I keep trying. I talk to him like nothing has changed yet he still hates me’

‘He hates you *because* you act like nothing has changed’, D.O sighs, ‘You act as if what you did to us, to Chen and Baekhyun, was not a big deal that you don’t even mention it. You think you’re doing the right thing, but it’s offending them that you don’t bother to explain to them anything’

‘But…’

‘Chanyeol, listen to me, they witness you die, Chen witnessed it twice. They can handle whatever reason who had on leaving them. Trust me’

Eun Bi walks home from school, her bag resting by her side, waving her hands goodbye as her friends choose to hang out at the mall first, but she had busier things to do. She couldn’t wait to stay over at her brother’s for the weekend, some of her clothes already in a small drawer in D.O’s spare room. She had never been away from her brother for longer than a week nowadays. The last time she had been apart from him was when he lived almost two hours away from them in Gangnam when he used to be a lawyer. She always tried to call him every night, but with his busy life, she found that he didn’t have time to talk to her like he used it.

She was glad that he became a police officer three years ago, going to the Police Academy for a year and moving back near them two years ago. Eun Bi had always thought to be a police officer suited D.O better. Her brother had always quietly protected her, but more discreetly. He was never very vocal when it comes to helping people, just doing what he can when it’s possible.

*Beep, beep.*

He hears a car honking beside her, making her flinch at the sudden loud noise when a bright glistening red Ferrari stops beside her, the tinted window rolling down.

‘Ergh. What are you doing here?’, she asks, her nose scrunching in disgust once she sees Kim Jongin inside the car, smiling at her and giving her a small wave.

‘Hey, nice to see you again Eun Bi’

‘Yeah, whatever… Now, what do you want?’, she asks, stopping and folding her arms across her chest.

‘Just here to ask if you know’

‘Now about what?’

‘I’ve recently purchased the community centre’

‘What a good Samaritan you are, do you want a medal?’, she sarcastically congratulates him, tapping her foot impatiently, ‘Now are you done showing? I have to go to my brother’s place’
‘You’re going to Soo’s?’

‘It’s D.O to you’, Eun Bi feeling agitated at the nickname he’s giving her brother.

‘Right… D.O’, Kai laughs, ‘Do you want me to drop you off?’

‘I’d rather have Baekhyun blind me’, Eun Bi calls out, sticking her tongue out to Ka before sauntering off, leaving the celebrity behind. If her friends are with her, they would’ve smacked her I the head and apologised to Kim Jongin for her rude behaviour before they start kissing his feet, but Eun Bi, being a brazen young woman, curses at the celebrity without regret, walking away from him and his sick car.

Kai on the other hand just smiles at her, parking at the side of the road, watching her walk off, teleporting out of his car and at the rooftop of the community centre, his feet standing right at the edge of the roof, eyes looking at the teenage girl who crosses the road, her phone pressed on her ears.

Jia sleeps on Lay’s arms, Luhan busy clearing the living room of the toys which had been thrown and played with all day, the couple sitting in the living room.

‘Hermes, play soft lullabies’

‘Playing soft lullabies playlist’, the voice announces, soft music playing inside the living room, Lay’s eyes shifting to sleep since he’s been working all day.

‘How was work?’, Luhan asks, ushering his husband and their baby out of the living and towards their bedroom, closing the lights behind them.

‘Long and draining’, Lay admits, feeling his muscle strains, ‘We had a new patient today’

‘Oh really?’

‘Yeah, a little girl’, Lay tells the story, feeling his husbands comforting arms around him, the both of them walking inside the small nursery room with a pink crib at the centre, Lay slowly placing a sleeping Jia onto the soft cushions surrounded by teddy bears.

‘I hope she gets better’, Luhan replies, holding onto Lay, both of them looking down at their treasure, the little baby which sleeps so soundlessly.

‘I hope so too’, they stood for a moment, not moving just yet as they let the soft lullabies leave them in a trance of peace, Lay feeling lucky every time they see Jia, healthy and happy.

‘Playing next: Call me daddy’

‘What in god’s name?’, Luhan stares around the room as another song plays through the built-in speaker, shocking both the parents at the sudden change of song.

Tonight, I want you to call me daddy
‘Lay, what have you been listening to?’

‘Don’t look at me, I haven’t been in the house all day long’, Lay raises his hand up, calling his innocence, ‘You had a week off last week’

‘Hey, don’t look at me’, Luhan argues back when Lay throws an accusing look towards him.

Baekhyun walks towards his apartment, his bag even heavier than before since he had his student’s books stuffed inside, knowing his night was going to be wasted on marking their homework, his eyes looking tiredly on the phone.

Most times he doesn’t think of him, He’s gotten used to ignoring his existence or pretending he doesn’t know him, but in spurts of moments, more often now that he’s back, he would often think of the tall boy. He doesn’t really know why since he’d barely seen Chanyeol since the reunion but small glimpses of him would pop up in Baekhyun’s thoughts.

He remembered of the time he saw Chanyeol with D.O at the grocery store, though quick and only for a few seconds, it stopped him in mid-motion, embarrassing him in front of the cashier lady. He didn’t feel anything seeing the two together, although it did seem rather odd that Chanyeol had decided to confide in D.O out of all people.

It’ll make sense since Baekhyun was still angry at Chanyeol, the pent-up bitterness surging back whenever he thought about it, but it didn’t seem to overpower the slight relief at seeing the giant all in one piece and pretty much as the same how he was before. It angered but yet relieved him that the boy had stayed the same.

He feels his phone buzzing, alerting him to a text message from none other than Kai.

_I expect you to come to the meeting in about three minutes._

Oh shit. Baekhyun almost forgot about Kai’s stupid meeting. He sends a quick text telling the celebrity that he’s not going to make it before entering his apartment, his bag weighing heavier by the minute since his shoulders started aching, walking up the stairs and to his apartment door, pressing his thumb on the lock and hearing the ping to which the door opens.

‘I knew you were going to bail out on me’, Kai’s voice was loud and mad the moment Baekhyun opens the door, frightening the man to flail his arms in the air and hitting Kai in the face.

‘Shit! You scared the living daylight out of me!’, Baekhyun shouts the moment he regains some form of sanity, seeing Kai bent down in front of him, covering his nose at the painful impact.

‘You broke my nose!’, he shouts, looking up with wide eyes as if Baekhyun had shot him.

‘Stop overreacting, you broke into my apartment!’, Baekhyun screams back, throwing his big heavy back to the floor, pushing past Kai, ‘And you embarrassed me in front of everyone at my work’

‘That was an accident. Like I said, my teleportation is a little rusty. I haven’t been using it’
‘How can you not use your powers? I would use it every single fucking day instead of having to walk to work’, Baekhyun rolls his eyes unbelievingly, opening his fridge to take out water, leaving Kai to follow him like a lost puppy.

‘It’s because there isn’t someone I want to run to nowadays’, Kai whispers, reaching his hand out to grab the water bottle from Baekhyun, ‘Now, can we start the meeting? I’ve already hired a team to reconstruct the centre with sustainable material, so it’ll last forever’

‘Kai, can you please discuss it with someone else? I need to mark my students’ work’, Baekhyun points out which only makes Kai laughs at the thought of Byun Baekhyun marking someone’s work, let alone a whole class.

‘Look, I just need to discuss the things we need to do after the construction is done. They say it’ll take three months to work on so we have three months to plan redecorations-’

‘Kai, I don’t give a shit’, Baekhyun waves his hand around, trying to stop Kai from talking, ‘Tell that to me in three months’ time when I need to start doing shit for you’, Baekhyun walks back to the front entrance and to pick up his bag, ‘But until then, I’ll be here marking my students’ work’, he points down again, laying them down on the kitchen counter where he and Kai sits, unzipping it and pulling out a pile of books, all tarnished and belonging to teenagers going through puberty.

‘is that my name?’, Kai giggles, seeing one particular notebook with doodles all over the front cover, seeing his name written in different colours with hearts drawn around it.

‘Don’t even try’, Baekhyun warns Kai, ‘If I hear anything narcissistic coming out of your mouth, I’m going to punch you’

‘Wow, I wonder how you survived dating the most narcissistic human alive’, Kai laughs, ‘Or maybe the real question, is how he survived dating you’

Baekhyun didn’t give him an answer, just glaring at him before opening his student’s book and reading over the answers they’d given, his red pen ticking the right answers and adding notes to the ones which didn’t make sense, Kai curiously staring at the way Baekhyun actually took his job seriously, watching as the pen glides from one page to another, shocked and impressed at how easy Baekhyun read the messy handwriting, having struggled reading the sentence himself when the letters into a hot mess of swirls at some point.

‘You love your job, don’t you?’, he asks, looking at how intent Baekhyun was when it was time to give feedbacks and notes.

‘Of course, I do, don’t you?’, Baekhyun asks nonchalantly, although, to him, it was a nonchalant question, but to Kai it bore down on him more than ever, his eyes gleaming out of the window and seeing the city lights from above, ignoring Baekhyun for a moment, feeling himself turn translucent, disappearing in the in between, half of his body still in Baekhyun’s apartment, but another half sitting in the middle of a corridor of a small and torn down apartment, the smell of beef and kimchi coating the whole apartment floor, his eyes falling on D.O by the end of the hallway where the kitchen was, cooking a meal with Eun Bi sitting down beside him, her loud voice talking about her day at school.

‘Kai? What’s wrong with you?’, Baekhyun asks the moment he looks up to see that Kai had become translucent, his body no longer solid but the spirit which becomes a result of Kai desiring to move from one place to another, but not quite doing so, his spirit stuck in the in between.
D.O walks out of the station, practically running to his police car as he opens the door and starts his engines immediately, Suho racing behind him and jumping inside the passenger seat, his phone pressed on his ear. They had gotten a call from the public, one which they did not expect for them
to make, but a shootout is still a shootout and D.O and Suho are forced into the scene.

‘Chonsa street’?, Suho shouts into the phone, double checking the address being telling D.O to step on it, the police sirens blaring the moment they drive from the station, alerting the public to make room for them in the traffic-filled streets of Seoul.

‘Guns? Purchased or stolen?’, Suho asks, holding tightly on the sides of the car as he feels the impact of D.O’s reckless driving, turning an abrupt left then a right, the two bodies inside swerving and hitting their sides on the car.

‘Doesn’t matter! Are there any injured civilians?’, D.O yells at Suho who is asking useless questions, making another turn and driving past three red lights.

‘Currently, there are four’, Suho informs D.O, hanging up on the phone and opening one of the drawers inside the car, a small pistol which they own but rarely ever use, Suho checking if it’s loaded before opening the window.

‘What are you doing?’, D.O asks, noticing at how Suho unbuckles his belt, his upper body practically out of the car and hanging out of the window.

‘Keep driving. They said the shooters have escaped and driving East of Chonsa street which is where we are!’ Suho shouts back to D.O, waiting for the white van which a nearby police officer at the scene described to him, his eyes gazing down on the license plate, trying to spot the same six numbers and letters that were given to him.

‘Suho, watch out’, D.O warns his partner, driving a bit slower, eyes alert with a stronghold to spot the shooters, the sirens still blaring.

A sudden bang shocks the pair of police officers as the hear the screeches of a van passing them, a shot directed at Suho once the police officer outside the window makes eye contact with them, ducking down and swerving the bullet.

‘D.O! Turn around!’, he yells at his partner who instantly makes a dangerous U-turn, driving in the wrong lane, cars swerving out of the police car’s way, causing a havoc with civilian’s cars hitting lamp posts and parking on the sidewalk, bystanders stopping in shock, kneeling down to also try and avoid the gunshot.

Suho stretches out his arm, aiming straight for one of the tyres, but the sudden swerve from D.O leaves him to shoot without aim, hitting the window of the van, shattering the glass to pieces and hitting out of the men inside. But that didn’t stop the chase since the driver was still well alive, speeding 80mph.

Goddammit Suho, be careful!’ D.O shouts, finally making another turn which allows him to tail right behind the van, but the back doors open, showing the pair to more men in black balaclavas with guns bigger than Suho’s pistol, ‘Suho! Get down!’, D.O orders his partner, but the Chief Police refuses to listen, looking far ahead of the road and seeing something, his eyes sparkle with an idea. Reloading his gun, he aims once again at the van, shooting at random directions, diverting their attention to focus solely on him, the driver constantly turning back to see what was happening behind.

D.O speeds up, his eyes constantly on his partner, seeing the machine gun which had shown itself to him, a man loading it with the plan to aim at them. They needed to turn otherwise Suho would become an open target.
‘I’m turning left!’

‘No! Stay here!’, Suho yells back at his partner.

‘What? Are you fucking crazy?!’, D.O shouts back, his hands itching to make a turn once the barrel of the gun begins to face them, more importantly, to Suho.

‘Just do as I say and trust me!’, Suho screams, his gun empty and thrown back into the car, D.O noticing well that not only was Suho out in the open but he was not armed either.

‘Suho! What the fuck?’, D.O keeps driving forward, freaking the fuck out as they inch closer and closer to the van, his eyes shaking in fear as he watches the man in the mask aims his gun straight at Suho, the streets emptying with the fear of the loud gunshots which started to blare.

But before D.O can fear for the worst, he sees multiple man holes open up with the force of water coming out from below the ground a fountain of water tipping over cars and lorries parked at the sides, every single fire hydrant placed at the end of the street bursts open, the water blocking strong waves of water blocking the bullets from hitting the police officer, a manhole from beneath the van exploding, resulting in the van tipping sideways, landing on its side with everyone inside tumbling out, D.O erupting to a stop, his wheels screeching.

His eyes looked up to the floods which had started to happen, parked cars starting to float at the waves of water which had stood still at the command of the Chief Police, Suho still hanging out of the police car, his face stiff and stern.

D.O heaves a sigh of relief, opening the car doors and running straight to the shooters, his hands gripping tightly on the barrel of the machine gun, the man still having a tight grip of it. As he was about to shoot, D.O grips onto it tighter, the metal caving in under his strength, twisting it until the barrel was facing the shooter instead.

‘You are under arrest’, D.O growls at the group of men before punching all of them, one punch each, which knocks them all out in one go, D.O even seeing a tooth fall off.

‘D.O…’, he hears his partner whimper from behind him, the water stopped flowing, making D.O stop in his tracks, his hands hovering above the unconscious man’s hands, the metal handcuffs still in his hands. He sees red mixed in with the liquid.

‘Suho?!’, he calls out, seeing that Suho had dropped onto the floor, his hands resting on his stomach which flowed out blood, ‘Suho!’, D.O abandons the criminals, running to his partner, immediately putting pressure on the wound, checking to see if Suho was still awake, the Chief Police’s eyes blinking in and out of consciousness.

‘Hello? Yes, this is Do Kyungsoo, Police Officer at Seoul Station, Division 012, I need an ambulance… Now! My partner has just been hit!’, D.O screams at his phone, dropping it in the water which had started to regress, flowing back into the drains of the street, Suho laying on D.O’s arms, ‘Suho, stay with me, stay with me, okay?’, D.O lightly slaps Suho’s cheeks, trying to get the man to stay awake.

Stay with me.

Stay with me.

Suho, keep your eyes open and stay with me.
Lay runs to the ER, his doctor’s coat flying past, pushing past other doctors and nurses once he got a text from D.O about Suho.

‘Where is he?’, he shouts to one of the Emergency nurses, asking for a Chief Police, his eyes gazing at the room full of people, his eyes focused on trying to find one person.

‘Lay! Right here!’, D.O runs to him the moment the other officer sees the frantic doctor. Lay instantly runs to him.

‘D.O! Where’s Suho? Is he okay?’

‘I’ve just been informed that they’ve taken out the bullet and they’re just closing up his wounds. The doctor’s already healed him once the bullet was out’, D.O informs the doctor, Lay wrapping his arms around him, both sighing a heave of relief.

‘Lay! D.O!’, Xiumin and Chen rushes in together, their eyes quivering in fear, Chen in his suit and tie whereas Xiumin was still in his pyjamas, messy hair and dark undereye circles. The pair rushes over to D.O in search of some form of explanation.

‘What happened?!’

‘Shooters’

‘I thought guns are illegal in Korea?!’

‘Doesn’t mean people still can’t have one’, D.O sighs in defeat, feeling the buzzing of his phones as his superior tries to call him. He’s been rejecting their calls for over two hours, but now that Suho was in the clear and his partner was safe, he decides to pick it up now, waving to his friends for a moment before walking off to a silent area, leaving Xiumin and Chen with Lay, in a brief sensation of relief.

‘D.O’s phone call gave me a fucking heart attack’, Chen whines, clutching his chest as the adrenaline rush was still surging through his veins.

‘Same…’, Lay spoke out, combing his hair back and giving Xiumin a hug, noticing how the man was still had asleep and tired despite being it being the afternoon already, ‘Did you skip a meeting?’

‘Of course, I did’, Chen points out, his high-pitched tone gaining other people’s attention, making Lay laugh.

‘Are gun wounds easy to heal?’, Xumin asks, still worried about Suho, looking up at Lay with hopeful eyes.

‘Yeah, it’s the one thing healers excel at. A direct wound made by an external object means we can easily heal it within a limited amount of time. With Suho’s case, since it’s the stomach, healers only have a few hours to fully close the wound before he runs out of blood, but luckily for him, we have healers in the hospital who can close up gun wounds in a few minutes’, Lay informs the couple, everyone feeling elated with the positive outcome of Suho’s case.
‘Guys!’, Baekhyun is the next person to join them, probably running out of his class since Eun Bi was right by his side, looking worried, eyes red and probably in tears at the news that her brother and his partner had been in an accident.

‘Suho!’, she screams the moment she sees that her brother wasn’t there, thinking the worse, ‘Where is he? Where’s my brother??’

Before she makes a scene in the hospital, Chen grabs hold of her, hugging her tightly.

‘It’s fine. Suho’s alive and all fixed up’, Chen whispers to her, stroking her back in comfort.

‘What about Kyunggie?’

‘He’s fine. He’s just taking a phone call’, Xiumin responds to her, joining the group hug, seeing Baekhyun sigh a heave of relief as he listens to them.

‘Jesus, D.O could not have made the phone call scarier’, Baekhyun breathes out, massaging his back from the sudden running he and Eun Bi did to get to the hospital, breathing heavily since he was still out of breath.

‘I know right’, Chen chuckles, the feeling of fear now gone from everyone, ‘D.O can be such a drama queen sometimes’

Speaking of the other police officer, he finishes his conversation with the Head of the Seoul Police Department, informing them of the outcome of the shooters and how much damage had been done to the city due to the chase. It had given him more stress having to be tasked with writing the report of today, but it wasn’t enough to tear his spirits down, celebrating that his partner has managed to survive.

‘D.O?’ he sees Chanyeol approaching him, the giant running up to him and giving him a hug before even uttering a word. Unfortunately for everyone, they see this gesture from afar, Eun Bi awkwardly looking over to where her brother is, being engulfed by a tall man.

‘Chanyeol, you got my voicemail?’

‘I did and what the fuck? Is Suho alive? Are you hurt?’, Chanyeol begins to bombard D.O of questions, the tall man bending down to see if he had any scars or cuts on his face.

‘I’m fine. Suho’s fine. He’s going to live’, D.O informs to which Chanyeol gives a huge sigh of relief.

‘Thank god’, he murmurs, looking behind D.O to find the whole group staring at them, more importantly, at him. It made him feel awkward, stepping back away from D.O, looking at his shoes and fiddling with the zip of his jacket, ‘Well, I’m… Glad that you’re okay’, Chanyeol awkwardly points out, ‘I should probably go now’

‘What? You just got here’

‘Yeah… But-’

‘No, stay here and grab yourself a coffee. Suho will enjoy everyone coming here and doting over him’, D.O insists, grabbing the ends of his sleeves and dragging him to the middle of the waiting room in which the other people stare gawkily and silently at the odd pair.

‘Hey, Chanyeol’, Xiumin was the first to come up to Chanyeol and give him a quick hug, followed
by Lay who holds onto him, linking arms and giving Chanyeol’s hair a ruffle.

‘I’m glad you came to visit’, Lay smiles at him, Chanyeol smiling back and leaning in Lay’s touch. Baekhyun on the other hand, stares at Chanyeol, looking back at D.O with a questioning look only for the latter to ignore him.

‘Eun Bi, why don’t I buy you some food whilst we wait?’, Chen avoids Chanyeol, looking down at the teenage girl instead, who nods her head sheepishly at Chen’s request.

Before anyone even moves, Chanyeol suddenly rips himself away from Lay, surprising everyone, his eyes shaking uncontrollably, his hands reaching out for D.O, gripping tightly on the latter’s arms whilst he gives him a look, a cry for help, which only D.O can recognise.

‘Come with me’, D.O holds his hand out, reaching for Chanyeol’s before dragging him out of the hospital, the two practically running out.

‘What just happened?’, Lay asks, the only person who vocalised what everyone else was thinking, ‘Was it me?’

‘No. No, it wasn’t’, Xiumin voices out in suspicion, noticing the way Chanyeol’s hands started tremoring.

‘Chanyeol, Chanyeol? You okay?’, D.O breathes out the moment they left the hospital, running to the nearest alleyway at the end of the street, turning back to see Chanyeol’s eyes turn a bright red, his fingertips burning a flame of blue which burns D.O’s hands, ‘Chanyeol?!’, D.O starts freaking out the moment Chanyeol kneels on the floor, his mouth opening and spitting out what D.O can only see as lava, orange fury spilling out of Chanyeol’s mouth.

‘Take… My… In…Jection’, Chanyeol gags in between, reaching his hand out for D.O’s help. D.O didn’t understand, or, he was too scared to process what Chanyeol was saying, the boy’s skin burning in flames, his hair turning bright red.

Chanyeol was on fire. All of him was on fire.

‘D.O… D… Please…’

In the spurt of the moment, D.O finally remembers the medical pouch Chanyeol keeps in his back pockets, finally bending down to try and get it but failing once his hands gets near the giant, feeling the surging heat of the fire touching him.

‘Chanyeol… Chanyeol, I can’t get to it’, D.O calls out, ‘Chanyeol, I need you to stop for a moment… I can’t…’, D.O terrified at the sight of Chanyeol tried to get the pouch, but every time he gets close to Chanyeol, the fire burned brighter.

‘What is it you’re trying to get?’, another voice interrupts their moment, Xiumin running over the moment he turns a corner, discreetly following the pair once he slipped past his husband’s notice, his eyes gleaming in shock at Chanyeol’s state.
‘The medical pouch in his back pockets’, D.O informs, watching Xiumin’s hands freeze up, his hands being covered in dry ice which blocks the fire from coming into contact with his skin. Xiumin quickly twists Chanyeol over, grabbing the pouch, probably made from anti-fire material since it was still intact unlike Chanyeol clothes which had started to burn.

D.O grabs it from Xiumin the moment it’s out of the boy’s pockets, looking for the injection the giant had shown him the other day, making sure to open the new packet without touching it, grabbing the liquid formula inside and filling the injection. Xiumin watches from the side, bringing Chanyeol hands to the latter as the officer slowly pierces the metal right into the vein, seeing the blue swim straight into his veins, the fire slowly stopping so that D.O can hold onto him when he drops into his arms, falling unconscious at the impact of the episode.

‘You better tell me what the fuck is going on’, Xiumin hisses the moment the damage has been cleared and Chanyeol is safe, his eyes glaring at D.O who could not stress enough about how much of a shit day this day has been.

‘Where’s Xiumin?’, Chen asks Baekhyun who waits patiently with Lay, Eun Bi and Chen walking back in after getting some food, Eun Bi sipping on her banana milk, sitting right next to Baekhyun.

‘I have no idea. I thought he was going to see you?’, Baekhyun asks, but before they can get into a discussion, the door to Suho’s room opens, the doctors giving them permission to visit Suho who was now awake and resting well in his bed.

‘You fucking dickhead’, was the first thing he was greeted with when Chen walks in with folded arms and an angry expression, ‘You got me into a hot mess’

Suho can only laugh, wincing in pain when he does so since his wound was still healing.

‘Don’t laugh too hard’, Lay informs him, ‘Your wound is still vulnerable to reopening’

‘Great’, Suho sighs, holding onto his stomach, ‘How long will it be until it fully closes?’

‘Probably a few more hours, then you can start running a marathon if you want’, Lay informs the police officer, laughing as he sits down next to him.

‘Where’s D.O?’

‘He’s with Chanyeol’

‘Huh’, Suho looks at Baekhyun who awkwardly tried not to react at the sound of his name, ‘That’s weird’

‘How so?’

‘D.O has been hanging out too much with Chanyeol’

‘This isn’t the first time he was with Chanyeol?’, Baekhyun speaks up, his curiosity getting the best of him since he’s reminded of the time in the grocery store.
Yeah… Chanyeol keeps calling him all the time during work

Why?

Well, D.O keeps saying that he has no one to hang out with’, Chen and Baekhyun stiffen at the statement, Chen guiltily scratching the back of his neck once he informed Xiumin to never let Chanyeol inside their house again after finding out that Chanyeol ate lunch at their place one time.

He should’ve asked. I would’ve asked him to babysit for Jia again’, Lay voices out, feeling slightly pitiful at Chanyeol’s situation, ‘He’s struggling to get a job too’

A job?, now it’s Chen’s turn to ask, looking at Lay curiously, ‘Why is Chanyeol trying to get a job?’

Well, he told me that he’s settling in Korea permanently if he finds a job’, Lay tells them, ‘But he then tells me, if he doesn’t, then who knows if he has to go back to Fiji or some other place for a job’

Baekhyun’s heart sinks.

So, he’s only staying permanently if he finds a job?

Yeah, as far as I know

And nothing else?

What other reason would he be staying here?

You have a lot of explaining to do Do Kyungsoo’, Xiumin folds his arms across his chest, tapping impatiently as he stares at D.O.

How can I explain something I don’t know shit about?’

Well, you know more than everyone else as far as I can see’

It was an accident!

What was an accident?!!

I saw him explode like this one night and I helped him get dressed. He didn’t tell me anything other than he gets these episodes whenever he doesn’t take his medicine. That’s all I know!', D.O raises his hand in defeat, Chanyeol laying on the ground and still unconscious.

Really? That’s all you know?’

Yes! Chanyeol explodes, I saw, I helped him out but he didn’t tell me anything else other than the fact that it started five or six years ago’

What, you’re telling me that Chanyeol started exploding fire randomly when he was still in Korea
and without our knowledge?’, Xiumin points out, unbelieving of D.O’s words since it didn’t make sense. Nothing about Chanyeol makes sense at the moment and it’s driving Xiumin insane.

‘It’s not random’, a hoarse voice joins their conversation, the pair of them looking down to find that Chanyeol had woken up, his eyes fluttering open and voice sounding like he just swallowed a whole dessert, ‘I don’t just randomly explode…’

‘Chanyeol’, D.O bends down, the back of his hands touching Chanyeol’s forehead, ‘You’re freezing’

‘That’s because I’m dehydrated’

‘Here, suck on this’, Xiumin claps his hands together, creating an ice stick and handing it to Chanyeol who only laughs as he holds onto it.

‘Great…’

‘Don’t complain. Ice is still water’, Xiumin points out, Chanyeol awkwardly sucking on the ice stick given to him, his shirt covered in burnt patched and holes along with his tracksuit, ‘What’s going on with you?’, Xiumin asks again.

‘I only get like this if I’m in distress’, Chanyeol responds, ‘When I get too stressed my brain releases these… Hormones or some shit like that which overloads my brain and re-jumps my neuro imperiuminal part of my brain’

‘You explode when you’re stress?’

‘Psychologically overwhelmed or emotionally stressed is what the doctor said. But like I said, I have pills which limit the extent of my explosion and suppresses it’

‘Then why did you explode today?’

‘The news of Suho was… Something…. Along with seeing Baekhyun and Chen, I just…’

‘Shit… You must’ve exploded when I refuse to let you see Chen’, Xiumin voices out, internally punching himself in the face.

‘No, don’t worry. I met D.O later that day. He calmed me down a bit’, Chanyeol comforts Xiumin, going back to sucking the ice which had started to melt.

‘Chanyeol, please tell me this isn’t the reason who left us six years ago’

Chanyeol stayed silent, D.O giving Xiumin a look, letting him know that this was the exact same response he was given a week ago.

_________________________________________________

Its night and Suho walks out of his room in need of food. With the coin he stole off Baekhyun’s purse, he makes his way to the vending machine, his eyes in search of a chocolate bar and skittles.

‘Suho!’, a voice behind him yells the moment he opens the door, being enveloped in arms and a
crying mess that was Oh Sehun.

‘Sehun…’, Suho breathes out, choking since Sehun was gripping onto him rather tightly, ‘Can’t… Breathe’, he pats the boy’s back, trying to get him to loosen his grip.

‘I’m so sorry’, Sehun mumbles, his voice muffled and buried in whimpers, ‘I’m sorry I couldn’t see you earlier’, he cries on, Suho feeling the liquid of tears touching his shoulder.

‘Sehun, Sehun, don’t you worry baby, I’m fine’, Suho comforts the lawyer, wrapping his arms around Sehun, his hand resting on the boy’s cheeks, looking at him, ‘Look, I’m all good’

‘I should’ve been by your side’. Sehun whines, his forehead touching Suho’s, his breathing uneven.

‘You’re here now’, Suho continues to comfort him, ‘You’re here now and that’s all that matter, okay?’

‘Suho, please don’t do this again’, Sehun hugs him again, kissing each of Suho’s cheeks.

‘I wasn’t planning on it’

Upon buying Suho his Skittles and chocolate bar, they stand outside on the rooftop of the hospital, overlooking the city lights below them, hearing the honking of cars, seeing people walking in and out of houses and buildings.

‘I’m going to make sure those shooters spend a lifetime in prison’, Sehun whispers, back hugging Suho and resting his chin on his shoulder.

‘That’ll be great, please’, Suho chuckles, leaning his head back at Sehun’s chest, ‘But I really do mean it when I say I’m fine, you know that right?’

‘I know… I just… Don’t want to see you hurt’, Sehun pouts his lower lip, reaching down to intertwine his fingers with Suho, looking up at the midnight blue skies.

‘I promise I won’t get hurt next time, okay?’

‘That’s a promise you can’t keep’, Sehun points out, ‘I need you say a promise you can actually keep’

‘Then what do you want me to say?’

‘I don’t know’, silence is filled with them afterwards, not one of them saying anything.

‘Do you want to dance?’, Sehun finally whispers, making Suho chuckle when he turns around, Sehun’s hands intertwining back with his.

‘I don’t think now is the appropr – Shit! Sehun!’, Suho can feel himself being lifted off in the winds, his hair blowing everywhere, his hands gripping tighter on Sehun, hugging him close as he looks down to see that the bastard has no plans of putting him down, ‘Sehun!’

‘Dance with me’, the lawyer says again, chuckling at Suho’s panic gaze.

‘If I can hit you right now, then I totally would’, Suho hisses, making Sehun twirl them around in mid-air with the use of the wind around them, Suho screaming as he feels Sehun continue to twirl them in mid-air.

‘Sehun! I JUST GOT SHOT TODAY, I DO NOT NEED THIS SHIT!’, he yells but the latter
continues to ignore him, laughing hard as Suho hugs him like a koala after being twirled in mid-air, his legs wrapping itself around Sehun’s waist like a snake.

Kai has just finished his photo shoot, closing his eyes the moment he got back to his dressing room, feeling his make-up team wiping the cake of makeup he had on his face, breathing a sigh of relief once it’s all off, his skin can finally breathe again.

He listens to his manager list a bunch of shit he needs to do now that he’s back in business, his flight to Japan being less than a week away. His return back to his normal schedules have made Kai feel down since he’s on a tight schedule again, people breathing down his neck and TV crews out to kill him with another scandal since they hit gold with the last one.

Kai has been backed for barely a day and he was already tired.

‘Hwang, can you turn on the TV please?’, Kai asks his assistant, seeing the new intern nod and shaking waving his hand to turn on the TV, sitting calmly on the sofa and keeping an eye on the celebrity once his manager walks out the dressing room to get the car from the parking lot.

The sounds of the news anchor fill the dressing room, boring Kai with their monotone voices and boring conversation about the economy or other shit with Kai didn’t give a fuck about.

Just as he was about to wave his hand to change the channel, he hears the announcer speaking about a recent incident in the city, his eyes widening and head instantly staring at the TV screen.

‘Police officers Do Kyungsoo and Kim Junmyeon to be in the middle of the attack, one of them receiving a huge injury. A bullet in the stomach.’

One of them receiving a huge injury…

Kai stands to his feet, pacing up and down the dressing room, scaring the new intern as he shakes his head in disbelief and fear, his breathing turning heavy, his vision blurring as he disappears in the dressing room, his intern shouting his name.

Kai arrives in the middle of the apartment, D.O microwaving leftover food when he spots movement ahead of him, seeing something appear right in the middle of nowhere.

‘Kai?’

‘Soo!’, he hears an old nickname being shouted from the distance, Kai running towards him the instant he sees D.O alive and breathing, not caring that they’re supposed to hate each other, not caring that he’s supposed to hate him, not caring that even after all these years, he still yearns to call out D.O’s name in the middle of the night when he feels the most lonely.
Chapter End Notes

celebrating my ass off for Lay's return and the reunion of the century~
Kyungsoo was keen on spending the night watching reruns of old shows with a plate of microwaved leftovers from the dinner before, but what he didn’t expect is to have someone else
joining him. Tall, blonde, tanned skin and genuinely everything that tears Kyungsoo’s skin to the
bone.

‘Aren’t you going to... Leave?’, he asks Kai the moment he sits down, prying himself away from
the idol’s surprise hug, quickly informing the latter that he was fine after endless numbers of
questions were thrown at him about the incident earlier that day.

‘I’m...’, of course, Kai should leave, he had no rights to be here. He didn’t even think he had any
rights to worry about the police officer, ‘Are you okay?’

‘Yes. I’m fine’, the one worded answers gave Kai enough indication that his presence wasn’t
wanted here, nor was it welcomed, which deemed rather degrading to his soul which slowly
crushes itself in, his hands awkwardly swinging to the side, his eyes gazing around the apartment,
trying to intake as many details as he can before he is forced to leave and probably never come
back.

There’s a family photo hung on every wall of the living room.

His sofa faced a 60inch built-in TV screen playing old shows aired almost ten years ago.

His jacket is thrown at the side where the kitchen chairs are.

The counter is covered in crumbs.

The walls are cream in colour.

‘Yeah. I should probably go’, Kai whispers, seeing the way Kyungsoo avoided him, keeping eye
contact on the TV screen, munching on his food, ‘I’ll... See you?’, his departure was left with an
open question, one which he never intended on asking nor was something his mind was very proud
of thinking.

See you?

Kim Jongin will never see Do Kyungsoo. That was the promise he made himself six years ago.

But why is it, the moment he sees the police officer, the small phrase is the first thing which
comes to his blurred mind? Why is it, the first time he ever saw the small boy after all these years,
he didn’t feel any resentment, not even a hint of anger.

‘Yeah’, Kyungsoo mutters, feeling his skin heat up, his fingers shaking as he uses every ounce of
his strength to stop from turning around, to stop and look at Kai in the eyes, to truly see him for the
first time in years, not in a TV screen, nor a billboard when he drives by the street.

It was too late for Kyungsoo to change his mind. The moment his eyes slowly turns back, the area
where Kai had been being empty, struck by nothing but air and a soft wisp of Kai’s cologne which
was strong and heavy.

Kyungsoo sighs, looking down at his plate of food, instantly losing his appetite.
Sehun brushes his fingers through Suho’s hair, the pair laying on the latter’s hospital bed, their eyes both closed but their touches still real and genuine. Suho had drifted in and out of sleep throughout the night, but in between the cracks on consciousness, he can always feel Sehun’s touches, on his cheeks, his hair, through the trails of his collarbone and chest.

‘Sehun, go to sleep’, he whispers once he opens his eyes again to find that the boy was still massaging his shoulders, feeling the cool fingertips of the lawyer running through his veins.

Sehun didn’t answer, instead, he braced himself into a soft kiss, lips barely touching but the action was still evident, fluttering Suho slowly back into consciousness, his eyes staring down at Sehun’s face, skin so close to his, lips practically melting onto his. Suho’s hands automatically glide up Sehun’s side, reciprocating the way Sehun’s fingers danced around his skin, exploring every bit of his body as if it was the first time. For once, Suho allows the younger to take control, his lips departing his and exploring everything else, his cheeks, chin, down to his neck and in between the junction between his shoulder and collarbone, mewls of soft moans emitting from the injured police officer, his hands gripping tightly on Sehun’s arms, firm and strong.

‘Sehun…’, he whispers, forcing his voice to be lowered to a whimper since they weren’t in the comfort of his apartment, the public setting being the only thing which bound him from taking slow and silent actions, his hands slowly yet surely gliding Sehun’s shirt off him.

Sehun so easily compiled into Suho’s quiet commands, breaking their contact for a moment to extract his shirt away, lips leeching back to Suho’s skin, his fingers unbuttoning the latter’s hospital gown which falls so graciously off Suho’s soft skin, fair and almost shining when the moonlight hits it.

‘You’re so beautiful’, he whispers directly onto Suho’s ears, his deep voice sending Suho into submission, the Chief Police falling under the trap that was Oh Sehun, his eyes closing at the feeling of his breath kissing his skin, the way his fingers suddenly travelled further down, the epitome of pleasure surging through his veins.

Kai looks out of his apartment window, a beer in his hand – his sixth one – and counting since he didn’t feel like sleeping and his mind was too clouded on the useless expression Kyungsoo had on his face.

‘Such a dick’, he whispers to himself, chugging the remainder of the bitter liquid, running down his throat and making his voice hoarse, ‘He’s such a dick’, he whispers again, this time letting the empty bottle fall from his hands, landing on the carpet floor with a thud, ‘Why do I even give him the day of day… He doesn’t deserve my time or my day…’, now Kai is just mumbling, rolling his eyes back and feeling a slight banging in the back of his head, his vision slightly blurred.

Kai is drunk.

Which is a first in a very long time since the celebrity found the time from his busy schedules to get drunk, but it felt like shit. He didn’t remember feeling this depressed whenever he got drunk. He remembered a whining voice, hands tightly gripped him so he won’t fall to the ground, his bare
feet skidding across the carpet as he lays face first on the sofa.

He remembered the sunlight seeping through the window and landing straight on his face, a blanket over his body and a feeling of warm hands wiping his hair back and waiting for him to wake up with homemade hangover soup heated and prepared just for him.

‘Mother! Mum! Dad! Mum! Dad! Dad!’, he hears shouting, a high pitched frightened tone which quickly turned to anger once they see what exactly is on the couch. Kai can feel the vibration of stomping – really hard stomping – almost like an earthquake rumbling beneath him, the sofa shaking, stirring him awake, his eyes fluttering open and feeling a distant yet familiar feeling of sunlight touching his face.

His eyes widen when he realised that he’s no longer in his apartment.

‘Mum! The one who shall not be named is sleeping on our sofa!’, Eun Bi screeches, Kai tumbling off the sofa and onto the floor, face first, feeling the impact hit straight on his nose.

‘Fuck’, he whimpers, pressing his nose together with his fingers, feeling something warm. He looks down to see dark red blood dripping down his hands, ‘Fuck…’. he whispers again, pulling at his sleeves and wiping his nose, the feeling of blood dripping down his face.

‘What is it darling?’, Mrs Do walks into the second-floor living room, stopping in her tracks when she looks down to find Kai leaning on the floor, his hair a flash of platinum blonde which took her by surprise, her eyes wide.

‘Kai?’

Kai looks up, seeing Kyungsoo’s mother staring down at him, hands on her mouth.

‘Hello, Mrs Do. It’s nice to see you again’

It was dark, almost nearing midnight when Chanyeol finally realised what he was doing, his legs walking without his thoughts intact with his body, his jacket loosely hanging off his shoulders. Xiumin had continued to drill him with mountains of questions, one which Chanyeol could not give answers too. Xiumin over the years has become a patient man, but patience is a virtue which can disappear once you get desperate, and by the tone of his voice, Xiumin was getting very desperate. Chanyeol knew the exact reason why Xiumin was not in good vibes with him, he knew his relationship with Kyungsoo was also growing thin the more the latter witnesses his recent explosion, more so now than when he stayed in Fiji.

He knew the circumstances he was going to put himself through.

‘You’re… Going back to Korea?’

‘Yes’
‘Mr Park, I don’t think that’s a good-’

‘I didn’t say it was going to be a good idea. I said I was going back’

‘Mr-’

‘I know what I’m doing. I know what my body is capable of... Or in this case... Not capable of. Just let me go. Please?’

‘It’s very ill-advised, one which I cannot encourage’

‘I don’t need to be advised. I’ve taken your advice for the past six years’

‘And your health has improved vastly within those years. If we look at your results, you’re at a steady rate of improvement and, if we get one of the doctors who specialised in neurogenetic imperium, we might-’

‘I’d rather be given five years to live and actually love living it than be given another ten gruelling one, thanks’

‘Chanyeol, I-’

‘My life isn’t here. I’ve been at a standstill for almost six years. I don’t wanna do this anymore’

Baekhyun hears a knock on his door, one which shocked him since he wasn’t expecting anyone at the moment. He closed his student’s notebook, red pen still in his hands as he stands up, stretching his arms from all the marking he’s been doing, his neck slightly strained. Walking over the door and seeing the reflection of a rather tall man sporting a tracksuit, his glasses thick and rounded, almost hugging his whole face, biting his bottom lip and carrying a plastic bag by his side.

Baekhyun stares at him for a moment, a little over a moment, his eyes stayed glued to the screen. He sees the way Chanyeol’s hand reaches out one more time, ringing his doorbell. He laughs a little when he sees him scratching the back of his hair, sliding his thick glasses back up his eyes, biting his bottom lip and muttering something Baekhyun can’t hear.

His fingers are on the doorknob, just hovering above it, so close to opening it. Just one twitch of a finger and he’ll be able to hear what Chanyeol is muttering to himself.

Chanyeol sighs, looking at the unopened door, seeing the white painted wood facing him, almost mocking him at this rate. He bends down, placing the plastic bag right in front of the door, knocking on it one more time, but this time, turning back, leaving the closed door and making his way back from the apartment.

He was sure this was Baekhyun’s apartment. Kyungsoo has told him it was. Maybe the unwelcomed atmosphere confirmed that. He was in fact not the person Baekhyun want to see. He leaves for the stairs, exiting from the corridor just at the moment that the door.

Baekhyun looks down on the small plastic bag resting on the front of his door. His curiosity got the best of him as he feels himself bending down to pick up whatever Chanyeol had left for him. It was a black plastic bag, Baekhyun peeking inside to see what it was.
He expected some kind of food, whether in a form of Chinese takeaway or pizza, but what he didn’t expect is Kimchi fried rice stuffed inside one container whilst another container was full of grilled pork belly, the plastic container entrapping the steam from the heat of the food, Baekhyun feeling the warmth. He places the two containers on his kitchen counter, looking bag down on the plastic bag to find that there was still something inside. He reaches down to feel what seems to be a smooth stone, picking it up to find that he was wrong.

It was a shell.

It was small enough to fit in the palm of his hands but big enough to impress him. It was so beautiful it looked fake, made in a factory that’s supposed to make a perfect replica of nature’s accidental beauties. He looks inside to see the inner shell sparkling rainbow glitter, the edges slightly chipped which confirmed its authenticity. Baekhyun was slightly confused as to why a shell was inside the plastic bag, but he didn’t question it, instead, he placed it in the middle of his kitchen counter, just staring at it, his eyes never leaving the way it rested awkwardly and out of place along with his metal fruit bowl, a glass of half empty water.

‘Kim Jongin, the nation’s boyfriend’, Kyungsoo’s dad earnestly approaches the hungover celebrity who was too busy trying to sip his water and suppress last night’s dinner down his stomach to see the old man’s folded arms, brows raised and expression grimace with half disgust and half confusion.

‘Hello, Mr Do…’, Kai didn’t know what else to say but other than, fuck. He didn’t know he would teleport to Kyungsoo’s house when he’s drunk. He’s never done this before whenever he got drunk – although, he never used his powers anymore till only recently.

‘I can only ask out of curiosity as to why you hear’, Mr Do looks over at him, odd at the fact that his son’s old boyfriend who is also a big celebrity who he sees on TV everyday is sitting in his kitchen, his hair messy. It felt familiar yet so different at the same time.

‘I was…’

‘Drunk?’, Eun Bi finishes his sentence, rolling her eyes and giving her mother a look, questioning why she would let him stay over for breakfast, ‘I can’t believe my brother used to go out with an alcoholic’

‘Eun Bi, darling, don’t forget that you used to purposely get him drunk so he would spend the night here’, her mother pats her back, placing the plate of bacon and fried eggs onto the table, making an extra one for Kai, ‘Eat up darling, it’ll get rid of your headache quicker’

‘Thanks Mrs Do’

‘Mrs Do?’, she chuckles, ruffling his hair just like before, ‘Since when were we back to formal basis?’, Kai looks up at her, like a child and not a twenty-something celebrity, ‘Seohee is just fine’

‘Mum!’, Eun Bi yells out, her mouth stuffed with food that some of the bacon flies out, leaving her to be hit on the head by her dad, mumbling about basic table manners.
‘What? Wouldn’t it be weird if he starts calling me Mrs Do? I already feel old enough, I don’t need any more confirmation’, her mum laughs, sitting next to Kai and taking care of him as always, his cup of warm tea set by his side, her eyes gleaming happily.

‘So, how have you been, young man? I heard you’re releasing another movie?’, Mr Do – who had always asserted himself as Mr Do even when Kai and Kyungsoo were dating – looking down at his newspaper, not really interested in Kai’s recent events but asking anyway.

‘Uh… Yeah, the press conference will be happening soon, but I’m not really attending most of them since I’ll be back in the studio to—’

‘Make our ears bleed again?’

‘Eun Bi!’, her mother slaps her arm, ‘That’s not very nice. Apologise’, she turns back to Kai, ‘We loved your last album’

‘You love his albums’, Eun Bi reiterates, earning herself another hit, but she took it with pride, standing up for her brother, unlike her mother who still treated Kai like a son in law.

‘I do actually’, she smiles at her daughter, ‘I bought all of them’

‘Did you really?’, Kai looks at her, awkwardly eating his food. His albums, though he was proud of them, wasn’t the most family-friendly album one would think coming from a K-pop idol. He was a solo artist, so he did have the privilege sing songs about other things than sappy love or heartbreaks.

‘Yeah, your last one was quite something, I think I read somewhere that you took part in the writing process?’

‘For once in his life’, Eun Bi continues to mutter, but this time, everyone in the room ignores her, her dad giving her a warning look that she was so going to be in trouble once the celebrity was out of their house.

‘Uh… Yeah’, Kai stops eating, awkwardly fiddling with the remainder of his food on the plate with his fork, ‘Yeah, I wrote a few of them—’

‘Did you write on your first few albums too?’, Mr Do decides to jump on the asking bandwagon.

‘Um, not really…’

‘So, when did you start writing your own songs?’

‘Uh… Probably… On my first Christmas album’

‘You made a Christmas album?’, Eun Bi snorts, despite her snarky side comments, she pays attention to him.

‘That was a long time ago. Something about gaining the public’s interests and such…’, Kai points out, a little embarrassed at talking about his workplace. He kind of felt like he was ruining the magic of artists releasing albums not as a financial boost rather just doing it for art and expression. It was like taking the mask off whilst still on your shift playing Micky Mouse in Disneyland.

‘Which songs did you write?’

‘I could only write one song then… I wasn’t much of a talent when it comes to music and
songwriting’
‘Or singing’
‘Yeah… And that’, Kai finally approaches Eun Bi’s heckles, chuckling it off and brushing it off his shoulder.

‘So, which song did your talentless ass make?’, that’s it, Eun Bi knows she was going to get the worst punishment as soon as he leaves, so she might as well milk it.

‘Haha’, Kai continues to seem unfazed by Eun Bi’s comment, and maybe he wasn’t, ‘The First Snow’

‘The First Snow?’, Mr Do repeats himself, not having heard of any of Kai’s music, ‘And what’s that song about?’

‘Alaska’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘I just… Thought of Alaska when I was writing it’, Kai comments, confusing everyone for a moment since it wasn’t the kind of answer anyone was expecting.

‘And, you’ve been to Alaska?’

‘Only once’

‘Oh… And I guess it was nice’

‘Yeah. It was perfect’

Chanyeol continues leaving things on Baekhyun’s doorsteps, a few recipes he learnt whilst he was in Fiji, his cooking improving immensely during the six years he spent alone in Fiji. He hasn’t put anything else, just food since he’d notice just how skinny Baekhyun has become during when he did see him walking in the grocery store or at the park.

He wondered if he wanted to add a letter or another gift he had been planning to give to him from Fiji, but he didn’t want Baekhyun to brush them aside like trash which he probably did with the shell he had placed inside the first. He didn’t think Baekhyun would be cruel enough to throw it away, but in the six years that they’ve been apart, he really didn’t know anymore. He felt slightly agitated having to revert to dropping off gifts like a middle school child to his crush, but whenever he came back up to his apartment floor, his last gift was gone, giving him hope that at least Baekhyun took a peek before maybe throwing it in the trash.

Before he was about to exit his house, he sees through his kitchen window Xiumin approaching his front porch. This made Chanyeol feel nervous since the man would call him nonstop, forcing, no, strangling an answer he refuses to give for the past week.

Chanyeol runs to his front door at the sound of Xiumin’s knocking, opening it to find him sporting
comfortable clothing.

‘Xiumin, what are you doing here?’ he asks, looking down to what he’s wearing, embarrassed that he’s still in his pyjamas.

‘I was wondering, maybe you can join me and Chen for a picnic’

‘Excuse me?’

‘Lay had the day off today and he wanted us to have lunch with him and Jia so…’, Xiumin laughs awkwardly, yet there was persistence in his voice, ‘I heard Jia fell in love with you’

‘Yeah. She’s a sweetheart’, Chanyeol comments, ‘I am… If Chen is okay with it’

‘Oh, don’t worry, he will be’, Xiumin voices out, a tone which scared Chanyeol a little, ‘Are you coming?’

‘Can I get changed first?’

‘Oh. Yeah sure’

‘You sure you don’t want to hold her?’, Lay asks Chen one more time, Jia resting on his lap as Chen sits slightly away from them, his gazing down at the little monster on Lay’s lap.

‘I’m good’, Chen points out, laying on the blanket, the picnic basket placed in the middle, sliced sandwiches and potato chips, Chen munching on Xiumin’s chicken and sweetcorn sandwich.

‘You know, Jia’s not evil’, Lay giggles when he spots Chen observing his daughter like an animal in a zoo, ‘She’s nice’

‘She also pissed on me’, Chen comments, making Lay laugh, even more, his arms hugging Jia close to him.

‘Not like it’s the worst thing that’s ever happened to you’

‘Excuse me? What’s worse than having human excrement all over my Georgia Armani suit?’, Chen folds his arms across his chest, glaring at Lay, the sun shining in his direction.

‘Remember the one time you and Chanyeol sneaked inside a petting zoo and Chanyeol accidentally tripped on goat shit and dragged you with him’, Lay points out, the reaction on Chen’s face was priceless as memory flashes across him, making him grimace at the memory of landing on goat shit with a laughing giant beside him.

‘If anyone ever digs up my past college activities, I might lose my own company’, Chen whispers out loud, shaking his head at the immaturity he once had.

‘Well, most of the time it was Chanyeol’s fault’

‘Most of the time? Bitch, it has always been Chanyeol’s fault. I got in so much deep shit because of
‘It makes for great memories though?’, Lay chuckles after hearing Chen’s usual whining, kissing Jia’s cheeks as he finally digs into a jelly sandwich after getting tired of waiting for Xiumin.

‘Hmm. I guess it does’, Chen says with his voice slightly lowered, looking down on his hands, fiddling with his wedding ring, the one Chanyeol forced him to buy when they were shopping for an engagement ring his proposal.

‘Hey! Hey!’, Xiumin’s voice interrupts their conversation, the pair turning around to spot Xiumin running up to them, a tall giant following behind him awkwardly. Jia instantly smiles at the sight of her new friend who she hadn’t seen for a week, her arms flailing up, making baby noises which Lay read as a cry for Chanyeol to hold her again.

‘Looks like someone’s missed you’, Lay chuckles, standing up and handing Jia over to an open-armed Chanyeol, seeing him kiss Jia on the cheeks, cradling her in his arms.

‘What is he doing here?’, Chen whispers the moment Xiumin sits down on the blanket, Chen glaring at his husband who looks innocently straight at him.

‘I invited him’

‘Why?’

‘Because he’s my friend’, Xiumin hisses back, pushing Chen back so he can lean on him, ‘Unlike you, I still like hanging out with Chanyeol.

‘Well, I don’t’

‘Boo hoo’, Xiumin sarcastically cries at Chen, ‘Then leave’, he simply stated, smiling at the knowledge that Chen wasn’t going to leave.

‘Hey guys’, Chanyeol greets everyone, sitting down whilst Jia was still in his arms, giggling as she reaches her hand out, pulling at his massive ears.

‘What’s up?’, Lay pats his back, ‘How are you?’

‘I’m good’

‘Yeah… About the thing at the hospital… Did something happen? You and Kyungsoo left pretty abruptly’, this gets Chen attention, the CEO not greeting Chanyeol, but his eyes look up, waiting for Chanyeol’s answer.

‘Yeah, I had some… News to tell Kyungsoo’, Xiumin raises his brows, looking at Chanyeol, putting him under pressure, but Chanyeol doesn’t budge.

‘News? What news?’ Lay, oblivious to the situation, continues to ask Chanyeol questions he’s not prepared to answer.

‘Um…’, Chanyeol holds onto Jia, struggling to think of an answer, ‘I… Just needed to tell him that I didn’t get a job’

‘Didn’t? How comes?’, goddammit, Lay, what is up with all of your questions?

‘Just… Not enough experience’
'Oh, which job are you applying?'

'At a construction site'

'Construction site?', Chen calls out, slightly confused, ‘Since when have you ever wanted to work at a construction site?’

'I don’t’, Chanyeol replies, ‘But a job is a job, I guess’

'Good thing you didn’t get the job’ Chen, without his knowledge, spoke his mind, everyone looking up at him.

'What was that for?', Xiumin responds, hitting his husband in the stomach, ‘That’s a shit thing to say aloud. At least just think it’

'Haha, it’s fine. I didn’t like the idea of having to lift massive shit all day’, Chanyeol points out, brushing Chen’s statement and even defending him.

'What I mean to say is’, Chen speaks out for himself, slightly embarrassed for even opening his mouth, ‘Is that I wouldn’t trust Chanyeol on a construction site. He might break a whole building for all we know’

'He does have a point’, Lay nods, ‘No offence Chanyeol, but my god can you do crazy shit sometimes?’

'Sometimes?', Chen yells at Lay, ‘Why do you always decrease the shit he does, he does crazy shit all the time!’

'I do not!'

'Oh, really? Well, if it weren’t for you, I wouldn’t have Jia piss all over me'

'She pissed on me too!'

'Well… I wouldn’t have had goat shit on me!'

'Are you talking about the time we went to the Petting zoo?’, Chanyeol responds, letting baby Jia crawl from his lap and crawl her way back to her dad who laughs at the interaction between Chen and Chanyeol, ‘It was your idea! You wanted to see a goat!’

'Not be smothered in their excrement!'

'Same thing! No one wanted to go with you, even Xiumin bailed on you’

'I had my finals coming up’, Xiumin defends himself, ‘And so did the both of you, so I don’t even know why you two went’

'Because I wanted to see a goat too’, Chanyeol points out, making everyone laugh at such an innocent answer, ‘What? I haven’t seen a goat before!’

The four grown men continue to ramble on, being the loudest in the park, laughing at each other, baby Jia laughing along with them even though she didn’t know what was going on, but as long as her dad and her new friend was smiling, she was happy.
Baekhyun looks ahead of his doorway, looking at the small TV screen by the door, wondering where the tall giant was. It was almost seven and he still hadn’t come. He had wondered what took so long, looking down at his watch and pacing back and forth before giving up and finishing his marking. But he gets up once in a while to get a glass of water, his feet taking him to his door, checking to see if he missed Chanyeol and if his gift is laying by his doorstep.

But every time he checks, he doesn’t see anything. Just an empty doormat.

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**Six years ago.**

‘Dude is finally doing it!’, Chanyeol screams as they walk side by side, holding a cup of coffee, his oversized hoodie over his head.

‘Shhh’, Chen punches his back, looking around the mall to see if anyone heard them. It looks like a few strangers were giving them odd stares, but with Chanyeol’s loud ass, he’s used to getting them, ‘I don’t want anyone knowing, especially Kai’

‘Why?’

‘That bastard can’t keep a secret’, Chen mutters, quickly turning a corner to where the small Swarovski shop is, no one bothering to go, only a few rich people walking in with a small bag perfectly wrapped with their diamonds inside. Chen has managed to save up – and beg his father – to give him his first paycheck as an official Executive director of their company to buy Xiumin the best engagement ring.

‘I say just give him a rock’

‘A what?’

‘A solid ass diamond rock. So big that when he puts it on it’ll weigh down his hands’, Chanyeol comments, obviously coming with Chen to pick up the ring.

‘No, Xiumin hates those kinds of stuff’

‘Well, that’s definitely what I’m going to give Baekhyun’

‘You’re planning to propose to him?’

‘No!’, Chanyeol shouts, arrogant in his tone since he didn’t know how to whisper, the silent store making his voice sound louder than when they were outside, ‘Just… When I do’
‘And when are you going to propose to Baekhyun’

‘When I get a proper job’

‘Aren’t you already in the National snowboarding team?’

‘That’s just fun play. I’m thinking of maybe creating my own team, become a coaching guru you see in those inspirational sports movie’

‘I’d rather quit than have you be my coach’, Chen points out, laughing when Chanyeol hits him on the back, earning a few judging glares from the shop assistant, ‘Now, enough about you, we are here to find the best ring for Xiumin’, Chen claps his hands together, two very immature men looking so out of place in the white walls of an elegant shop.

‘How about that one’, Chanyeol points at the glass presenting an engagement ring that – as Chen would’ve suspected – looks more like a rock.

‘I said I’m not going to get him a super flashy one’, Chen reminds Chanyeol again, ‘Now, take this seriously Chanyeol. I’m going to propose to him and I need something that speaks…’, Chen didn’t finish his sentence, he just made a gesture with his hands that Chanyeol didn’t quite understand.

‘You know him better than me’, Chanyeol snorts, looking around the different rings and jewellery, ‘You pick one’

‘You’re supposed to help me, Best Man’, this makes Chanyeol turn abruptly back at Chen, staring at him with wide eyes, wider than Kyungsoo’s.

‘Excuse me?’

‘Why are you remotely surprised? Who else do you think was going to be my best man?’, Chen points out, resting his hand on his hips as he sees the small smile displayed on Chanyeol’s lips.

‘I don’t know’, Chanyeol voices out, trying to suppress the grin from showing, ‘I thought maybe Suho or Lay was an option too’

‘They can plan the wedding, but… I mean, come on Chanyeol. Don’t act too surprised’

‘That’s true’, Chanyeol finally breaks out of the initial shock, ‘Who wouldn’t want me as their best man?’, Chanyeol grins, walking up to his best friend and leaning an arm on his shoulder, ‘I’m good looking, smart looking and absolutely talented at everything’

‘I almost forgot how narcissistic you are’, Chen rolls his eyes, playfully pushing Chanyeol off him, bowing to the other shop assistant who offered to help, but before Chen can accept her offer, Chanyeol pulls him to the side, pointing at another glass case.

‘How about that one?’, he asks, and Chen instantly knew, that the ring Chanyeol had offered was the perfect one for Xiumin.

‘Um, excuse me’, Chen turns around, the shop assistant coming over to them, ‘Can I take a look at that one?’, he asks, the shop assistant grinning as she takes the keys from her pocket.

‘What a great choice. It’s from our recent collection’, she informs him, putting on her white-gloved hands before taking out the box, showing Chen the humble ring, the diamond intricately shaped like a snowflake, ‘It’s from our Ice Princess collection’
‘It’s perfect’

‘The next thing you need is lightning wedding bands’, Chanyeol playfully jokes, but at the end of the day, Chanyeol searched for approximately three hours trying to find jewellery stores who can personally make your wedding rings, Chanyeol putting in a good word and persuading Chen to design his ring like a lightning bolt as a good joke. Xiumin wasn’t impressed with the decision but at least Chanyeol and Chen got a good laugh out of it.

reference photos of the rings:
The song referred to Kai’s Christmas album is, in fact, EXO’s the first snow. (Please do check the lyrics if you don’t know what the song is about)
Kai wasn’t one to say much, but my god has Manager Song aged.

‘Kai!’, her squeaky voice, still the same after all these years, screeched right by Kai’s ear, making him flinch from the sudden noise, hugging her awkwardly as she wraps her arms around him, squeezing the air out of his lungs.

‘Umph’, he whines, trying to get off her strong grips. He had been busy making calls and finalising the new project he’d been planning for the old community centre he bought. For once, he’s actually
going to make a good use of it.

‘An orphanage?’

‘No, more like a foster home’, Kai sits down Manager Song, her hair all grey, the ends in her eyes crinkle even when she doesn’t smile. Her energy had stayed the same, hyper and childlike, but everything else is different, almost unrecognisable if it wasn’t for her voice. Kai knew that he needed someone he knows and trusts to control the project and the moment Baekhyun mentioned that Manager Song still volunteers at the school once in a while, he managed to get her number and set up a meeting.

‘Why do you want to build a foster home?’

‘I don’t know, I just… Feel like it’, Kai answers with a not very good answer, but Manager Song brushes it off, Kai pulling out a folder from his bag, his sunglasses still on despite being inside the café, hood up and covering his face, ‘I’m planning to add an extra floor and widen the football field at the back so the kids can have somewhere to play’

‘Isn’t it odd for you to be doing this?’, Manager Song finally approaches the topic every single person Kai had ever approach for this project – his status, ‘I mean… Is this because of your scandal recently?’

‘No. It’s not’, Kai responds with a stern and grimacing tone in his voice, his eyes looking down since he didn’t want to glare at Manager Song, but he couldn’t help but do it, ‘I just wanted to do it’, he finalised that conversation, turning over the page of his plan which took him hours to make, filling the conversation about his construction plans, design ideas and other partnerships he’s planning to make this project work, not giving Manager Song any time to intercede, the older woman looking pleasantly at an old student of hers, gleaming at the way he passionately talks about his plans, his platinum blonde hair fading into light brown at his roots.

‘What is Chanyeol doing here?’, Chen whines the moment he sees the tall giant eating in his kitchen, cheeks stuffed like a hamster as he waves a good morning to a suited Chen.

‘I invited him over for breakfast’

‘But why?’, Chen whines, not trying to hide the annoyance in his voice, walking towards Xiumin and hugging him close, giving him his usual morning kiss despite their company, his lips pressed softly against his husband’s.

‘Don’t mind me’, Chanyeol speaks out, ruining their idyllic moment, ‘I’m just here trying not to throw up’

‘Shut up Chanyeol’, Chen calls out, kissing Xiumin’s cheeks before coming over to sit right next to him, taking Chanyeol’s plateful of bacon and eggs, ‘These are mine’

‘Hey!’’, Chanyeol whines, trying to grab the plate back, but Chen fights back, refusing to let go of the ceramic plate, ‘Xiumin gave that to me!’
‘Xiumin is my husband’

‘So, what?’

‘Which means, this meal is also mine’, the two bigger between each other, Xiumin rolling his eyes and looking from behind the kitchen counter, holding another plate of food he made, slapping both their heads once he made it to the dining table, placing the other plate in front of Chen’s whilst sliding the other plate back to Chanyeol.

‘You two can be such kids’, Xiumin rolls his eyes, the two kids right in front of him.

‘Tell Chen off, he’s the one who’s acting over the top’

‘Shut up before I electrocute you’

It took a while for Kyungssoo to get a sense of things, feeling embarrassed the moment he hears his colleagues calling him to the public reception area of the station, screaming about his sister having a tantrum in the middle of the station. It was embarrassing enough to hear his colleagues shout about it, but to feel it at the moment, the ground shaking as she stomps for her brother, was even more embarrassing.

‘What? What is it?’, Kyungssoo shouts as soon as he walks inside, seeing his little sister still in her school uniform, her backpack behind her back, her hair tied in a ponytail.

‘You! Why haven’t you been picking up my calls?’, she whines, making her way over to her brother, ready to spill everything to him, ‘I only have you now!’

‘What are you talking about?’, Kyungssoo looks down at his sister who has gone over to hug him, ‘I’ve been busy. Suho just got back to work after his week off. I’ve been trying to juggle two jobs here’

‘I don’t care’, Eun Bi speaks out, her voice muffled due to her crushing her face on her brother’s police uniform.

‘What is it?’

‘Mum invited him over for dinner’

‘Invited who?’, Kyungssoo looks down, stroking his sister’s back.

‘Kim Jongin! Who else?!’, at the sound of the familiar name, everyone’s head looks up and turns around, eyes wide and staring at Kyungssoo and Eun Bi, his co-workers giving him a raised eyebrow.

‘Eun Bi, can you at least whisper next time?’, Kyungssoo growls at her, pulling her away from the main reception and outside the main entrance where they can have a much more private conversation.

‘But…’, she continues to whine, looking down on the floor, tapping her foot, ‘I don’t want Kai to
‘Why not, Eun Bi?’, Kyungsoo folds his arms together, ‘It’s just dinner. Can’t you let him spend time with mum and dad just like old times?’

‘Why are you like this? Why are you okay with all this?’, Eun Bi points out, her frustration only worsening once she sees Kyungsoo’s calm manner, something which she did not expect, ‘You’re supposed to be mad’

‘No. I’m not. Why would I be?’

‘Um… Because he broke up with you? Because he suddenly left you to sign a stupid contract!’, Eun Bi stomps her foot one more time, the whole street practically shaking, ‘I saw you! You wouldn’t stop crying! I hated it!’, Kyungsoo reaches his hand out to stop her from moving too much, shushing her in the process since he had a feeling the sudden earthquake has already informed his co-workers that something weird was going on outside and he doesn’t need another strike of misconduct.

‘Eun Bi, Eun Bi, listen to me’, Kyungsoo calls at her, gripping her arms, ‘Listen, what happened to me and Kai back then has nothing to do with you. You do not have to act on my behalf, it’s not needed and I certainly don’t want it. You need to cut him some slack’

‘Why should I? You’re more important to me than his stupid job’

Kyungsoo didn’t want to tell her, not when she’s been so adamant in her dislike with the celebrity. Every day, whenever he hears her talks about him, or whenever one of his friends ever mentions it, he always feels guilty. He couldn’t bear to look at Kai at the reunion at the thought that he also knew what everyone thought. How Baekhyun, Suho, Chen and Sehun instantly stopped talking to him the moment the news broke out of their break-up, how Lay sent Kai a long message of how disappointed he is of him and how he and Xiumin’s relationship slowly drifted due to it. He couldn’t bear to talk to Kai like everything was normal, or how he should forgive him.

He couldn’t bear to tell anyone that it was him who broke it off with Kai.

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Suho sits inside his office, his eyes on the verge of closing as he tries to finish up his report at two o’clock in the morning, the station quiet with a few stranglers inside and night duty cops. It didn’t phase him that Kyungsoo had already left with Eun Bi earlier on that day, so he didn’t have his best friend to knock at his door and remind him to get some rest. He looked down at his paperwork before looking back on the screen. It had taken Suho much longer to finish looking through the reports that were made whilst he was away, forcing him to stay longer hours than usual, which was already a lot for a Chief Police.

‘Hey, Suho, someone is at the front of you’, someone finally knocks at his door, tearing him away from the big screen, a fellow officer knocking and pointing at the corridor. Suho smiles, having a feeling who exactly has come to visit him, waking up a little and getting up, stretching his arms as he makes his way out.

He hadn’t seen Sehun in two days since the lawyer had a conference to go to in Japan for the
weekend, but it looks like he’s back and had gone straight to him. With a small skip in his steps, he turns a corner, expecting to see his tall boyfriend in his usual smart attire, only to find another tall man standing in front, in casual ripped denim jeans, longer hair than he’d last seen him and three piercings running along his ears, sunglasses hiding his eyes, but Suho recognises him almost instantly.

‘Kris?!’, he calls out, everyone turning their head to their Chief’s surprise voice when he meets someone he didn’t think he’d ever meet again.

‘Suho’, the man raises his hand and gave him a small wave, ‘Long time, no see babe’, he smirks, he usual smirk he always sports.

‘What the hell are you doing here?’

‘I heard you work here’, Kris points out, lifting up a plastic bag with the familiar symbol of the local Chinese takeaway restaurant, ‘Do you fancy a meal?’

Suho can only look at him in shock and somewhat wonder. What was his ex-boyfriend doing here?

Chanyeol steps out of the elevators, a small plastic bag resting in his hand as he looks down on his phone, quickly messaging his sister of his day since his older sister has made it her goal to check up on him every five seconds. Chanyeol hadn’t visited Baekhyun’s apartment in two days since he’s been busy with his resume, plus Xiumin had made it his goal to drag Chanyeol everywhere, inviting him to go with him to places Chanyeol would rather not visit.

Looking ahead to find the usual apartment, he sets down the plastic as soon as he arrives at the door, knocking on it lightly as he usually does, preparing to walk away as usual since he didn’t expect an answer or the door to open soon.

But today must be his lucky day.

Baekhyun hears the soft knock, one which instantly knocks him off his desk, his pen flying out of his hands as he quickly turns and jogs to his door, his eyes falling on the small screen which showed Chanyeol in a hoodie, his hair curly and glasses resting on his face, bent down as he tries to readjust the plastic bag, making sure that Baekhyun can see it when he opens the door, but not step on it accidentally. He couldn’t resist a smile when he sees Chanyeol stand up, only to bend back down and readjust it one more time.

He didn’t know what he was thinking when his fingers no longer hovered over his doorknob but gripped onto it, twisting it so the door opens, Chanyeol just about to turn away.

Their eyes meet.

‘Bae – Baekhyun…’, Chanyeol, wide-eyed and shocked at the unfamiliar notion that the door that usually closes on him has finally opened, ‘What… What are you doing?’

‘What… What do you mean what am I doing?’, Baekhyun murmurs, just as shocked at his own actions, ‘I’m opening my door’

‘Oh’, Chanyeol responds, ‘That’s right… I knocked… Sorry… I shouldn’t have’, this was
awkward. This was disgusting. Chanyeol hated this more than being ignored whenever he
knocked. He preferred it when he and Baekhyun argued like the night at the station. He preferred
that than whatever this awkward bullshit was.

‘No, I’m…’, Baekhyun looks down to see the familiar plastic bag that’s been missing on his
doors for the past two days, not admitting to himself the heavy feeling he gains whenever he
sees his empty doormat, ‘I was wondering where this was’, he bends down to pick up the plastic
bag.

‘Wondering… What?’

‘I keep on finding this on my doorstep every day’, Baekhyun lifts up Chanyeol’s gift, ‘It gave me a
reason to stop getting takeaway everyday’

‘You’ve only been eating takeaway?’, Chanyeol asks, an instant wave of worry surging through
him as he looks at the teacher up and down, once again recollecting his skinny figure.

‘I can’t cook’

‘You’ve been living by yourself since you graduated. How can you not know how to cook?’,
Chanyeol points out, raising his brows and resting his hands on his hips like a mother ready to
lecture her child, ‘At least learn how to cook rice and boil vegetables’

‘I tend to overboil the vegetables. They become too soggy and soft’

‘Still? Didn’t I tell you to set a timer?’, Chanyeol’s voice has become stern, the awkwardness
around them disappearing instantly, ‘Didn’t I tell you to buy a rice cooker too?’

‘I did buy a rice cooker!’, Baekhyun argues back, raising his voice subconsciously, ‘I bought two
because the other one was too small’

‘Then cook rice’

‘I can’t’

‘What do you mean you can’t? You put the rice and water in and wait for the rice cooker to do the
job for you’

‘But I always leave it for too long’

‘Oh, for fuck’s sake Baekhyun. You didn’t buy a second one because the other one was small, you
burnt the first one, didn’t you?’, Chanyeol sees straight pass Baekhyun’s façade, seeing the man
awkwardly looking down before telling him that he was telling the truth.

Unfortunately for Baekhyun, Chanyeol still knows whenever he lies.

‘I can’t believe you burnt a rice cooker’

‘I didn’t! I told you! I bought another one because the other one was too small!’

‘Fine. Let me see it then’

‘See what?’

‘Your two rice cookers’, Chanyeol points out, pushing straight pass Baekhyun trying to close the
door on him, Chanyeol not recognising the apartment since Baekhyun’s last one was different,
much smaller and less grand, but thank god the first thing he sees is the door to the kitchen, walking towards it, the open door leading to the kitchen island.

‘Chanyeol! What are you doing inside my apartment?! Get out! Get out!’, Baekhyun races over, putting the plastic bag on his counter and running up to the giant, trying to pull him away from opening every drawer he had in his kitchen, his eyes searching for the rice cookers, ‘I said get out!’, Baekhyun whines, gripping Chanyeol’s arms, trying to pull him back, but the giant has always been a little bit stronger than him.

‘Ah hah!’, Chanyeol shouts, opening the bottom drawer right underneath the sink, looking at a small rice cooker with the edges blackened, ‘I knew you burnt it!’

‘I didn’t burn it! That’s just how it is!’, Baekhyun shouts, which didn’t get a good response since Chanyeol only looked at him with a raised brow.

‘Really? You really bought a rice cooker with ash around the edges?’

‘Yes!’, Baekhyun, albeit embarrassed, decides to stick with his sad excuse for a story, ‘It was a second hand’

‘Secondhand?’, now Chanyeol was chuckling, looking back down at the rice cooker which Baekhyun has kept despite it looking more like a grenade.

‘Don’t you dare laugh at me’, Baekhyun glares, his eyes in slits, ‘Don’t you fucking dare’

It was too late. Chanyeol had already started clapping like a seal, pointing at the abomination that was Baekhyun’s first rice cooker.

‘You burnt a rice cooker’, Chanyeol wheezes in between his laughs, tears streaming down the ends of his eyes the more he stared at the burnt object.

‘It’s not funny!’

And with that, the tall giant does stop laughing, pausing for a moment as he stares at Baekhyun, his skin glowing a slight red, one which always happens whenever Baekhyun gets agitated. One which Chanyeol tried to make Baekhyun do by annoying him throughout the day, triggering the orange glow which emits from his skin.

‘You’re glowing’, he comments, Baekhyun instantly looking down at his hands the moment Chanyeol spoke, seeing the same red glow.

‘Ergh’, Baekhyun rolls his eyes, closing them as he tries to relax, ‘Look what you fucking did’

Yeah. Chanyeol keeps looking. And suddenly, a wave of nostalgia brings him back to the thought, one which had always rested on his mind ever since he left Korea, but one which slowly manifested itself at the front of Chanyeol’s daily thoughts.

*God, I’ve missed you.*
Lay walks into his office, sitting down after hours of standing up. He breathes a sigh of relief once he is finally given a break, closing his eyes for a moment’s rest. It’s been a long day for him longer than expected since he had to perform an emergency surgery since the ER was one staff too short. It didn’t help when his own patients needed him after having an episode, his patient with the ability to manipulate sound waves having an episode which disrupted their radio and technology inside the hospital.

‘Dr Zhang?’, his assistant knocks softly on the door, holding onto a tray of food, a sandwich and juice which she had prepared for the tired doctor, ‘I thought maybe you should eat something quick’, she insists, placing the tray down and looking at the doctor, seeing his tired face.

‘I’ll eat it later’, he murmurs, leaning back in his chair and feeling himself let go of unconsciousness. His assistant can only nod and leave Lay was in the midst of a well-deserved rest, the time on his watch nearing two o’clock in the morning.

He hears the obnoxious ringing of his office phone blaring, bringing him back to consciousness like an ice-cold bucket of water pouring onto him. His eyes, red and strained, looked down on the phone, his under eyes circle dark and skin pale, He yawns before reaching out to take the phone, his voice hoarse and croaky.

‘Hello?’, he waits for the other end to reply to him, trying to keep awake and not collapse right there and then.

‘Hello? Is this Dr Zhang Yixing?’

‘Yes, this is he speaking’, Lay spoke in English the moment he hears an American accent greeting him in English, making him straighten up from his chair.

‘Hello, I’m Dr Stevenson, a neurosurgeon and researcher at the National Hospital of Fiji’

‘Oh’, Lay straightens up at the English-speaking doctor, ‘How may I help?’, he says, his accent evident.

‘I’m here to talk about a patient you might be interested in’

‘Interested in?’

‘Yes. Your research studies in neurogenetic imperium had led me to believe that you out of all doctors are one step closer to a somewhat cure and… I have a patient you may be suffering from imperium sclerosis’

‘Imperium sclerosis?’, Lay asks again, looking down on the phone as if it was the actual person he was talking to, looking down before lifting it back to his ear, ‘Who is this patient you’re talking about? And is he living in Fiji?’

‘Luckily enough, I heard that he has moved back to Korea without my notice’

‘Korea? He lives here?’

‘Yes, and it would be better if I have someone I trust to take care of him there. His body is fighting hard and successfully but it’s still very fragile’, Dr Stevenson explains, Lay reaching out to try and find a pen and a scrap piece of paper.

‘Can you tell me his name and contact details?’, Lay asks after he found a highlighter, ‘I’ll get in contact with them as soon as possible’
‘Yes, gladly’, Dr Stevenson pauses for a moment, probably looking for the patient’s files and details, Lay turning a page from an old notebook, waiting to write down the name.

‘His name is Park Chanyeol’

Lay didn’t write the name down. He didn’t move.

‘Excuse me?’

‘His name is Mr Park Chanyeol. His files are still with me and I can fax it to you know if you want…’

The rest of what Dr Stevenson was saying had stopped being processed by Lay, the doctor looking down at the blank page in front of him, pink highlighter still resting in his hand.

Park Chanyeol.

Park Chanyeol.

Park fucking Chanyeol.

Lay was going to kill him.
Two Points Meet Again.

‘Little Jia’, Chanyeol beams the moment Luhan opens the door, seeing the giant walking in with a small teddy bear he bought in the mall, ‘There you are!’, he gleams at the sight of the little baby crawling on the floor of the big living room, smiling the moment she sees her big-eared friend coming towards her, her arms already stretched wide for him to pick her up.

‘Hey, how have you been?’, Luhan asks, walking over to Chanyeol and picking up the scattered toys around the living room, putting them inside the play box whilst he tries to make the living room presentable.
‘I’ve been good’, Chanyeol converses to Lay’s husband, feeling less awkward with the paranoid father since they’ve been spending more time together, more time then they’d both expected but it Luhan to relax for a bit, observing the way Chanyeol plays and takes care of Jia, ‘How’s work?’

‘A drag’, Luhan sighs, ‘Ever since I got promoted, it’s been more work for me and not enough sleep’

‘Well, at least you’re promoted’, Chanyeol points out, gesturing to himself, reminding the both of them that one of them is still unemployed.

‘Don’t worry about it. You’re a hard worker. I’m sure you’ll get a job soon enough’, Luhan points out, sitting down on the floor with Chanyeol, chuckling once he spots Jia playing with Chanyeol’s ears, ‘God, she loves you’, he chuckles, ‘I’m starting to get jealous’

‘Don’t worry. She still loves you more, look’, Chanyeol points out, lightly slapping Luhan’s back, Jia instantly stops smiling, hitting Chanyeol in the face when she sees him harming her dad, ‘Ow’, Chanyeol whines, turning back to Luhan, ‘Told you’

‘Ha ha, good girl’, Luhan whispers to Jia, stroking her hair back, watching her come down from her anger once she spots Chanyeol massaging her dad’s back, smiling back at her big friend, being forgiven instantly.

‘So, what do you need me here for?’, Chanyeol finally asks, picking up the toy that he had purchased for Jia, ‘You don’t need me to babysit, right?’

‘No, I have the weekend off and miraculously, so does Lay’, Luhan informs, leaning on his hands as he lets Jia play with her new toy, still sitting on Chanyeol’s lap, ‘But he still asked for you to come here’

‘Oh, really? What for?’

‘God knows’

‘Where is he?’

‘At the store. He’ll be here any minute’

And with the sound of his name, the door bangs open, an indication that Lay has arrived, his hands full of plastic bags from his grocery shopping, his feet stomping inside the living room, shoes still on, his eyes falling on the three humans sitting on the floor, all looking up at him.

‘Luhan, didn’t I tell you to start preparing for lunch?’, Lay calls out, looking at his husband who is still playing on the floor. He then turns to look at Chanyeol, his eyes never leaving the tall giant who ignores him as he continues to keep Jia company, ‘Park Chanyeol, can I speak to you’

‘Huh? Oh, yeah sure. What is it?’

‘Alone. Upstairs. Now’, Lay says those three words in separate sentences, Chanyeol instantly stopping what he’s doing, looking at Luhan confusingly, his eyes asking for help. But it seems like the man can only shrug since he had no idea why his husband was acting like a serial killer about to perform his first kill and he’d rather not find out.

‘I guess it’s time for Jia to come to daddy’, Luhan whispers, reaching his hand out to grab Jia from Chanyeol.
'Now playing, *Call Me Daddy*’, Hermes says from the speaker, Chanyeol instantly freezing whilst Luhan sighs and rolls his eyes.

‘Honey, can you please fix Hermes, and stop listening to inappropriate songs’, Lay points out as he places the grocery bags on the kitchen counter, walking past them and kicking Luhan in the shin.

‘I’m not the one listening to it!’, Luhan yells out, Chanyeol quickly noticing that it’s not the first time they’d had this argument. He quickly stands up and coughs his way out of the situation, walking out of the living room and towards the stairwell, his eyes looking down at his socks just in case they notice him.

‘You. Come with me’, Lay hisses the moment he tears himself away from the living room, grabbing hold of Chanyeol’s long sleeves, pulling him up the stairs and pushing him inside his small house office by the end of the first floor, locking the door.

‘Woah… Umm, Lay, if you’re planning to kill me, at least tell me why’, Chanyeol comments the moment he noticed Lay twisting the lock the moment the pair of them are inside the office, Lay rolling his eyes as he pushes past Chanyeol, opening one of his drawers and pulling a light brown envelope and shoving it to Chanyeol.

‘I need you to explain this to me’, Lay growls, Chanyeol being taken back when he sees the genuine anger in Lay’s eyes, one he had never seen before since the boy had always been so soft. Chanyeol had no choice but to open the envelope, seeing his name printed on the top, along with his medication history, his prescriptions along with the lists of operations he’d had over the span of five years.

‘Oh crap’, he whispers, looking back up at Lay whose arms are crossed, his foot tapping impatiently as he waits for Chanyeol to answer him, ‘How did you get these?’

‘Your doctor in Fiji gave them to me’

‘Why? Isn’t that illegal? That’s a breach of privacy’

‘Chanyeol, I’m a doctor, first and foremost. And I’m a neurogenetic imperium specialist’, Lay points out, ‘I’ve had your doctor begging me to take you in’

‘Take me in as what?’

‘My patient. What else?’

‘Oh no. Not this again’, Chanyeol rolls his eyes, sliding his files back inside the envelope, ‘I am not having you of all people poke and probe on my body, not anymore’, Chanyeol also changes his tone, a set of anger rising in him as he throws the files back at Lay, ‘I said I was done with that’

‘I’m not here to experiment on you’

‘That’s exactly what you’re going to do!’, Chanyeol raises his voice, not caring if Luhan and Jia can hear them from below, ‘That’s what they’ve been doing to me for the past six fucking years! And I’m tired of it! I’m never going to get better, so what’s the point of trying?’

‘What, so you’re just going to give up? Just like that?’, Lay points out, stepping closer to Chanyeol, ‘I can help you, you know, that right?’

‘My disease isn’t fatal and it’s not worth me giving up everything I have. I’ll just live my life like this. I’m fine’
‘Oh, are you? Are you fine with losing your sight? Are you okay that it’ll only get worse? That you might be legally blind in the next three or four years?’, Lay points out, reaching to snatch Chanyeol’s glasses off him, the tall giant trying to pry it back, but his blurred vision not helping him, in fact, at this point, without his glasses, he can only see shapes, different shapes separated in blurred colours. He couldn’t even see Lay’s expression anymore.

‘Give those back’

‘Are you going to be okay when one of your legs closes in on you and you won’t be able to walk anymore?’, Lay asks, continuing to poke and pry at Chanyeol, ‘Or when you can’t control your muscles that you can barely swallow your food? Or go toilet?’, Lay is now infused with anger, ‘Chanyeol, this is a neurogenetic disease! This could cause you depression and anxiety!’

‘Give me my glasses’, Chanyeol hisses, reaching his hand out, ignoring everything Lay had said since he’d heard it a million times already.

‘Chanyeol, please’, Lay soften his voice the moment he realised what he’s done, looking down at the thick glasses in his hands, ‘I’m so close… Please, just let me help you’

‘No. Now give me my glasses’

‘Chanyeol, I…’

Chanyeol reaches out for his glasses, having enough of Lay’s drilling, tripping over his own feet and almost landing on Lay, but he picks himself up, feeling for his glasses and snatching it from the doctor.

‘I said I’ve had enough. So, can we please drop it?’, Chanyeol puts his glasses back on, feeling the familiar surge of his hands shaking uncontrollably, the both of them looking down at his tremoring hands, ‘I have to go’

‘No, Chanyeol, wait!’, Lay reaches his hand out to grab hold of Chanyeol, but the boy had already sped away, twisting the lock and walking out of the room, Lay hearing his stomping down the stairs and the bang of the door. He sighs, looking down at his feet and seeing the crumpled envelope on the floor.

‘Everything okay?’, Luhan knocks on the door, Jia resting on his arms, ‘Did he take it well?’

‘No’, Lay whispers, resting his hand on his face, ‘Neither did I’, the instant regret surging through him. He knew he should have spoken about this lightly, but the moment he saw the first date recorded in Chanyeol’s files of his first episode, he felt himself cave in, the pieces suddenly coming together.

‘I told you, you should’ve spoken to him at the hospital’, Luhan walks over, stroking Lay’s back, looking down at his distressed husband, wiping his hair back.

‘I thought… Maybe he’d feel relaxed talking about it here’

‘We can try again next time’

‘I hope there’s a next time’

*Patient name: Park Chan Yeol*
Date of Birth: 27th November

Nationality: Korean

Gender: Male

Sexual Orientation: Bisexual

Date of first recorded episode: 26th March 2022

Signs and symptoms: second-degree burns, muscle spasms, flame emesis, uncontrollable explosions.

Prescriptions: none

Doctor’s note: in need of immediate surgery, spinal cord injury due to episode. In theory, a cleaner environment needed for his wellbeing, preferably out of the city.

‘Kyungsoo, we’ve got a call from Gangnam Police Station’, Jinah, a rookie police officer calls over Kyungsoo, her hands raised as she sends him the voice note they’d left for him.

‘What do they want?’, Kyungsoo whines, looking down at the notepad and reading the message. One Punch Man to report at the station. Immediately.

‘Why do they still call me by that stupid name’, Kyungsoo rolls his eyes, handing back the notepad to Jinah.

‘Because you punched a drunk driver last week and he lost both of his front teeth’, Jinah points out, the rest of their co-workers laughing along at the memory of Kyungsoo dragging a drunk man with his two front teeth missing and mouth bleeding.

‘Whatever, just… Finish my report for me’, he hands over his files to Jinah who bows her head and accepts it, letting her senior walk out of the station, his phone in his hands as he texts Suho a quick message that he won’t be able to attend the meeting in the afternoon.

He wonders what the Gangnam branch wants from him.

‘You want me to… Do what?!’

‘This has been the fifteenth report that has been filed under his name. His company is at our throats and his fans are in the midst of killing us’

‘That’s your fault, how hard is it to find a bunch of screaming girls?’, Kyungsoo whines, looking down at the pile of report cases of stalking, breaking and entering, vandalism and stealing, all under the name of Kim Jongin.

‘His saesangs are all minors, we can’t do anything to them’
‘Send them to juvey’

‘Some of them come from fairly wealthy families’

‘Great, fucking fantastic, so they get a free pass for being a dick?’, Kyungsoo rolls his eyes, opening another case with clear CCTV images of a group of girls clearly breaking into his apartment, ‘I mean, you have legit proof of what they did, look!’, he points at the pictures, placing it down on the desk, ‘Arrest them and give them a criminal record, or at least six months community service or something’

‘Like I said, wealthy families’, the Chief Police of Gangnam point out, a man in his late fifties, hair bolding and motivation in being a good cop also running on thin ice. It looks like he gave up on trying to be the good guy and is now more concern in easing the pressure of his team by dumping just about anything to Kyungsso’s branch instead.

‘I live on the outskirts of Seoul, I live almost two hours away from Gangnam’

‘You have the strength to protect the guy, better than anyone else on my team’

‘Well, boo hoo for you, you have a sucky team’

‘Let’s not act childish Mr Do’, the Chief Police looks over at him, eating his doughnut, ‘I expect you to check up on his apartment every seven o’clock in the morning and eight o’clock in the evening starting from tomorrow all the way up to when he leaves for Japan’

‘Fuck off. There’s no way in hell I’m going to travel all the way to Gangnam every day for seven o’clock check-ups. Are you mad? Am I a babysitter?’

‘No, but you are a police officer, and you are acquired to protect a very valuable human being’, the Chief Officer stops to sip his energy drink, burping right in front of Kyungsoo, ‘Think of it as being a bodyguard to the President’

‘I’m checking his house and Kim Jongin is not the president’

‘Say that to those teenage girls’, he points further at the back where a group of girls are huddled together, wearing shirt with Kai’s face on it, probably here to complain and report about anti-fans and bad comments as they usually do, and the envelope and folders in their hands both confirmed that.

‘You have got to be kidding me’, Kyungsoo breathes out, banging the files on the table before making his way out of the station.

‘And what did Sigmund Freud say about Hysteria as a diagnosis?’, Baekhyun asks his unresponsive class, most of them trying not to fall asleep during the first period, whilst the others are glued to their phones, not even trying hard to hide the fact that they were texting in class, ‘Anyone?’

‘He says that the hysterical mainly suffers from reminiscence’ a voice from the back calls out, his
eyes reverting to Eun Bi who looked bored as she does her nails, being the only one who read up on this week’s reading.

“That’s right Eun Bi”, Baekhyun points out, walking back to the bored to type out the sentence, “And, what exactly did he says trigger these thoughts?”, before he can get another reply, the bell rings across the school building, everyone making quick movements and packing their bags away as quick as they can, escaping from the boring lesson of Mr Byun’s, the flow of talking finally coming back as friends huddle together, giggling and conversing of their next plans to hang out.

Baekhyun would give him homework, but he’d been marking too many essays to even remotely want to mark another thirty or so notebooks again.

‘Baekhyun’

‘Mr Byun’, he reasserts himself the moment he hears Eun Bi behind him, being the last student to leave his class, as usual, her foot tapping impatiently and her hand leaning on the desk.

‘Walk me to class’

‘Excuse me?’

‘I have AP Physics. It’s just in the other building’

‘Eun Bi, I’m not your brother’, Baekhyun points out – again – rolling his eyes since his comments obviously didn’t trigger Eun Bi to leave without him. He stuffs his papers into his briefcase, sighing since he had next period free.

‘Just. Walk me down the corridor at least’

‘I don’t understand why you want to be seen with me all the time’, Baekhyun sighs, resting his bag on his shoulder before making a move, allowing Eun Bi to walk by his side, ‘I’m going to have to report you to the principle for giving me too much stress’

‘Just keep walking’, Eun Bi sighs, trying to avoid her other classmate’s gaze, feeling them roll their eyes as she engages with another teacher, gaining the teacher’s pet title fairly quickly ever since freshman when she asked her teacher for extra work which resulted in her whole class getting extra work too.

‘Is there anything going on? Are you scared of someone?’, Baekhyun asks once he noticed how Eun Bi’s eyes would always revert back and forth across the halls, cautious and somewhat frightful, ‘Are you being bullied’

‘No’, Eun Bi presses on, ‘Of course, not. I’m Do Eun Bi’, she points out, which was enough to shrug Baekhyun’s thought, him turning a right when Eun Bi turns left, the seventeen-years-old girl being left alone in her Physics class, her whole classroom rolling their eyes at the sight of her.

‘You don’t have to come here if you don’t want to’, Kai speaks out after he’s informed by his manager that he was gaining a bodyguard in the form of his ex-boyfriend, Kyungsoo walking
inside his apartment, checking the drawers, tweaking the locks and double checking the built-in
CCTV cameras he had set up at every corner in the room, not saying a word to Kai whilst he was
trying to look busy with work.

His apartment was much more lavish than his one, which would make sense since he lived in
Gangnam and he was a celebrity. Kyungsoo would so often forget that Kai is now a national
ANDHRE, one who requires an actual police officer to check up on him every day.

‘It’s fine. It’s my job’, Kyungsoo points out, trying to avoid eye contact with Kai, looking down on
his phone and sending a quick message to the Gangnam Police station, summarising his visit
before turning around, ‘Well, I best be off’, Kyungsoo responds after another flood of awkward
silence buries itself between them, Kai nodding his head sheepishly.

‘Do you… Maybe want… A cup of tea before you go?’

‘No, I’m fine. I’m supposed to meet Suho out for dinner anyway’

‘Oh, okay…’, Kai ruffles the back of his hair, awkwardly standing in the middle of his own living
room, still in his designer clothes. It really shouldn’t have, but the more Kyungsoo interacts with
Kai, the angrier he becomes. He doesn’t have the rights to be, he knows that, which is why he’s
holding everything in, but if Kai offers any more hospitality on him, he’s going to have a word with
him.

‘Do you want to at least have a snack? My housekeeper made some-’

‘I’m sorry Kai, but can you stop?’

‘Stop what?’

‘This’, Kyungsoo gestures around him, ‘You acting civil and actually being nice to me. Stop it’

‘Why? I thought maybe you’d be hungry and I-’

‘Ergh, this is just getting too much for me… Is this my punishment? Is this your way of saying
fuck you to me?’

‘What the fuck are you talking about?’

‘Why aren’t you hitting me? Why aren’t you treating me cold? Or at least trying to get me to stay
away from you?’, Kyungsoo didn’t know what else to do but to finally approach the elephant in the
room, ‘Why didn’t you punch me in the face that night in the jail cell? Why did you visit me when
Suho and I got into an accident? Why did you hug me?’

‘Because I was worried about you’

‘Why?! Why are you so worried about me?! What did I do to deserve your time to worry about
me? Huh? Are you trying to make me feel guiltier? Is that it? Or are you finally forcing me to tell
everybody that I was the one who broke it off with you?! I can call them all right now and tell them
if you want. Is that what you want?!’

‘Soo, calm down. Calm down, I just wanted to-’

‘And you still fucking call me that!’, Kyungsoo is now more or less enraged, which was not part of
the plan, ‘Why do you still call me that?’
'Why do you still call me Kai?!', Kai finally raises his voice at Kyungsoo, ‘Explain to me why you don’t call me Jongin instead?’

That’s not your name

‘Yes, it is my name, my real name’

‘It’s not to me!’, Kyungsoo blurts out all of a sudden, his hand instantly reaching out to cover his mouth once he realised what he said, looking up to see Kai with a shocked expression.

‘And what is that supposed to mean?’, Kai points out, taking a step closer, but Kyungsoo brushes past him, walking towards the corridor, ignoring Kai’s questions as he picks up his bags and runs to the door, closing it behind him, internally cursing to himself for his slip of the tongue, his hands already pressing for Suho’s number, waiting for the man to pick up.

‘Kris, what are you doing back in Korea?’, Suho asks the pair inside a fairly lavish restaurant, Suho agreeing to meet up with him last night when he gave him Chinese food in the middle of the night.

‘I’m supposed to help my mother pack since she’s planning on moving back to China with me’, Kris informs him, slicing a piece of steak and giving it to Suho, placing it on the man’s plate.

‘You still remembered?’

‘Your obsession on steak? Of course, how can I not? You wouldn’t stop talking about it on our first date’, Kris laughs, earning a small smile from Suho even though the Chief Police was still a little uptight. It’s been a long time since they’ve seen each other and although they parted on good terms – well, good enough – there was still some awkwardness in the air.

‘So, how have you been? Have you finally… You know… Signed a contract?’

‘With an agency? Damn Suho, I’m slightly disappointed that you haven’t done your research on me’, Kris chuckles, Suho spotting his Rolex watch resting arrogantly on his wrist, ‘Of course, I got signed to an entertainment company, I’m Kris Wu’

‘Ha, ha. I see you’re still your narcissistic self’, Suho points out, making Kris chuckles as he quickly does a cool pose, embarrassing Suho as the waitress walks past them, looking oddly at the tall man, ‘Please stop’, he tries to suppress his laughter since they were in a rather fancy restaurant, ‘You’re embarrassing me’

‘You should be lucky that you’re hanging out with the Kris Wu’, Kris points out, chewing on his steak as Suho nibbles on his, observing the way Kris spoke, his Korean slightly broken, his accent coming off as cute like when they first started dating.

‘Are you really a big shot in China? Or are you just lying to me?’

‘How dare you. I have my own show, thank you very much’

‘Doing what?’
‘Training the next big thing’

‘God, don’t tell me you’re in a tacky talent show’

‘It’s not a talent show’, Kris says with his mouth stuffed, ‘It’s more of a… I don’t know… Preparation as such for upcoming artists’

‘Ah, I see…’, Suho comments although he was still confused, it didn’t seem like Kris knew too much of his own work either, so they continue to eat, silently, but much more comfortably now.

‘So, are you still single?’, Suho freezes at the random question, his fork in midmotion as he looks up at Kris.

‘Um…’, he puts his fork back down, ‘I’m actually seeing someone at the moment’

‘Oh’

‘Yeah…’

‘What a shame’

‘What? Planning to get back together?’, Suho jokes, laughing as he continues to eat, chewing his grilled pork.

‘Yeah, actually I was’, with that blunt statement, Suho chokes on his food, feeling the air getting sucked out of him as he tries to cough out the chewed meat, grabbing his glass of red wine and gulping it down in one go.

‘Sorry…’, Suho gasps in between, flinching when Kris reaches his arm over, patting him on the back, ‘I just… Got this stupid pork stuck in my throat’

‘Haha, no worries’, Kris chuckles, seeing a flustered Suho finishing his glass of wine in one go, fanning himself from the initial shock, ‘I should’ve worded it a bit differently…’

‘Kris… I’m being serious. I really am with someone’

‘Yeah, I believe you’, Kris points out, calming Suho from thinking a lot of things he shouldn’t be thinking, sighing in relief once Kris got the picture, ‘That isn’t going to stop me though’

And Suho is back to thinking about the worst-case scenario.

Sehun waits inside the police station in search of Suho who refuses to answer his calls, the lawyer looking rather suspicious standing around the reception area by himself.

‘Can I help you?’, Jinah asks, approaching the lawyer who has become a usual visitor since the case between him and the Chief Police had started.

‘Um, do you mind telling me when Suho is coming in?’
‘Captain Suho has already left work about an hour ago’, Jinah informs the lawyer, ‘But if you have any questions for him, you can leave it with me’, Sehun pauses, looking down at his phone to see if Suho had left him a message informing him of his whereabouts, but he didn’t find anything, the last conversation they had was the day before he left for Japan.

‘No, I’m fine. I’ll come back tomorrow’, he informs the police officer, walking out of the station and dialling Suho’s number, waiting for the Chief Police to answer his call, his long legs running down the flight of stairs by the entrance, feeling the cold breeze of the evening hitting his face.

‘Oh Sehun!’, a deep voice calls him ahead, his eyes falling on the parking lot where Kyungsoo is, walking towards him, his hair messy.

‘Don’t worry, I was just about to leave’, Sehun calls over the officer, not in the mood to argue with him.

‘You’re leaving? Oh, good, d’you mind driving me to McDonald’s’, Kyungsoo calls over Sehun, running over to him and standing by his side, which took the young lawyer by surprise, ending the call with Suho and looking down at Kyungsoo.

‘You want me to what?’

‘I’m fucking starving and I feel like I’m going to go insane if I don’t get some meat in my stomach’, Kyungsoo calls over, ‘Now, where’s your car?’

‘At… The end, right there’, Sehun points at his Mercedes Benz, Kyungsoo gesturing for him to follow as he makes his way to the car, not caring that he is not only taking Sehun by surprise but scaring the shit out of him.

‘Are you okay?’, Sehun asks once they got inside McDonald’s, the both of them eating by the window, Kyungsoo stuffing his face with a Big Mac, whilst Sehun just settled on his chicken McNuggets, looking at the officer curiously.

‘Oh, don’t act too surprised. I used to pick you up and feed you’, Kyungsoo points out, bits of chewed food flying out of his mouth, ‘You should do the same for me for compensation. You know how much money I spent trying to take care of your ass’

‘Yes, when we were teenagers’, Sehun points out, sipping on his coke, ‘What’s with the whole talking to me. Did Suho finally get to you?’

‘What? What are you talking about?’

‘You hate me’

‘Oh yeah’, Kyungsoo stops eating, looking at Sehun one more time, realising that even after the years, Sehun didn’t look like he aged, he looked exactly the same when he was still a sophomore, ‘Right, well, fuck you’

‘Gee, thanks’, Sehun raises his eyebrows, nibbling on his chicken, ‘I guess Suho does have shit
persuading skills’

‘Look Sehun, I don’t hate you’, Kyungsoo finally admits to the boy, ‘Since today is tell the truth to every one day, I might as well just add that I’ve never truly hated you’

‘That’s not exactly what you would say to me after the trials’

‘Yeah, you can blame my adrenaline on that’, Kyungsoo nods in agreement, acknowledging that his first fights after his trials are dismissed were uncalled for and totally unprofessional, ‘Sorry about that, by the way’

‘Seriously, what has gotten into you? Are you planning to poison me here?’

‘I’m trying to be nice since you paid for my food you bastard’, Kyungsoo mumbles, not really wanting to admit that he’s been in need of company after being alone with Kai and Suho has gone missing for some unknown reason, so he had no one to hang out with and pour his heart out – Sehun would just have to do.

‘Well… I’m sorry too. I know losing those cases are the worst for you’

‘Yeah, it is. Why do you always try to one-up me?’, Kyungsoo reaches the pivotal knockdown of their relationship, looking up at Sehun and waiting for the boy’s answer.

‘Because those criminals are still human’

‘Yeah right’, Kyungsoo snorts, laughing at Sehun’s reasoning as he drinks his Fanta, ‘They’re scums who break the law. That’s enough to send them to jail’

‘You and I both know that humans are much more complex than that’, Sehun murmurs, scratching the back of ears as he awkwardly tries not to get heated up on the topic.

‘Oh really? Please do enlighten me’, Kyungsoo urges Sehun on.

Well… Remember the first case we ever went up against each other?’

‘The one with the drug dealer?’

‘Yeah’

‘He’s a scum for selling drugs to minors. Those fourteen-year-olds are minors who can easily be influenced. There’s clear evidence that he persuaded them to buy from him, that’s a breach of the minor protection code, filed under article 7 section 4’

‘He’s also under the protection of code 4.5 under the witness protection. He was forced to take part of gang activities after falling in debt with the loan sharks, forcing him to take grand actions to pay for the money used for his mother’s operation along with his younger brother’s college tuition’, Sehun points out, recollecting the same law he had read over and over again once he decided to go to law school, Kyungsoo observing him, the way he can recall each article from his memory.

‘You’re a good lawyer’

‘So were you’

‘Don’t’, Kyungssoo stops the conversation before it went to the direction Sehun was trying to lead it to, the police officer waving a handout.
‘People are still talking about you in my law firm’

‘Your fault for picking the same law firm I went to’

‘It’s one of the best law firms in Korea’

‘Well, I guess we both hit jackpot’, Kyungsoo chuckles, cheering his plastic coke bottle with Sehun’s.

‘Why did you quit being a lawyer? Hasn’t it always been your dream?’, Sehun asks again, pressing the question like a real lawyer, never backing down until he got an answer.

‘It wasn’t a dream of mine. It was just something I wish I did because of the academic achievements I got during school’, Kyungsoo explains himself, but it seems like Sehun is still not persuaded, of course, he wouldn’t be. It’s the number one rule for every lawyer to never take the first answer as the only answer.

‘Then you could’ve become a doctor instead. Your academics can even allow you to do architecture… Or economics. I mean, why law? And why give up so suddenly?’

‘That’s a lot of questions for a night out, Oh Sehun’, Kyungsoo, knowing how a lawyer should act since he was once one, presses on his will to stop the conversation, ‘We’re eating as friends, not as enemies’

‘Friends?’, Sehun repeats the word from Kyungsoo.

‘Well, since you’re fucking Suho again, I supposed we might as well get along’

‘Like old times?’, Sehun questions, a glimmer of hope hinted in his eyes, one which Kyungsoo noticed immediately since Sehun’s strain expression had finally relaxed, reminding him of the time where he used to take care of this tall kid.

‘Yeah, sure, why not’, Kyungsoo reaches out and ruffles the lawyer's hair, ‘But I’m still pissed at you’

‘Why?’

‘You winked at me during our last case when you won. I don’t give a fuck, that was an asshole move’

‘What are you talking about? When did I ever wink at you?’

‘During the case of the girl who blackmailed her boyfriend, that one… Remember?’

‘The one where her boyfriend sued for revenge porn?’

‘Yeah, that one’

‘I wasn’t winking at you, there was something in my eye’, Sehun yells out, the rest of the restaurant silent, amplifying Sehun’s shocked tone the moment he realised what Kyungsoo was talking about, ‘Why would I even wink at you?’

‘Wait, you didn’t wink at me?’

‘It was April and some kind of dust thing went in my eye. I even got an allergic reaction from it! My eyes were all puffy the next day!’, Sehun defends himself, throwing his empty coke bottle at
Baekhyun hears the knock at his door, looking down at his watch which read 9.46pm. Chanyeol was a whole two hours late. Baekhyun contemplated whether to open the door from the giant, slightly annoyed that Chanyeol was being inconsistent with his visitation.

If he was going to visit, he might as well be on time.

But before Baekhyun can ignore the knock, another knock comes again, this time banging with Chanyeol’s voice screaming his name.

‘What?!’, he shouts as he runs over to the door, opening it to find that Chanyeol wasn’t holding a small plastic bag like he usually does, his eyes landing on the big grocery bags Chanyeol is carrying.

‘God, you are so slow in opening your door, aren’t you?’, Chanyeol whines, pushing past Baekhyun, ‘Hurry, these bags are heavy’

‘What are those?’, Baekhyun asks, closing the door and stalking Chanyeol to his kitchen, looking at the grocery bags which are now placed on his kitchen counter.

‘Food. Wholesome good food that’s healthy and good for you’, Chanyeol points his finger like a teacher explaining to his student.

‘And… What are you doing with it?’

‘Look at you Baekhyun. Honestly, I worry more about the fact that you don’t know how skinny you are’

‘I’m not skinny’, Baekhyun takes a peek inside one of the plastic bags, seeing vegetables and fruit, the soya milk and a lot more organic food he’d seen for a while. He turns around to see Chanyeol storing the newly purchased food inside Baekhyun’s almost empty cabinets and fridge, chucking the expired canned food along with dangerous microwavable food, finding a half-empty expired ice cream tub right at the back of the fridge.

‘Really Baek? How have you not died yet?’, Chanyeol lifts the lid of the trash can, throwing the tub in before Baekhyun can argue, ‘I mean, if you see that the expiration date has passed, throw it away! The bacteria will only accumulate’, Chanyeol lectures the sociology teacher, muttering unknown phrases Baekhyun can barely hear.

‘Who gave you the rights to bombard my kitchen? And what makes you think I’m going to accept these? I’m not going to let you waste your money on me’, Baekhyun breaks away from the plastic bag, walking over and snatching the flour from Chanyeol’s hands, only for the giant to grab it back, two pairs of hands gripping onto the pack.

‘I don’t have time to play tug of war with you, I gotta start preparing for the kimchi jjigae’

‘Give me the flour’, Baekhyun growls like a puppy, ignoring Chanyeol and pulling the flour
towards him, only for his whole body to be pulled back by Chanyeol.

‘Baek, don’t try me’

‘Oh, bitch, I’m not trying’, Baekhyun glares up at the giant, tiptoeing so he looks more intimidating, pulling at the flour, ‘Now give it to me!’

‘No!’

‘Give it!’

The instant the pair of hands pulled the opposite way, their strength became too much to handle for the poor packet, the paper bag ripping straight in the middle, puff of white flour emitting all over them, blinding Baekhyun for a moment as he steps back, almost tripping over his own feet trying to get away from the overwhelming amount of flour which had started to land on his hair and face.

‘Blurgh!’, Baekhyun coughs out, swatting his hands everywhere to get the flour off him, finally opening his eyes and looking up to see his kitchen floors covered in flour, ‘Look what you did!’ , he moans, looking down at the mess they made, glaring up at Chanyeol to see the boy covered in white, almost like a ghost, is eyelashes also covered in flour along with his hair. For a moment, Baekhyun forgot that he was supposed to be angry. All he thought of was how fucking ridiculous Chanyeol looked.

‘Achoo!’, Chanyeol yells as he sneezes due to the flour getting stuck up his nose when he breathed in, the flour in his hair shaking off him, making Baekhyun laugh, ‘Oh, so you think this is funny? Huh?’ , Chanyeol whines, looking all around him to find that his $8 flour is now all over the floor, ‘This was full wheat flour! This shit is expensive!’

‘Did I tell you to buy it?’, Baekhyun yells back, tiptoeing as he tries to ruffles the flour off the giant’s hair.

‘How am I supposed to make you cupcakes now?!’, Chanyeol pouts, but he leans his head down at the touch of Baekhyun’s hands ruffling his hair, combing his hair back and trying to get the rest of the flour off, the simple act making him feel like a dog in dire need of attention.

‘I don’t eat cupcakes’

‘Don’t bullshit yourself, Baek, you love cupcakes’

Chanyeol did have a point. No matter how many years had passed, Byun Baekhyun will always have a sweet tooth.

Lay sits across the little girl, seeing her pale figure and her blank stare, the monitor in the room emitting the painful sound of a flat line, her mother’s hysteria being heard throughout out the whole room, her husband gripping her tightly. Lay sits on the chair, his hand never leaving the girl’s, his eyes closing at the feel of her cold hands, letting go of his has her muscles begins to relax. The room is dark, the omniscient nature of Lay’s prediction playing out once again, the little girl who had just celebrated her ninth birthday only a week ago, leaving the earth too soon.

He can feel his assistant’s hand resting on his shoulder, but that did nothing to take the weight off
things, in fact, it put even more weight in his heart, the ringing in his ears never fading as he loses yet another patient, damp tears resting by the ends of his eyes, his hands shaking, praying for a miracle, for a quick revelation that maybe her heart will start beating again. He feels himself surge a wave of his power onto her, but he knew it was useless.

He was a healer, not a reviver. It was far too late to assert any of his power onto her. All he could’ve done was to make the transition a little less painful.

‘I’m sorry’, his voice whispers across the room, silencing the cries, the childless mother looking up, her vision blurred, but she continued to look at the doctor, the doctor who’s lost more lives than he’d saved.

‘Sorry’s not good enough’

And she was right. Sorry wasn’t good enough. Lay finally let’s go of her cold hands, standing up and stroking back her hair behind her ears one last time, his hands brushing across her face, closing her tired eyes before bowing to her parents and turning his way out of the room.

‘Give me the number of the National Seoul Board Association of Human Healthcare and Wellbeing’, Lay informs his assistant, taking off his doctor’s coat and stethoscope, his pace quickening, practically running out of the corridor and towards his office, ‘And set up a meeting with the Minister of Health and Human Rights’

‘Why?’, his assistant questions him, picking up his white coat and running over to him.

‘I’m going to pitch a fund’

‘A fund? A fund for what?’

‘To find a cure’

‘A cure for what? Neurogenetic Imperium deficiencies? You must be out of your goddamn mind. No one even knows how many diseases can accumulate from the deficiencies, no one hasn’t even explored that part of the brain in detail to have a starting point to find a cure!’, his assistant informs him, reminding him just how mad he sounds, her arms wrapped around his coat, but it doesn’t seem like the doctor is paying attention anymore.

‘Well, I guess I’ll have to be the first’
Unwavering Change.

Nine Years Ago:

‘Kai!’, Kyungsoo gleams the moment his boyfriend walks offstage, his hair stuck to his forehead as soon as he ends his performance, breathless and euphoric as he lands straight into Kyungsoo’s arms as soon as the curtain closes, trails of cheers and hurls of claps showcased around the hall, ‘You
‘I better hope I do, this was the grand finale’, Kai whispers, closing his eyes and feeling Kyungsoo’s hold tighten on him, ‘You better take me out for a fucking treat’

‘Gosh, so needy aren’t we?’, Kyungsoo chuckles, stroking Kai’s back as they both walk off, Kai high fiving his fellow cast mates, cheers and whoops still constant around him backstage, Kai being greeted to an ocean of flowers.

‘Congratu-fucking-lations, you psychopath!’, Chanyeol yells, putting Kai into a headlock and ruffling his hair as the whole group find their way in the backstage, Sehun giving Kai a hug before Xiumin can engulf his best friend in a giant hug.

‘You were great’, he smiles, ruffling Kai’s hair, leaning his arm on his as he waits for everyone to huddle in, a group hug much needed at this moment.

‘So… When are you going to perform Xiumin’s debut musical score for his first musical?’, Chen asks, holding on Xiumin’s waist, fist bumping Kai once the high of everyone cheering for him had stopped.

‘When he lets me pass my audition’, Kai points out, wiggling his eyebrows at Xiumin, ‘Which hopefully I’ll be getting the male lead, right?’

‘Don’t worry, I put a good word in’, Xiumin smiles at Kai, looking at the way his best friend fist pumped the air, ‘I told them to give you tree number 7’, the last statement made Kai stop mid-motion in dancing, looking at Xiumin in disbelief.

‘You wouldn’t dare’

‘Oh, but I would’, Xiumin chuckles, ‘To see you dress up in a tree costume, I would do anything’

‘You piece of shit!’

‘Alright, alright’, Kyungsoo pulls him back, Kai instantly following where Kyungsoo’s hands were leading him, ‘Kai, you know he’s lying right?’

‘Or is he?’, Chen decides to join the fun, smirking at the way Kai genuinely started to freak the fuck out, the rest of the group laughing at his expression of distortion. Kyungsoo gives him another warning glare, the rest of the group already complaining about where to eat, Baekhyun’s loud voice rushing over the rest as he screams for Mexican but Sehun blows him down by requesting for Japanese food instead, and in the same fashion, Suho turns everyone down and finalises in going to a Japanese restaurant instead.

‘Chanyeol seems to be improving’, Kyungsoo comments the moment they separate from the rest of the group. Kai driving his car to his private dorm which he thankfully shared with no one curtsy of him begging for his parents to pay for the extra costs.

‘Yeah. Still powerless though’, Kai responds, unlocking the door in which Kyungsoo comfortably walks in, removing his jacket and making himself at home. Kyungsoo has been visiting Kai’s dorm
more times then he’d like to think, mainly due to his excessive whining whenever Kai couldn’t teleport to his, so he would drive for three hours just to visit him instead. It was the worst mistake he’d made since he has a lot of work to do and he shouldn’t be wasting his time spending the night at Kai’s when he has a presentation he needed to prepare for. But that doesn’t stop him from making the same mistake again.

‘So, my cooking skills have improved’, Kai yells out to Kyungsoo who sits down on his couch, already switching on the TV and taking off his shoes.

‘Yeah, by one less burnt pancake’, Kyungsoo yells back, chuckling even though he can’t see Kai’s expression but he knew that the boy was pouting.

‘That’s not nice’

‘I’m just kidding babe’, Kyungsoo turns to see Kai standing in his small kitchen placed by the corner of the room, one which he hardly found to be a kitchen, ‘What are you making?’

‘I’m thinking, fried eggs and spam?’, Kai smiles his usual goofy smile, ‘That is my speciality’

‘Yeah sure, why not’, Kyungsoo tries not to laugh at his over-enthusiastic boyfriend, letting him make food despite eating Japanese with the rest of the gang, ‘How are you not full?’

‘I just did a two-hour performance and about a hundred pirouette, give me a break’, Kai defends himself, the sound of sizzling coursing through the small apartment as he cracks the egg and places it on the pan before running away from the jumping oil.

‘You are such a baby’, Kyungsoo laughs, clapping his hands as he watches Kai scurry in the corner of the room.

‘Can you stop judging me?’, Kai yells out, making Kyungsoo laugh even more as he approaches the scared boy.

‘You want me to cook instead?’

‘No. I said I’ll do it myself’, Kai whines, holding on tightly to the only spatula he owns, Kyungsoo abandoning the show he’s watching on TV and walking over in an attempt to cook instead.

‘Okay fine. Just saying that you don’t have to’

Two hours and three burnt eggs later, Kyungsoo and Kai are sitting side by side, Kyungsoo chewing on the burnt edges of the eggs, stuffing rice in his mouth to stop the bitter taste from making him grimace, keeping his expression straight.

‘This tastes great’

‘You sound like a robot when you lie’

‘This tastes great’, Kyungsoo tries to add a bit more life in his response, turning his gaze to watch Kai pout, ‘It doesn’t taste that bad, how about that?’, Kyungsoo pats his shoulders reassuring.

‘I’m going to be good at cooking’, Kai announces, chewing on the spam which was perfectly
cooked since Kyungsoo thought enough was enough and took over the cooking, ‘One day I’ll be making you an eight-course meal’

‘You really don’t have to. I can do that, I’m already a great cook’

‘No. I’m going to make sure you’re well fed before your future cases and I’ll feed you all kinds of meat. Fried chicken, pork cutlet, lamb curry…’

‘Are you trying to give me high cholesterol?’, Kyungsoo laughs, cutting his spam in half and giving the rest to Kai since the boy didn’t want to eat his own fried eggs.

‘I’m going to make sure you become obese. More fat than Baekhyun…’

‘Baekhyun? What’s Baekhyun got to do with – Oh… Wait a second… This isn’t about Chanyeol’s cooking is it?’, Kyungsoo stops in mid-motion of cutting his food, looking back to Kai who avoids his gaze, ‘Kai you’re such a dumb fuck’

‘His food was fucking delicious!’, Kai shouts across, dropping his chopsticks down, ‘How can that bastard be good at cooking too?’

‘Are you seriously turning into a Chanyeol? Right in front of me? Is this really happening?’

‘I am not! I’m just saying… He doesn’t have to be good at bloody everything’

‘He’s Park Chanyeol… Because of you, he’s the Captain of his University’s bowling team. If he sees something he likes, he goes for it, and if he sees anything someone else is better at him at, then he goes for it. That’s how that idiot function’

‘Yeah, I know that…’

‘Well, at least he can never beat you at dancing’, Kyungsoo tries to comfort Kai, which seemed to work since the boy’s eyes did light up at the fact.

‘That is very true’, Kai breathes out a sigh of relief, Kyungsoo leaning in for a kiss once he noticed that Kai had calmed down now, his hands placing itself subconsciously on the back of Kai’s hands, reeling him in closer, their breaths colliding, eyes closed as they feel each other.

Kai grazes his hands on Kyungsoo’s back, holding onto him, knowing where the line is and often pulling back once in a while once he felt the urge to feel Kyungsoo’s skin underneath his cotton shirt. He plans to pull away soon since the tension begins to grow, but just as he was about to, he feels a pressure below which sends him in shock mode, feeling Kyungsoo’s hands beneath.

‘Soo – What are you doing?’, Kai looks down in utter shock, feeling Kyungsoo’s fingers unbuckling his jeans, ‘Wait! Hold on, what are you doing?’, Kai looks at Kyungsoo in distraught, the latter’s expression calm compared to him.

‘What do you mean, what am I doing? What does it look like?’, Kyungsoo looks at Kai innocently, which makes it worse for the dancer who had to take deep breathes of three to calm himself.

‘I think we need to think this through’

‘Really Kai? How long have we been in a relationship?’

‘That’s not the point!’

‘Then what is the point?’, Kyungsoo rolls his eyes, resting his hands on Kai’s waistband, ‘This is
me saying I’m ready’

‘Are you serious?’

‘Yeah, I’m being serious’, and with that Kyungsoo is flung right out of Kai’s arms, tumbling back and nearly falling off his chair as Kai runs off, leaving him surprised and alone in the living room. He watches Kai grab the bouquet of flowers that the gang gave to him after his performance, slamming the door shut.

Was Kai offended in any way?

Kyungsoo would’ve thought his reaction would lean more on the positive side after he decided that he was ready to have sex with him. It had been gnawing at the back of his head over the years and although Kai never pressed on the subject ever since their first argument, Kyungsoo still thought about it once in a while, slightly nervous if Kai was going to explode if they don’t do it.

He thinks waiting for two years was enough for Kai to handle. And the thought of having sex doesn’t fear him as much now that he knows it’ll be Kai holding onto him.

So Kyungsoo is more than confused as to why Kai was the one running away this time.

Maybe he didn’t like the idea of them having sex anymore?

Before Kyungsoo can get up and investigate, the door to Kai’s room opened, Kai, combing the back of his hair nervously, fixing his shirt and walking back to Kyungsoo.

‘You okay?’, Kyungsoo asks, nervously reaching out for his arm, ‘Do you… Maybe wanna discuss it more?’, Kyungsoo points out, standing up as he shyly cages in at the thought that maybe he was taking it too far and caught Kai off guard, ‘Maybe we can…’

Kai grabs Kyungsoo before the doubt in his mind starts to consume him, dragging him towards the room to which Kyungsoo can clearly see why Kai had locked himself in his room for what seemed like an eternity. He spots the petals from the flower of his bouquet splattered all around the room and the messy bed which Kai probably quickly made.

‘You should’ve given me a fair warning before’, Kai stands behind Kyungsoo, shyly looking around at the small set up he made, only a few candles that he found in his drawers being lit around the room, on his desk and his bedside table, ‘I would’ve made it more nice and romantic’

‘You’ve got to be kidding me’, Kyungsoo whispers, turning to face Kai, ‘You know I don’t need all this’

‘This is your first time. We gotta make it special’, Kai whispers back, taking a step forward and snaking his arms around Kyungsoo’s waist, ‘Right?’

‘Was your first special?’

‘Meh’, Kai shrugs, ‘Special enough’

‘Special enough, huh?’

‘We were at a party…’

‘Wow’, Kyungsoo sarcastically beams at Kai, laughing when Kai holds onto him tightly, leaning his chin on his shoulder, the pair looking away from each other in a moment.
‘Please don’t judge me’

‘Don’t worry’, Kyungsoo pulls Kai back, his hands resting on his cheeks before tiptoeing to face him properly, ‘I won’t’, he seals his promise with a kiss, one which makes Kai step forward, the both of them tumbling onto the bed, the pink petals sliding from the sheets, Kyungsoo’s eyes closed as he relishes at the moment where he feels himself let go, truly let go, feeling everything from Kai’s fingers racing underneath, slowly and shyly embracing his skin as he lifts off Kyungsoo’s shirt, feeling the density of the situation when they break apart, panting harshly, Kyungsoo’s eyes wide and vulnerable.

‘Please take care of me’

‘I will. I promise’

Present:

Kyungsoo knocks at the door harshly, almost breaking it as he downs his morning coffee, looking at his watch to remind himself the bullshit that he’s put into as the light from the sun is barely breaking daylight when a sleepy Kai opens the door, his eyes still half closed, hair messy and shirt non-existent since the bastard still liked to sleep with no shirt on.

‘I’m here for the daily routine’, Kyungsoo announces himself nonchalantly, trying to ignore Kai, pushing past him and throwing his empty cup into the trash can, missing it completely but not giving a damn and showing no signs that he was going to pick it up. Kai tails behind him, scratching his head as he tries to wake himself up, rubbing his eyes and trying to look presentable in front of the police officer, rushing over to his kitchen and splashing his face with cold water from the kitchen sink.

‘Hey, how are you?’, he asks, but he is given no answer as Kyungsoo checks the perimeter of his apartment, looking down to the secret screen he had stashed inside a locked drawer in Kai’s apartment, rewinding the last 12 hours since he had last been here, checking for any suspicious movements, only seeing Kai moving around in fast motion, drinking, eating and watching something on TV before calling it for the day, taking off his shirt and throwing it on the sofa.

‘Right, it seems like no signs of a break-in have happened last night’, Kyungsoo summarised his review over his quick check-up of the place, quickly typing it down so he can finish his morning report and give it to the Gangnam department as quickly as possible, ‘I’ll be going then’

‘Are you sure you don’t want tea, or something else?’

‘No’

‘Are you sure?’, Kai looks out to find that Kyungsoo was already on his way to leave, ‘I can make you some breakfast’
'No thanks'

'How about some eggs and spam'

Kyungsoo freezes for a moment, turning back to face Kai, the boy still looking tired since it was early morning, and it seemed like he had some work schedules last night since the CCTV showed Kai walking in rather late into the night.

'No, get some rest’, Kyungsoo responds again, bowing his head and walking in full stead, closing the door behind him and leaving all at once.

Chen looks across his room, tying his tie perfectly just like how Chanyeol had taught him. He didn’t think that an eleven-year-old would be so good at teaching him how to do something he seemed to think of such an adult thing back then. He still remembered his lank arms almost strangling him to death as he tightens the tie around him as he prepares for a wedding for his mother’s colleague, forcing him to wear formal clothes for the first time in a long time.

‘Hey, your brother was on the phone’, Xiumin’s voice whispers to him calmly as he feels his arms around him, ‘Are you going to spend dinner with him?’

‘Yeah, I haven’t seen him in years. It’ll be nice to catch up’, Chen points out, smiling at Xiumin through the mirror, seeing the way he clung to him. For a bizarre reason, he never got sick of Xiumin over the years they knew each other. Maybe because it was the man’s enticing way to make him fall in love with him every day, even during the years where Xiumin could not stand the sight of him from time to time. He looks at Xiumin one more time, seeing the same smile plastered on his face whenever he hugs him goodbye for work.

It seems like Chen’s biggest accomplishment was not raising his family’s company from the dead. His biggest accomplishment was probably getting this man to actually fall in love with him. He still wonders how he did it.

‘Hurry back, okay?’, Xiumin kisses Chen’s cheeks before letting him go, patting him on the shoulder as he urges his husband to hurry up for work, the pair walking out of their room and downstairs towards the kitchen where they find Chanyeol on the leftover food they had for dinner, Chen sighing at the sight of a sleeveless Chanyeol, his hair messing with ashes of red at the roots.

‘Morning’, he waves his hand out to greet the both of them, Xiumin walking to sit beside him.

‘I am going to fucking-’

‘Time to go to work honey’, Xiumin calls out, cutting Chen’s sentence as he waves goodbye to Chen, urging him to get going. Chen gives Chanyeol a last look of warning before grabbing his briefcase and leaving his house, slamming the door shut behind him. Xiumin looks over to Chanyeol.

‘You know, he doesn’t hate you that much anymore’, he points out, looking at the way Chanyeol paused his eating, before continuing after the slamming of the door, ‘He would’ve electrocuted you right here and now if he did’

‘I know’, Chanyeol responds, bits of chewed rice flying out of his mouth, ‘I saved his life, that man
wouldn’t hold grudges to his hero’, Xiumin laughs at Chanyeol’s quick-wittedness, slowly admitting to himself that he did miss the old Chanyeol but being reminded that there never was an old Chanyeol. Chanyeol may have left, but there was clear proof that the bastard hadn’t changed one bit.

Eun Bi pulls her hoodie up after finding out that Mr Byun had called in sick today, leaving her alone in the hellhole that was high school.

Do Eun Bi is a scary character, one which no one wanted to mess with, especially since her brother was Mr One Punch Man himself.

But that didn’t mean they couldn’t isolate either,

It seemed inevitable that an outspoken character like Eun Bi would seem to be the most annoying human being in a high school setting, always asking for more work, correcting a teacher, raising her hand and answering everyone’s questions. She had most likely been known as the most annoying teacher’s pet known to man.

‘Hey, Eun Bi, you look like you’re ready to annihilate someone, you okay?’, Suho is the first to notice the weird vibe Kyungsoo’s sister was making, the Chief Police walking in the school corridor to do his monthly speech during morning assembly about safety and violence and community spirit, all the mumbo jumbo stuff for being a good city cop.

‘I’m fine’, she mumbled back, although there is a sting in her voice as she watches her classmate swerve away at the sight of her.

‘Are you sure?’

‘I said yes, now will you quit it?’, Eun Bi presses on, trying to get Suho off her shoulder.

‘Alright, whatever you say. But don’t blame me if Kyungsoo finds out about your pressing mood swings’, Suho raises his hand in surrender, turning the other direction and on his way to the exit, which made Eun bi much more cautious since she was now all alone and without anyone older to lean back on.

‘I’m sorry Dr Zhang, but a project this daring is not something my board members can agree on’

‘This isn’t a project. This is arrogance. Just because you’re one step closer to understanding the anatomy of the imperium mind does not mean you are capable of raising even a finger of interest in finding a cure’

‘A cure for what? We don’t even know about the disease or its main causes. This isn’t even classified as a curable disease’

‘I understand your worries, but it seems like Dr Zhang has a point. If we start from his-’

‘There is no starting if the probability of its failure is stronger’
‘This isn’t the money we are throwing at. This is the money of the taxpayers. We should be finding more use of it somewhere where a positive outcome is actually on the horizon’

‘Cancer’

The board members look across the room full of doctors and scientist, their eyes finally resting on the man who called them, Dr Zhang standing tall, his hair combed back, his doctor’s coat on along with his files of report and research cases, a different pile next to him of all his patients and their progression, all typed and written by him personally.

‘Did you know it took doctors with healing powers like me approximately 176 years to cure cancer?’, Lay points out, the only doctor standing up whilst the others are seated firmly on their seat. He rests his hand on his back and starts to work, ‘The progression of the cell was far too great for healers to cure the thing that was killing them came from them’, Lay continues on, walking past different board members of the Hospital and government, ‘See, us healers can only heal a sickness when the clear cause was an alien, a thing which clearly attacked the body, whether it’s a form of a knife or some kind of virus’

‘Influenza, Ebola, Swine flu, AIDS, STIs, HIV’

Dozens of different types of diseases begin to be listed on the holographic scene ejected in the middle of the long table, each doctor and government officials looking up at videos of healers quickly eradicating the disease within only a few hours of touch.

‘Our generation, and the generation before ours, and the generation before theirs and the generations from before them have all imputed approximately 700 billion American US dollars to do everything they can. It was taken from taxes, millions of charity donations and a lot of perseverance, but don’t you think it paid off?’, Lay continues on, pressing the small button hidden inside his coat, showing videos of countless of cancer patients being treated and healed.

‘Healers cannot fix what the bodies themselves have created, which is why Imperium sclerosis is our new cancer’, Lay shows the next slide of humans and their powers growing out of control, ‘Our body releases too much hormone, a hormone called imperizilitus which controls and dictates how we use our powers, even in our time of reflex the hormones dictate our brain how to control our powers. These patients right here?’, Lay points on a patient who was in the middle of an episode, having released a wave of liquidised metal, ‘His own body is causing this, so we healers simply can’t touch him and fix what’s going on’

The rest of the doctors’ waver in judgement, their stern decision being nudged by Dr Zhang.

‘And say we do fund your project. What’s your proof that you’re on the right track for a cure?’, a board member cuts Lay’s speech, looking through his proposition with the same grimace on his face when he walked in.

‘If you turn over the page, maybe you’ll know’, Lay points out, a wave of the response of the members flipping the page to find a photocopy of a certain patient by the name of-

‘Park Chanyeol’, Lay continues on, pressing the button to show a picture of the tall giant, ‘He suffers from imperium sclerosis and he’s still alive’

‘A lot of people have suffered from’

‘He’s had approximately forty episodes, including fire enema… Which basically means throwing up fire’, Lay points out to the government officials who had no idea what he was talking about, ‘In
theory, this man should not only be dead, but-

‘Burnt to the ashes’, one of the doctors’ whisper, looking at all of Chanyeol’s detailed episodes which had been written by the doctors.

‘Despite his powers being to manipulate fire, he still has human skin tissues which means it’s still vulnerable to some extent to fire. Although, over time he might evolve special amplifiers which layer onto his skin to stop him from burning but overall... His skin will still be vulnerable to the penetration of fire coming out of him’

‘And what do you want me to do with this information? So, we got ourselves a classified high evolver’

‘It means that, if given the chance, I can yield information about his body and how it withstands such immense injuries every day and find a way to mimic it’

‘And that’s going to help you find a cure?’

‘It’s a better start than none, isn’t it?’

‘And have you got the patient’s permission? To be part of the project’

‘Yes. I do’

Soon enough.

Sehun sees Kyungsoo slyly winking at him when he walks past to ‘talk’ with the Chief reports about the files he had received from them, Sehun shaking his head at the sight of the other police officer nudging him, relieved that he can finally close the door so he can have some privacy.

‘Where have you been?’, Sehun asks the moment the door closes, looking at Suho who was too busy typing something to spot Sehun’s angry expression, ‘You weren’t picking up your calls this morning’, his stomps towards the Chief Police’s desk, his hands on the wooden table which frightens Suho when he noticed his papers flying away from the intense wind.

‘I was doing a school assembly speech, please calm down Sehun’, Suho looks up at the lawyer, swatting his hand away as he tries to pick the papers, rolling his desk chair away to bend down and grab some which landed on the floor, ‘Can you help me pick that up?’, Suho points on the paper that landed on Sehun’s side.

‘Sorry’, Sehun whispers once he got his anger dialled down, bending down to pick up the stray papers which had landed on the carpet floors, ‘You could’ve called me at least’, he points out, to which Suho can only laugh at him, reaching his hand out to stoke Sehun’s hair.

‘Why are you worrying? You know I’ll be right here anyway’, Suho chuckles, continuing to dote of the young lawyer, finding it cute to see Sehun shyly looking down, ‘I’m never anywhere unexpected, so you’ll be able to look for me’

‘Then where were you last Friday?’

‘Last Friday?’

‘Yeah, I came to pick you up but you weren’t here at the station’
‘Ah…’, Suho laughs it off, piling up the papers back into one corner, ‘I just had a small gathering going on’

‘Gathering?’

‘Family stuff, you know how it is’, Suho points out, Sehun nodding at Suho and believing his story despite Suho’s tone being completely off.

‘Well, are you at least free tonight?’

‘Of course,’

‘Why don’t we try that new restaurant? Down by the bridge? I heard they made great steak’

Eun Bi tries to walk out of the school building, pushing past a bunch of girls on the way out which earned her a trail of curses, a tug on her hoodie as she feels something pushing her back, the flick of the girl’s wrist nonchalantly pulling her back towards them.

‘Eun Bi, how are you?’, the girl asks menacingly, one with overwhelming bitchiness in her tone, her hand waving again, forcing Eun Bi to face her, ‘Where have you been during Physics? We’ve missed your draining and depressing voice’, she continues to mutter out, her tone being responded with fits of giggles from the other girls around her, leaning on the lockers by the front entrance like every cool kid you see in every high school movie.

‘Leave me alone’, Eun Bi points out, getting disrupted when she feels her backpack tighten around her, the girl’s fingers waving around as she forces the bag to suffocate Eun Bi.

‘That’s not very nice’, she sarcastically pouts her lip, looking down sadly before smirking at Eun Bi, ‘You should really set your tone down now that your brother’s fucktoy isn’t around’

‘Mr Byun is not like that!’, Eun Bi yells at her, the group of girls taking a step forward at her sudden loud confidence, ‘He and my brother are friends!’

‘That’s not what the rumours are saying’

‘And how do you know about the rumour of our teacher and a random police officer? You must truly have a lot of free time to go searching around for it’

‘Shut it ass licker’, she hisses, Eun Bi squirming when the back tightens around her, forcing her shoulder to constrict at the pressure.

‘You get more annoying every day’

‘That’s because you get dumber every day’

Eun Bi suddenly feel herself choking when her hoodie strings begin to tie itself around her, her breath cutting for a short moment, the burning grip of the strings making her feel like her neck is going to slice open any time soon, her hands reaching out, trying to free herself from it.

‘I wouldn’t do that if I were you’

Suddenly, the suffocating grip on her is loosened almost instantly, Eun Bi falling to the floor, breathing in and out heavily, her fingers resting on her neck as she feels her raw skin. The group of
girls take an alarmingly slow step back as their eyes widen in sudden absolute shock, their hands shaking and eyes quivering as Kim Jongin stands in front of them.

‘Eun Bi, you okay?’, the tall handsome celebrity bends down, his hands automatically holding her up as he looks down on her worriedly.

‘I’m fine’, she murmurs back, trying to regain her natural stature of calmness, but there’s still a quivering in her voice. Kai looks up, staring at the group of girls, looking down at one of the girl’s hand where her phone rested, a picture of him clearly printed on her phone case.

‘Are you a fan?’, he asks, not getting a verbal response but a unison of nodding heads greeted him, Eun Bi rolling her eyes as she watches the girls become silent and submission over the presence of Kai, ‘Well, I’d like to informally cut you off my fandom’

‘Huh?’, they all stare at each other before turning back to look at Kai.

‘I don’t condone bullying’, Kai points out, his fingers pointing at all of them, ‘And this bitchiness is something I don’t want my name or reputation to be part of. So, if you can kindly retract yourself from my name and fandom, that would be awesome’, Kai bows to them as respectfully as he can, but his cutting edge and piercing voice was enough of an indication of his anger towards them, one of the girls in the back being blown to tears at the uncomfortable interaction she was having with her favourite artist, ‘Come on Eun Bi, we should get going’, Kai almost had to drag Eun Bi out of the school the pair walking down the flight of stairs, Kai’s hands still resting on her shoulders.

Once they make it down the main road, Eun Bi is finally brought back to her sense, pushing Kai away from her the moment she sees Kai’s reflection on the tinted window glass of a Porsche car.

‘Get off me’

‘Why don’t I drive you to my place’

‘Why the fuck would I agree to go inside a stranger’s house?’, Kai looks at Eun Bi, raising an eyebrow at her statement.

‘Because your brother is going to be there in about a couple of hours’

‘My brother? What is Kyunggie doing in your apartment?’, she asks sternly the moment Kyungsoo is mentioned by Kai.

‘My manager accidentally hired him to sort out my sasaeng situation’, Kai explains, unlocking the doors to his car, putting back the files of the plan he was planning to present to the Principal today, but since it wasn’t an official meeting, he can just quickly cancel it.

‘Kyunggie has to deal with the crazies that obsess over you? Are you trying to rub it into his face even more?’, Eun Bi grimaced in disgust, folding her arms across her chest, ‘You really are the worst’

‘Do you want a ride or not? I suspect you haven’t seen your brother in a while’, two weeks to be exact, Eun Bi didn’t say anything, but she did start walking around the car, stopping over where the front passenger seat is an opening the door, Kai shaking his head at the teenage girl’s actions.

It seems like Eun Bi had grown up, but very little had changed.
Baekhyun wraps himself in his blanket, feeling his nose clog up, even more, his eyes stinging. He had never been sick in a long time before, so waking up with a dry as sand throat and a headache which might as well be a fucking bash in the head every time he turns. He felt guilty having to call in sick so last minute, his students probably being stuck with an unresponsive substitute, but after throwing up in the morning, he knew he wasn’t going to be fit enough to teach a bunch of teenagers for six hours straight.

The whole day has consisted of him just laying in bed, dragging himself and his blanket to and from the bathroom and drinking water and only eating an apple. He felt his stomach rumble, begging for Baekhyun to eat something other than a piece of fruit. But his head was hanging onto him, warning him that if he gets up and remotely stands up for a minute, he would be throwing up all his organs out.

He hears a knock on his door, his eyes looking on the small alarm clock by his bedside table which read that the afternoon had slowly turned to evening.

That must be Chanyeol.

Baekhyun tries his best to reach his hand out for his phone which was charging, pulling it out of the plug and quickly looking ahead to find a new saved number on his phone.

_Can’t come to the door. Sick right now._

He quickly sent him a text before throwing the phone back onto the desk, closing his eyes and hugging his spare pillow, going back to sleep, feeling himself feel more tired the more he gives him to the drowsiness of his illness.

He is awakened suddenly by the sudden stream of aroma hitting his nose, his eyes fluttering open. He didn’t know how long he’d been asleep for, only just looking around to find himself in a rather dark room, although he still saw flashes of orange outside his window, which means he’d only been sleeping for a couple of hours.

He tries to stand, only to be reminded that his headache was still being a bitch, sneezing into his tissue, a glowing substance coming out of him which makes him shiver in disgust.

He looks down to find that his skin was glowing green like he’s just turned into a Hulk – or a light stick – whining at how his skin would turn a different colour whenever he as sick.

‘Do I really have to fucking glow?’, Baekhyun complains to himself, reaching out for the box of tissue as he tries to wipe his sweat from his face. He smells the delicious aroma once more, making him finally look up to his open door, hearing a few cluttering pans and a lot of noise now that he’s finally got a few of his senses back.

‘Hello?’, he calls out to whoever was inside his apartment. He should be much more scared than this, but he concluded that if a murdering psychopath was going to murder him, they wouldn’t cook something delicious first, ‘Who’s there?’, he asks again, his voice croaky and barely audible since he was having such a hard time yelling.

‘Baekhyun?’, he hears a voice calling back to him. He forces himself to try and lift up his head, looking out to see who the stomping feet belonged to.

‘Chanyeol?’, he calls out in surprise as he sees the tall giant standing in front of his door with a
towel resting on his shoulder, ‘What are you- How did you even get in here?’

‘Your lock screen has an emergency code’, Chanyeol explains, walking closer, bending to his knees by the side of Baekhyun’s bed, his hand reaching out to feel the intense heat of Baekhyun’s skin, his green glow reflecting onto his.

‘How do you know my passcode?’, Baekhyun groans out, feeling a slight sensation at the feeling of Chanyeol’s rather cold and damp hands – he was probably washing something – closing his eyes again, trying to relax.

‘Kyungsoo told me’

‘Oh’, Baekhyun whispers out, trying to fix his messy hair out of the way.

‘Have you eaten?’

‘Yeah…’

‘What did you eat?’

‘An apple’

‘I thought so’, Chanyeol whispers to himself, getting up and wiping his hands on the towel, ‘Wait here one second’, and with that, Chanyeol leaves a sick Baekhyun alone, his green glow saturating into neon as he feels his dry lips press together, in need of some form of hydration.

He reaches out to grab his half-empty bottle of water, downing it in one go and even spilling some on his sheets.

‘Can you sit up?’, Chanyeol’s voice returns so suddenly, Baekhyun’s eyes subconsciously gaze on the tall man walking in with a bowl of something which smells so nice his stomach making whale noises.

‘I… Don’t think I can’, Baekhyun whines, his voice high pitched as he feels himself turn into a kid being instructed by his mother as Chanyeol lays the bowl of samgyetang on the bedside table, dragging a chair to sit beside Baekhyun’s bed, his arms already holding onto Baekhyun’s arms, helping him gain some form of strength to sit up, his head leaning on the bedpost.

‘Shh, don’t worry’, Chanyeol whispers, stroking Baekhyun’s hair out of the way, trying to get him to look at him, ‘Just open your mouth’, he directs Baekhyun, picking up the spoon himself, feeding Baekhyun the samgyetang he made himself, still hot, so he blows the steam off, waiting for it to cool down for a moment before resting it on Baekhyun’s lips, the latter swallowing it in one go, his stomach growling again once something other than an apple is finally in his digestion.

‘God, that’s so good’, Baekhyun sighs in relief, feeling the taste of ginseng and jujube, the sweet rice along with the chicken and warm broth making him feel relaxed.

‘Thanks, I cooked it myself’, Chanyeol playfully points out, making Baekhyun chuckle at the comment, Chanyeol blowing on the spoon and resting it on Baekhyun’s lips again.

‘How’d you get so good at cooking?’, Baekhyun whispers, gaining a bit more strength now that he’s finally eating a proper meal, looking at Chanyeol who continues to spoon feed him without so much as a complaint.

‘I get bored easily. I never really had anyone I hanged out with that much’, Chanyeol chuckles to
himself, looking down at the bowl of chicken broth, ‘So, my cooking went from well to fucking stellar. I’ve got more up my sleeves you know’

‘You wouldn’t have been so lonely if you had stayed here’, Baekhyun whispers, making Chanyeol freeze mid-motion, the spoon still resting on Baekhyun’s lips, but it stayed there one Baekhyun finished the broth, the latter closing his eyes, ‘Maybe I wouldn’t have been as lonely too’

Chanyeol knew that Baekhyun was too sick to understand what he was saying, especially when the sweat on his forehead was still beading out despite the cold air of the evening coming in from his open window. He looks down, avoiding whatever eye contact Baekhyun could muster at this situation, silent in finishing his task in feeding Baekhyun, not saying anything nor responding.

‘I couldn’t stop you anyway. You’re such a stubborn prick sometimes’, Baekhyun leans his head further back on the bedpost, feeling his skin warm up, even more, the green glow turning into an indigo colour, ‘Sometimes I wish I did… But then it’ll remind me that…’, Baekhyun closes his eyes, not finishing his sentence as he feels himself give in to the sleepiness again, leaving Chanyeol by himself with a half-empty bowl, the spoon resting on the rim, Chanyeol’s eyes closing as he sighs.

‘It’ll remind me that I would always have to reach out to you. Always have to… Be the one… Reaching’, the rest were just mumbles, Baekhyun talking nonsense in his sleep, his glowing skin dimming down to a soft glow of light blue, barely visible now that he had calmed down, Chanyeol noticing the same colour which Baekhyun would exert whenever he felt some form of sadness.

Kyungsso knocks on Kai’s door, typing on his phone for Suho to go ahead home without him since he’s still in Gangnam, rolling his eyes when Suho sent him a sad emoji of a crying bear.

‘Kyungsoo’

‘I’m here to check on your apartment’, he announces himself monotonously, not even greeting Kai once the door is opened, pushing past him to look around, taking a step back when he spots Eun Bi eating a bowl of ice cream in the living room, watching TV.

‘Kyunggie!’

‘Eun Bi? What the hell are you doing here?’, Kyungsso points out, watching how his little sister jumps up at the sight of him, leaving the bowl of ice cream on the coffee table and running up to him.

‘Kai picked me up after school’

‘And why?’, he turns to looks at Kai who just shrugs, walking past the pair of sibling and sitting down on the sofa, picking his own bowl of ice cream, ‘Eun Bi, why are you here?’

‘Because Kai told me you would be here’

‘Eun Bi’, Kyungsso rolls his eyes, you should be at home, with mum and dad doing homework or hanging out with your friends.

‘He said I could wait for you here’, Eun Bi defends herself, picking up her backpack, her school shirt crinkled from sitting down on the sofa for hours, ‘Thanks again, Kai’, she calls out, still an edge of coldness in her tone, but her gratefulness was still there.
‘No problem’, Kai calls over, leaving the two of them alone, Eun Bi sitting on the kitchen dining table as she waits for Kyungsoo to quickly check around the apartment, looking over the CCTV footage, fast forwarding to when Eun Bi walked into the apartment, throwing her stuff everywhere like this is her home, leaving her jacket on the floor and seeing Kai make something for her only for her to take a bite and leave it half finished.

‘I am so sorry about this stupid idiot’. Kyungsoo turns to apologise to the celebrity after seeing Eun Bi’s actions in the space of three minutes, ‘I’m going to kill her…’

‘Don’t worry about it. She’s a teenager’, Kai points out, laughing at the way Kyungsoo gave Eun Bi a warning glare, ‘You can’t say we weren’t like that’

‘Oh yes I can’, Kyungsoo points out, ‘I was never like this’, he turns around, closing the drawers and looking around one more time, rechecking the positions of the windows and alignment of furniture before he gives Kai a bow, Eun Bi rolling her eyes.

‘You take your job too seriously’

‘And you are wreaking havoc in a celebrity’s house’, Kyungsoo bites back, hitting the back of her head, ‘Watch when we get to my car, you are going to-’

‘Hey, Kyungsoo’, Kai points out, shocking both Eun Bi and Kyungsoo who had never heard Kai say his real name before, the police officer turning back to spot Kai standing up, opening the fridge from his kitchen, ‘Have this’, he reaches out his hand and hands Kyungsoo a container, small and resting on his hand.

‘Um, no thank you, I have-’

‘Just take it’, Kai urges on, not giving Kyungsoo a chance to reject it even further, ‘It’s my speciality’

‘Oh’, and with that, the pair awkwardly part ways, Kai walking back to his living room whereas Eun Bi drags Kyungsoo away, closing the door as she jogs out of the hallway of the fanciest apartment block she’s ever been in, humming a soft song about first loves and heartbreaks.

By the time they got to the car, Kyungsoo’s curiosity has already reaches its peak, opening the container lid before starting the engine, looking down to see a messy yet well made bento box, a section filled with rice the shape of a really demented and maybe even demonic bear, his eyes and mouth made of badly cut seaweed, the rice bear sleeping with a blanket of yellow – and slightly burnt at the edges – omelette along with octopus-shaped hotdogs and spam at the side.

‘What the fuck is that?’, Eun Bi looks over at whatever her brother was randomly smiling at the opened box.’

‘Nothing’

‘If it’s nothing, the start driving already’

‘I am not afraid to leave you in the sidewalk by yourself’
still didn’t know how he was going to start when the campaign in sealed, but he had hoped that by the time he got everyone on board, maybe his patient will be too.

‘You know, I would suspect a doctor would know when to stop overworking’, he hears a knock on his door, his eyes lifting up from his mountains of paper, seeing Xiumin arriving at his office with a bag of what can only be known as his own cooking which Lay seems t adore.

‘Oh, please tell me you’ve made some grilled chicken’

‘Of course, I have’, Xiumin responds, laughing when Lay claps his hand, cheering as Xiumin laid down the plastic, Lay reaching out for the container of food.

‘I’ve been dying for some meat in my system’, Lay whines to Xiumin, seeing the man laughing as he sits down.

‘And what are you doing now that got Luhan complaining to us over the phone about?’, Xiumin points out, raising his brow accusingly over Lay, the busy doctor stuffing his face with the food.

‘A new proposition’

‘About what?’

‘Finding a cure for Imperium Sclerosis’

‘Damn. That’s a big proposition’

‘I know, which is why I have to nail it right’, Xiumin follows Lay’s gaze as the doctor closes his case files, a familiar name printed in the bold black text.

‘So, you know about Chanyeol too?’, he asks, which sends Lay back, the doctor looking at Xiumin like he’d just grown another head right in front of him.

‘You… Know?’

‘About the fire-breathing flaming thing? Yeah’, Xiumin nonchalantly shrugs like it was nothing, Lay putting down the fork in his hand as he puts his focus on Xiumin.

‘How did you know? Did he tell you?’

‘No… I sort of just… Saw’

‘Saw? As in… You witnessed one of his episodes?’, Lay’s voice was more than focused, he was concentrated, ‘And what did you see?’

‘A hot mess, that’s what I saw… What’s so important about it anyway? It’s not like Chanyeol would ever explain to me what the fuck is going on, so I just leave him be’, Lay ruffles his hair in frustration, after getting little to no information from Xiumin except the things that are already written in Chanyeol’s files.

‘I really do need to observe him, but I seriously don’t know where to start with that guy. He’s so stubborn sometimes’

‘I know right’, Xiumin nods his head in agreement, ‘Such a dick sometimes’

‘I really do need him to participate in my research…’, Xiumin noticed the desperation hinted in Lay’s eyes as he looks down, his hands clenching.
‘How comes?’

‘I don’t know… I just’, Lay sighs in utter embarrassment. As a doctor, he should never really call his hunch since it crosses the fine line of unprofessionalism, but he was getting desperate, ‘I just have this odd feeling that maybe Chanyeol might have something to do with the cure’
Chen sits down with his brother for brunch, his older brother visiting Korea for the weekend before he goes back to America. His brother has been visiting him in fragmented years, being absent from his life every couple of years before returning again for a few moments. It has definitely put a strain in their relationship, but not as much as people would think since once they do meet up, it’s like they’re still four and twelve-year-olds playing around and making fun of each other.
‘So, how’s the company’

‘In deep shit since dad keeps announcing that he’s retiring’

‘Jesus, that old man doesn’t quit, doesn’t he?’, his older brother laughs, sipping his latte and watching Chen eat his grilled sandwich, wearing casual clothes and not looking at all like a serious CEO.

‘Can’t blame him, He never wanted the job in the first place’, Chen comments, munching on the salad, his brother looking out at the patio garden like café they were sitting on, feeling the sun shining warmly on his skin.

‘He should’ve followed me and ran off’, his whispers, Chen rolling his eyes as he stares at his brother.

‘If he had the guts’, Chen chuckles, ‘I guess that’s why dad is always jealous of you’, Chen knew since he was little that their family business has always been important, to everyone, which is why he decided to take up the role his brother and barely his father could ever do, which turned out for the best since he didn’t know where he would be without his company and over the years, the company has become to rely more and more on their new trusted CEO, one who actually knows and likes what the fuck they’re doing.

‘So, where’s Chanyeol? Is he still in hiding?’, Jongdeok eyes Chen, seeing his brother sigh for a moment before continuing to eat.

‘Yeah, he’s back in Korea’

‘Oh? That’s good’. Jongdeok beams, noticing his little brother’s gaze, ‘It sounds good but you don’t look happy about it’

‘It’s because I’m not’

‘That’s clearly a lie’, Jongdeok laughs, setting his cup back down, straightening his back and observing the way his little brother tried to avoid the conversation, like a little kid, ‘You must have at least been happy to see him again’

‘It’s not that I’m not glad that he’s doing fine… It’s just… Things have changed, you know?’, Chen explains, combing his hair back and turning his gaze to focus on a mother adjusting the pram of her baby, ‘It’s been years since we last spoken and… I don’t think we’ll ever be the same’

‘Are you telling me that the both of you are going to be like us two?’, Jongdeok asks, the flash in Chen’s eyes being enough signal for him to recognise, ‘Look, we may have had a rough patch, but look at us, we’re still brothers. We’re still here. I could still tell you everything without feeling awkward or estranged’

‘But it’s not the same’

‘Of course, it’s not. But at this point, it’s better than nothing’
Xiumin sits inside his studio, writing, writing, writing. He’s had hours of sessions with composers, playwrights, producers and they all seem eager to know what the Xiumin has up his sleeves, something with the songwriter has been struggling to focus on since the pressure became more unbearable.

Due to the musical in need of some music, most of the script had barely been finalised, everyone waiting for him to release the lyrics he’s been working on for months on end. He looks over the basics of the script, reading over the characters, again and again, analysing and rereading the dialogue and stage directions.

‘A boy in need of understanding’, he whispers to himself, focusing his main muse on the male character, a famous dancer who falls in love with a Prince during his preparation for the Grand Royale performance for the Crown Prince’s coming of age.

Xiumin looks over the compositional notes his partner and writing team had come up with, the gaps in notion in need of words to finalise the finishing touches of the masterpiece, Xiumin’s hands reaching out for his pen, s few words standing out in his mind, his fingers interweaving each of them to form sentences, lines of verse with connects together in soft melodies, melancholy and sweet.

‘Leave me alone Lay’, Chanyeol growls as he tries to push past the doctor with baby Jia in a pram, Chanyeol too busy carrying his groceries to entertain the doctor who has been calling him every day nonstop.

‘I just wanted to see if you were free to hang out with Jia. She’s missed you’

‘Don’t lie to me’, Chanyeol rolls his eyes, ‘I can’t believe you’re using Jia as a pawn’

‘I am not!’, Lay yells, strolling the pram out of the store, still trailing behind the tall giant, ‘And even if I was, I’ll be killing two birds with one stone because she really wants to see you’, Lay points out, and just like it was staged, baby Jia reaches out her hand in an attempt to gain attention from her giant friend, gurgling nonsense.

‘I am not going to fall for that’, Chanyeol looks down, trying hard not to fight his urge to pick up Jia and hold her in his arms right now.

‘Now you’re just being cruel’, Lay points seeing the sad expression of his daughter once she finds out that her elf friend was not going to pick her up, her face scrunching up, preparing to cry – one of that ugly baby crying that is louder than a police siren.

‘Okay, okay, fine’, Chanyeol gives in, sliding the grocery bags to his arms, freeing his hands so he’s able to pick up Jia, bending down and grabbing hold of her before she turns off and start crying, Jia instantly smiling once she feels the protective hold of Chanyeol’s hands around her, ‘I’m surprised you still let me hold her’

‘As if you’d actually let yourself explode in front of her’, Lay points out, a statement which shouldn’t make Chanyeol feel better, but once he looks up to see Lay’s relax stature, he felt more secure, surer that he would never hurt anyone, not when Lay trusts him.
‘What do you think her powers will be?’, Chanyeol asks once the pair starts to walk, Lay strolling an empty pram, walking side by side with Chanyeol.

‘Children don’t start showing signs of powers until they’re at least three, so I have no idea’, Lay replies, the pair turning a corner. ‘Although there are some cases in which children might show it earlier, it’ll be a weak sign their brains have just started to create the hormones used to control whatever powers they have on their DNAs so it’s still weak’

‘Thanks for the scientific explanation that I totally didn’t ask for’, Chanyeol murmurs, chuckling when Lay gave him a glare, ‘What? I didn’t ask for a biology lesson’

‘Were you even listening to classes in school?’

‘Enough to pass it’

‘You are just…’, Lay sighs, shaking his head in amazement, ‘Well… I mean… I can only imagine what you were like in high school during the months I was actually there to witness it’

‘That was pretty much me throughout the four years, to be honest’, Chanyeol responds, laughing when Lay sort of gives him a look, half of the amazement yet half of the wonder how he could have passed high school and got into University.

‘Anyway, I’m guessing maybe time control, that’ll be cool’

‘What for?’

‘Jia’, Chanyeol gestures his eyebrows on the little baby sucking her thumb, ‘You adopted her right? Which means her parents would’ve had other powers? Right?’, Chanyeol comments, Lay nodding his head and squeezing Jia’s cheeks.

‘Yeah. But I didn’t talk with her mother, so I have no idea what her powers will be’

‘Isn’t it written in her paperwork?’

‘No, it’s a breach of privacy for the mother. She signed to be anonymous. If she writes down her powers, she’ll be giving a hint of who she is’

‘Ah. What if one day she shows up at your doorstep soap opera style? You know, wanting to take Jia back and be a mother she never could kind of drama?’, Chanyeol asks, his mind filling in with the number of dramas and soap operas he’d been watching over the years, Lay laughing at him.

‘Then she’ll have to convince Jia, not me or Luhan’, Chanyeol looks down on Jia, seeing the cute little girl’s eyes sparkle whenever she looks up, her odd shade of frozen blue eyes differing from Lay or Luhan’s brown orbs, her fair skin making her look foreign than she is Korean.

‘Maybe she might be frost, like Xiumin’, Chanyeol comments, still intrigued at the beautiful baby and her future powers, already having a solid list of what she might be capable in the future of doing.

‘Why do you say that?’

‘She has piercing blue eyes’
‘You want me to… Be part of the cast crew?’

‘What we need is in your opinion to who we’re going to give the roles to. This is a big production. We have you, a critically acclaimed and best songwriter of the year for two years running, Kang Daniel as our well known and national treasure of a playwright and a production team which has done over 100 plays. We need to get the casting for this perfect’

‘And what’s that got to do with me? How am I supposed to know who’s good for the part? I only write the songs’, Xiumin points out, turning the page of his team’s files, looking down at the list of auditionees waiting for their turn on the stage, from rookies to already established musical actors.

‘We know exactly how you feel whenever an actor sings your song. You always have that look whenever you hear them sing it right’

‘And what look do I give?’

‘Like when Gandalf looks at Frodo’

‘What great observations you have of me’, Xiumin rolls his eyes as the analogy, giving the files back and standing up from his chair, ‘Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have somewhere I need to be’, he announces before opening the door and walking himself out of the building, his back behind his back and his phone already in his hands, ready to call his husband to pick him up from his meeting.

‘Wait!’, his manager calls after him, forcing him to a stop, turning around to find the middle-aged man reaching his hand out with the file still in it, ‘At least look at some of them’, he breathes out, thrusting it into his hands, ‘Just look and give me some form of feedback’

‘Ergh, fine’, Xiumin whines, grabbing hold of the files, ‘But I’m only giving one worded answers’, he warns his manager, turning back around to the exit, looking down on his phone and sending a quick message for Chen to pick him up.

Walking outside, the warmth of the sun touching his skin, he puts his phone to his back pocket, not wanting to look at the files but since he had a few minutes of free time, he opens it on a random page, looking at different actors, some faces familiar, other fresh. It didn’t phase him which actors would be cast since he’d never been part of a casting crew before, so he flicked past the different resumes from each of the aspiring actors and actresses, stumbling upon the last page of the file, his eyes landing on a headshot photo that looked familiar – so familiar since he was the one who took it. A photo taken from his old iPhone X, he sees Kim Jongin’s headshot, one with his messy hair and an undercut done by himself, his eyes practically charcoaled since Kyungsoo tried to make him look mysterious and cool but finding out that putting eyeliner was harder than it looks. He remembered taking about one hundred photos that day. This was the only one which looked remotely okay.

‘The bastard still uses it’, Xiumin whispers to himself, laughing as he reads Kai’s resume, listing the different experiences he’s had and why he should be given the part of the main lead. He reads through the endless lists of movies and plays he’s been, seeing movies that broke Korean box office, dramas which had reached the top of ratings and Musicals which many still talk about till this day.

But at the end of it, he sees a small play that was made approximately eight years ago, a small
indie play with little to no production compared to his other works. It is listed that he played tree number seven.

Name: Kim Jongin

Age: 28 years old

Occupation: singer, actor, dancer, songwriter, model

Experiences: acted in thirteen movies, released seven albums, played in three musicals, performed in five ballets.

Personal Accomplishment: My ability to dance as a tree without falling off the thick costume.

Xiumin starts laughing, being reminded of the time he had to hold his laughter at the sight of Kai in thick long brown cardboard type costume, with fake leaves sprouting out of his sides, blocking his view whilst he had to dance a number of scores throughout the movie.

‘You know, you could’ve warned me about giving Chanyeol my emergency code’

‘If I can have it, why can’t he’, Kyungsoo points out, laughing when he sees Baekhyun give him a look whilst they sit down in Baekhyun’s office, going over Eun Bi’s alarmingly low graded work, one which set Baekhyun back since Eun Bi may be annoying, but she was as smart and hardworking as Kyungsoo was back then, so this work was more worrying than disappointing,

‘Me and Chanyeol hate each other’

‘No, you don’t’, Kyungsoo scuffs, laughing at Baekhyun’s failed attempt to trick him into thinking that he was even remotely capable of hating Chanyeol, ‘I keep in contact with Chanyeol more than you’d think and I already know that he cooks for you every day… In your apartment’, Kyungsoo raises his eyebrow playfully at the last bit, Baekhyun hitting him on the arm.

‘Shut up’

‘Seriously. Why did you even let him in your apartment? Didn’t you say you’d set him on fire last time you two spoke?’

‘I wasn’t planning it’

‘Of course, not’, Kyungsoo points out, ‘Now, what about my sister are you worried about?’, Kyungsoo changes the subject before Baekhyun blinds him.

‘Oh’, Baekhyun is brought back from their small argument, bringing out Eun Bi’s essay, ‘It’s been her behaviour recently’
‘If she’s still trying to set me up with you, just tell me and I’ll kick her ass again’, Kyungsoo was preparing for the same complaints he would always get from Baekhyun from time to time, the teacher awkwardly mentioning the number of times Eun Bi would constantly drive him insane with the mention of their more than uncomfortable past.

‘No, it’s not that’, Baekhyun waves that subject away, ‘It’s this’, he shows the police officer Eun Bi’s paper with a red mark with her grade, a big fat F at the right side.

‘Shit, she failed?’

‘It’s not just that’, Baekhyun sighs, ‘This is the first time she’s given such a poor piece of work. It’s not because she didn’t study or she wasn’t paying attention’

‘So… What do you think is the cause of this?’, Kyungsoo starts to worry the moment he sees the way Baekhyun looks around, scratching his neck and overall looking uncomfortable at talking to him. Baekhyun was never like this, even after their break-up, even though they both tried to ignore and avoid each other for some time, it still wasn’t enough to put Baekhyun in a mood that he couldn’t hold a sentence.

‘Well, she’s been asking me to drop her to all of her lessons lately’

‘Drop her off? As in… Walking her around the school?’, Kyungsoo asks, quite taken back from the sudden information, ‘Is she… Being bullied?!’

‘I don’t know’, Baekhyun replies, ‘I can’t confirm anything since I’ve never personally witnessed anything happen, but… I don’t know… She hasn’t been acting herself all that much nowadays so… I thought… Maybe?’

‘Fucking hell, this place never changes’, Kyungsoo kisses his teeth, leaning back in his chair, clenching his fist, ‘Fucking dump’

‘It’s not the school’s fault’

‘Don’t fucking start with that’

‘It’s not…. As long as there are kids around here, bullying generally never stops’

‘It’s your fucking job to make it stop!’

‘I’m not their parent! What they get taught and influenced outside my lessons are none of my business!’, Baekhyun defends himself, watching as Kyungsoo starts to lose his temper, the pen in Kyungsoo’s hands bending like it was a piece of paper. Kyungsoo couldn’t argue anymore, and even if he could, he knows that it wasn’t going to help anyone.

‘I witness my best friend go through hell because of those twats, I’m not letting my sister experience that too’, Kyungsoo mutters to himself, combing his hair back as he stands up, giving Eun Bi’s essay back to Baekhyun, ‘Thanks for informing me about this Baekhyun’

‘What are you going to do about it?’, Baekhyun asks curiously, looking up to find that Kyungsoo was still pissed.

‘Something’, is all Baekhyun gets from the angry police officer, seeing Kyungsoo walking out of his office, stomping on the floor and causing a small earthquake throughout the whole school building, everyone feeling the soft shaking of the ground.
‘You need to hang out with your brother more often. He misses you’

‘He’s seven, I can’t just take him to my workplace’, Sehun whines to his mother over the phone, walking out of his car, closing the door and locking it before walking in a cul-de-sac house, bigger than the old house he spent his childhood in, the patio decorated with all kinds of flowers and plants, a small child’s car parked at the front along with the curtains of the front windows being opened. He still has the keys his parents gave him to their house when he needed a place to crash when his apartment was being renovated, unlocking the door, his heels stepping on the wooden floors indicating everyone in the house that he’d arrived.

‘Sehunnie!’, a shriek crosses across the living room as he sees a short kid running up to him, his skin darker than his but his facial features were somewhat the same but a little different. They shared the same small lips and the same long nose, but his eyes were bigger and his face shape was a little rounder.

‘What’s the up little fella’, Sehun embraces his little brother as soon as he feels his tiny skinny arms around his waist, ‘You’ve grown, haven’t you?’, he smiles down, ruffling his hair as he bends down to the same level as him.

‘Yeah! By ten centimetres! Can you believe it?!’, he shrieks again, not caring about other people’s hearing since he was super excited to see his brother again, ‘One day I’ll be as tall as you!’

‘Ha ha, keep dreaming’, Sehun jokes to his brother, holding his hands as they walk together inside the living room, ‘Guys, I’m here’

‘Darling!’, his mother is the first to greet him, her arms already out and hugging her older son, the tight embrace knocking the winds in his lungs, ‘How have you been honey? It’s been such a long time since you visited’

‘Yeah! You’re so mean for not visiting me!’

‘I’ve got work Intak, I can’t visit you all the time’, Sehun looks down on his brother, seeing the way his brother had to arch his head up eye just so he can look at him.

‘Hey! Sehun! You there?!’, his dad shouts from the living room, probably making dinner since he can already smell the food from here.

‘Yeah! I’m here!’, he shouts back, the three of them walking into the kitchen to find that his dad has already finished the cooking and was just finishing up setting the dining table, ‘How have you been, dad?’, he asks, looking down at the amazing homemade food he’s been craving for a while now.

‘It’s been alright. How about you? How’s your case going?’, his dad looks up, smiling and showing evidence of his age with the crinkles at the corner of his eyes when he smiled.

‘It’s been going good, a little slow, but alright’

‘That’s my boy’
‘How’s everything else honey? Anything interesting happening in your life?’, his mother carries on the questionings, sitting down on the table with Intak by her side, her younger son sitting on the chair, his little legs dangling, the boy waiting for Sehun to sit next to him.

‘Nothing that interesting. Just a few meetings in Japan and one in Thailand’, Sehun goes on to list what he did in a monotone voice, not really interested in making himself sound interesting.

‘How about Suho. How is he?’, his mother, who knows all, raises an eyebrow at him when he just sighs, ‘Are you guys not on good terms again? Have you broken up?’

‘No, we haven’t’

‘Then why do you look sad?’

‘I don’t know. It’s been a weird week, that’s all’, Sehun sighs, sitting down to face Intak instead. His little brother pouting when he sees that Sehun chose not to sit next to him.

‘Weird? How comes?’, his dad comes over, placing the last dish which was just fried chicken, sitting down next to Sehun and taking off his oven gloves.

‘He’s been acting weird’, Sehun didn’t know whether he should tell his family about his odd feeling since he didn’t even think it’s a feeling he should be having, ‘I just… There was this one night when we were supposed to meet up but he stood me up… I mean, we’ve been going out for a year now and he’d never stood me up before…’

‘He’s a Chief Police Sehunnie. I’m sure he must have had an emergency call somewhere’

‘That’s the thing. When I asked, he just told me he had family gatherings to attend to… I know his family. There’s no such thing as last-minute gathering… If he was going to one, he would’ve been informed at least a week before the day…’

‘Maybe it’s a family emergency thing’, his dad pats his back, giving him a reassuring smile, ‘Don’t think too much about it. Suho is a trustworthy person, we all know that’.

Which is exactly why Sehun is feeling shitty about thinking oddly about Suho’s excuse. He should have more trust in Suho, after all, they’ve known each other since forever and even after years, Suho hasn’t changed all that much.

Suho looks out the window of the passenger seat, observing the city lights and bright lights from the billboards above them. It’s been a while since Suho can relax in the passenger seat instead of having to drive himself back home with his eyes barely having the energy to stay open and his muscles strained from sitting down for too long.

‘Thanks for driving me home’, Suho finally turns back to the driver’s seat, seeing Kris turn to smile at him, his earrings dangling with each movement, his sleeveless arm decorated in tattoos, some he even participated in choosing and new ones he had since they separated.

‘No problem. We were in the same area anyway’, Kris points out, nonchalantly driving with one
hand whilst the other resting on his thigh, mimicking the soft beat of the song playing on the radio in forms of tapping, humming the melody which played around the car.

‘What were you doing in the police station anyway?’, Suho asks, confused as to why Kris was just about to walk in the station as soon as he walked out of his office with his bag on his side, ‘You there to turn yourself in for something?’

‘No, I was there to see you’, Suho flinches away at Kris’s reply, the latter laughing at the way Suho looked down at his lap, awkwardly picking at his nails. Right. Suho was supposed to be aware of Kris’s intent. The latter had made it very clear since last week when they went dinner together. He suddenly felt weird accepting Kris’s offer for a ride home.

‘Kris… I’

‘Sorry. That made you uncomfortable didn’t it?’, Kris laughs, swerving the car to turn a corner, ‘I’ll lay off a bit’

‘You should. I’m taken’, Suho presses on, with a lot more confidence than he’d expected, sounding more arrogant than she should’ve.

‘Yeah. Who’s the guy by the way? Is it a work colleague?’, Kris asks, turning another corner until they’re finally driving down Suho’s neighbourhood, near his apartment, Kris turns to see Suho giving him a warning look for asking too many pressing questions, ‘I mean… You know, just curious… Just for… Research purposes’, Kris tries to shrug off his intense curiosity, Suho giving him the benefit of the doubt and ignoring the stern gaze the taller was giving him.

‘Sehun’

‘The kid you used to date in high school?’, Kris blurts out, laughing to himself before stopping once he received the millionth glare Suho has given him, ‘I mean… That lawyer kid’

‘Yes. The lawyer kid’, Suho accepts the absurdity of the situation, especially given the fact that he wasted his and Kris’s first date trash talking the shit out of Sehun, but that was ages ago and time and perspective changes.

‘What did he do to win you back? Made you a proposal?’, Kris jokes, parking at the side of the road where Suho’s apartment block was.

‘Don’t make fun out of him. He’s matured over the years’, Suho points out like a proud mother, which makes Kris laugh even more over the fact that Suho was willing to gush over the boy.

‘Sure’, Kris shakes his head whilst still laughing, tapping a beat on his stirring wheel. Suho didn’t leave just yet, which confused him since he just continued to stare at Kris.

‘So, are you going to let me off?’

‘Babe, I unlocked the door five minutes ago’, Kris chuckles, Suho blushing in embarrassment when he turns around and opens the door successfully.

‘Oh… Right…’

‘You’re still so ditsy, it’s so cute’, Kris points out, which didn’t help since it just forced Suho to lean back and land on the door which he forgot was wide open due to opening it, falling out of the car, his hand grazing the cold pavement beneath him.
‘Ow, motherfucker’, Suho whines, standing up and quickly dusting himself off, his back facing Kris since he didn’t have the confidence to look at him, not after he just performed the worst slapstick comedy known to man.

‘Jesus Christ Suho’, he hears the loud roaring of Kris’s laugh along with his clapping, ‘I didn’t think I still had it in me to make you so flustered’

‘I wasn’t flustered’, Suho spins around, ‘I’m just clumsy’

‘Sure, you are’

‘Now if you don’t mind, I’m going to call my boyfriend’, Suho stresses the last word, almost too much as he whips out his phone and dials Sehun’s number.

‘Tell him I said hi’, is the last thing Kris says to him before giving him a wink and closing the car doors, the engines roaring back to life and Suho watching the four-wheel drive start to get smaller as it reaches the end of the street, making a left turn and out of his gaze.

Suho sighs, putting down his phone which was in fact still locked, walking to his apartment with his head hung low and internally killing himself twice already for acting like a total idiot right in front of Kris. And for what? Why did he feel like such a high schooler whenever Kris was around him all of a sudden?

Baekhyun walks inside of his apartment, a mask to cover his snotty face since he was forced to go back to school after only having a day off, sneezing his way through his lessons. His room is dark and empty, cold seven though it’s the start of summer.

He flicks the switch open, dropping his bag on the floor and walking into his kitchen, opening the fridge to grab himself some water. For once, he found the silence of the apartment overbearing, yet he couldn’t pinpoint why. He had always been used to the silence followed whenever he entered his apartment, clicking his fingers so the music from his player starts, looking around trying to find something to eat for dinner before he gives up and just grabs a fruit and goes to bed for the day.

Chanyeol had told him that he won’t be visiting as often since he’d had a week packed with job interviews which he told him he needed to prepare for. Baekhyun didn’t reply to him, just shrugging before closing the door on him. That was three days ago.

He grabs an orange from the fruit bowl before making his way to his room. He stops mid-step when he notices something odd and out of place sitting in his living room coffee table.

There was a cake placed at the centre of the table with the candles shaped as the number 28 placed on it. He walked slowly towards the object, noticing a yellow post-it-note. He curiously picked up the card, opening it to find a familiar handwriting sprawled all over the post-it-note, messy and barely readable.
Baekhyun should probably change his emergency code. But he didn’t let that phase him as he subconsciously smiles at the note with a doodle of a cute cat singing happy birthday with a guitar in his hand.

Happy belated birthday to mochi Byun Baekhyun xx
Chapter End Notes

This was supposed to be uploaded on Baek's birthday and I completely forgot...
‘I don’t suppose you got my message, have you?’

‘No. If I did, I wouldn’t be greeting you shirtless’, Chanyeol raises his brow as he sees Chen standing in front of him in a full suit and looking like he’s just about to buy Samsung right off the bat, whilst he’s in his pyjama shorts, his hair looking like Beetlejuice’s, and still more asleep than he is awake at this point in the morning.

‘Just get out of my way’, Chen blurts out, pushing past Chanyeol and walking inside his house, knowing where to go even with his eyes closed since he’s been here more often than not when they were kids and it seems like nothing has really changed except for a few furniture changes here and there.
‘So, what pleasure do I have of you coming over here at six o’clock in the fucking morning?’, Chanyeol yells, closing the door and following Chen to the kitchen where the CEO grabbed himself a bottle of water, downing it in one go.

‘Shut up and don’t talk’. Chen replies, not really knowing how he himself ended up here. One minute he’s on his way to work, the next he did a U-turn and drove straight into a neighbourhood he hadn’t been in for a long time, ‘Let me breathe, this is a big moment for me’

‘Big moment?’, Chanyeol tilts his head like a lost puppy, ‘Are you and Xiumin getting pregnant?’

‘What?!’, Chen turns his gaze at Chanyeol, ‘No! How– how the fuck are we going to get– you know what… Never mind…’, Chen shakes his head furiously, trying hard not to punch Chanyeol in the face, ‘You’ll never understand…’

‘Understand? Well, how can I when you’ve barged into my house uninvited looking like you’ve met death himself – wait a minute…’, Chanyeol stops his sentence, looking at Chen who was fanning himself, looking down at his phone and quickly texting. There’s that usual anxious expression in his eyes, ‘Has this got anything to do with Minhyuk?’

Chen stood silence, not responding to the tall giant which was enough of an answer as it is.

‘Chen seriously? Are you still shit scared of him?’, Chanyeol looks at the man disbelievingly, shaking his head, ‘C’mon, what’s there to be scared about?’, Chanyeol points out, ‘You’ve got Xiumin has a husband, you’re a CEO and you’re probably richer than him’

‘Wrong’, Chen calls back, ‘He’s richer than me’

‘Oh, boo hoo, what a sad life’, Chanyeol sarcastically responds, folding his arm, ‘Stop trying to make it look like you’re living in poverty’

‘I’m not! I’m just saying that he is richer than me’, which is true, since Minhyuk had decided to stray away from the family’s company after it was announced that Chen was going to be the one taking it, leaving him with only an executive director which was not enough for him. Apparently, you don’t need a conglomerate family to become a top CEO of any company nowadays, in fact, he just needed to work his way to the top as a secretary to become the future CEO of a clothing brand which is more high achieving than Chen’s food product company. At this point, Chen looks absolutely ridiculous next to Minhyuk who had earned his way to the top, whereas everyone else saw Chen as a child with a silver spoon.

‘You know, you can always clap back and say Minhyuk’s company uses cheap labour to produce their goods’, Chanyeol suggests, ‘It’s probably true’

‘It’s not. They’re doing promotional campaign over environmentally friendly manufacturing and fair labour’

‘Shit. How about animal abuse?’

‘Nope, they’re partnering with Animal Aid campaign to raise awareness’

‘Well, I can’t help you with anything’, Chanyeol raises his hand in defeat, walking over to make himself some cereal since it seems unlikely that he’ll be going back to sleep any time soon.

Chen looks down defeatedly. He didn’t even know who called for a meeting, but he had a feeling that his grandparents had something to do with it. Two CEO grandchildren and the one thing on their mind is to most likely connect the two company into one big branch, which only leads them
all back to square fucking one.

Chen and Minhyuk have to fight for the position of CEO again.

Chen doesn’t have the mental strength to do that anymore.

‘I’m fucked’, he whispers to himself, looking down at his watch and fiddling with the straps. He looks up in defeat, watching Chanyeol chewing on his cereal, his mouth full and milk dripping down the side of his mouth, looking like a five-year-old sleepy child.

Unless…

‘Chanyeol!’, Chen screams in the middle of their silence, making Chanyeol flinch and spill his spoonful of cereal on himself, ‘You’re still jobless right?!’

‘Yes, as a matter of fact, I am still at the lowest point of my life, thanks for asking’, Chanyeol responds sarcastically again, wiping his chest with a tissue, trying to pick up the soggy cereal on his lap.

‘Well, how would you like a job at my company?’, Chen offers, tapping his hand on the counter and waiting for Chanyeol’s response.

‘Excuse me?’

‘I’m in need of a new secretary anyway since the other one resigned not too long ago’

‘Don’t I have to have a formal interview? Or I don’t know, at least one of your people to look at my resume?’, Chanyeol questions, abandoning his soggy cereal and looking at Chen.

‘Do you want the job or not?’

‘I… I mean… A job is a job… I can’t be too picky and-’

‘Great, you’re hired’

‘What?!’

Chen pulls out his phone from his pockets, quickly trying something whilst walking out of the kitchen with a dumbfound Chanyeol following him behind.

‘I’ve already texted the management team and they’ll be registering you in as my new employee’

‘This is ridiculous-’

‘Now, I need you to be in my two o’clock meeting today’, Chen informs his new secretary, ‘And I need you to dress formal, we cannot afford to look sleazy in front of Minhyuk. We have to devise a plan to conquer and destroy that bastard once and for all’

‘This is sounding more like Lord of the Rings, let’s kill Saruman…’

‘Chanyeol, shut up’, Chen stops him right there, fixing his tie and combing back his hair, ‘Now, repeat after me, two o’clock sharp, smart suit and a plan’

‘A plan for what?’

‘For beating Minhyuk! Now repeat’
‘Two clock meeting, smart suit and a plan’, Chanyeol obeys Chen before the latter smiles and opens the door.

‘Don’t fail me, secretary’

‘I want a high paying wage for this!’, Chanyeol shouts at Chen before the CEO can disappear in his car, Chanyeol cupping his hands on either side of the corner of his mouth and yelling the request again before closing the door and looking at the clock by the hallway.

He has enough time to get a second sleep.

Kyungsoo looks confused. He looks more than confused as he walks into the station with two-morning coffees to find Suho standing next to a rather tall looking mug with his arm decorated in tattoos, his hair somewhat borderline silver and sunglasses arrogantly resting on his face.

‘Excuse me’, he calls out, pushing past the tall creep and handing Suho his coffee, ‘I didn’t know you did early morning arrests’

‘Oh, Kyungsoo…’, Suho straightens his posture, looking like he just got caught smoking a joint, ‘You remember Kris Wu, right?’

‘Kris… Wu?’, Kyungsoo tilts his head, turning back to look at the tall man who slides down his sunglasses, giving him a small wave, ‘You mean… The underground rapper dude that you dated for like a year?’, Kyungsoo turns back and looks at Suho, ignoring Kris’ presence.

‘Uh… Yeah, you can say that’

‘What do you mean I can say that? You did date him’

‘Kyungsoo, can I talk to you’, Suho interrupts Kyungsoo’s sudden interrogation, grabbing his arm and turning back to Kris, ‘I have to discuss a few things, you should probably go’, he bids farewell to him, bowing his head and dragging Kyungsoo to the familiar storage closet.

‘What the fuck is wrong with you? I just started to get used to Sehun and now you bring back this guy?’, Kyungsoo gazes down on Suho, folding his arm, the cup of coffee still in his hands.

‘Look, it’s not what it looks like’

‘Not what it looks like? Then why did you drag me here looking guilty and shit? Are you two sleeping together?’

‘What?! No!’, Suho yells at him, nearly spilling his coffee, ‘I’m already with Sehun’

‘So, act like it!’, Kyungsoo stops himself before he gets to invested in screaming the hell out of Suho, ‘Just last month I’m screaming at your stupidity for dating a fucking lawyer, now I gotta scream at you for two-timing too?!’

‘I’m not two-timing! You have to believe me when I say I’m over Kris!’
‘Then what the hell is he doing here?!’

‘He’s trying to get back to me! I’ve been trying to push him away but he keeps coming back!’

‘Then put a restraining order on him!’

‘It’s not that simple’

‘Not that simple?’

‘Yeah… He’s like… A proper rapper now… Like, I Googled him and… He’s had two number one albums in China and-’

‘For fuck’s sake Suho’, Kyungsoo rolls his eyes, ‘What kind of men do you get up to?’

‘Don’t you dare start judging me’, Suho folds his arm too, mimicking Kyungsoo’s mannerism, ‘They’re both good men in their own way’

‘One’s a fucking loser whilst the other fucks up out cases’

‘Kris is a best seller and Sehun is a great ass lawyer and you can’t deny it!’

‘Stop defending them and just pick one!’, Kyungsoo commands Suho, sipping his drink and walking out of the storage closet, slamming the door at Suho who looks down to his feet, staying for a couple of minutes by himself.

‘I have a feeling that this is your company talking you into this’, Xiumin looks down on the resume, looking back up to Kai who is wearing designer brands and looking like he doesn’t belong here since the other auditionees are just in their sweats and hoodies ready to perform in front of the acclaimed playwright and musical writers, standing behind Kai in admiration and jealousy when he is called first out of all of them.

‘No, not really’, he replies informally and without manners, everyone behind him gasping but Xiumin only smiled back at Kai, ‘I was actually supposed to be signing for another movie but I suggested this instead’

‘And what about your album comeback?’

‘In preparation, but not commencing production until I’ve finished this musical’

‘And why are you so confidently sure that you’re actually going to be cast’, Xiumin asks again, leaning his arm on the desk, the script and countless piles of resumes by his side, the playwright and orchestral conductor looking at the both of them with somewhat of a questioning look since the banter between them seems to cross the borderline of professionalism.

‘Because you know I’m the best dancer here’

There’s a murmuring whisper behind him, one which probably snarls at his narcissism, whispering the ‘celebrity prince syndrome’. But Xiumin knows better. It’s been years since Kai showed the public what he was really capable of, only dancing simple steps in his music videos since he needed to keep up on the rising need of his vocals instead of his dancing skills.
‘He wasn’t even that good on his latest music video. He did like one flip and apparently, he’s the best dancer in Korea’, Kai hears someone whispering rather loudly behind him, the twinge of anger in his voice. Kai just smirks.

‘So, you don’t want the male lead?’

‘The male lead sings too much. I think you might need me for something else’

‘Are they flirting?’, Daniel asks the casting crew beside him, looking at the way Kai smirks at Xiumin and the way Xiumin reciprocate by smiling back.

‘I have no idea…’

‘And what do we need you for?’

‘I heard you’re in need for a Prince Charming’

‘Is that so?’, Xiumin looks at Kai, not wanting to break his gaze in defeat since the two are battling each other not known to the others, ‘Well, why don’t you show me just how good of a Prince you can be’

‘It’ll be my pleasure’

‘They’re definitely flirting’

‘Good, guys!’, Xiumin turns back to the sounds guy, ‘Play the Don Quixote basil cup variation’, everyone suddenly murmurs amongst each other, in shock as to why Xiumin was giving Kai such a difficult variation, to begin with. They didn’t even see Kai do warm up since he came in late for the auditions.

‘Hey, are you sure he can do this?’, Daniel whispers to him, looking quite worrisome but it seems like he’s the only one worried since Xiumin just carries on looking relaxed, Kai still with smirk on his face taking off his leather Gucci jacket, dropping it on the floor like any other piece of clothing, ‘This is Baryshnikov we are talking about’

‘Which is why this is going to be the deciding factor’, Xiumin whispers back, the rest of the auditionees taking a step back to the back of the stage whilst Kai bends down to where the prop table is, grabbing himself a silver plastic cup, ‘If he messes this up, he’s out of the musical’

‘What?!’, Daniel hisses to him, ‘But this is Kim Jongin we’re talking about! He should at least be a supporting character’

‘You said you wanted my opinion in the casting, well, you got it’, Xiumin replies back nonchalantly whilst the rest of the group looks in front with anxiety in their eyes. Kai, despite his mediocre skills over the years, still has a powerful name, so if the news articles ever find out that they rejected him a role, that may be enough publicity to shut down their production.

‘Xiumin, we need to-’

‘Silence! Music is about to start!’ Xiumin screams at the hall, everyone ordering his command as all eyes fall on the celebrity, his eyes gleaming with pride at the knowledge that everyone was intrigued only by him. Xiumin waits for the movements of Kai, his legs stretched out and arms, starting off with an elegant yet arrogant pose.

The music begins.
Kai starts with a demi-plie before jumping into an assemble, his legs moving forward for a swift arabesque, the crowd shock at his quick movements, his toes pointed and chin held up straight, the loud music being accompanied with an even loud character that was Kim Jongin. A pirouette along with an allonge, moving around the stage, making sure the overwhelming size does not eat him up, moving from one place to another, making sure that every corner is known to him, his arms reached out in celebratory as he caught swift notions of the others’ expression, their wide eyes and parted lips as he jumps across from them, another swift and elegant turn before making his way to the centre, learning and memorising every move for this variation ever since he was a child. He uses the cup in his hand, sipping it and flailing it around in his arms just as he had seen many male ballerinas do before, turning back to give it to another auditionee one he was done with it, winking at him before turning back.

This was Kai’s music and Xiumin knew it.

Everyone is shocked to see the so-called mediocre singer owning the stage and completely oozing in stage presence and charisma, but not Xiumin. He knows exactly what Kai was capable of and it’s been a long time since he’s shown this side of himself to the public. It felt refreshing and relieving.

‘Shit’, Daniel whispers, the music coming to a close, Kai doing one last pirouette before ending with a strong pose, arms stretched out, his chest heaving due to the adrenaline coursing through him.

‘Was that really Kim Jongin?’, they whisper amongst each other, their eyes still fixated on the celebrity.

No. That was Kai.

‘I’m going to pretend that I didn’t hear what you just said’, Luhan looks at Lay as they sat inside a restaurant during lunch, Luhan looking at his husband.

‘It’s a great idea’

‘Having a weekend getaway is not okay when we can’t bring Jia’

‘It’s a doctor’s conference and they said I could have a plus one. Who else am I going to bring?’

‘And who’s going to watch Jia whilst we’re away?’

Lay looks at Luhan, sipping his drink and shrugging his shoulders.

‘Oh no. We are not going to have flame boy staying over our house with our six-month-old baby!’, Luhan stares at Lay, his voice stern and unchangeable.

‘But why? You like Chanyeol’

‘Yes, I do, but that doesn’t mean I trust him enough. Especially when you said one of his episodes is what… Exploding?!’
‘Don’t be so tough, Chanyeol’s strong enough to control it’

‘I don’t care if he is, all I know is that he still has them. What if he has an episode during his sleep and burns our whole house?’, Luhan stops eating, putting his knife and fork down.

‘Don’t be Mr Worst Case Scenario, we’ve left him with Jia loads of times before’, Lay points his fork at Luhan accusingly, ‘You’re being discriminative, that’s what you’re doing’

‘I am not discriminating’

‘Yes, you are. Just because he has a disability doesn’t mean he’s not capable of-’

‘Okay! Fine! Fine, he can take care of Jia’, Luhan gives him, Lay smiling in victory as Luhan continues to eat, trying to brush off and move on from the subject. Luhan always lets Lay do whatever he wants and at this moment, it doesn’t look like that’s going to change any time soon.

Kyungsoo stayed behind after school, his car parked by the end of the school building, watching with his binoculars the front entrance with a sandwich in his hand. It had felt like another stakeout since he had been sitting here for three hours straight after Suho gave him the permission to have a half day today. Ever since Baekhyun warned him about the potential bullying, he was going to make sure to film it and sue the shit out of the parents.

He was already devising a plan to break down the doors of their houses hulk style and slam the legal papers on their stupid mahogany dining table and watch them freak out at the numbers presented to them. He was so determined to get their asses before they got to Eun Bi, zooming in to see if his sister has walked out of the building yet.

Ah ha. He spots Eun Bi walking out with her hood up and face hung low, trying to avoid the group of teenagers hanging around the front entrance like a bunch of dicks and gangster wannabes it makes Kyungsoo sick. He observes the way they stare at her, but they don’t approach her, actually, some of them are even taking a step back. It wasn’t until one boy shouted something at her that he couldn’t hear from here that Eun Bi stopped in her tracks and turned around to approach the boy. Kyungsoo puts down his binoculars once he sees that she is about to push him off, his hands on the door, about to open and run to her before she can do anything, but she noticed that someone has already appeared right beside her, out of thin air.

Kai holds onto the arm which had swung in the air, about to hit the boy, Kyungsoo noticing Kai’s lips moving, probably saying something to her. He stays inside his car, watching Kai try to relax Eun Bi, pushing her back and guiding her to his car which was parked on the other end of the street.

Kyungsoo continues to stay inside his car, motionless as he watches Kai and Eun Bi driving away from him, their silhouette heads inside the car getting smaller and smaller.

‘What the fuck’, he whispers to himself, twisting his car keys and turning on the engine, slyly following them from behind.
‘These pants are so fucking tight’, Chanyeol whines to himself as he sits in the reception of the building, waiting for the receptionist to hand him his newly formed I.D pass for the company security doors by the elevators, looking around to find that Chen’s family’s business has bloomed rather nicely. When he first visited it, it was nothing more than a small building on the outskirts of Seoul with only a few employees, but now they’ve relocated to the heart of Seoul with a pretty nice building, touchscreen walls, holographic helpers and tiny robot boxes with wheels which roll around the floor picking up trash and wiping the floors.

The place was fucking tight and he didn’t know that Chen was capable of it.

‘You, what are you doing? Get here now!’, Chen shouts from across the hall, Chanyeol turning around to find Chen walking straight towards him, his hands on his hips.

‘She told me to wait until she got my I.D’, she points at the empty seat of the receptionist desk at the front, Chen looking at the desk, then back to Chanyeol.

‘Just hurry up and follow me, I don’t have time for this’, he rolls his eyes, walking away from Chanyeol who was still sitting down in his seat, waiting for the receptionist.

‘How am I supposed to follow without an I.D?’’, Chanyeol calls out, looking at the way Chen grabs his I.D and presses on the touchscreen on the small gates which leads to the main building, the gates opening swiftly.

‘Pass through’, he orders Chanyeol, his I.D still on the touchscreen, holding the gate for Chanyeol to walk through, quickly running and rushing by Chen’s side.

‘Is this legal?’

‘Are you asking the CEO of this company if he’s allowed to do whatever the hell he wants?’

‘Okay, fine. Call me silly for trying to follow the fucking rules on the first day of work, you hoe’, Chanyeol calls back, earning many stares from other workers who looked at him like he’s just murdered, someone, It seemed unlikely for anyone to dare try to speak to their CEO like that and Chen didn’t give any impression that he would allow such behaviour to go unnoticed, which confused them more when all Chen did was roll his eyes and push Chanyeol next to him.

‘So, what’s the plan?’, he asks his new tall secretary who looks out of place despite quickly purchasing the cheapest suit he can find in the stores, his briefcase old and tattered since he found it in the basement of the house, concluding that it was probably once his dad’s.

‘Um… Still thinking about it’

‘Still thinking about it?! What are you? Nuts? The meeting is in thirty seconds!’

‘How am I supposed to know what the fuck to do if I don’t even know what the fuck is going on?’, Chanyeol hisses at him as they get into the elevator full of other workers bowing their head the moment Chen walks in.

‘You better think of something by the time we walk inside the meeting room’, Chen whispers back, looking down at his watch and wondering if Minhyuk is already inside, that bastard is always early for everything. The pair walks off the elevator one the doors open for the top floor, two suited men sauntering side by side, Chen’s hair gelled up and back whereas Chanyeol at least combed his maroon shaded hair.
Chen’s Rolex flashed as soon as the light hits it, his wrist turning as he opens the door to find several of his management team already present along with another group of people in well-suited uniforms and smart attire sitting beside them patiently.

‘Kim Jongdae’, he hears Minhyuk deep voice taunting him, the fake smile on his face etched with a sly expression in his eyes as he claps his hands, welcoming his cousin, ‘Right on time, my beloved cousin’, he announces to everyone, standing up and walking towards Chen.

‘This is going to be a long meeting’, Chanyeol whispers to himself before Minhyuk can stand close to hear him.

Sehun and Suho are inside the lawyer’s penthouse, Suho cooking something in his kitchen whilst Sehun takes a shower. Kyungsoo’s words have been fitting inside Suho’s mind since this morning and it’s making him feel more nervous than he should be. He tried to tell himself over and over again that he didn’t do anything wrong at all and that entertaining Kris until he heads off to China was not cheating but simply being a good friend. Of course, Kris’ intentions were different, but as long as Suho doesn’t fall into the trap, he didn’t see why hanging out with Kris would be such a sin.

‘Hey babe, do you wanna take a shower next?’, Sehun calls out, the door to the bathroom opening, welcoming steam from the hot shower out into the corridor, a towel hanging around Sehun’s waist and hiding his modesty as he walks towards the living room connected to the kitchen, his blonde hair damp.

‘No, I’m fine’

‘Are you sure?’, Sehun asks again, looking ahead to find Suho in his clothes from yesterday since the man has a habit of wearing clothes twice in a row, ‘Why don’t you get changed in my pyjamas at least’

‘Sehun, I trip over your pyjamas’, Suho calls back, having to explain that their height difference constrains Suho from using any of his clothes – especially his jeans.

‘Well, I’ve got some of your old clothes still hanging around the closet, you can grab some if you want’, Sehun points to his room as if Suho didn’t already know where it was, Suho still stirring the stew he was making, looking at the bubbling broth.

‘Yeah, maybe later’, Suho calls back and this time, Sehun noticed. He walks over behind Suho, wrapping his arms around the boy’s waist, bending down to rest his chin on Suho’s shoulder.

‘Are you okay?’, Sehun bends down to watch Suho’s expression, seeing him smile back and kiss his cheeks in comfort.

‘I’m fine’, Suho whispers back, softly kissing his lips, ‘Just had a tough day at work’, the pair continues to embrace each other in silence, feeling each other’s warmth at the end of a tiring day.
‘And the emergence between the two branches will not only expand out options but allows us to stand in feet with multi-running companies such as Samsung that not only focuses on one manufacturing but a variety. Fashion and food products will be the start, but our innovation to start a branch in tech or electronics is not far behind’, Minhyuk continues to drown on, everyone focused on his presentation, the room dark except for the flashes of bright light from the power point which presents statistics and numbers which no one could understand but are still impressed by.

All eyes were on Minhuk apart from two people sitting right at the back.

‘Tell me that’s not all you came up with’, Chen whispers with as much harshness as a pissed off cat, glaring at Chanyeol as he writes something down on a scrap piece of paper, trying to plan Chen’s speech on the spot.

‘Shut up, I only had a few hours to learn about his company. Let me plan in peace’, Chanyeol hisses back, handing Chen the other paper already filled with statistics and general knowledge he got from Chen’s company’s website, trying to device an argument as to why the two companies shouldn’t merge.

The pair gets cut off from their planning the moment they hear clapping and the lights turning back on, everyone standing up for Minhyuk, Chen rolling his eyes once he noticed that Minhyuk was sucking it all in.

‘Right, well, that was a definite strong proposal’, he hears his grandfather gleaming at him, his hand resting on his chin, the smug grin on his face whenever he is offered something of value etched across his face.

‘You’re up’, Chanyeol thrusts the pieces of scrap paper at him, ‘Don’t mess it up’, he warns his friend encouragingly, one which Chen didn’t take well since he pinched Chanyeol’s back, the tall secretary eliciting a whine before closing his eyes and burying his face on the table, hiding his pained expression from everyone else.

‘Well, that truly was great’, Chen bows to Minhyuk who sits arrogantly at his chair, leaning back like he owned like place, ‘Unlike Mr Hwang Minhyuk over here, I didn’t prepare a long presentation with slides of how arrogantly well I’ve been doing in the company since I’ve been too busy actually taking actions on the promises’, Chen welcomes his speech with a jab at the other CEO, Chanyeol giving him a thumbs up for using his insult first, ‘Which goes to show, just how well Yeolmae Co, has been doing over the years. Starting out has nothing more than a homes meal product company, we have branched off to investing in big brands and even started formulating our own manufacturing of snacks and treats which will, later on, become something more’, Chen goes on, looking down and reading the statistics of the rise in consumer over the past five years.

‘But we’ll be making more money if we merge. Isn’t that what this whole meeting is about?’, someone deemed brave enough to interrupt his speech and ask a question.

‘Well, what’s more important? Reputation or money?’, Chen asks back to the person, looking around and seeing people mouth to each other ‘money’

‘Don’t be too over the top cousin’, Minhyuk calls out, ‘Reputation is but mere words on paper. It doesn’t affect us’

‘Then you must be living in the past’, Chen calls out to all of them, ‘In this generation where everything is prejudged, my company cannot afford to be associated with a money hungry company known to have closed down small businesses and over take them’, Chen places a piece of
paper Chanyeol had managed to print during his limited research time, ‘Over the past year, you have been boycotted by over three dozen campaigns, along with being dropped from New York fashion week as the main sponsor, all in the name of your vicious reputation’, Chen raises an eyebrow to Minhyuk, suppressing a smile when he sees his cousin loosening his neck tie, ‘My company aims to cater for everyone, to become the company not only that people know, but respect, and I believe working for you would definitely ruin that, don’t you think?’

Chen stays silent, his eyes never leaving Minhyuk’s for a second, his hand resting on the table, his stance strong and dominant which flustered both Minhyuk and the rest of the people in the room, his grandfather looking at the news article which dives into the business Minhyuk had to crash and burn in order to get to where he is.

Chanyeol sits at the back with his arms crossed and a smirk playing on his lips.

His best friend was on fire.

Kyungsoo didn’t know what to do and he keeps asking himself why he’s had his car parked by the side of Kai’s apartment for three hours straight. He had watched Eun Bi leave the apartment a few minutes ago, still deciding whether to drive past her and give her the worst lecture of her life, but it seemed like what his sister didn’t need is her brother drilling her for information about a topic which she didn’t have enough confidence to approach him herself. It broke him to pieces to think that his sister, who literally tells him everything, couldn’t find the confidence to tell him something as massive as bullying.

He looks back up at the top of building to where Kai’s apartment is.

A knock in the door is heard, surprising Kai since it’s only six o’clock and he wasn’t expecting anyone until seven, opening the door to find Do Kyungsoo standing on the other side of the door awkwardly staring up at him.

‘Oh, hey… I didn’t expect to be seeing you for another hour’, Kai looks shocked, leaning his body on the door as he watches Kyungsoo approach him.

‘Yeah, I thought I’d try to get it out of the way first’, Kyungsoo points out, Kai widening the door for him to pass through, noticing the strange slowness at the way Kyungsoo moves compared to the other times he had visited his apartment, quick and swift and without a moment’s word. It seems like this is the first time Kyungsoo has ever looked around his house.

‘So… Nice painting you’ve got there’, Kyungsoo points out to a painting Kai bought during a charity auction of an impressionist piece of a horse.

‘Yeah… I… Bought it myself’, Kai answered in the most confused and awkward way since he wasn’t use to Kyungsoo actually conversing with him in any way apart from asking questions about his crazy fans.

‘It looks nice’

‘Yeah… It does… I guess’
The pair is back to the numbing silence whilst Kyungsoo looks around the room, checking the
cameras and fast forwarding the screen to see CCTV videos recorded during the day. Kai goes off
to the kitchen to make himself a quick snack since he felt awkward and unwelcomed in the living
room with Kyungsoo inside, the small officer stealing lost glances at the connected kitchen where
Kai stood.

‘So… When are you leaving for Japan?’

‘Next week’

‘Next week? What for?’

‘Just a photo shoot and then I’ll be back and busy than ever’

‘How comes’

‘I just got cast in a musical’

‘A musical? Really?’, Kyungsoo looks at the celebrity, shocked, ‘You still do those?’

‘What do you mean? It’s always been my passion, so, of course, I still do those’, Kai chuckles, 
seeing the way Kyungsoo stops staring at the hidden cameras, ‘I supposed being in movies had
stopped me from doing it but since I won’t be signing for another film in quite a while, I’ve got
some free time on my hands’

‘Ah… Well, that’s great. I’m sure you’ll do great in it’, Kyungsoo points out, closing the drawers
and fixing his shirt. After finishing his round of check-up, he would usually just walk off and leave
and Kai had gotten used to it and had never bothered to ask the man to stay for a little while more.

Kyungsoo had hoped that maybe now he would try. Especially when he walks slowly around the
living room, looking hanging pictures around the walls, a mixture of paintings and family photos.
Kyungsoo slowly looks at the different toys and figures placed around the desks and shelves along
with books.

‘Are you done?’, Kai asks from a distance, bringing Kyungsoo back to reality in which he’s
supposed to leave – like five minutes ago.

‘Oh, yeah. You’re safe here’, Kyungsoo announces, making Kai giggle at the absurd statement
coming from the police officer.

‘I’m relieved that I’m safe in my own house’, Kai chuckles, walking over to the living room with
his toast which Kyungsoo noticed was burnt around the edges.

This man didn’t leave the kitchen yet he still manages to burn the toast?

‘I should probably go’, Kyungsoo bows to Kai before brushing past him like he normally does,
leaving Kai standing alone in the kitchen as he opens the door handle of the main entrance. Before
he can twist the doorknob, he quickly turns his head around, ‘Hey, Kai!’, he calls out his name, Kai
turning around to face him, standing by the end of the hall, far from Kyungsoo.

‘What is it?’

‘Thank you’

‘Thank you? For what?’
‘For being nice to me, even though you probably shouldn’t’

‘Why shouldn’t I be nice to you?’, Kai questions, one which Kyungsoo couldn’t answer even though he could probably prepare a list of reasons as to why. It pains him, even more, to realise that Kai wasn’t just being a nice person, that he genuinely felt no grudge or hatred towards him despite his utter decision to be the absolute dick to him all those years ago. It made him feel more like hell to see that despite everything, Kai genuinely didn’t hate him.

That made him hate himself even more.
Chanyeol’s new job has hindered more than improved his life at least to say. He had always hoped to find a secure and high paying job ever since he got to Korea, his desperation causing him to stoop lower every time he gets rejected for a job, but now that he’s got a prestige position in a big company, least to say he’d rather be stuck on square one in the unemployment line.

‘Chanyeol!’

‘Chanyeol!’

‘Chanyeol!’

‘Bring me my coffee’
‘Finish the report my eight’

‘Remind me of my three o’clock reservations’

‘Chanyeol!’

‘Chanyeol!’

‘Park Chanyeol!’

Chanyeol closes his eyes and bites the inside of his cheeks, the rest of his new co-workers looking at him with pity as they continue to work at their desk whilst Chanyeol stands up for the millionth time, trying so hard not to punch something, his fist clenched by his side as he stomps his way towards the CEO’s office.

‘What do you want your royal pain in the asshole’, Chanyeol grits his teeth the moment he opens the glass doors, closing it yet seeing no point in doing so since Chen’s office was made out of glass walls which means this bastard has no privacy whatsoever.

‘Have you cancelled my meeting with Poise yet?’, Chen looks down on his laptop, trying something down before flicking his wrist and activating a holographic screen of his monthly stats.

‘No, I haven’t, since Minhyuk is adamant in coming back’

‘Then try to stop him’

‘He’s your evil cousin, you stop him’, Chanyeol rolls his eyes and folds his arm, ‘And what’s up with the slavery shit? Do you treat your secretaries like this all the time? Are you usually this much of a dick? Because it doesn’t look good on you’, Chanyeol whines, Chen looking up and giving him a warning look.

‘I am not treating you as a slave’

‘Chanyeol get this, Chanyeol get that. Chanyeol where are my notes, Chanyeol can you run an errand for me, Chanyeol can you make a phone call’, Chanyeol starts to imitate Chen’s voice, over exaggerating the high-pitched whining and snarling his face.

‘Don’t test me’, Chen glares at the tall secretary, ‘Now can you go cancel my meeting and leave? You’re embarrassing me’

‘In front of who?’, Chanyeol snorts, being stopped when Chen points to the right of his office where the glass wall is, everyone stealing judging glances at Chanyeol and his various questioning facial expressions he was making a few minutes ago.

‘You’re such a pretentious asshole for having this stupid glass wall’, Chanyeol whispers, looking down to his feet and bowing to his boss before turning around.

‘What can I say? A good CEO hides no secret from his workers’

‘Go suck a dick, you pretentious asshole’, Chanyeol shouts back at him, opening the door and slamming it gently since it was glass and he had no idea if it was capable of shattering into millions of pieces if he slammed it like a normal door.

Chanyeol walks pass the desks of workers, trying to avoid their stares and sitting back to his desk, taking off his blazer and loosening his tie since he gave no fucks about formal behaviour, everyone
else being uptight, straight postured and formal whereas he sits cross-legged on his computer chair, his hair uncombed and messy as he types an e-mail to the CEO of Poise fashion brand.

Sehun looks down on his phone, watching the time tick by as he waits for his superiors to release him. Ever since the fail of their previous case, his company has been drilling him to win his case to cover up their failure, having him stay overnight and overworking to try and make his case viable and an easy win. They have enough faith for one of their best lawyers to conquer the trial but for once Sehun wished he could fail just so he can get it over and done with.

Suho and Kyungsso are being a bitch to him again added onto the fact that they also need to win the case for their own reasons, which means that whatever Suho and him had going on, it was made worse with the rise of the case, Sehun having valid and reliable proof and evidence to let his claimant to avoid jail time, or at least shorten it by five years.

‘Mr Kill Joy!’, he hears Kyungsso shouting at him as soon as he enters the courtroom inside Seoul’s High Justice Court, his side bag hanging with all of his important details, ‘Nice to see you here again’, Kyungsso sarcastically announces with solemn in his voice his shoulder hanging low, ‘But I hope you enjoy ruining my arrest since that’s most likely going to happen’

‘Sorry’, Sehun apologises in advance, ‘I’ve kind of been eyeing the pay rise for a while now’

‘Who can blame you’, Kyungsso raises his eyebrows, sipping his hot coffee, ‘Listen, I’ve got somewhere to be, so I’ll let you do what you do best’, Kyungsso announces his departure as soon as they see the judge coming their way. Sehun seemed rather oddly unsatisfied with Kyungsso’s departure since the officers have always been present in court, he looks behind Kyungsso in search of the second officer and found that Suho wasn’t even present.

‘Right…’, Sehun tries to brush it off, ‘I better go in then’, he bows to Kyungsso, the officer giving him a pat on the back before walking forward and away from the court building, the lawyer walking inside the courtroom where the trial is waiting to commence.

Kyungsso looks down on his phone, quickly texting Suho his whereabouts, looking down at his wrist and reading the time which reads on his watch, sipping his coffee and nonchalantly walking away.

‘You’re fucking kidding me’, Kyungsso sighs, seeing a sports car parked at the front with Suho at the passenger side whereas Kris was sitting at the front, honking for Kyungsso’s attention, ‘Why is he here?’

‘Because I heard you two need to pose as club goers for an arrest and what better person to be
associated with than me?’, Kris points out, winking at the small officer which did nothing but
made Kyungsoo’s eyes roll back so far, he might as well have lost his sight.

‘Just get in Kyungsoo’, Suho rolls down his window and orders him, ‘The sooner we get the arrest
the sooner we can leave’. Kyungsoo had no choice but to sit at the back, slamming the door and
looking ahead to where Suho is, calm and definitely as nervous and twitchy when he first saw him
with Kris yesterday morning. He continues to observe his best friend, watching to see how he
reacts to Kris’ smiles and awful jokes along with his stories about touring and such.

‘So, when are you going back to China?’, Kyungsoo asks when the conversations quiet down, the
three of them awkwardly driving towards the red district of Seoul hidden beneath plain sight and
away from tourist and major city citizens, the sunset rising down the orange canvas of the sky,
Kris’ car zooming past the looming demons which had started to come out, men and women of
lesser dignity than a wild animal as Kyungsoo would describe them.

‘Uhh, soon. Maybe in a month or two’, Kris replies, taking a turn to see the clubs starting to come
to life despite the fact that it was only seven o’clock in the evening, rarely a time for any club or
bar to be open, but today is a good day.

‘So, when you go back to China, will you be staying there forever? Or…’

‘You asking if I’m coming back to Korea?’, Kris ends Kyungsoo’s questions, chuckling at the
interrogation he’s having in his own car, ‘Maybe. If I have something to come back to’

Kyungsoo squirms at the line, snarling at the statement, looking out of the window and ending his
conversation right there and then. It’s good he’s sitting in the back seat, otherwise, Suho might end
up getting a piece of his mind when he spots the Chief Police’s cheeks turn a bright red.

‘Kyungsoo, can you just prepare for the arrest? And make sure you have a working gun’

‘Since when have I ever carried a busted one?’

‘I’m just saying. This is a gang leader we’re planning to arrest, not just a petty member’, Suho
informs his partner, preparing his equipment too, double checking his taser which hangs on his
belt.

‘Ooh, we’re here to catch a gang leader? How exciting’, Kris turns to Suho, the Chief Police
forgetting the fact that he shouldn’t be telling Kris about this information.

‘No. We’re not’, Suho attempts to lie, which only made Kyungsoo roll his eyes at his failure to do
so, ‘No, we’re doing something else… Just a check in errand…’

‘You’re so fucking stupid’, he hears his best friend whispering behind him, Kris also hearing
Kyungsoo and laughing as they drive through the awakening streets of bars and strip clubs.

‘Give me a ride’

‘Go home yourself’
‘No, I need to go to Lay’s place’

‘Why?’

‘I need to babysit Jia’

‘Why the fuck do you need to babysit Jia?’

‘Because Lay and Luhan are going to a conference in Busan for the weekend’

‘Why didn’t they ask me and Xiumin?’

‘How am I supposed to fucking know? Ask them yourself’

‘The fuck are they thinking hiring you? Xiumin and I literally live one house away’

‘Why are you whining at me for? Just take me there as fucking ask him yourself you asshole’

The Yeolmae workers look behind the escalators going down to the ground floor reception, seeing the CEO and his new secretary swearing at each other, their voices rising the more heated they get, CEO Chen ruffling his once perfectly combed and styled hair when Chanyeol continues to beg for him for a ride. It was the talk of town hearing Chen’s new secretary who didn’t have to go through a gruelling process of interviews like all the rest of them, whispers of their connections already being told on all floors. Their worryingly violent banter confirmed that they do know each other, but they still don’t know whether they’re friends or not.

‘So, are you going to give me a ride?’, Chanyeol asks for the millionth time, poking Chen’s arm like a bratty child asking for a new toy. Chen doesn’t reply to him, pulling out a chewing gum instead and ignoring the tall secretary, ‘Just give me a ride’

‘Why don’t you just get your own car? Huh?’, Chen glares at Chanyeol, trying to brush off his arm around his.

‘Because I just got a job like two days ago’, Chanyeol informs of Chen, the two of them walking side by side out of the tall skyscraper, Chen rolling his eyes as Chanyeol complains about having to walk to and from the grocery stores nowadays, talking about his fun times with his car during his youth, blah, blah, blah…

‘Just get in the fucking car’, Chen sighs in defeat, unlocking his car doors, hearing Chanyeol cheering and jogging towards the passenger seat, ‘Don’t you fucking dare do anything that might break my car’. He calls out before Chanyeol can close his door, opening the driver’s door and giving Chanyeol a warning glare.

‘And what exactly am I going to do? Huh?’, Chanyeol asks sarcastically, rolling his eyes as he feels Chen’s real intimidating stare continue on.

‘I don’t know… Um… Maybe shit?’

‘I didn’t shit in your car, Jia did’, Chanyeol defends himself when Chen reminds him of the only time he’s been inside Chen’s car, ‘You think I’m just going to undo my trousers and take a quick shit inside your car? What do you think of me? Honestly, you’re making me want to shit in your car right now’
And so, it goes, Kai being the most popular and hated member of the new cast has started to commence the first day of the read-through of the script. He had kind of saw it coming, especially after his infamous ‘performance’ which was still being talked about by everyone else who managed to have gotten the part in the play. He had started to notice the usual isolation he would receive whenever he tried to approach the rest of them for a normal friendly conversation. All he got from them was a simple head nod and one word answers which were enough to show him that his presence was unwanted, which was totally normal for him. He is Kim Jongin had he’d experienced this numerous of times during filming and award shows, so he just shrugged it off as a normal day at work.

Of course, at least in filming, he could kill time by learning his lines ahead of the shoot, but since he played a mute Prince, he had no lines whatsoever, which means turning up to the read through was almost pointless for him.

‘Why the fuck am I here?’, he could hear himself whisper, flipping through the script, more curious about the stage directions which focuses on his movements and actions which is the only thing he has to do in the play and his presence isn’t made until Act 2. Of course, he’d wanted this part the moment he stole the script from his manager before he can throw it away. Being in musicals has become somewhat of an embarrassment for Kai and his company since the last time he was cast in a musical, he did not deliver as well as people would have thought since his singing skills were not in the same level as professional sopranos – he was barely a solid tenor.

But after he read the second lead, the voiceless prince who uses his movements to communicate, he knew that this will be the perfect role to prove himself again.

Xiumin keeps looking up, watching Kai looking bored out of his mind, his face without make-up but still flawless looking and without so much as a scar, not even faded acne scars from when he was young. He was wearing jeans and a sweatshirt which should look normal, only if they weren’t Gucci and Levi’s whilst everyone was just wearing something they probably bought in the market or a thrift store. He hadn’t spoken much to Kai when the read through started since he was busy preparing for the rehearsals which are about to commence soon now that the cast has been finalised.

It seems like everyone else was fresh and of rookie status since he looked around to find that all of them had barely made a break in anything, which seems to be the idea Daniel was going for.

‘You sure you wanna give the main lead to some kid who’s barely in his twenties?’, Seulgi, the stage manager and director, whispers to the playwright, looking worryingly at the fresh out of the theatre schoolboy.

‘He was the top of his class’, Daniel whispers back confidently, ‘And he’s a great singer. Have some trust in the kid’

‘I don’t know’, Seulgi looks down on the script again, quickly skimming through the pages until she gets to Act 3 near the end, ‘There’s a love scene here. Has he ever done a love scene?’

‘Love scenes are usually not that hard. Just kiss and go, I’m I right?’, Daniel chuckles, being the only one to do so since the rest of them were too busy judging his sense of humour.

‘Right…’, Seulgi pretends not to hear his response, ‘Let me rephrase that… Has he ever done a
love scene with someone like Jongin?’, this definitely got the whole crew thinking, all heads simultaneously looking ahead to where Kai is, sitting down with his back leaning against the chair, his legs spread out and hands resting on his thigh, his eyes closed and head also leaned back. He looks like a model even whilst sitting down and looking bored.

‘It’s just Jongin, it can’t be that bad, right?’, Daniel whispers, his crew members looking at him disbelievingly. Kim Jongin, national treasure and a sex symbol were not just Jongin.

‘I’m sure Jongin will take care of him. I heard he’s a nice person’, Seulgi turns the page again, Xiumin laughing at her statement which sounded like a lie by her tone.

‘Jongin-ah’, Xiumin silences the room, his crew member looking at him in shock when he calls out the celebrity’s name informally, all conversations stopping, eyes fixated on the way Xiumin calmly rests his elbows on the table, pen resting on his fingers.

‘What is it?’, Kai replies back, tilting his head confusingly at the use of his birth name from Xiumin.

‘Have you read the full script yet?’, he questions, quickly writing a note of the way Kai looks, making sure to keep that in mind during the beginning scene of Act 2 where the Prince first meets the performer by the gardens of his palace.

‘Um, yeah’, he replies, ‘I even made notes’

‘Notes?’, this shocked the whole room since they’ve only been given the full script two days ago.

‘And what do you think of Act 3?’

‘Which scene?’

‘The love scene’, Xiumin points out with blatancy, not caring about anyone’s awkward stares, ‘How do you feel about it?’

‘Pretty neutral’, Kai replies with no added emotions, ‘I’ve done a few for me to be experienced with it’

‘Definitely Prince syndrome’, someone whispers in the background.

‘How about you? Lee Soogeun? Ever done a love scene before?’, Xiumin turns his gaze to the main lead, looking at the way he awkwardly tugs at his sleeves, avoiding all eye contact.

‘Um… I… Kissed once’

‘Once in your life?’

‘No! I mean, in a play’, he exerts himself, looking around the room to hear fits of giggles at his reply, ‘I’ve kissed loads of times’, he tries to add, but it’s drowned out by the chuckles the cast shared amongst themselves.

‘I’m sure Mr Kim Jongin will take care of you. Like he said, he’s done it loads of times’, Xiumin gestures to the celebrity, ‘In his work and personal life too’

‘You bet I do’, Kai adds on, earning himself another round of laughter, the rest of the crew relaxing at the light-hearted mood between Xiumin and Kai, the pair staring at each other with a soft smile plastered on their faces.
Baekhyun’s electricity isn’t working. Again.

‘For fuck’s sake’, he hisses when he tries flicking the switches on to find that his lights were not turning on any time soon. He damned his building for always having this fucking problem. It gave him a reason to consider moving out despite the expenses.

He noticed that he wasn’t the only one having problems since he can hear his next-door neighbour shouting – probably at the phone to their landlord – the banging and screaming from the person on the top floor is more than enough to notify that at least he wasn’t the only one pissed off.

Unlike the rest of the people in his floor, he calmly walks over his dark living room, clenching his hands before opening, blowing small sparks of light, like fireflies but slightly bigger, like a ping pong ball, flying around his room, lighting a bright white around, hovering above him, bouncing off the walls.

Since the electricity was out, he didn’t think he’ll be able to make something to eat, but it’s alright. He just opens up his fridge, pulling out one of the many containers of homemade food that’s neatly packed inside, his hands glowing into a fury red, his hands beginning to heat up the plastics container.

He walks across the living room, the hovering lights following him as he makes himself to his room, bouncing onto the bed and lifting open the container lid, smelling the warm aroma of fried rice and chicken.

‘Hey’

‘Fuck!’, Baekhyun shouts the moment he hears someone from beside the bed, looking to see a shadow standing next to him. Baekhyun throws the container up in the air, the rice flying everywhere, a chicken leg hitting his face as he gestures for the light to hover across the room to see who the invader is, Kai standing right by his bed, ‘You fucking bastard!’

‘You still do that?’, Kai looks up at the pretty lights, reaching out to touch it.

‘Look what the fuck you did, you fucking bastard!’, Baekhyun screams, gesturing to all of him, seeing the food that he was so ready to devour all over the bed and on his lap, the meat dropping to the floor when he moved, ‘I was fucking hungry as well! You absolute dickhead!’, Baekhyun continues to scream at the celebrity, feeling the warm rice still on his lap, standing up and shaking it off him, glaring at Kai as he tries to wipe the bed off the food.

‘Sorry about that’

‘What is up with you and teleporting? Are you even allowed to do that?’, Baekhyun looks up to watch Kai, seeing the man walking up towards him, looking plain and simple in his joggers and shirt, with a beanie to cover his hair.

‘It’s not illegal’, Kai points out, ‘It’s just not ideal for a celebrity to use their powers’

‘I still don’t get that’, Baekhyun responds, ‘Everyone’s got powers. Why do they have to judge
celebrities to use theirs? I mean come one’, Baekhyun starts to rant about something he barely has interests in, but he did read about a scandal of a female celebrity who got ridiculed for using her powers in public. He didn’t think anyone remembered her powers, but the fact that she used it was enough to judge her.

‘It’s like dating’, Kai explains to Baekhyun, ‘People don’t like celebrities dating’

‘Which is also fucking stupid’, Baekhyun calls back, ‘Probably ruins a lot of personal lives’

‘Yeah, it does’, Kai comments, Baekhyun looking up to see Kai scratching the back of his neck.

‘Oh… I didn’t mean to…’, Baekhyun noticed the tight-lipped man awkwardly standing in front of him, realising what he’d just said, ‘I wasn’t trying to mention…’

‘No, it’s cool. You do have a point’, Kai shakes it off, shrugging his shoulders and leaving the conversation as it is, ‘Anyway, I came here for a practising buddy’

‘A what?’

‘A practising buddy. I have a musical to do and I wanna get my performance right’

‘Didn’t you flop your other musical?’, Baekhyun bluntly points out, regretting it once again since this time Kai glares at him, ‘Sorry. I remember mentioning on my fan café’

‘Anti-fan café’, Kai elaborates, ‘Which I can still sue you for’

‘Oh, boo hoo. I shut it down ages ago anyway’, Baekhyun argues back, walking out of the room to grab a broom to clean up the mess in his room, he should probably get another container of food since he hears his stomach rumbling.

‘Anyway, I need someone to be my critique’

‘Critique?’

‘Yeah. My character’s a mute so I have to do all the talking with my face. I need someone to help me with my expressions’

‘And you think I’m the person good for that?’, Baekhyun snorts, opening his storage closet and pulling out a broom.

‘You are a teacher. I’m sure you had kids giving you attitude left, right and centre’, Kai points out, following Baekhyun like a puppy.

‘Yeah. Sure’, Baekhyun nods his head. Yeah, his students have given him some pain over the past couple of years, and he does know how to tell if a student is lying to him, but he didn’t think that was enough to judge a theatrical performance, ‘I don’t know. I don’t feel like having to watch you make weird faces at me when I’ve just got off from work’

‘Dude, come on, help me out’, Kai begins to whine, which didn’t sit well with Baekhyun since Kai becomes a bratty kid whenever he fucking whines, ‘Be a good friend and help me. Otherwise, I’ll sue you’

‘Sue me for what? Does it look like I have money?’, Baekhyun yells out, getting sick and tired of Kai pulling out the ‘sue’ card, ‘Now leave me alone’

‘Fine, but I’ll be back when they give me my chores’
'Ergh, so you’re going to dance for me too?', Baekhyun rolls his eyes, sweeping the rice and chicken in his room.

'Oh! So, you are agreeing to help me?!', Kai claps his hands together in celebration, taking Baekhyun off guard.

'What? No!'

'Nope, you’ve already said it!'

'No, I didn’t!'

'I’ll see you after my first practice!', Kai screams at Baekhyun, blocking the teacher’s argument, ‘Bye!’

Before Baekhyun can get another word out, Kai had teleported out of his apartment, leaving him all by himself with his hovering lights and messy room, broom still in his hand and about to yell a trail of profanity.

'Fucking dick’, is all he can whisper once he finds out that he’s all by himself again, ‘Fucking bastard’

‘Hello Jia’, Chanyeol cuddles with the baby, being left alone in a big house all by himself, still in his suit since he didn’t have time to pack a bag of overnight clothes, but he was sure Lay was okay with sharing his clothes.

He hears the little baby gurgle something, probably the baby way of greeting him, kissing her chubby cheeks as he walks across the living room, singing to her as he cradles her in his arms.

‘You’re still so cute’, Chanyeol coos, his voice high-pitched and melodious, ‘I wonder what your first word is going to be’, he talks to her, opening the living room lights despite it being late at night and that he should probably tuck Jia to bed, but since he only got here an hour ago, he wanted to spend some more time with Jia, ‘Do you want to play a game?’, he asks, bending down and placing baby Jia on the ground whilst looking around for the box of toys Luhan always left around the living room, ‘What do you want to play?’, before Chanyeol can take out a little car toy, he hears the front door banging, making him flinch as he looks out to the hallway to see who got inside the house.

‘You!’

‘Chen?’, he sees his boss walking in with his pyjamas and a pile of paper resting on his arm, ‘How the fuck did you get in here?!’

‘What are you talking about? Lay gave us a spare key’, Che quickly explains himself, putting his papers down on the coffee table and sitting down on the floor next to Chanyeol, ‘I need your help’

‘What now?’, Chanyeol rolls his eyes. He didn’t think he could change his mind. In forty-eight hours he had changed from being excited to detesting having to be around Chen for more than an
hour, trying so hard not to have a mental breakdown.

‘I need you to choose an endorsement plan for my next project’

‘Which is?’ , Chanyeol asks, looking down at pieces of paper, reading the planning and different ideas.

‘Top of the line delivery service’, Chen points out, ‘For people who aren’t able to go grocery shopping, we’ll create an online store of all our goods and have it delivered to their house whenever they want’

‘Sweet. That doesn’t sound all too bad’, Chanyeol nods his head in agreement, seeing the inventory and other business stuff he knows nothing about since he didn’t do business in school and god forbid he is asked to do anything with numbers and databases for this project.

‘I need to find a way to advertise it, really make it sell to our consumers’

‘There’s nothing more to do. Everyone’s lazy nowadays so just the word delivery is enough to get them all wet’

‘That’s disgusting’

‘I’m only speaking the truth’, Chanyeol holds onto Jia, seeing her crawling her way out of the living room, her small chubby hands clutching to the air as she whines at Chanyeol for pinning her down, ‘Anyway, I suggest not to use anymore swearing or graphic language’

‘Why? Is Jia able to percept any of our conversations yet? She’s like six months old’

‘Yeah but Lay and Luhan has this stupid fucking built in speaker thingy that picks up on anything you say and I think it’s defected’, Chanyeol whispers to Chen, pointing at the built-in commanding buttons.

‘I have those at home too’, Chen points out, ‘It’s not big a deal’

‘Oh, just you wait’, Chanyeol raises a suspicious eyebrow at the technology, ‘It will do surprising things’

‘Yeah, whatever. Now…’, Chen goes back to his proposal, flipping the pages and going straight to endorsements, ‘We need someone who can really sell this idea… Maybe if we do a CF we can’. Before Chen can get another word in, Jia starts to uncomfortably fidget, her face scrunched up as he holds onto Chanyeol’s fingers. She begins to wail.

‘What’s wrong Jia?’, Chanyeol looks down on her, seeing her sudden change of emotions, feeling her arms and legs kicking, her eyes closed and mouth wide open as she begins to cry, extremely loud and quite concerning.

‘Dude, what’s wrong with her?’, Chen calls out, leaving his proposal for a minute, looking concerned for the baby, ‘Is she hungry?’

‘No, Luhan told me that they already fed her…’, Chanyeol murmurs as he tries to find out what’s wrong, lifting her up and checking if she needed to change her diapers, but still smelling the fresh baby powder on her, ‘She’s recently been changed too…’, Chanyeol mumbles, ‘I have no idea what’s going on…’

‘Give me her’, Chen orders once Jia shows no signs of stopping, continuing to wail her eyes out,
her cheeks and pretty much her whole face turning bright red. Chanyeol quickly gives her to Chen to cradles her in his arms, gently rocking her back and forth, his voice trying to lull her to stop.

‘It’s not working’

‘Shut the fuck up. I know it’s not working’, Chen hisses at him, rocking Jia a little bit faster.

‘You think that’s going to do it? She’ll get sick if you rock any faster’, Chanyeol continues to criticise Chen’s tactics, reaching his hand out to grab her back, ‘Now give her to me’

‘And what are you going to do? You’re going to do the same anyway!’

‘Well, at least I don’t have bony arms! She might like laying on mine, I have more fat in my arms’, Chanyeol wiggles his arms to show the CEO, which didn’t help since Chen just gave him a ‘what the fuck’ look, ‘C’mon, I did put on a little weight, didn’t I?’

‘Not the point!’, Chen yells back, their rising voices didn’t help to calm Jia down as the baby continues to screech, more so in pain than discomfort which worries the two adults.

‘Signs of screeching, discomfort and levels of rising body temperature’, Chen and Chanyeol hears Hermes speaking in the living room, the built-in virtual helper analysing the situation, ‘It is seen that a lifeform is in the process of teething’

‘Teething?!’, the pair screams at each other at the same time, looking down at Jia, still in Chen’s arms.

‘She’s teething?!’, Chanyeol takes a step back, trying to look around to see if Lay and Luhan left him anything to prepare him for this process, but it seems like they didn’t since nothing was out on the kitchen, no soothing cream, no nothing.

‘How the fuck do we stop it?’

‘Are you seriously asking how to stop a baby from making teeth? What are you?!’

‘Not a fucking doctor, that’s for sure!’, Chen argues back, rocking Jia back and forth excessively, ‘Oh my god… I should have waited tomorrow to talk about the damn proposal’

‘And leave me here with a teething baby?’, Chanyeol whines, ‘You heartless animal’

‘And what help am I? How am I supposed to take care of a baby?!’

‘Hermes! How do you help soothe a baby’s teething gums?’, Chanyeol yells out, not really directed to anyone since he didn’t know where Hermes speaker’s or intercom was, just hoping that it would respond.

‘I special, soothing cream, organic and safe to apply to the baby. It is found in any pharmacy stores’

‘Okay, so where’s the nearest one here?’

‘An hour’

‘An hour?!’, Chanyeol yells, standing up and just about to grab the keys when he heard Hermes directing him to the pharmacy right in the middle of Seoul, ‘I’m sure there’s one closer?’

‘There is, but it is currently closed for construction and will not be opening for another week’
‘Fuck… Well, what else can we do?’, Chen asks, standing up and softly cradling Jia, trying hard not to be punched in the face by her wrath, her limbs wriggling around.

‘Wait, stick a finger in’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘I heard if you massage the gums, it will stop, or at least let her suck onto something’, Chanyeol orders Chen who refuses to do anything, shouting back at Chanyeol at how useless he is.

‘I’m not doing that’

‘Fucking hell’, Chanyeol pushes Chen, grabbing Jia off him, not caring about his language whatsoever, gently cradling Jia in his arms, trying to get her to calm down, putting a finger in and massaging her gums gently, whining when she bites down.

‘I told you it won’t work’, Chen calls back, but he is at their side, hands on his hips and waiting for Chanyeol’s plan to take effect, the screaming still being heard around the room.

Xiumin finally walks out of his studio basement, ready to call it a day as he listens to the actor’s singing in the demos of his songs, his shoulders tensed and eyes drooping by the time he closes the door. He looks around to find the living room lights still on but no one present inside. Chen always closes the lights before he goes to sleep upstairs.

Out of curiosity, Xiumin closes the lights and quickly goes upstairs to check their bedroom to find that Chen was not in fact on the bed snoring. Xiumin walks back down, not really sure where his husband is but remembering him shouting from above when he was still inside the studio about checking on Lay’s home so he assumes Chen must still be in there.

But it had been almost two hours since then?

He looks around to see if Lay’s spare keys to his house were still paying on the rack to find that one was still there, which means Chen was still definitely there. He takes the key along with his own house keys, quickly locking the door to his house and jogging over to the house close to his, looking to see the lights to the first floor still on.

‘What the hell are they still doing up?’, Xiumin whispers, walking up to the small steps by the door, unlocking the door and walking inside. The house is intact, so he didn’t have to worry about the pair damaging the house, but as soon as he turns to the living room, his shoulders droop and he tries to repress a smile when he sees Chen sleeping on Chanyeol’s shoulders, the both of them sitting on the floor, using each other as their pillows, Jia sleeping soundlessly in both their arms, four limbs tangled together to protect the baby from falling over, Chanyeol’s finger still in Jia’s mouth, the little baby using it as a pacifier.
‘Holy shit’, Kyungsoo looks around the club, his gun resting by his belt, Suho by his side, trying to find the man they’re supposed to arrest. But it didn’t help when Kris was with them since a swarm of people, boys and girls, all cradle towards them with phones out, flashes and screams distracting them from finding their guy, ‘What great plan you have’, Kyungsoo whines at Suho, elbowing his best friend, ‘Totally conspicuous’

‘Shut up’, Suho threatens Kyungsoo, ‘Quit complaining and look for the guy. I go left and you go right’

‘And what about the people?’, Kyungsoo asks, being pushed for the umpteenth time by someone else desperate to get a picture.

‘They’re going to be at the centre where Kris is’, Suho tells his partner, looking around, his hand resting by his sides, ‘So, we’ll use this distraction to search for him’

‘I’m on it’, Kyungsoo, above all things, turns serious when he is ordered by his superior, already breaking away from Suho to the right, his eyes glaring ahead in search of a man in his late forties, probably grey and balding hair along with his lines of ladies draped around him. Apparently, he wasn’t hard to find.

He hears the loud banging of club music, the smell of sweat, smoke and alcohol filling his senses, making him grimace at the bitter odour, walking slowly and trying to avoid anyone with eyes for him, their arms draping around him, their whispers being pushed aside since he did not have time to entertain drunk idiots.

The club was big within itself and already filled with shady looking people, their eyes suspicious and their movements even more so. Kyungsoo made sure to note that in case he’s ever ordered to look for someone else who might also be present in this facility. His eyes scan upstairs, seeing the DJ booth being owned by someone who barely looked sober, bottles of wine and vodka decorating his DJ table, booth and tables erected around the perimeter, where men can see semi-private shows of their likings, Kyungsoo spotting a commotion of girls and boys hurdling in one booth, a crowd forming.

Bingo.

Kyungsoo quickly races his way over to where the booth is, watching his own back and memorising which stand of well-suited men walking around the perimeter, his gun hidden under his clothes as they stare at him. He passes them rather quickly, much to his surprise, coming closer to the group of performers desperate to show a particular man their skills.

This has to be him.

But to his surprise, he looked much different than he had pictured.

He was definitely in his forties, but his hair was still intact and combed back, he had a goatee and he was still built, he can see his muscles being embraced by his tight suit. His arms were draped over one man and one woman, all too busy touching his body whilst another group of girls dances in front of him.

Disgusting.
Kyungsoo tries to find a way to arrest him, but he had already calculated at least five bodyguards surrounding him, so walking up to the gang leader and simply showing him his badge was not going to cut it.

He looks around, walking straight to another crowd of boys who had started to walk over towards the big booth, hiding himself bang in the middle, out of plain sight, taking out his phone and sending Suho a text for back up.

He quickly earns a reply, commanding for him to stay put and keep an eye on the man. Suho has probably already called for backup and on his way to join him before the rest of the team can make the arrest.

‘You’, he hears a deep growl silencing the area, everyone looking around at who the man was pointing to, seeing his eyes sparkle at the sight of a lean man standing in front of him, ‘You’, he says again once the crowd of people parted to make way for a direct contact between him and the man.

Who happens to be Kyungsoo.

‘Me?’, Kyungsoo points to himself, looking around to find that all eyes were on him, which was not a good idea. He was supposed to lay low, ‘What about me?’

‘Come here’, the gang leader commands, waving his finger as if he was just an animal, ‘Come sit on daddy’s lap’

_Is this man for real?

Kyungsoo looks around, confused and trying to hide the disgusted grimace he was feeling towards this old hag. He could say no, but that would earn even more attention and cause a commotion. But he simply cannot leave. Not when Suho isn’t here yet and they’ll lose sight on the target.

Kyungsoo closes his eyes and slyly slides his gun inside his jeans instead, walking over to where the man is, sitting on his lap awkwardly, his hands by his side, not knowing what to do.

‘Come on angel’

Kyungsoo contemplates whether to pull out his gun right here and now, but he stays calm like he was taught in the police academy, always choosing to take the safe route and follow his order. Suho will come anyway, he just needed to stay calm before so.

‘What brings an awkward little butterfly my way?’, he whispers, his voice sticky with danger and sultry, making Kyungsoo feel even more uncomfortable, which didn’t help by the sudden touch which starts to glide over his back, slow and dehumanising as if he was taming a wild beast. He stays quiet, not wanting to draw more attention, although he did try to relax a bit. His eyes shift from side to side, in search of a familiar flock of hair, waiting for Suho to come so he can get off this bastard.

The music continues to blare, the booth still full and his waist still locked around the man’s arms. He had no idea what his name was, the case files only revealing a picture of him along with a few information they had managed to salvage. The flashes of reds and blue lights reflecting from the disco ball above them, everyone singing along to a song that he had never heard of before.

_Suho. Suho, come on…_

Kyungsoo finally sees something which caught his attention, Suho and Kris secretly hiding behind
another crowd of people, Suho’s hands resting ever so slightly above his belt buckle. Kyungsoo relaxed now, looking down at the man in question.

‘Hello Mr’

‘Oh, so the sweet thing does talk’, he smirks, pulling Kyungsoo closer towards him.

‘Yes, I do. And you are under arrest. You have the right to remain silent. If you do say anything, what you say can be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to consult with a lawyer and have that lawyer present during any questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer, one will be appointed for you if you so desire’, Kyungsoo pushes himself back as he tries to pull out his gun but he feels the strong hold against his back still pulling him intact, which confused him for a moment since he’s never met someone who was stronger than him.

‘Yeah, I know…’, he whispers, biting his bottom lip as he looks at the police officer up and down, ‘You should try a little harder Mr Do Kyungsoo, I expected better’

‘You… You know me?’, he calls out, feeling something going wrong, his stomach churning and eyes shaking towards Suho.

‘I know everyone, sweet thing’, he murmurs right by Kyungsoo’s earlobe before shoving something into Kyungsoo’s stomach, a loud gunshot from outside informing everyone to get the fuck out, Kyungsoo looking down to find a knife pierced in his stomach, a patch of blood already forming around it.

‘Everybody! Out!’

Police sirens churn, more gunshots ensued, the music continued to screech at a continuous loop as the DJ booth is abandoned, legs running around, stomping over others and spilling drinks, glasses shattered and alcohol splattered.

Kyungsoo is pushed onto the ground, the hard force of shoes kicking and climbing over him as he watches their guy get away along with his posse.

He held onto the knife, making sure not to take it out just in case he bleeds to death right here and now, his eyes threatening to close as he feels his insides meshing, feeling it tightening and convulse in pain and terror. He tries to breathe but even that had become hasty and too much of a task for him. The surge of something wet and red decorating his hands, his eyelids twitching, his legs shaking and something weird running through his veins which felt more painful than being blown up by the grenade. He feels the corners of his mouth salivating, his visions blurring in colours of red and shapes of blues.

This is not what it’s like when you’re stabbed.

This is what it’s like when you’re poisoned.

Kyungsoo realised that the metal blade pierced inside him was soaked in poison.

He takes it out immediately, feeling a wave of blood surging out of him and trailing onto the floor, slowly yet evidentially pooling around him.
He stops breathing.
‘We need to stop meeting up in the hospital. This is getting ridiculous’, Xiumin looks around the waiting room, seeing everyone sat around, elbows on knees, heads resting on hands as they wait for some form of verdict. They had all gotten the call in the middle of the night, Suho’s quivering voice which triggered them to rush out of their bed, running for their jackets and leaving everything behind to race their way over to the hospital, baby Jia being reunited with her dads the night afterwards after Lay finishes the conference, him and Luhan racing their way back to Seoul.

‘What have we got?’, Eun Bi asks, sitting right next to Kai who had been silent throughout the whole day, being the last one to attend due to his photoshoot which had contractedly constrained
him into a cage, not being allowed to leave. He had walked in with everyone half-asleep, covering themselves with blankets Lay had stolen from the storage room.

‘They said the poison had reached his heart’, Suho whispers, ‘Which means it’ll take hours for them to get rid of the poison and even longer for them to heal his heart’

‘You’ve got to be kidding me…’, Sehun mumbles, his hair messy and shining with grease since he hadn’t washed it for two days straight. He had just gone out to celebrate with his colleagues on his winning case when he got the call and he hadn’t left the hospital since.

‘Hey, Suho’, a foreign voice retracts them from their conversation, a tall man walking into the waiting room, holding a cup of coffee and pastry.

‘Kris? What are you doing here?’, Suho questions, already at his feet and moving to push Kris back form further entering the room.

‘I bought you coffee when I found out you were still here. You should go home and rest, do you want me to drive you home?’

‘Kris, that’s very nice of you, but no. Please just leave’, Suho requests with a hint of desperation as he can feel numerous pairs of eyes lasering at his back, ‘Sehun is here with me, so I’ll be fine’

‘Oh, right…’, Kris looks ahead to find the tall kid staring back at him, feeling the boy’s gaze turn stern and defensive the moment their eyes meet, the glimmer of second in which Sehun recognised him, ‘Okay, I’ll be off then’, he bows to the Chief Police, handing Suho the coffee he had bought on his way up here, waving a greeting and a goodbye to everyone else in the room.

‘Who was that?’

‘Please Sehun, I don’t have time for this’, Suho calls back to the voice which had broken the tensed silent, ‘Kyungsoo is still in surgery’, Suho had a point and Sehun couldn’t just start interrogating Suho during such a sensitive time. He leans back, looking away and down to the floor before things get any worse.

‘What’s up with the two of you? Gosh, so tense. As if I’m not already freaking the fuck out…’, Chanyeol murmurs, looking between the two of them, seeing Suho sitting back down next to Suho to see the tall lawyer getting up and moving a seat away, which was picked up by everyone since he was the only person moving.

‘We’re kind of dating’

‘What?!’

‘Who?’

‘Are you fucking kidding me?’

All of them shout simultaneously, their heads jerking up from the floor and to the pair, looking from one guilty pair of eyes to another.

‘You two are fucking again?’

‘Can we please give me one news at a time? I can’t handle stress like I used to’, Xiumin pinches his forehead, massaging it as he is yet given another big news which he did not need since he should be
worrying about Kyungsoo at the moment.

‘Yeah, like overeating and stealing all my food?’, Chen whispers to himself, but since he was sitting right next to him, his husband heard every word.

‘Your food? Bitch, we share the same food’, Xiumin turns his head over, glaring at Chen who, even though looked cute when he was half asleep, was about to be murdered right here and now.

‘Guys! Stop!’, Baekhyun stands up after the voices starts to rise, piling up and overlapping each other, the married couple fighting whilst everyone else was too busy asking Sehun and Suho what the fuck was going on with them, ‘Kyungsoo is fucking dying! Have some respect and shut up’

‘Hey, he’s not dying’, Lay comforts everyone, pulling Baekhyun’s arm so he can sit back down, ‘Retracting poison from the body is a simple thing for healers. It’s not going to be a big deal’

‘But it reached his heart’, Baekhyun looks at the doctor, ‘That can’t be easy to get rid of’

‘That is true, it’ll be a little bit more difficult’, Lay nods his head, ‘But, it’s not impossible’, the words of the professional which eases everyone a little, Suho finally relaxing his tensed muscles, the warm coffee still in his hands, holding it up to take a sip.

‘I can’t believe you’re drinking his coffee…’

‘Then go get me one!’, Suho yells at the petty lawyer, jerking his head to glare at Sehun who continues to look forward, back leaning on the chair and arms folded across his chest, ‘God, you get so jealous sometimes’

The room quietens down once another hour pass, even Lay’s statement not being enough for them to be at ease, everyone being agitated, legs shaking, eyes glued to the clock hanging above them.

‘Dr Zhang’, a voice from the end of the corridor calls out Lay’s name, the doctor standing up, ‘We need you in the department. There’s been-‘ before the nurse can finish, Lay is already running towards them, leaving everyone behind as he picks up his job, rushing out of the corridor.

‘I wonder what that was about’, Baekhyun whispers, looking ahead to find Eun Bi sleeping on Suho’s lap as another night turns in, the evening slowly turning into night, Kai standing up and pacing back and forth, nervously looking down at his phone. He had to be with Kyungsoo when he wakes up, he needed to be here, but his phone was giving him anxiety. One call and is obligated to go to his next schedule without no question.

‘Please, Kyungsoo… Wake up already…’

‘What is it?’, Lay pushes through until he’s in his department, his assistant already by his side, giving him his jacket, pacing forward to a VIP room, opening the door with swift as he looks down.

‘She’s a new patient’, his assistant informs him whilst he walks towards her, his eyes glancing at her state, her skin matted in rocks, solid and unbreakable by the looks of it, ‘She’s an earth
manipulator, but it seems like her neuro nerves have guided her powers to…’, she didn’t finish her sentence since the patient’s very form was enough of a conclusion as to what has happened, Lay slowly and gently touching her arm, just in case it had become a pain if triggered. He can hear the small whimpers from her face which was half covered and decorated in rocks, blocking her right eye from seeing, her mouth almost shut out by the pile of stones, her skin breaking apart slowly.

‘Ple- Uh-‘, her voice is muffled, her muscles strained due to the weight, her eyes tearing, blood sipping between her joints when she tries to bend her arms.

‘Stay still…’, Lay gently orders her, stroking her face where her skin was still untouched, ‘I’m going to try and heal you, okay?’, Lay whispers, gripping onto her face, tensing his arms as he tries to make it a little painless for her.

His assistant and nurse are left in shock. Of course, Lay being a healer wasn’t anything new, but the noticed the way some of the smaller rocks around her face started to crumble off her ripped skin, her skin also regenerating due to his touch.

No one can heal neuro led diseases, not by a long shot. But this tiny glimmer was… Enough to maybe think otherwise’

‘Doctor Zhang… How did you?’, of course, Lay couldn’t ever heal all of her, but he had taken care with at least half of her face, enough or her to at least breath and talk.

‘She’s an earth bender. What she got on her body is a foreign scar. But it seems like the rocks have started to latch onto her skin’, Lay informs them, ‘We need to perform surgery on her immediately’, he starts to walk away from the patient’s room instantly, ‘Prepare an operation room, now’

‘But… You’ll have to remove every rock on her… That can take hours… Days even’, his assistant races after him, flustered and a little bit cornered by his sudden decision for an operation.

‘There’s no other way. We can’t just let the rocks consume her’, Lay pulls his jacket, throwing it on the floor the moment they reach his office, taking off his shirt and getting changed into surgery clothes, ‘And by the looks of the guards following us behind…’, he suddenly noticed two suited men standing behind his office, looking through his window with sunglasses covering his face, ‘We wouldn’t want to lose the prime minister’s daughter in our hands, right?’

His assistant also looks back out of the window, gazing down at the men who are talking on the form, probably informing the Prime Minister himself of Dr Zhang’s decision.

‘Oh god…’

‘C’mon Miss Lee, let’s get this over and done with’
making the tall man feel even more uncomfortable. Chanyeol tries to calm him down, but he couldn’t do much since he was sitting on the other side with Baekhyun and Chen. It didn’t help when Chen noticed his husband giving the stink eye to Chanyeol, looking back and forth between the two of them.

‘I’m sure Lay’s just doing his job as a doctor. No big deal’, Chanyeol cuts the silence, standing up, ‘I’m hungry, anybody wants anything from the canteen?’

‘You have money?’

‘Okay, first of all, Sehun, ouch’, Chanyeol points to Sehun with a defeated look, ‘And second of all, yes I fucking do, so do you want anything or not?’

‘Some crisps would be nice…’, Sehun whispers out, which Chanyeol didn’t expect, folding his arms together and judging the young lawyer terribly.

‘Fine, your majesty’, Chanyeol growls back, just about to walk out until he hears another pair of footsteps following him.

‘I’ll come with you’, Baekhyun calls out, shortly being followed by a few more stares, their eyes not leaving until the pair had closed the doors behind them.

‘If I get any more news, I’m going to throw a brick at all of you’, Xiumin rolls his eyes the moment he noticed that they’re all staring at each other with conspicuous looks, suspicious and slightly confused at the interaction between the two who shouldn’t even be having a conversation with each other. Xiumin also feeling the vibe and not being able to take any more news. If he finds out that Chanyeol and Baekhyun are also fucking each other, he will end up reverting to violence at some point.

‘You think Suho will like some kimbap?’, Baekhyun breaks the silence, the both of them inside the canteen, a scattering of people sitting down to grab a bite to eat, nurses and doctors on break, others whose feet are also tied to this hospital, for now, looking down at their half-empty plates with sullen looks.

‘I’m sure he wouldn’t mind it’, Chanyeol comments, picking up some snacks for everyone, ‘Grab some water too’, he points to the fridge placed by the side where the ranges of drinks are.

‘You think he’s going to be okay?’

‘Who? Kyungsoo?’, Chanyeol turns to see that Baekhyun is watching him, paying a close extra attention when he walks over to him, ‘He’s a fighter, you and I both know that’

‘Yeah… Yeah’, Baekhyun nods aggressively, a little over exaggeration which prickles Chanyeol’s interest.

‘So… Are you nervous about Kyungsoo?’, Chanyeol trod at the question lightly. He didn’t need to be approaching the elephant in the room at such an untimely hour and he didn’t mean to poke at Baekhyun’s business, but a hint of curiosity got him looking back, finally feeling agitation that he
hadn’t felt even during the night at the jail cell.

‘Of course, I’m worried for him’, Baekhyun comments, ‘How could I not? He’s going through his third surgery’, Baekhyun heaves a long breath, following Chanyeol to the cashier, ‘I knew his job is dangerous but… I mean… A poisonous knife? That’s intense man’, Baekhyun whispers, looking down at the floor, letting Chanyeol pay for the items on the counter, Chanyeol swiping his card and dreading how much money it will detract from his barely revived bank account.

‘You and him… I mean… I’m sure you’ll be more worried than the others’

‘What is that supposed to mean?’, Baekhyun feels the hinting voice in Chanyeol, glancing up at the boy’s facial expression. Chanyeol had always worn his heart on his sleeves, if not, he loved showing his emotions during his youth, he probably didn’t know how to hide it, which is why Baekhyun knew the instant their eyes met, where Chanyeol was going with the conversation, ‘Oh, come on Chanyeol. He’s in fucking surgery. Can we leave this conversation another time? An appropriate time?’, Baekhyun rolls his head back in disappointment, already tired of being stuffed inside the goddamn waiting room.

‘I’m not saying anything’, Chanyeol lifts his hand up in innocence, quickly picking up the bag of food, taking a step backwards, ‘I’m only-’

‘Implying’, Baekhyun interrupts him, ‘You were implying that I would care more about Kyungsoo because we dated’

‘I wouldn’t be surprised’

‘No… You shouldn’t. Because unlike you, he was actually there for me’

‘There for you? What was that for? You’re telling me that I wasn’t there for you when we were together?’, Chanyeol tilts his head back, stopping his steps in mid motion, ‘I was there for you’

‘Was’, Baekhyun emphasises, his arms folded in front of his chest, ‘Kyungsoo helped me get over you. I guess you’re mad at that, huh?’

‘Get over me?’

‘Yes, get over you. You think stomping your way in and out of my life is all child’s play to you? It fucking hurt when you left’, Baekhyun’s voice sounded calm, it wasn’t loud, it wasn’t full of anger, but there was something hinted in his tone, a tone like he’s had enough, a sense of desperation to end whatever they were talking about now, ‘I can’t believe I’m talking to you about this…’

‘Why not? I’m back aren’t I?’, Chanyeol points out, ‘And you weren’t holding any sort of barriers. If you did, you wouldn’t have let me even five miles near to you’

‘And what? So, what if I decided to tolerate you?’, Baekhyun argues back, ‘You think you’d just forget what you did to me just because I’m cutting you some slack? You think all is forgiven? Who the fuck do you think you are for you to think you even deserve to be forgiven?’, Baekhyun’s growing frustration begins to rile him up, he bites his inner cheeks to avoid spurting out anything he might regret.

‘Then why did you cut me some slack? Why would you even give me any form of hope that maybe we can talk it out someday?’

‘Hope? Bitch, I wanted an explanation’
Chanyeol stops in his track of thoughts, looking at Baekhyun, only looking at him, not thinking about what Baekhyun was thinking or what he was thinking. He stares at his eyes, the way it squints like it usually does when he gets fed up.

‘Baekhyun…’

‘I deserved an explanation for you leaving me and I thought you were going to give it to me… But I guess all you give me is your stupid homemade food which I didn’t even ask for’, Baekhyun closes his eyes, seriously in need to stop himself before he says anything else, feeling his hands reach out to hold his face, blocking Chanyeol from seeing his torn expression for a minute, giving in to his emotions from six years ago just for a few seconds, only a few moments before he has to pretend he’s all fine again.

‘Baekhyun…’

‘Guys! Suho’s asking what’s taking you all so long’, Chen’s voice runs from the main reception of the hospital by the canteen, Chen stopping in midtrack when he sees Chanyeol and Baekhyun facing each other, not at all looking comfortable, sensing tension which should not have been interrupted, ‘Sorry… I can always tell them you’re still buying something…’, Chen calls out when he spots that none of them had yet to turn around and face him despite his presence being acknowledged by his loud ass entrance.

‘No, it’s fine. We were just going’, Baekhyun coughs out the awkwardness, brushing pass Chanyeol and Chen, striding away from the canteen and back towards the waiting room which had become his own personal hell.

‘Dude…’, Chen spoke to no one in particular, just needing to voice out the tension in the air as he turns to spot Baekhyun’s figure disappearing as he turns a corner, abandoning both him and Chanyeol.

‘Don’t’, Chanyeol waves a warning glare to Chen, turning around to join him walk back to the gang, ‘I don’t want to hear it’

‘What did you say to him?’, Chen pokes an accusation finger to the stomach, making Chanyeol flinch at the contact, ‘Did you try to burn him again?’

‘If that’s supposed to be a joke, it’s not funny’

‘I thought it would’ve eased the tension’

‘You’re so shit at doing that, you know that right?’, Chanyeol rolls his eyes at the suited man, shaking his head, ‘Just don’t do it’

‘Well, at least I’m good at staying exactly where I am’

‘And what’s that supposed to mean?’

‘Exactly what it needs to mean to you right now’

‘You’re a fucking twat. You know that?’

‘Of course, I am. That’s because I grew up with one’
‘Look, I know Kyungsoo is not doing so well, but—’

‘Sehun, please. Can we drop it?’, Suho whines the moment he opens the toilet doors to find Sehun leaning on one of the sinks, hands resting inside his pockets, eyes staring at the stall he was in, waiting for him to step out. Suho brushes past him, going over to the other sink to wash his hands.

‘I just need to know… Was he the reason why you’ve been cancelling our dates?’, Sehun asks, bluntly, like a lawyer. Which didn’t sit well with Suho since he felt like a victim being interrogated, ‘Like when you disappeared from the station last week?’

‘Look… I haven’t been cancelling our dates because of him’, Suho sighs, shaking his damp hands by the sink before swerving from Sehun to the hand dryer, ‘But yes, I was with Kris when you came to the station last week’

‘I knew it…’

‘Knew it? What the fuck? Sehun, Kris and I went to dinner because we haven’t seen each other in a long time… That didn’t mean it went further than that’

‘Then why do you let him follow you around like that?’, Sehun’s voice begins to rise, a crescendo of piled up frustration and suspicion climbing up his throat and punching its way out of his mouth, ‘I even heard the officer talking about how you asked him to join you in the arrest’

‘Because he’s Kris fucking Wu Sehun! He was a perfect alibi for me’

‘Or was he a perfect guy for you?’

‘What?’, Suho shakes his head, closing his eyes and pinching his forehead, ‘Sehun, I don’t know what you’re talking about’

‘Those officers co-operated with Kris smoothly, your co-workers, your team gets along with him. You probably wouldn’t need to keep your relationship a secret if you’re with him instead’

‘Sehun, what are you talking about? He’s a celebrity, of course, I’d have to’

‘Oh’, Sehun squints his eyes, ‘So, you were thinking about being in a relationship with him?’

‘What? Oh, come on, don’t pull that fucking trick on me Mr Oh’, Suho sarcastically yells back, ‘I was talking in a hypothetical sense, you dimwit’

‘You know what, whatever…’, Sehun scratches the side of his head, rolling his eyes, preparing himself to leave the bathroom, striding past the Chief Police and out of the door, but before he could, his eyes graze over the shield of water which stops him from opening the door without getting wet, covering the whole door.

‘Sehun, do you remember the first time we hooked up ever since we met again almost two years ago?’, Suho slowly turns around to face Sehun who had his back towards him, his coat showing off his broad shoulders, ‘Remember how I had to literally pretend you didn’t exist because it would affect my case?’, Suho is asking questions, but he seems to be getting no reply, just Sehun standing in front of him, contemplating whether to just feel the rush of cold water splatter all over his hands and clothes to try and escape the room, ‘Sehun… Do you remember what I did after the case was
closed? After you made me lose another case, again? Huh? Do you remember?"

‘Of course, I fucking remember’, Sehun hisses out, his back still facing Suho’s, but he answered back anyway, remembering the time he felt conflicted with emotions, looking at Suho with anger and the beginning of an unknown feeling which he later found out was longing.

‘What did I do then? Tell me. Remind me. What did I do?’, Suho takes a step forward, reaching his hand out, squeezing Sehun’s shoulder before gliding it down his arm and into his hands.

‘You… Knocked on my apartment door…’

‘And?’

‘And… You kissed me’

‘That’s right’, Suho rushes forward, his hand already intertwined with Sehun’s, tiptoeing to brush his lips against the back of Sehun’s neck, ‘I chose you’, he whispers, Sehun feeling his breath kiss his skin, sending shivers down his spine, ‘I didn’t even have to think twice and chose you’, Suho reminds Sehun once again, trailing his kisses between the junction of his neck and exposed shoulder, gliding up to his prominent jawline, ‘Remember that, okay?’, he commands Sehun, the young lawyer feeling himself let go the moment he feels Suho’s kisses along with his soft fingertips holding onto him, pulling him closer to where the Chief Police is, ‘Don’t forget what you do to me’. Suho finally gets a fully grip go Sehun’s waist, twisting him around so that the latter is finally facing him, looking down at his wide honest eyes, ‘What you still do to me, every single fucking time… Okay?’

‘Okay’, Sehun gives in, feeling himself dip in with the contact of Suho’s lips crashing into his, his hands automatically cupping the Chief Police’s face, locking him in to where he can’t run away, the wind rushing beneath his feet, making them tumble against the wall, Suho pressed between the two.

‘I bet you 50 that they’re fucking in the toilets’, Chanyeol points out the moment they see two spare seats being unoccupied for quite some time now.

‘Nah, they can’t be fucking. Maybe just making out’, Chen calls out, pulling out his wallet and ripping out a 50.

‘Are you guys seriously betting?’, Kai looks between the two of them, trying to keep quiet since Eun bi had taken to sleeping on his lap since Baekhyun had left to fetch some more food.

‘The nurse just came and told us we gotta wait another two hours until the surgery finishes, so unless you want to die of boredom, I suggest you either pick fucking or making out’, Chen tries to ease Kai and deviate the growing stress the idol was going through, ‘Now, what’s it going to be? Fucking or nah’, Kai is silent, trying to ignore Chen and Chanyeol, deeming himself too good for this nonsense and immature bet, looking ahead at the operating room, feeling his anxiety slowly coming back to him, the feeling of his phone against his hands, making him shake like he’s holding a ticking time grenade.
‘Fine… I bet they’re fucking too’, Kai breathes out a sigh of defeat, practically throwing his phone on the spare seat next to him, ‘I’ll pull out the 50 when Eun Bi wakes up’

‘Sweet. Looks like I’m earning some dough’, Chanyeol gleams, Chen raising his voice and whining a list about how he’s wrong.

‘You guys are fucking useless’, is the only thing Xiumin – the only normal person in the room – can say as he watches an argument unfold between the three of them, Kai arguing that fucking in the toilets can be hot, whereas Chen argues that Suho didn’t have the courage to have sex in a public setting. It sounded disgusting, yet there was a hint of playfulness which Xiumin hadn’t seen in the three of them in a long time.

Before another night ends, a few of them had decided that it was time to go home after being informed that the surgery had gone well, but Kyungsoo would be in the recovery room for a long while, still unconscious and weak. They all wait until Kyungsoo’s parents had gone back to the hospital after work, picking up Eun Bi who needed a warm shower and maybe proper food, the rest slowly making their way out of the hospital halls, their footsteps following along each other, a sense of déjà vu running their course once again.

‘I swear, if one of you ends up in hospital again, I’m going to go back in time and punch you all in the faces’, Xiumin sighs once they all step out of the sliding doors, feeling the cold rush of the night flooding around them after being cooped up in the small and warm waiting room for a whole weekend.

No one bothered to reply to Xiumin. Probably because they didn’t think anyone else was going to get themselves hurt. Or maybe the opposite. Xiumin wasn’t quite sure, his eyes slowly yet steadily turning over to where Chanyeol was standing, towering over everyone with his long limbs, following shortly behind everyone else, always a couple of steps away from them. Suho had offered to drive Baekhyun, Sehun following them towards his car which was parked right next to Suho’s, a soft nod of separation being the only way of informing the others of their departure. No words, no hug. Just a small action.

‘You want us to drive you home?’, Xiumin turns to Kai and Chanyeol, seeing the way the idol didn’t even answer, just following Chen towards his car, resting his forehead on his back before disappearing to god knows where even before Chen can open his car door.

‘No… No, I’m good. I’ll just walk’, Chanyeol dismisses Xiumin’s offer, nodding them off and turning to go his own way, not giving any time for the remaining pair to protest, Xiumin watching Chanyeol walk slowly away from them, pausing his movements, leaving the door open despite Chen asking him to close it so they can get going, his eyes still fixated on Chanyeol just walking away from them.

‘Why do you think Chanyeol walks so much nowadays?’, he says aloud, curiosity getting the better of him as he slowly closes the door at Chen’s third command, his eyes never leaving the tall figure who grew smaller as he walks away, turning a corner and finally disappearing from his gaze.

‘I don’t know. Probably because he doesn’t have a car?’, Chen points out nonchalantly, putting his
car in reverse and driving the other way to the parking exit, not paying too much attention to Chanyeol’s behaviour since he knew the latter had always been an unpredictable character.

Chanyeol limps his way towards the park benches right by the end of the road of the hospital, feeling himself heave a sigh of relief as he mutters curses to himself, distracting himself from the growing ache in his left ankle which he would have from time to time. He feels his hands brushing against his back pocket, feeling the familiar pouch he always carries around, unzipping the content and quickly pulling out his injections right after he took off his shoes and sock, looking down to his perfectly normal looking feet, albeit differing the drumming pain which had gnawed its way.

He had gotten used to the injections, despite being terrified by them at first. How could he not? He’s had more injections pierced into his skin than he had felt the flowers beneath him when he used to lay down on this very same park with Chen before school, early morning when the sun is still rising, his hair bundled with the grass and blooming daisies.

***

Eleven years ago

‘It is important for you all to get vaccinated. It will help you in the long run… To avoid cancer… And other diseases’, they can hear their teachers groan when they finally get the news from the local nurses that it was time for them to get their shots, which didn’t sit well with everyone, pretty much all the school trying to make an excuse not to attend classes that day to avoid the dreaded appointment.

‘Dude, can we stay in your basement for today? Why do we have to be here?’, Chanyeol whines, ruffling is curly hair, hitting his forehead lightly on his desk as he watches Chen nonchalantly read a book, being the only one calm about it.

‘Calm down, Chanyeol. It lasts like three seconds and it’s just a prick in the arm’, Chen tries to comfort his friend, yet he seems to engross in his book, so he instead reaches out his free arm to where Chanyeol is, patting his shoulders, ‘There, there. Everything will be alright’

‘What? You think I’m scared? Of a stupid fucking needle? Ha!’ Chanyeol pushes Chen’s arm out of his way, ‘You fucking wish! I can melt that shit in seconds!’, Chanyeol yells out, gaining the attention of the rest of his class, smiling when he sees their usual awe when he flicks his wrist, the palm of his hand resting a fireball in a shape of a glowing heart. It had become his recent masterpiece. To create different shapes with his flames. He had started with a simple circle which turned into a square when Chen accidentally scared him, and he emitted extra power from his hands. He can only do certain shapes and in certain sizes, but the heart had been earning him some
extra points with the girls and boys he’s been having a keen eye on lately.

‘Chanyeol, put that away’, Chen flinches at the sudden arrival of flames, putting his book down and leaning away from Chanyeol’s hands, ‘We’re not allowed to use our powers’

‘But we’re in class’

‘But still… Just quit it, okay?’, Chen orders, which Chanyeol follows, but not without his usual whining and other bullshit Chanyeol spurs out of his mouth when he’s being told to do something.

‘C’mon guys. Our class is up for the shots’, the can hear the Student President knock on their door, seeing Suho’s head pop up and informing their class to get up and line up outside the nurse’s office.

‘Dude, you’re a Park, so you’ll be behind me’, Chen pats Chanyeol’s back as they leave their bags behind, all of them walking out of the class and bruising the once quiet halls with their screeching and loud jokes that aren’t even that funny, the boys screaming and trying to make the girls scared, whereas the girls just roll their eyes at the immaturity, calmly walking over but still being shakenly nervous.

‘Hey, line up with me’, Chanyeol grabs Chen’s wrist the moment he walks further down the line since it was alphabetical order, ‘Chen, come on’

‘Dude, I’ll see you later’, Chen tries to suppress a laugh once he finally sees the flash of terror in Chanyeol’s eyes the moment he realises that it was all too real. He was going to get stabbed today, ‘You’ll do fine. Okay?’, Chen comforts him one last time before walking at the front, but his comfort did no good to Chanyeol who tries to keep his cool in front of everyone, trying to laugh with the other guys about how silly everyone is and laughing at some people’s overreactions.

Chanyeol turns his head immediately ahead when he hears screaming coming out, something about a student not wanting to get their injections done or some shit they can’t hear since the nurses and closed the door for privacy, but the muffled whining was still heard.

This, of course, did not fucking help.

Chanyeol was going to throw up. He’s going to throw up all his organs so what’s the point of getting his vaccination done when he was going to die right here and now anyway. He tries not to think too much about it, breathing in and out like how Chen had taught him whenever he felt frustrated or scared.

‘Does this stupid fucking breathing shit even work?’, he heard himself mutter to himself.

‘What?’, the girl in front of him turns after hearing him whisper, ‘Were you talking to me?’

‘No… No… I wasn’t…’, Chanyeol manages – barely – to form a sentence, closing his eyes and once again trying to keep his cool.

He shouldn’t have opened his goddamn eyes.

He sees another nurse rushing in with a cart of freshly packed injections, Chanyeol’s eyes falling on how fucking long the needle was.

*What the actual fuck? Are they piercing all of that in my fucking arm?*

‘Hell fucking no’, is the last thing he whispers out before he feels himself let go and go completely
He wakes up in the hospital wing, a blanket over him and a warm towel on his forehead. He squints due to the sunlight coming in from the window, hearing a scattering by his side.

‘Hey, Mr Park Chanyeol’, he hears the familiar sound of the school nurse by his side, clearing up the other bed next to him, ‘You’re finally awake’, she smiles down at him, finding it adorable that Mr Popular himself had fainted due to the thought of a thin needle.

‘Mrs Lee… How long had I been…’, Chanyeol itches his eyes, looking around and whining as he stretches his arms.

‘About an hour’

‘An hour?!’, Chanyeol feels a small ache in his left arm, looking down to see that his jacket was off and there was a plaster on his arm, ‘What is this?’

‘You signed a consent paper for us to vaccinate you, whether conscious or unconscious, so we thought it would’ve been the perfect time to get your vaccination over and done with whilst you were asleep’, Mrs Lee explains to Chanyeol as he rolls his shoulders around, trying to feel if his left arm was numb and about to fall off, but, except for the small ache, he didn’t feel a terribly great deal of pain.

‘Wow… It doesn’t even hurt that much…’, Chanyeol looks down on the small circular plaster, ‘How embarrassing’

‘Don’t worry. You’re not the only one who freaked out’, Mrs Lee chuckles, nodding her chin forward, Chanyeol following her guide to find another boy sleeping on the other bed, black mullet hair resting on the pillow.

‘Loner boy got the shit scared too?’

‘Hey! Don’t call him that. He may not like it’, Mrs Lee tells him off the moment Chanyeol spoke of the nickname the boy sleeping next to him got.

‘He probably wouldn’t know we call him that. He doesn’t interact. He’s basically a robot’, Chanyeol snorts at the sensitivity Mrs Lee was giving the situation even though it was a joke.

‘You’ll never know. He was scared of the needle today. So, he may have more emotions than you know’, Mrs Lee pats Chanyeol on the back, turning back to fold the blankets and heading over to the cupboards on the other side of the room.

Yeah. Maybe.

Chanyeol had never gotten to look or interact with loner boy at all, but he recognises his face. And his hair. God, his hair is a mess, his ends curled and hair a little longer at the back than the front – but apparently, that was on purpose – he also had a lip piercing which he wears occasionally, but sometimes doesn’t. He was also small. Tiny compared to him. If they both stand, maybe he would reach up to his shoulders, maybe a little higher.

He was sleeping so soundlessly, Chanyeol didn’t want to wake him. So, he tries to move in slow motion, attempting to get off the bed without triggering creaks, slowly taking off the blanket off him and onto the bed, about to slowly tiptoe away when he hears creaking which didn’t come from his bed. He turns his gaze to the bed next to his, seeing loner boy turn his body to one side, both his hands clapping together as he rests his cheeks on it like a pillow, his hair falling forward,
blocking his eyes from view.

He forgot loner boy’s name. He didn’t even think he knew his name since they didn’t share a class with him… Maybe Health Class last year but…

Chanyeol moves forward to the other bed instead of the exit, unknowingly reaching his hand out to comb it out of the sleeping boy’s eyes to make sure he doesn’t get irritated whilst sleeping. He feels his flames running through his veins and gently touching loner boy’s hair, but it didn’t set aflame. It didn’t burn. It didn’t hurt. Chanyeol’s flames never hurt. Instead, it coloured a streak of his hair in red, bright against the black.

Chanyeol quickly flinches his hand away when he sees what he had accidentally down, quickly turning back and rushing out of the hospital wing without saying goodbye to Mrs Lee.

Baekhyun had woken up that day with an odd streak of red in his hair, not knowing where it came from, but since he saw a little glow in the red, he concluded that it was probably his light messing with him, but it did look okay.

Okay enough that he would highlight his hair in red streaks the following year.

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*Kyungsoo is awake.*

Kai sits inside the meeting room in his company with his head rolled back and eyes closed whilst he listens to his management team ponder over his schedules for the next couple of months. He was set to leave for Japan tomorrow for a photo shoot which was most likely going to last three days and afterwards, he’s going straight to rehearsals for his musical whilst he sits through composers to make a start for his album.

He has no way of getting away from his manager with such a tight schedule.

He can’t visit Kyungsoo.

‘After the first rehearsal, we need you to come to the studios’, he hears his manager and President ordering him, reading off the list they made for him to follow, ‘We booked an influential composer to work with you and… Since your last album was a success, we’ll let a few of your own songs in’

‘That is… If they’re any good’, the President proceeds to limit Kai’s creative freedom, but at this point, the idol has gotten used to it.

‘Whatever’, Kai dismisses them, ‘Can I go now?’ Kai asks them, seeing the rest of the team slowly packing away their files, his manager giving him a nod of approval which was responded by his sudden disappearance, everyone looking up at where Kai was sitting just a moment ago, now just seeing an empty space.

‘Did he just?’

‘I told him not to teleport’
Kai ends up in the middle of the hospital hallway, doctors and nurses rushing past him, not even noticing that he had appeared out of nowhere. He looks around, trying to see where he ended up in since he wasn’t in the usual waiting room. This tends to happen a few times. Since he hasn’t used his teleportation powers for over five years, it had started to get rusty, his powers taking him to somewhere else.

He sighs, looking for the directions of the hospital, following the arrows and asking around for a few minutes before he saw Suho walking his way.

‘Hey, what are you doing here?’, Suho calls out, quickening his pace to face Kai.

‘I’m here to visit Kyungsoo’

‘Kyung… Soo?’

‘Yeah, is he alright?’, Suho hadn’t gotten used to Kai addressing his best friend by his real name, but he shrugs it off, playing it cool and guiding the tall idol to Kyungsoo’s private room, opening the code lock since Kyungsoo is currently under protection due to the circumstances of his injuries. He slides the door to find Kyungsoo with a blank stare, lifting a spoon full of porridge from his bowl before dropping it slowly, watching the porridge fall from the spoon and landing straight back into the bowl.

‘Kyungsoo, you’ve got another visitor’, Suho informs the resting officer, his eyes reverting up to where Kai waves at him.

‘Oh shit. Wow… You got a celebrity to visit me?’, Kyungsoo’s eyes widen at the sight of Kim Jongin standing right in front of him, looking taller and more handsome than he did on the small TV screen by his hospital bed, ‘How did you get him to come?’, both Suho and Kai looked at each other in confusion, Kai giving Suho a questioning look, yet the Chief Police could not give him answers. They turn back to look at Kyungsoo due to the flash of a camera, Kyungsoo taking a snapshot of Kai standing right in front of them, ‘The guys are going to be so jealous when they found out you got a celebrity to visit me’, Kyungsoo calls out to the both of them, ‘I mean, the doctors say to help me ease the anxiety but… Wow, Suho you really do go above and beyond’

‘What the fuck is going on?’, Kai finally asks Suho, tilting his head for an explanation.

‘I have no idea… He… The doctors didn’t say anything about amnesia or anything… And Chen and Xiumin visited him like yesterday and he remembered them…’, Suho looks at Kyungsoo, not really sure what’s going on and why he’s acting a certain way, ‘I need to go see a doctor. Excuse me’, Suho quickly pats Kai’s back before rushing out of the room and quickly looking for Lay to see if he’s hanging around lately.

Kai slowly approaches Kyungsoo who was busy texting someone, smiling and his eyes in an outburst of joy which somewhat confuses Kai.

‘Kyungsoo?’

‘Oh!’, Kyungsoo turns back to face Kai once he heard his name being called, ‘Sorry, I should probably introduce myself’, Kyungsoo straightens himself up, stretching his hand out to try and reach for Kai’s, ‘I’m Do Kyungsoo by the way’

‘I… Know…’, Kai replies, not taking Kyungsoo’s hand, ‘I know you’

‘Oh really? How? Did we meet before?’
'Yeah… We did’

‘I’m sure we didn’t… I’m pretty sure I’ll remember if I ever met the Kim Jongin’

‘Who?’, Kyungsoo starts laughing when Kai asks him the question.

‘Jongin’, that didn’t sound right. It didn’t feel right either, ‘Or shall I call you Mr Kim?’

‘No, no…’, Jongin looks down on the floor, not really knowing how to approach the situation, ‘Jongin… Jongin is fine’

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Lay looks down at the girl who sleeps soundlessly in front of him, her body practically mummified in bandages after a gruelling fifteen-hour surgery to personally taking off all the rocks on her skin. He had gone to check up on her, being the only one to do so since the whole corridor to her room was guarded by three or sometimes four men with real guns by their sides. It was a whirlwind of stress having the Prime Minister’s daughter be in his care, not forgetting the amount of press being shoved up his face whenever he walks out of the hospital, asking private questions which he as a doctor and decent human being shouldn’t have the rights to share.

He looks at her closed eyes, her chest which heaves up and down slowly, the machine plugged by her side and showing life at every beep.

He’ll come back when she’s awake. Till then, he slowly gets up from the chair, stroking her hair back before exiting the VIP room, sliding the doors closed and bowing to the guards by the sides of the door, striding out of the hallway to get himself a cup of coffee and maybe an apology card for Luhan for not being able to come home for the third night in a row.

‘Hey! Lay! Dude!’, he hears someone screaming his name, swiftly turning around to see Suho in a leather jacket and his police badge pinned by the side, running up to him, ‘Lay!’

‘What is it?’, he questions, reaching out to hold onto Suho’s arms as the officer tries to catch his breath, ‘What’s wrong?’

‘You need to see Kyungsoo. Now’

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It turns out the knife wasn’t poison. After Suho begged his department to release the evidential items, Lay locked himself in the lab room, looking at the poisoned knife to realise there were some mixtures of the poison which looked rather odd.

‘I’ve debunked each particle and substances used to make the poison’, Lay turns his paperwork which finalises his analysis of the knife, ‘There’s 30% Arsenic like what the original analysis had concluded but…’, everyone looks down on Lay’s paperwork, the doctors and Suho huddles
together, even with the police officer who was assigned to safely carry the evidence from and back to the station, ‘There’s a 0.9% of memoria damnunilia present in the mixture’

‘What the hell is that?’, Suho looks up to Lay, the rest of the doctor taking a closer look at the microscopic picture of the chemical mixture.

‘It’s a hormone released from the brain which has the ability to take away a piece of your memory… The person who had made this poison specifically extracted that hormone in the specific amount for the purpose to take away a part of Kyungsoo’s memories’

‘What?!’, the officers yell out, ‘They can do that?’

‘Un fortunately, it’s a power that they have since this hormone only exists to those with the ability to wipe out memories’

‘Are you kidding me?’, Suho heaves out a sigh of frustration, clutching at his hair, wanting to rip it all out, ‘We’re dealing with someone who can wipe out memories?’

‘Chief… Does this mean… There may be more witnesses?’, one of the officer’s looks at is superior, looking more worried as they turn back to look at Lay’s files, confirming that this case might be bigger than what they had expected.

‘But…’, Lay looks down, ‘If we break it down more specifically, the accurate amount of memoria damnunilia is precisely 0.9475… And I’ve studied a patient with the same ability…’

‘Does this number mean anything?’, Suho turns back to face all the doctors, seeking for one of them to at least speak up.

‘The number of hormones released dictates what they want the person to forget’, one of the doctors point out, taking out a pen and quickly doing some calculations along with Lay.

‘If they had wanted Kyungsoo to forget about the whole event, they would’ve used a slightly higher percentage… Since they need to get rid of everything which happened that day’

‘The food he drunk, what he was feeling at that particular time, what he saw, what he felt… They would need more hormones to release’, the other doctor points out, ‘The would at least need 1.234’, the other doctors look down at his quick calculations, ‘But they only used 0.9’

‘Because that’s enough to wipe out someone out from their memories’

‘How? Wouldn’t you need more to get rid of a whole person’s existence in someone else’s life?’, Suho points out, ‘Kyungsoo knew Kai since we were in high school’

‘That’s why I looked at the specific’, Lay points out, ‘0.9476 is the right amount to wipe someone’s memory of a particular someone out of your memories… But 0.9475 is the amount put… Which means they either got the mixture wrong or…’

‘Or what?’

‘Or they’re not trying to wipe out his memories… They’re trying to manipulate his memories’

‘Manipulate?’

‘Well… That’s the thing with evolution’, Lay sighs out, writing over his other colleagues’ workings and doing another set of calculations, ‘Memory loss can also mean memory manipulation
and powers have increased a considerable amount over the past century’

‘But… Why did they choose Kai to be wiped out? Have they been stalking Kyungsoo this whole time?’

‘I doubt it… This is a weapon of attack that he had on him… Which means, he would’ve used it on anyone… He would’ve used it on you if you were in Kyungsoo place instead of him… And if he can use it on anyone… That means the target is totally random’

‘So… Why Kai?’, Suho thought out loud, ‘Why not me? Or his parents? Or even Eun Bi?’

‘Probably because Kai was the last person he was thinking about before he collapsed’, Lay whispers, ‘That’s a major factor. If they were already thinking of someone whilst the poison is in them, that could automatically set the hormones into function’

‘But… Memory manipulation. Dr Zhang, there’s no reason for them to manipulate someone’s memories’, one of the doctors point out, ‘As you said, this was a random attack, not a specific one’

‘No… There is a reason for this’, Suho sighs, punching the wall in frustration, ‘The man is the gang leader of the Seoul branch of the skullies gang… A gang is known to torture their victims…’, Suho rests his forehead on the wall, ‘They’ve used their powers specifically to torture their victims… But the twist? They torture them from the inside’

‘That’s right’, one of the police officers points out, ‘Most of their victims and witnesses have been admitted to a psychiatric ward… We couldn’t get them to testify due to their health…’

‘They probably wanted Kyungsoo to forget someone important to him… Like a grape being plucked from its branch but not entirely squished yet… Jus dropped to the floor near its old home’

‘Fuck… Sir, I think we need to report this. We can no longer just send our other officers to arrest him… What if they do something like this?’

‘Okay. Go call the higher state and inform them of the situation. I need to go back to Kyungsoo’

‘Yes, sir’, the officers' bow, Lay quickly standing to guide them back into the lab where the knife was, giving them his files along with the evidence, the other doctors rushing to call for an emergency meeting, Lay being dragged with him despite not being an emergency doctor. Seems like Lay is doing a lot of work beyond his title.

‘So, what do you remember?’, Kai sits down on the chair next to Kyungsoo after the boy had asked him for a selfie, Kai awkwardly smiling and holding up a peace sign before looking back at Kyungsoo.

‘Remember? Suho didn’t tell you how I got here?’, Kyungsoo gestures to himself laying on the hospital bed, ‘I just got stabbed, nothing important… I didn’t get hit in the head, so my memory is still pretty good’
‘Huh…’, Kai nods his head in understanding, but inside, he’s not understanding. He’s not sure why Kyungsoo had forgotten him suddenly, and why he knows of him but not him, how he’d seen his movies and listened to his songs, but he couldn’t even remember his birthday, or what they did during the summer of their graduation, or their first kiss and first…

‘So… About your high school? Have any memorable moments happened to you?’, he asks, his eyes begging, pleading for him to remember something.

‘I’ve had a pretty normal high school experience… Went to school… Got good grades… My Senior year was a hot mess though… I got into trouble and had to do community service because of some idiot…’, Kyungsoo points out, telling Kai a story about a boy with fire bending skills, telling him the story of that day they all got acquainted with each other, as if he wasn’t in the picture, as if he wasn’t there.

‘Any boyfriends?’

‘Now? God no’

‘Oh… But how about high school?’

‘High school?’, Kyungsoo looks up, trying to remember anything from his school days, struggling for a moment. He does remember someone, he was sure he probably did… He was definite since he does remember feeling someone’s hands holding his… And he remembers snow, cold snow. Northern lights, ‘I think I had one, probably in Senior year too…’, he suddenly laughs, ‘But that was a long time ago… I even forgot his name’

‘Right… It was a long time ago so… Yeah, that’s completely understandable’, Kai nods, trying to shake off this heavyweight which had started to sag his shoulders down, his arms resting on his leg as he holds his hands together.

‘Sorry for wasting your time…’, Kyungsoo suddenly whispers, ‘I know you’re a busy man and this isn’t even a make a wish thing since I’m too old for that and I got stabbed doing my job…’

‘No, no… I… Owed Suho a favour anyway’

‘Oh really? Since when had Suho ever been acquainted with a celebrity before?’

‘He just dealt with… My crazy fans from time to time’

‘Oh right… I bet you get a lot of those’

‘Yeah… I do… Sometimes…’

Kyungsoo felt his heart give way, his hand clutching on his open stomach, feeling more blood pouring out, his face battered and bruised after being trampled over by shoes and heels. He can feel his cheeks becoming swollen, his eyes threatening to close as his muscles weaken.

*I don’t want to die.*
He didn’t want to feel his life flash before his eyes, he didn’t want to feel the bubbles dribbling down his mouth and onto the floor, or the thrashing, numbing pain of his stomach. He didn’t want to see his own pool of blood surrounded him or his sleeves being dipped in dark blood.

He didn’t want to see Kai staring at him in his old school uniform, walking beside him and carrying both their backpacks since Kyungsoo has always hated carrying his. He didn’t want to see Kai dancing on stage during his first every college show, dressed in all white along with white legging.

*Temps Levé Arabesque.*

*Soubresaut.*

*Retiré Devant.*

*Grand Jeté.*
nothing but a good old amnesia trope that makes this fic so fucking cliche but oh well...
Midnight in Japan.
Mon 21 May, 10:05 PM

There's been a problem

What is it?

Kyungssoo lost his memories

What?!

But I remembered talking to him... he seems fine

It's more complicated than that.

The knife was also dipped in memoria damnunilia

Speak Korean please

Ergh. It means someone used their powers to get rid of memories of Kai

Kai? Why Kai?

We think it's bcos Kai's the last person Kyungssoo was thinking of

That's so cute

Babe someone just got stabbed. This is not cute

Mon 21 May, 10:09 PM

So... what are we going to do now? Have you told Kai?

Yeah. I've spoken to him about it and he understands... barely

We'll, I have rehearsals with him soon so I'll try and talk to him about it

I'm already looking up doctors who may have the same powers but maybe to restore memories

I'm still not acquainted with anyone with that power tho😊

Just take care of Kyungssoo

Yeah I will. If any of y'all are free just drop by my apartment cos I'm a fucking mess rn

Don't you have your baby daddy to help you unwind? 😚منتج

Babe. Suho's best friend just got his memories wiped. Have a bit of dignity

Ergh. I'm going to mark my students work
Kyungsoo has been locked in his room when the doctors found out about his memory loss, everyone grouping together, Xiumin screaming at everyone for giving him grey hair at such an age when they hear Suho explain the situation.

The would’ve all stayed by Kyungsoo’s side had adulthood not been in the way. Baekhyun’s students have an exam coming up and he hadn’t even finished teaching the module just yet, Chen and Chanyeol too busy trying to run a company and Xiumin had to be on his feet during the rehearsals in case any of the actors still felt nervous.

Kyungsoo had heard about his memory loss situation and even though he didn’t understand any of it, he still felt like something inside him agreed with his problem. He knew he also had memory loss even though he wasn’t quite sure what he had forgotten.

‘Can I come in?’

‘You better ask Suho’s permission, to be honest. He has me on lockdown as of right now’, Kyungsoo jokes, but he slides his door open and welcomed the celebrity in.

‘Yeah, I heard about that. He’s been forcing me to stay away from you’, Kai points out, smiling when he spots the familiar deep chuckle Kyungsoo would always make. He hadn’t heard it in quite a while and it brought about a sense of nostalgia which seems to be an irony given the situation, ‘Did he tell you anything else about your situation?’

‘Suho? Nope’, Kyungsoo shakes his head, ‘But Lay told me something’

‘Lay?’ Kai turns and walks over to Kyungsoo’s bed, sitting down on it since Kyungsoo had decided to start walking around even after the doctors had recommended being on bed rest for a few more days. Kyungsoo had never been a fan in sleeping in bed all day anyway.

‘Yeah. He told me that you were my boyfriend’

Kai tenses at the word, his neck pretty much stiffen, and his eyes widen at the sudden statement which had caught him off guard.

‘Um…’

‘Yeah, I know. I was surprised too’, Kyungsoo points at Kai’s reaction, ‘That was exactly my facial expression’, Kyungsoo was reluctant to ask Kai any further questions about their relationship since Lay and Suho gave him little to no information about the matter, which must mean that it must’ve been a sensitive topic to talk about. But now that Kai is right in front of him, willingly and without being forced by anyone, surely their relationship can’t be in total ruins.

‘I can leave if you want me too’

‘What? No!’’, Kyungsoo shakes his hand, trying to get Kai to sit back down, ‘No! I’m glad you came to visit… Like I said… I’ve been on lockdown for most of the day’. Kyungsoo bites his lower lip, frustrated over Suho and Lay’s orders for him to stay in one room for god knows how long, looking up at the small TV screen playing trashy shows throughout most of the day.

‘Yeah, but I need to get going anyway… I’m supposed to be preparing for a shoot in the morning’, Kai points out, straightening his jacket once he stands up, noticing a glimmer of disappointment in Kyungsoo’s eyes.
‘Oh’, Kyungsoo whines, ‘Really? Well… I should probably let you go then’, Kyungsoo nods in agreement, although he doesn’t agree at all. For some reason, he wanted to spend more time with the famous stranger he’s supposedly had a history with.

‘I mean, I’m supposed to be in Japan right now anyway’

‘Japan?’

‘Yeah, according to my manager, I should be fast asleep in my hotel room right now’

‘Wait… You left a fucking country just to come see me?!’, Kyungsoo yells out, forcing Kai to run up to him, covering his mouth with his hands as he tries to get Kyungsoo to shut up, his loud voice may cause enough noise for someone outside to hear him.

‘Shh’, Kai warns him, ‘I’m not supposed to be here’, Kyungsoo nods, Kai feeling Kyungsoo’s lips slide across his hands, making him flinch and abruptly taking a step back as if he’d just touched fire. The pair was silent, both their feet being glued to the floor since neither of them moved from then on, Kai awkwardly placing his hands in his back pockets, not really knowing what else to do.

‘Have you ever left anything behind because of me?’, Kyungsoo randomly asks, his voice in a whisper, but his eyes were screaming in curiosity, his attention infatuated over the fact that he’s had any form of relations with Kim Jongin, someone who he would have never thought he’d be acquainted with.

Kai gives out a throaty laugh, seeing Kyungsoo inquisitively staring at him, waiting for him to answer such a ridiculous question.

‘You would never let me’, he gives a low chuckle, one which didn’t sound at all like he was having fun, it was a laugh hidden with emotions.

‘Oh’, Kyungsoo was once again reminded that his relationship with this man was not on good terms, or so it was implied by both Suho and Lay but never bluntly said. He should remember that Kai may be uncomfortable in situations like these and maybe he was being forced into coming here for his sake, ‘I should probably-’, before he can allow Kai’s departure, he hears Suho’s voice talking with someone, most likely his doctor, indicating that they were walking towards his room.

The pair stare at each other in panic, Kyungsoo, in reflex, grabbing Kai’s arm and dragging him towards the bed, the both of them landing on the stiff and small mattress, Kyungsoo covering Kai who was on top of his, the boy’s head resting on his stomach, the thin material hiding Kai from being seen by the two people who had just walked in, their eyes landing straight to Kyungsoo who tried to keep a straight face, his hands holding Kai still, warning the latter to stop moving so much.

‘Kyungsoo’, Suho calls out to him, smiling down at his partner, walking over to give a reassuring pat on his shoulder, ‘How are things going?’

‘Well, pretty much like I’m in juvenile since you’ve locked me up here for the whole day’, Kyungsoo jabs at Suho sarcastically, feeling Suho laugh for once ever since he woke up.

‘Well, Mr Do does have a point’, the doctor interrupts their short banter, looking down and writing something down on some files he’s carrying around, ‘Kyungsoo is need of some fresh air. It’ll be good for him to maybe walk around outside for a bit’

‘I’ll keep that in mind, sir’, Suho replies, waiting by Kyungsoo’s side as the doctor checks Kyungsoo’s heart rate, one of Kyungsoo’s hands pressing on Kai’s cheeks as he tries to adjust himself for the doctor but not let it show that there was someone inside his blankets.
Kai fidgets around, having trouble breathing since his face was planted on Kyungsoo’s lower stomach, in the most uncomfortable position ever, his arms awkwardly by his side and resting on Kyungsoo’s side, which didn’t help since the latter is ticklish and would flinch every time Kai accidentally brushes his fingers against him.

‘You okay?’, Suho asks when he noticed the way Kyungsoo would suddenly stiffen, patting his back in reassurance when the doctor pulled out his injection, requesting for Kyungsoo to stretch out his arm out of the blanket, ‘It’s just an injection. I won’t hurt’, he comforts Kyungsoo, not noticing something else moving around under the blanket, trying to hide after the doctor lifted the cloth slightly to try and force Kyungsoo’s arms out.

‘Anyway, why don’t you try doing some walking after this?’, the doctor converses with his patient, trying to distract it him from the pinch of the needle which made Kyungsoo hiss a little, ‘It’ll be good to have your legs moving too’

‘Yeah… I’ll do that’, Kyungsoo breathes out, looking down at his arm where a small plaster was pasted right after the injection.

‘I can walk with you’, Suho offers, but he was brushed to the side when Kai dug his nails on Kyungsoo’s legs, forcing the latter to shake his head.

‘No, I’m fine. I’ll take a walk in a minute. I don’t mind walking by myself’, Kyungsoo dismisses Suho and his doctor, lying still in his head as he waves for them to leave his room, ‘I’ll just rest for a few minutes then I’ll go’

‘Whatever you say’, Suho responds, looking at Kyungsoo with some suspicion. The latter had been complaining about being cooped up here yet when the offer of finally leaving his room is given, suddenly he needed to rest for a few minutes. He didn’t say much, deciding to leave the boy to do whatever the fuck he wanted. Kyungsoo wouldn’t get himself into trouble anyway.

The door closes swiftly, Kyungsoo finally throwing the covers, Kai turning his head up to breathe a gulp of air after being stuffed down there, combing his hair back.

‘You should’ve at least given me room to breathe’, Kai complains, his chest still heaving heavily, his hands leaning between Kyungsoo’s sides.

‘Sorry about that’, Kyungsoo speaks out, laughing at the way Kai looked now, his hair slightly messy from being thrashed around by him under the blankets, his eyes looking down on them, the proximity between them becoming a real thing which Kai had just noticed. He quickly moves out of the bed, struggling to get off and not kick Kyungsoo in the process, getting back on his feet.

‘Yeah. I should go now. My manager will kill me if he checks an empty hotel room’, Kai once again tries to escape the hospital room, regretting even thinking about visiting Kyungsoo. He shouldn’t have, not when Kyungsoo doesn’t even remember him, the real him. But he just needed to make sure. Make sure that it wasn’t a joke or a prank or that Kyungsoo may have had a concussion at the time.

‘Hey’, Kyungsoo calls out before Kai can teleport out, quickly getting back to his feet and racing his way to grab Kai’s arm.

‘What?’

‘You heard the doctor’, Kyungsoo replies, giving the tall idol a small smile, ‘He said I needed a walk’
‘Yeah… You should probably go do that…’

‘Well, I’ve never been to Japan before…’, Kyungsoo shrugs his shoulder nonchalantly, but his eyes were just and determined, ‘It’ll be nice to-

‘Are you asking me to take you with me?’, Kai’s eyes widen, not sure where this version of Kyungsoo is coming from since the boy barely wanted to hang an extra five minutes at his place whenever he visited to do his runs and now suddenly, his asking for him to take him to Japan with him? He barely remembered Kyungsoo being like this even when they were dating, always telling Kai off during his surprise visits and holidays to other countries.

‘I mean… It would be… I… Would like to?’, Kyungsoo’s stuttering made him even cuter, his eyes looking down, awkwardly playing with his hands. It reminded Kai of a time where Kyungsoo was just a shy and soft-spoken boy in his school uniform, reading a book in the library to kill time. It had been a long time since he’d seen that Kyungsoo.

‘I mean… If you want?’, Kai responds, feeling Kyungsoo’s hands slide down his arm, holding his hands once he slowly agrees on Kyungsoo’s request, like a genie who couldn’t possibly deny his owner’s wishes.

‘Yeah… I want to’, and with that, the pair disappears from the hospital room, leaving the cold room, the drumming of the machine is the only thing which pumps life into the empty and lifeless room, the dark evening sky being closed off by the closed curtains, the blankets landing on the floor, the mattress cold and empty.

Suho sits down on the cafeteria, looking down on his phone and replying to everyone’s text, messaging them as much information he had learnt today since they’re all still freaking out about the situation. His other hand is holding a can of sprite, taking a sip as he scrolls through his social media which he hadn’t used in ages since he’d been too busy with life to bury his attention in his device.

It’s been about an hour or two since he last visited Kyungsoo, so the boy is probably out already taking his much-desired walk. He felt kind of off since Kyungsoo should’ve past the canteen already to get to the backfield of the hospital, but he didn’t recall spotting the small officer walking this way.

He’s about to get up to check if Kyungsoo even left his room when he saw a new update from Kai’s personal snapchat. He didn’t think the idol would ever use his old social media again and he didn’t want to follow Kai’s celebrity snapchat since he knew he was just going to get updated with useless shit since most of his social media are run by his management team anyway.

Curiosity got the best of him and maybe he probably shouldn’t have opened it.

‘Kim fucking Jongin!’
Suho couldn’t believe his luck. He looks around the picture to see where the hell the pair had gone off too, praying to see a tree or a familiar building that he might recognise so he can quickly run after them and stab Kyungsoo again with his own knife. But lord behold, he didn’t need to check the blurry and dark picture for any clues since the dickface left he geotag on. Suho almost has a heart attack seeing where the fuck they were.
How did this bastard even know that Kyungsoo needed that fresh air? Did Kyungsoo tell him? When did he visit Kyungsoo? He can’t remember Kai coming inside the hospital. Did he teleport straight into the hospital bed even after knowing Kyungsoo’s situation?

‘Kai, if you are using this situation to your own advantage, I’m going to skin you alive’, Suho growls to himself, throwing away his half-empty sprite in the bed whilst running to the elevators and back to Kyungsoo’s room on the third room, ready to give his partner a proper ass whooping for leaving a fucking country with stab wounds and messed up memories. Along with the fact that a fucking gang could be after him for all anyone knows.

He rushes out the elevator doors the moment it opens on the third floor, seeing Kyungsoo and Kai sitting together in bed, laughing and talking and just being down right annoying.

Suho slams the door shut, announcing his presence, eyes glaring at the both, his hand resting on his hips, clenching his fists to try not to do anything stupid like flood the room or drown Kai right here and now.

‘I’m giving you three seconds to leave this room and never visit it again’, Suho hisses at Kai whose smile is erased at Suho’s command.

‘Oh, come on Suho. It was just a bit of fun’, Kai defends himself, but Suho was having none of his shit.

‘One’, he ignores Kai, tapping his foot impatiently, Kyungsoo standing up and trying to get Suho
‘Suho… Stop being such a-

‘Two’

‘For fuck’s sake Suho. I asked him to take me-’

‘Three!’, Suho screams once his time is up and he still sees Kai sitting on Kyungsoo’s bed, ‘That’s it!’ , he’s about to wave his hand out, ready to spray Kai out of the room when the latter admits defeat and disappears before any damage is done, Kyungsoo turning back in disappointment to find an empty bed.

‘What the fuck is wrong with you? We were having a good time!’, Kyungsoo whines like a teenager, stomping his own foot down and pushing Suho, ‘You’re such a drama queen’

‘Drama queen? Me? Me?’, Suho calls out unbelievingly, ‘I’m being a drama queen? You’ve been stabbed by a poisonous knife Kyungsoo! I’m not having you go around and running off to a different country doing whatever you want!’

‘Okay! Okay! Fine! I won’t do it again’, Kyungsoo finally complies, looking at the way Suho frustratingly looks at him, understanding that what he did may have stepped over the line, especially since he’s a police officer going in a different country without going through immigration. He had known it to be a bit risky, but…

‘I’m giving you a warning Kyungsoo. And it’s for your own good’, Suho softens his tone, sincerity buried inside as he watches Kyungsoo slowly let his guard down, ‘You two broke up for a reason’, he whispers, patting the back of Kyungsoo’s neck before turning back to leave Kyungsoo for the night.

Kyungsoo sleeps in the middle of the night, getting changed from his hospital gown to a usual shirt and a hoodie since he had begged the doctors to let him change and since he didn’t need any more medical treatment, they had allowed him to. However, he still needed to stay in the hospital after being told that he needed to seek psychological guidance to see if he can conjure up his own lost memory himself rather than have them plan to extract the hormones out of him in an intricate surgery. Which means Kyungsoo wouldn’t be turning up for work in a long time.

He lays in bed, eyes wide open, not being able to sleep. He relives the moment he smelt the different air, the loud bustling noises of the night street alive and well, aroma of street food and cigarettes, clanking of beer bottles and shouting of men and women from clubs and karaoke bars. He remembers looking around with the celebrity by his side, tasting sweet takoyaki and looking running past arcades, always moving, always looking around.

He felt disappointed that their moment was cut short, right before Kai was about to direct him to the hotel room to show him the fancy lifestyle he’d been living. But he thought it best that it ended there, especially after what Suho had told him.

They did break up for a reason.

He wonders what the reason was. Surely, it couldn’t have been that bad that he would still think about him from time to time, even in moments of death. Is it because of their job? Infidelity? Unapproved parents? He tries to remember, but he knew that every moment he had of him are
wiped out.

He hears his phone buzzing inside his sweatpants, his hands pulling them out to find that an unknown number was facetimeing him. He nervously sits upon his bed, not sure if he should pick up or not. But he didn’t see the consequences in doing so, so he pressed the green button.

‘Kyungsoo’

‘Jongin!’
Y'all didn't actually think I was making it all angst for Kaisoo? This is set ten years later and I have no idea what future technology is going to be like, but let's all pretend that in ten years time, snapchat, iPhone, Instagram and everything else still exists? Haha
Suho opens the door to his apartment, tearing off his jacket and throwing it to the next chair he sees. His apartment is a hot mess, clothes everywhere, empty ramen cups sprawled around his kitchen along with empty cans of beer and other shit he never bothered to clean since he’s always at work. He seems to surprise however to find at least his living room floors to be tidy and not decorated in potato chips packets and weeks old shirts and jeans. He didn’t remember clearing his floor but at least he can finally see it.

‘You’re finally home’, he hears a deep voice in the shadows, his fingers switching on the lights to find Sehun standing by the hallway in a suit, waiting patiently for Suho to arrive home.
‘Sehun’, Suho brings himself forward and wraps his arms around the boy’s waist, ‘What are you doing here?’, he asks, feeling Sehun reciprocate his actions when he feels arms wrapping around his waist, resting behind his back in a comfortable manner.

‘Chen texted me. Said you were having a tough time’, Sehun responds, resting his chin on top of Suho’s head, taking advantage of his boyfriend’s small height.

‘Chen? And what the hell did he say?’, Suho looks up suspiciously, not understanding why Chen of all people had suddenly gone out of his way to reach out to Sehun for his sake.

‘Nothing much… Just said something odd and random whilst I was at the office’, Sehun shrugs it off, reaching his hand up and combing back Suho’s hair which had been growing long, ‘Something about me helping you unwind or something like that’

‘Oh, for fuck’s sake’, Suho whispers under his breath, making a note to slap Chen if he ever sees him this week, ‘Just ignore him and don’t reply to his messages’, Suho dismisses Chen’s immaturity, breaking away from Sehun’s arms and going back to the kitchen to make himself a cup of coffee.

‘No, I’m glad they’re reaching out’, Sehun smiles, playfully walking over and reconnecting his arms back around Suho’s waist, sticking to him as the older moves around the kitchen, in search of a clean cup, ‘I’m glad you told everyone about us’

‘Not like I had a choice. They would’ve caught on sooner or later’, Suho points out, turning on the kettle and waiting for the water to boil, ‘And I would’ve been given even more shit if they found out like that’

‘Well, now you don’t have to worry’, he whispers, kissing the back of Suho’s neck, relishing at the moment since he hadn’t found the time between work and the hospital.

‘Mmhh’, Suho murmurs, feeling Sehun’s kisses travelling around him, from the nape of his neck all the way around until he is forced to pause his movements, feeling the surge of wavering pleasure when he feels Sehun’s lips open, biting at his skin, lapping at his neck. His breathing turns heavy as he tries to grab onto something to grip, his hands sliding up to Sehun’s head, tugging at his hair and reeling him in deeper.

The way Sehun works his tongue, gliding his tongue down his neck, nibbling on his collarbone, he would never have guessed the boy was at least three years younger than him. He would never have even predicted that the innocent little Sehun has now got his hands under his shirt, his fingertips grazing his sensitive skin.

He feels himself let go, abandoning the cup of coffee he was about to make for himself, turning himself around to wrap his arms around Sehun, his lips attaching to his in a battle for dominance. Had this been a few years back, Sehun would give into him, submitting to Suho in an instant, but these days Suho would find himself in a collision with Sehun, as he felt the latter’s tongue sliding into his.

Would’ve thought that the shy sophomore kid he once met was known capable of making his knees weak.

‘Sehun…’, he whines when the latter pushes him back to the counter, Sehun’s arms gliding down his arms and onto his waist, resting just above his hip, ‘Don’t you have to finish your case files?’, he asks in a sultry whisper, not wanting the boy to let go of him just yet, but if they carried on like this, he didn’t know if he was going to keep holding onto his self-control.
‘That can always wait’, Sehun murmurs, too busy decorating bruises all over Suho’s neck, gliding his tongue across his collarbone. He didn’t ask for permission, but Suho’s lack of defiance didn’t stop him either from lifting the Chief Police’s shirt, dropping it to the floor with no care in the world, his lips hungrily bringing itself back down to touch his skin, feeling Suho’s chest heave heavily at the touch of his warm lips slithering across his chest, hands pinning him down.

‘Ah, Sehun’, Suho’s voice is barely audible, a little lower than a whisper, his body too engrossed with the way Sehun laps his tongue around him, his hands automatically resting on Sehun’s neck, guiding him lower to his chest, all the way down to his abdomen.

‘Easy babe’, Sehun chuckles when he feels Suho’s grip around his neck dragging him lower, forcing his knees to meet the floor, ‘I thought you wanted me to leave and finish my work’

‘Why don’t you finish this work instead’, Suho murmurs, looking down to find a smirking Sehun looking up at him with playful eyes.

‘Finish what babe?’, he teases the older, resting his chin on the waistband of his jeans.

‘May I remind you that I’m older’, Suho grimaces, not welcoming Sehun’s overly confident playfulness that he still needs to get used to, ‘You used to be so vanilla, gosh what happened to you?’, Suho sighs the moment he finally feels the pressure he’s been dying for, Sehun’s hands resting on his crotch, massaging it excruciatingly slow.

Sehun didn’t reply, he just chuckles as he watches Suho unravel right in front of him, his eyes which closed shut as he bites his lower lip, suppressing the moan which had threatened to escape his lips. It had become an ordeal for the both to date behind closed doors due to their positions, but seemingly, Suho’s sudden resurgence in making their relationship public by telling their friends had slowly made him a little jittery, excited at the new prospect of showing off their relationship whenever they hang out.

Maybe he got a little bit too excited since he couldn’t help himself, his fingers quickly brushing Suho’s pants, unzipping the older’s denim jeans, not that Suho was complaining about it.

He supposes doing it in the kitchen seems rather tacky, a little bit like frat boys during college, but it was too late for either of them to move to someplace dignified and it’s not like Suho’s room is the cleanest thing on earth, in fact, maybe the counter where he’s leaning is cleaner than the abomination that is his room.

‘Have you got something you need to tell me or are you just horny right now?’, Suho chuckles at the sight of Sehun beneath him, juxtaposing his usual lawyer-like stern expression, the once firm and uptight manner that Sehun would always put on was now eager and excited. He would have wanted to say something, yet he just let his hands roam through Sehun’s hair. For once, the table has turned, Suho controlling the situation, gearing Sehun to what he wants, feeling the latter’s lips kiss his thighs as his denim slides down to his ankle.

Sehun didn’t respond, how could he when he’s too busy lavishing on Suho’s skin, grazing his tongue on the soft spots he knew the older would be wringing for. His sight was hazy, too focused in taking care of his most prized possession, his hand stroking Suho’s cock, doing whatever the latter wants him to do, his head being directed by the grip of his hands.

Elicit moans coming from above him makes him continue his conquest, his lips finally making its way to lick the base of his cock, all the way up to the tip, Suho’s grip on his head tightening.

‘Ahh’
It gave him pleasure to see Suho in this much ecstasy, a playful smirk hanging from his lips as he looks up, giving Suho a playful gaze before going down on him, lips wrapped around the tip of his cock before sliding down.

‘Sehun, ah’ he was almost speechless at the action the younger was doing, confidently owning him to himself.

‘I bet you fifty that they’re fucking’, Chen puts his phone down after receiving a reply from the young lawyer after he texted him to go to Suho’s apartment. Xiumin glares at his husband for a moment before continuing to eat his dinner, twisting his fork around the pasta and ignoring his husband’s stupidity.

‘I bet he doesn’t even remember Suho’s birthday’, Chanyeol points out, deciding to visit the couple’s house after needing some advice on how to use excel since he wasn’t much of a technology guy, both Xiumin and his own boss having to tutor him on how to fill in the data as accurately as possible, leaving him to stay over the house late at night which forces Xiumin to invite him over for dinner, ‘Maybe Suho will get mad and kick him out’

‘Nah, he wouldn’t do that’, Chen shrugs, putting his fork down and pulling out the wallet in his back pocket, pulling out a twenty and placing it on the table, ‘They’re definitely fucking’

‘But Sehun is Sehun’, Chanyeol shrugs, pulling out his own wallet and placing a twenty right next to Chen’s, ‘I bet he’s just giving him a blowjob or something’

‘Sehun’s changed man, have you seen him lately? That dude is the definition of a 180-degree game changer’, Chen points a finger at Chanyeol, exaggerating his statement.

‘Don’t be stupid’, Xiumin intervenes, despite not wanting to be part of the conversation, ‘Sehun is still shy. Have you noticed that he still doesn’t talk that much?’

‘That’s cause he has a reputation to uphold being the mysterious lawyer and all’, Chen dismisses Xiumin’s point, the three men having the weirdest conversation as they sit around the dining table, eating Xiumin’s homemade pasta, the clock nearing midnight yet all of them still feasting on their meal.

‘Ah, babe, slow down’, Suho whines, feeling himself let go as he feels the girth of Sehun’s cock inside of him, their bodies travelling to the sofa, his head leaned back on the edge, his nails digging into Sehun’s skin at the touch of pleasure he feels Sehun’s quickening thrust.

It was frantic, almost animalistic, the strong grips, uncensored roars of pleasure, nails digging into the skin, mouth gaped open. It had driven the both of them in complete ecstasy, unwanted pain in
some cases, bruises decorated all over their body, riding up from their necks all the way down to their torsos, painting each other with their marks. Suho should probably take into account that they were not inside Sehun’s soundproof penthouse but in his cheap apartment right downtown of the neighbourhood, but every time he feels Sehun’s lips on his, the boy’s rhythmic thrust busting him at the seams, he couldn’t help eliciting trails of moans which collectively turns into screams at one point.

‘Chanyeol, can you please get out of my house’, Xiumin whines once he walks down the stairs in his pyjamas to see Chanyeol still in his house, wearing clothes which he knows doesn’t belong to him since he sees just how small they were on him, ‘Are those mine?’, he tilts his head once he recognised his shirt.

‘Dude, I wanna make sure Chen loses this bet’, Chanyeol murmurs, looking around to see if Chen had joined Xiumin in checking out the ruckus that was happening downstairs.

‘Are you out of your mind? Do that in your own house’, Xiumin rolls his eyes, walking forward to see what Chanyeol was trying to do, seeing him with his phone and typing something, ‘Are you dialling Suho’s phone number?’

‘He always picks up your call’, Chanyeol explains to a confused Xiumin, not even sure how the tall idiot got a hold of his phone. He sits down on the floor, crossed legged beside Chanyeol, curious to see if Suho does reply.

‘If he replies, then they’re definitely not having sex’, Chanyeol whispers to Xiumin once he hears the dial tone, putting it on speaker and waiting patiently, his fingers crossed for the phone to be answered.

‘This is stupid’, Xiumin continues to judge Chanyeol, but he waits with him anyway, curious to see if Suho would pick up. Chanyeol may have been gone for six years, but he still knows the fact that Suho is the only person out of everyone who will never miss a call and even if he does, he will call pretty much right away.

The line continues to ring but there were no signs of it being picked up, which quickly made the both of them nervous sine Suho doesn’t usually take this long to take a call. Chanyeol was just about to give up and throw the phone on the sofa when he hears murmuring on the other side of the call.

‘He-hello?’, he hears Suho muttering on the phone, Chanyeol raising his hand in a fist of celebration.

‘Suho!’, Chanyeol yells on the line, ‘I knew you’d never let me down!’’, he cheers to himself, Xiumin shaking his head and rolling his eyes at his overexaggerated behaviour over something small. He was close to hitting Chanyeol in the head.

‘Wha– What… Uhh… What do you want?’

‘Dude, you alright?’, Chanyeol stops his screaming to ask Suho, who sounded like he was in pain, ‘You don’t sound too good’. Xiumin also noticed it, edging closer to have a closer listen on Suho’s
murmuring, holding onto the phone along with Chanyeol, the two of them looking at each other with warning eyes.

‘Nothing... I’m– fine… What the fuck do you want?’, his tone turns angry at the last part, Chanyeol and Xiumin leaning back in surprise, as if Suho was in the room with them whilst saying it.

‘Um…’, before Chanyeol can say anything to cater Suho’s frustrating tone, they hear something else in the line, background noise which almost sounds like grunting.

‘What the fuck is that?’, Xiumin murmurs, edging even closer till his ear is leaning on his phone, ‘What the…’

‘Fuck, are you fucking?’, Chanyeol calls over, hearing the evident grunting of someone else along with Suho’s shaky voice, ‘Ew!’, Chanyeol threw the phone as if it was covered in shit, it might as well be since he just heard an abomination.

‘Turn it off! Hang up!’, Xiumin screeches, reaching his hand over to where his phone had landed, the both of them still hearing something they should not be hearing since Chanyeol the dickhead put the phone on speaker, ‘Hang up!’, Xiumin continues to say aloud, grabbing his phone and pressing the end button over and over again until Suho’s contact picture was off the screen and he’s sat on the floor staring at his home screen.

‘I need to get a new phone’, he whispers, throwing his phone on the sofa and wiping his hands on his pyjama trousers, as if he had just touched shit.

‘That was messed up’, Chanyeol whispers, the both of them sat on the floor in silence, ‘Even I wouldn’t do that’

‘We never speak of this’, Xiumin points to Chanyeol, ‘Never. Do you understand?’

‘And in what normal social convention is it okay for me to start talking about the time I heard Suho fucking Sehun? Huh?!’, Chanyeol flails his arms around, glaring at Xiumin for even giving him such an order. Of course, he wasn’t going to talk about this day. Not now, not ever.

‘No mate… I think he got fucked’, Xiumin points out after assessing what they just heard, making the both of them cringe at the thought.

‘Can you not? I’m already traumatised’, Chanyeol pushes Xiumin, getting up from the floor and walking over to the kitchen to get some water and maybe pray that his memories over the last twenty minutes can be erased.

‘Your fucking fault’, Xiumin hisses, getting up and following Chanyeol, ‘Don’t ever do that again. Not with my phone!’
Lay sips his morning coffee the next day, finally getting the day off he deserves after working on his new patient for a week straight without so much as a given break. His fight with Luhan about his job had garnered him to ask for at least a day off from his work which didn’t settle well with his manager since he was the only doctor in the whole country who can be assigned to cater for the Prime Minister’s daughter’s condition.

‘Hey, so what do you wanna do?’, Luhan calls out from the other side of the kitchen, pleased to see his husband inside the house and not buried in the hospital for once, ‘We can go to the park? Or maybe eat out?’

‘Why don’t we have a lazy day in?’, Lay suggests, turning his gaze to Luhan, sipping on his cup of coffee as he watches his husband feed their baby, small baby spoon resting in his hand, ‘Me, you, little Jia just having one big movie fest in the living room and hey, maybe we can order some pizza and get fat too?’, Lay smiles, sitting himself down next to Jia who gurgles on the food Luhan tries to feed her, laughing as he reaches out for tissue to wipe her smudged face.
‘I have an idea’

‘Hello Jongin’

‘God, please don’t call me that’, Kai rolls his eyes as soon as he teleports into Kyungsoo’s hospital room.

‘What should I call you? Mr Kim sounds formal’, Kyungsoo points out, looking at the sight of the celebrity and being shocked by how beautiful he looked. He must’ve dyed his hair since last night it was platinum blonde yet he now sees Kai roaming around with ashen brown hair along with a plaid three-piece suit, his skin glowing tanned and his eyes smoky and covered in make-up – but in a good way – it almost shocked the latter just how ethereal he looked.

‘You used to call me Kai’

‘Kai? How comes?’, Kyungsoo tilts his head the moment the name rolled off his tongue. It definitely sounded familiar, and it tasted right when he spoke it, yet it was still new to him, frustratingly new.

‘It was a nickname I gave myself in high school’, Kai quickly explains, looking down at his watch and seeing that he only had five minutes left before he had to go back to his photoshoot in Japan, ‘Anyway, I have an idea’, he turns his gaze on Kyungsoo who was sitting on his hospital bed with a plain hoodie and tracksuit, not in the least bit as elegant looking as he was in right now. His hair is messy and uncombed, eyes drooping since he’s been watching TV all day without even going outside for a walk.

‘What is it?’, Kyungsoo asks, trying hard not to blush whenever Kai bit his lip. It should be illegal the way he was acting, looking cute yet hot at the same time. Kyungsoo didn’t even think that was possible.

‘Okay, I’ve been thinking about this all night and you need to hear me out’, Kai prepares Kyungsoo and himself for what he’s about to say. He took Suho’s warning, he took it seriously which is why he’s been acting sensitive around Kyungsoo since the moment he woke up in hospital. But last night. Last night felt so good, to be feeling relaxed in Kyungsoo’s presence for the first time in years, to see the boy acting like himself around him, not feeling awkward or weird. It made him take Suho’s warning and rethink all night.

He had never lied about the fact that he still had feelings for Kyungsoo. That was still known and very evident for everyone to see. But he knew that Kyungsoo wanted them to go their separate ways, which is why he kept his distance from everyone and had inevitably lost contact with them. He had decided that Kyungsoo was right and that this life was the best chance he had in achieving his dreams.

But what if he had the chance to go back and take the one most precious thing he had in the past and bring it back to his future?

Somehow, as the sun began to rise in his hotel room, Suho’s warning has become futile to him.

The slates are clean.

Their memories reworked.

If Kai can take a chance, he might as well do it now.

‘Would you like to date me again?’
Kyungsoo heard his voice, his deep yet soft-spoken voice which didn’t match the brilliant looking personality that he looked like right now. His eyes widen at the offer, head tilting in shock and confusion.

‘But… Didn’t you… Break up with me in the first place?’, Kyungsoo couldn’t deny that he felt something tug inside him when the question is asked, yet he had heard Suho multiple times explain his rough relationship with Kim Jongin, albeit, he doesn’t remember a single event mentioned, he trusted in his best friend to give him all the information he needed and it seems like the person standing in front of him with a hopeful smile didn’t fit the exact description of a selfish dick Suho had mentioned to him earlier.

He also remembered Lay’s discussions with the other doctors. How Kai is the person to be washed out from his memories due to the fact that this man was the last person he was thinking of. Why was this person the last person he thought of on the brink of death? Had it been regret that he was thinking of? Fury? Anger? Nostalgia? Or need?

‘C’mon, I need to get going, but I can’t be left hanging’, Kai urges Kyungsoo back to reality, looking down on the fazed boy who’s fiddling with his hands.

‘But… You’re a celebrity and I… Don’t think I should meddle in your life…’

‘It’s fine. I’m the nation’s treasure’, Kai laughs, ‘I don’t think the world is going to drop my ass when they find out I’m dating a police officer’

‘You know what, why don’t I think about it?’, Kyungsoo suggests, feeling way too many emotions to give a full answer that he won’t regret, ‘Give me a couple of days and maybe I can give you an answer?’

Kai sighs at the thought, but he didn’t dismiss it. He had to be fragile with this situation and he can’t afford to force Kyungsoo to answer now. He did, in fact, get into an accident and the gang is still on the loose. He tries hard not to look upset though, smiling his usual sweet smile.

‘Okay, fine. I’ll wait for your answer’, Kai points out, his smile turning real when he sees Kyungsoo’s expression turn relaxed.

‘Thanks… Kai’, Kyungsoo tries to address the latter with the nickname, Kai chuckling at his attempt to sound normal, awkward it may be for the both of them, Kai had never sounded more selfish then thanking the skies for the accident. He’s never been selfish with Kyungsoo before, and for him, it was about time that he did.

Kyungsoo sees him disappear, turning into a translucent form before teleporting out of his room. His hands quickly reach out for his hard hospital pillow and hug it, resting his chin and looking blankly at the wall as he replies Kai’s voice over and over again.

‘Would you like to date me again?’

Suddenly, Kyungsoo is feeling like a high school kid again. Is this how it felt when Kai asked him out the first time around in their senior year? God, if only he can remember the feeling.

His hand slowly reaches out to his phone, look for his phone which laid on the mattress, its battery low since he’s been messaging everyone all day. He had kept in touch with everyone, even picking up the phone to talk to Chanyeol despite the latter going off on his own to complain about something he heard but can’t talk about. The conversation was weird, but at least it kept him entertained.
He unlocks his phone and opens Spotify, curiosity getting the better of him as he scrolls through his playlist, finding out that he didn’t have any of his songs saved on his playlist. He had never remembered listening to his album, but he had thought that the hormones would’ve fucked up his mind and that he did listen to something.

He thought he’d give it a go, typing his name and clicking on the latest album with his face on it, yellow and mystic looking.

He closes his eyes to listen to the first song on the album, laying back down on the bed with his hands wrapped around the phone.

Words that became a secret before I said them,
That’s why I wasn’t for you.

Chapter End Notes

this chapter was supposed to be uploaded on Junmyeon’s birthday, but as everyone can see, I am a complete failure.
(happy late birthday to our bunny leader though~)
Chanyeol had gone through enough without the need to feel guilty about everything else that everyone is going through, but by the looks of Lay sitting in his house and in his clothes, he had yet another set of situations to pull on his guilty conscious.
‘So, remind me why Luhan kicked you out of the house again?’, Chanyeol asks, placing a cereal bowl on a doctor in crisis, seeing his glum look after not seeing Jia for a whole day along with the fact that this was his first ever big argument with his husband for a long time.

‘I had a day off today and it was all going great… We even had sex whilst Jia was asleep—’

‘Okay, ew’, Chanyeol interrupts Lay from speaking any further, ‘I’m not in the mood to talk about sex… Like ever, so please refrain from ever mentioning about your sex life’, Chanyeol shakes his head and cringes at a bad memory which so happens to have happened yesterday.

‘Anyway… Luhan found my files on the Neurogenetic Imperium Funding that I’m requesting from the government’, Chanyeol lost his concentration at Imperium, rolling his eyes at the familiar word and walking over to get himself a drink since he’s probably going to be listening to a lot of medical jargon that doesn’t make sense to him, ‘He found out that I’m seeking funds to help my research progress in finding a cure for it and he flipped out

‘Why? Seems like you’re just doing your job’

‘Yeah, that’s right, my time-consuming job’, Lay points out, ruffling his hair and taking a bite of the soggy cornflakes Chanyeol gave him, ‘If the funding goes through then I’ll be practically buried inside the lab most of the time and I’m barely getting any days off as it is now… Luhan sort of just had enough of me putting my work first’

‘Then don’t do your work first’, Chanyeol shrugs, sitting down beside Lay on the old sofa, watching daytime TV, ‘I’m sure you can cut your project before it starts and bam. Happy husband, happy life’

‘It’s not as simple as that’, Lay points out, sighing as he lays the unfinished soggy cereal on the coffee table, ‘Now I’ve got a pretty important patient in need for a cure’

‘And who is this important patient?’

‘Can’t say. Private information’, Lay informs Chanyeol, looking at the screen and down to his watch, waiting for his assistant to call since they always do that even when he’s not at work.

‘Well, all I’m saying is, you have a baby girl and if you abandon her now then you’re never going to see her grow up’, Chanyeol confronts Lay, his hand holding a bottle of beer despite it being the afternoon, ‘Plus, I wouldn’t want Jia to hate you for abandoning her for your work, but trust me, she’s going to end up doing it if you don’t pull your ass up and choose your family’

‘And how would you know that?’, Lay snorts, looking at the way Chanyeol took the conversation seriously, something the man had failed to do in other conversations.

‘May I remind you of my lovely mother who wanted to pull the plug on me just so she can get back to her work’, Chanyeol raises a glass sarcastically, one which made Lay instantly apologise.

‘Anyway, it’s not like my project can go through either way anyway’, Lay sighs, looking small and defeated over the fight he had with Luhan.

‘How so?’

‘I need you to be my patient’

‘Okay, here we go again’, Chanyeol heaves out a frustrated sigh before getting up from the sofa, walking out of the living room and into the kitchen.
Chanyeol, if the funds do come through, you have to do this’, Lay begins to follow Chanyeol into the kitchen, leaving the TV unattended and still playing, Chanyeol large shirt and sweatpants dragging on the floor, ‘I need you’

‘No, you don’t’, Chanyeol rolls his eyes, throwing away his empty beer bottle, ‘Didn’t you say you already have another precious patient to stick needles into?’

‘Chanyeol, please… I can’t just let you deteriorate like this’

‘Deteriorate? Are you serious?’, Chanyeol abruptly stops his movements, turning around to glare at the doctor, ‘Do I look like a machine to you?’

‘No, because unlike you, machines don’t have hissy fits when people are trying to fix them’

‘Okay, first of all, yes they do, machines go into overdrive and explode whenever you prod at them’, Chanyeol points a frustrated finger at Lay, ‘And second of all, unlike machines, I have the rights to choose whether to get fixed or not and I chose not to get fixed’

‘C’mon Chanyeol, you seriously don’t want to get fixed?’, Lay raises a questioning brow at him, noticing Chanyeol’s thick glasses which he knew was for his bad sight and his limp which never seems to go away, ‘You used to be the Captain of everything. You play five different instruments and even took dancing lessons once. Don’t you ever want to feel like you can do those again?’

‘If I did, then I would’ve stayed in Fiji and wasted my life waiting for a fucking cure’, Chanyeol spits out, yet Lay didn’t seem affected by his sudden rash tone.

‘Well, if you join my project, maybe I can cut the time in half?’

‘No, just focus on your family and leave me alone. The other people and I who have this stupid disease already know our fate. There’s no point in trying to give any of us false hope’

‘That’s what cancer patients said almost a decade ago’

‘You know, for someone who got kicked out of their house by their husband, you’re very optimistic in trying to push my buttons to kick you out too’

‘Kick me out if you want, I can always bail at Baekhyun’s’, Lay points out, ‘He’s better company than you anyway’

‘Not cool man, not cool’, Chanyeol throws a peeled banana skin to Lay who just sticks out his tongue like a child and saunters off back into the living room.

Least to say, Baekhyun kind of regrets arguing with Chanyeol at the hospital. It’s been almost a week since then and the tall idiot hasn’t visited his apartment and his food stock had run out. He’s sitting on the sofa, watching TV and eating pizza he had delivered to his house a few minutes ago, already on his fourth slice.

He had meant every single word he said that night yet he felt guilty for saying them. Of course, his leniency with Chanyeol was more than just waiting for his explanation. It seems like throughout
the years, he’s always been lenient on the motherfucker’s stupidity, starting off with the time he let a bunch of college kids beat the shit out of them whilst they were still in high school. He did admit that he forgave the guy a little too easily, but it was just something he does with Chanyeol.

To say he would forgive him now seems a little bit of a stretch, but he would still want to have contact with him, maybe even form a friendship they once had.

“What the fuck am I even thinking?”, Baekhyun shakes his head, trying to dismiss his thoughts of possibly rekindling anything with Chanyeol. He can easily give in to Chanyeol, yet he promised himself not too. That was the plan the day the fucker took off for Fiji on short notice and without so much as an explanation and he plans to keep it that way, maybe until he explains himself.

“And here we have Mr Byun, looking like a hot piece of mess’

‘Leave me alone Kai’, Baekhyun rolls his eyes as soon as he hears the familiar voice of the annoying celebrity, ‘Aren’t you supposed to be in Japan?’

‘Oh, so it is true. Your anti-fans are just as invested in your everyday lives’, Kai chuckles, watching Baekhyun throw a used tissue at him.

‘Suho told me! He told everyone what you’ve been trying to do with Kyungsoo’, he raised a suspicious eyebrow at him, ‘You think just cause Kyungsoo lost his memories, he’ll come running back to you? Ha! You dumped him, and we’ll keep reminding him that until he remembers it’, Baekhyun sees the way Kai’s shoulder’s slouch nonchalantly, not being too affected by his words as he walks over and sits next to him, grabbing a slice of pizza.

‘if you’re done being an anti-fan, I suggest we get moving and start planning the interior design of the new and improved community building’

‘Why would we? It’s only been a month since constructions started’

‘Yeah, and it’s finished’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘I hired the best construction company to do the job and they have employees with those powers… You know… Like people who control metal and have magnetic powers and shit. It pretty much only takes them about a month tops to fix up a small building like this one’, Kai explains to Baekhyun who looks at him like he’s crazy. If he remembers correctly, those types of construction works are only available for those who are building stadiums for the Olympics or some shit like that.

‘Well… Shit then… How long will the interior be done?’

‘The designers have the same powers so… About a week? So, we need to get going, our meeting with the designers are in the evening’, Kai stands up in his Gucci attire and Balenciaga shoes, one which makes Baekhyun want to poke his eye out for having to dress fancy even at a normal occasion.

‘Now? Jongin, I look like shit!’, Baekhyun whines, getting up and looking down at his grey shirt which was stained in tomato sauce from the pizza.

‘Then get changed’, Kai claps his hands together excitedly, ‘If I can come over from Japan to here without looking like a hot mess, then you can get changed in five minutes’, he points out, shoving Baekhyun into his room and ordering him to hurry up.
Suho looks down on the files which had begun to pile up on his desk, criminals, ex-convicts and other people who may be associated with the gang. His department has their work cut out for them since their leading the investigation, most of them staying in the station for three days straight trying to look for any more potential witnesses.

Without his partner, it seems like work has become even more stressful, having to go through the meeting, checking with doctors and having long hour conversations with superior who gave no fucks about the case just as long as they solve it before the press latches onto them.

He had wondered if Kyungsoo was fit enough to work and would probably go over to the hospital to drag him out, but as the Chief Police, he needed to stop relying on his partner and try and hold the team together. He had already ordered a group to round up as many witnesses as they can, sitting down in his office and waiting for the verdict of their discoveries.

That’s when the door opens with the receptionist bopping her head in.

‘Mr Kim’, she calls out, widening the door for her to go in once she sees him nod at him, waiting for her message, ‘Someone is here to see you’

‘Who?’, he was about to ask if it was one of his crew but the tall man standing behind her as he follows behind her shows Suho that it was none other than Kris waiting for him with a smile plastered on his lips, earrings dangling off his ears and sunglasses blocking his eyes.

‘Hey’, he calls out, ‘I was wondering maybe if I can talk to you for a bit?’, by then, Suho has noticed that the receptionist has left them alone, closing the door behind her, leaving him alone with Kris. He quickly gets up, awkwardly walking over and leaning on his desk whilst he waits for Kris to speak, yet the man said nothing, just staring at him with the same smirk he always plays.

‘Are you going to say anything?’

‘Not when you look like you’ve just arrested me’, Kris chuckles, reaching his hand out and poking a finger on the middle of Suho’s eyebrows where he found the man to be frowning at the sight of him, ‘This is the first time I see you unimpressed by my presence’

‘Kris…’, Suho sighs, folding his arms together, ‘I know you’ve been a great help, especially after Kyungsoo’s accident, but I have to make a line right now’

‘Line?’

‘You and I both know that I’m with Sehun now and I can’t have him thinking I’m just letting you in like this’

‘If you were really serious with Sehun then you wouldn’t be so stressed in trying to keep me away’, Kris points out, his distressed denim jeans and leather jacket juxtaposing Suho’s pressed and clean uniform, ‘I would’ve felt like I was on the losing side, but now that you’re taking extra precaution, it might not be like that anymore’, Suho noticed the way Kris raised his eyebrow and gave him one of his usual smirks.
‘You know, you can’t just expect to act like that in front of a Chief Police without getting tasered’, Suho wasn’t waiting for the laugh that followed since he was trying to be serious and intimidating, yet Kris’ full laugh still gets him, the way he claps his hands together and crunches his face so his eyes disappear made him chuckle a bit, yet he still tried to hide it, but a smile did crack on his lips.

‘Look, I was talking to some of your crew and I heard that you’ve nailed yourself in this office for days’, Kris finally says after he stops laughing, ‘So, let me do you a favour and take you out for lunch. Your whole department is getting worried’

Suho had noticed his team side eyeing him whenever he walks out of his office to get himself another cup of coffee. He knew his team would most likely be worried for him and he didn’t want to add any more stress for them.

‘Fine’, Suho straightens his posture, ‘But this is just lunch, okay?’

‘Okay’

‘Now, I’m thinking, the top floor to be split up into different rooms with six or seven beds in one room’, Kai keeps on going on about the structure of his new and improved community centre turned foster care home. Baekhyun should give a fuck, he really should and working on Kai’s project will really boost his resume as a whole if ever he wishes to randomly change jobs, but my god did he want to poke Kai’s out with the fork since he’s been talking for too darn long.

‘Can you just get to the point where I come in?’, Baekhyun whines, looking down at the number of paperwork and portfolio Kai had brought along with him, each portfolio being a different designer who has already made a sample of the different bedrooms for the kids.

‘You’re going to help design the rooms’, Kai puts the pile of drawings in the middle of the table, wiping off the pasta which had dropped from his plate, ‘I don’t want them to have plain and boring rooms, it needs to be vibrant and cool looking’

‘Something that I have no interest in putting my two senses in’, Baekhyun ends the sentence, gulping down the spaghetti he still hasn’t finished eating since he’s a slow eater compared to Kai, a bit of his pasta becoming cold.

‘You need to take this seriously, this is the first project I’m doing without my company and it needs to be a blast’

‘You really have been deprived of creative freedom’, Baekhyun shakes his head, looking at the way Kai leaps up in excitement at the sight of a bunk bed with a slide on the side, ‘But something is telling me your jittering ass is excited for something else’

‘Huh?’, Kai ignored Baekhyun’s suspicious side-eye, continuing to make notes and cross out designs which he didn’t see as fitting.

‘Are you happy about something? Did you fuck like a pop star celebrity whilst you were in Japan or something? Was she pretty? Or he?’, Baekhyun begins to ask a question which Kai didn’t expect from the latter since Baekhyun wasn’t much of a person in terms of gossiping.
‘I’m not fucking anyone’

‘You might as well look like it’, Baekhyun states, ‘Everyone’s been kinda tense since Kyungsoo’s situation and you’re looking like you just won the— wait… No’, Baekhyun stops his sentence the moment Kai turns into an eighteen-year-old puppy love dickhead at the mention of Kyungsoo’s name, something which Baekhyun instantly picked up, ‘You didn’t fuck Kyungsoo did you?’

‘No! I would never!’, Kai defends himself, although the smile on his face wasn’t doing him any justice, ‘But…’

‘But? What but? What do you mean but? Explain yourself!’, Baekhyun drops his cutlery and abandons what was left of his already cold pasta, glaring at the man in front of him.

‘We hanged out a couple of times and it seems like Kyungsoo isn’t trying to push me any more’away

‘Yeah, because he doesn’t remember you, dipshit’

‘No, that’s not it! He’s much more comfortable around me, and it feels great’

‘Don’t tell me you’re actually using this situation to start again, after Suho’s warning?’, Baekhyun didn’t need to wait for Kai’s response to get an answer, ‘Look, Kai, you broke up with him. There’s really no going back with your decision’

‘I…’, Kai had no idea what to say to Baekhyun. It frustrated him whenever anyone tried to use that information to get him to stop seeing Kyungsoo, but what else can he say? He couldn’t deny the information anymore and he wouldn’t purposely try to make Kyungsoo into a bad guy either, but how he wishes at least one person knew that he would have never broken up with Kyungsoo. Not for a contract, not for anything.

‘Kai, you trying to get back Kyungsoo is not going to work. He’s going to get his memories back eventually and all the memories will come back to him’, Baekhyun shrugs his shoulder, ‘I suggest you move on before you give yourself too much hope’

‘But… I…’, before Kai can make up an argument, he hears the bell of the restaurant door ring for a new customer, seeing a familiar face walking in, ‘Shit… Is that Suho?’, he whispers, rushing to get the menu tucked on the side of their desk, opening it up and hiding his face behind it, ‘Who’s that he’s with?’

‘Kris Wu?’, Baekhyun spits out the moment the stranger turns and he recognises him, ‘Shit’, Baekhyun does the same thing Kai did, grabbing the other spare menu, trying not to get caught.

‘Kris Wu? You mean that Chinese rapper?’, Kai stretched the menu so he can speak to Baekhyun, the two of them garnering looks as the make a fort of menus trying to hide their faces from being spotted.

‘Yeah… But he wasn’t a rapper when Suho was dating him’

‘Suho’s hanging out with his ex?!!’

‘Shh!’, Baekhyun shushes the loud celebrity, thanking God that Kai’s hair is no longer the arrogantly bright platinum blonde that he’s been sporting since they first met in person during the reunion party but now an ashen light brown which can be disguised.

‘I didn’t even know Suho was dating someone’, Kai turns back to see the pair seated on the other
side – thankfully – conversing so nonchalantly and smoothly for a pair who had supposedly used to
date.

‘Yeah, but it was brief, barely a year I think’, Baekhyun tried to recall the time Suho had
introduced them to his new boyfriend. Everyone had just gone through massive changes in their
lives to pay too much attention, especially since it was the year Chen and Xiumin nearly got
divorced and the latter was busy confining in him, yet they did try to make some time to meet up
with Suho’s new boyfriend, ‘I think it was a year after Chen and Xiumin’s wedding and after
Sehun left to work in a firm in Japan… We all met up for dinner and he was kinda nice’

‘How did the two meet?’

‘Kris’ grandfather passed away and apparently we knew him’

‘We?’

‘Yeah… Remember when we used to do community service and Manager Song keeps forcing us to
cater for some old people in the care home just across the school?’

‘Ah shit, I remember that’

‘Apparently, Suho kept in touch with some of the old people-’

‘That’s something he would do’

‘Anyway, when Kris’ grandfather passed away that year, they met up and then kind of…’

‘Hooked up?’, Kai finishes the sentence, two pairs of eyes bopping up from the menu and staring
intently at the two who were laughing together. If they didn’t know any better, they would think
the two were on a date, ‘Shit, I didn’t know Suho would hustle that quickly’

‘No, he was still pretty heartbroken about Sehun so we gave in and approved of Kris’, Baekhyun
points out, Kai being shocked just by how much he missed and since this was only a year after
Xiumin and Chen’s wedding, the last time all of them were together without so much drama, he
didn’t think a lot would happen afterwards.

‘Sehun just did a Chanyeol and left?’

Baekhyun glares at Kai’s wording of the situation but he didn’t deny it. However, everyone knew
that Sehun, compared to Kai and Chanyeol, didn’t really have much of a choice since it was part of
his training to work in a firm outside Korea and plus, their break-up wasn’t entirely because of
long distance but had been a pile of already existing argument between the couple prior to the
added situation, so Baekhyun wouldn’t say that Sehun did a Chanyeol.

‘Look, we should probably bail and meet up with the designers now and finalise everything. It’s
none of our business what Suho does in his free time’, Baekhyun points out, slowly folding the
menus back and quickly grabbing his bag.

‘But we haven’t decided on the final design…’

‘We’ll do that when we get out of here’, Baekhyun growls at a clueless Kai, reaching his hand and
tugging at Kai’s sleeves for him to stand up, ‘Have you paid for the meal yet?’

‘Well obviously’, Kai rolls his eyes, piling up his papers and neatly stacking them up before putting
them in his bag, pulling his mask to hide his face from being seen by anyone as the pair walks off
the restaurant, trying hard not to get noticed by Suho which was easy enough since the man was
too busy paying attention to whatever Kris was talking about.

‘Leave me alone’

‘It’s my day off and it’s your day off’, Lay points out, seeing that Chanyeol hasn’t left his house
despite it being well into the afternoon, the tall idiot walking around in his pyjamas all day, his hair
growing longer and messy.

‘Have you had a haircut yet? Look at you’

‘I’m not Jia, stop babying me’, Chanyeol whines, pushing Lay’s hands away from his hair, ‘Plus, I
don’t want to have an episode whilst someone has scissors near me. They could accidentally stab
me or something’, Chanyeol points out, which makes the doctor laugh of how overdramatic he’s
being.

‘I highly doubt that will happen’, Lay informs, yet Chanyeol is still not moving, sitting on his sofa
like a lazy motherfucker with a bowl of cereal.

‘Look, why don’t I come with you? I’ll be there to hold your hand-’

‘Hold my hand? Haven’t I just said that I don’t need to be babyed?’ Chanyeol spits out the soggy
cereal, landing on the carpet floor, ‘Now, leave me alone’

‘No. We’re going to get you a haircut’

‘Ha, dream on’

‘So, what style would you like it in’

‘Just short’, Chanyeol sighs out, crossing his arms together across his chest, huffing out the hair
flying in front of his face, Lay sitting down on the seats by the edge of the hairdressers.

‘We need to give your hair some treatment since it’s a little bit dry…’, the hairdressers speaks on,
yet Chanyeol isn’t speaking, just rolling his eyes and letting her get on with it.

A couple of years ago, Chanyeol would’ve never let his hair get this damaged. The high
maintenance guy in him would have already booked the best hairdresser prior to his hair ever
getting this far damaged.

Now he just wants to hurry it up so he can go back home and spend his day's binge-watching, and
speak to his dad about the reconstruction of the house.

‘You know, you can get your sides shaved, I heard the cool kids are doing it nowadays’

‘Do I look like a kid?’ Chanyeol turns to glare at the doctor, ‘Leave me alone’
‘Okay then’, Lay stands up, bowing to the hairdressers, ‘Take good care of him, I’ll be back in about an hour’

‘Wait… I didn’t mean it! Come back!’, Chanyeol was about to get up, but the hairdresser had pushed him back down since she was in the process of applying the treatment on his hair, ‘Lay! Where are you going?’

‘Don’t worry about it. I’ll only be out for an hour’, Lay laughs, patting Chanyeol’s shoulder, ‘I have a husband I need to win over’

‘Lay! Please, I don’t think I can-’

‘Relax, okay? You’re gonna be fine’, Lay comforts Chanyeol, laying a restful hand and patting him once more before exiting the hair salon inside the mall, probably in search of a flower shop.

‘I hate him’, Chanyeol hears himself mutter, trails of curses following on as he looks forward in the mirror, his glasses taken off so he couldn’t see much, just a blurry figure, barely a shape of a person.

‘I’m guessing they’re just meeting up’, Kai points out, still not over the fact that Suho would just so nonchalantly hang out with an ex of his, ‘Sehun wouldn’t be too pissy about it, right?’, he goes on, the pair inside the mall after finalising everything with their chosen interior designer, Baekhyun calling it a day and wanting to go home, yet Kai seems adamant in keeping him in his hold, thus the pair roaming around the mall, Frappuccino in their hands.

‘I wouldn’t worry too much. Kris isn’t a bad guy, he was actually kinda good for the uptight Suho’, Baekhyun shrugs, recalling the few moments he did interact with Kris, knowing that he wasn’t awful and the only person who was pissy about their relationship was Kyungsoo since he had an overprotective ass, but everyone else was pretty calm about it.

‘God, I wondered how Kris felt when he met all you weird asses for the first time’, Kai laughs, just imagining what could’ve happened had all of them been in the room, ‘You probably caused a mess, right?’

‘No, all the weirdos who start shit weren’t present’, Baekhyun turns to look at Kai, the celebrity suddenly cowering over the statement.

‘I would’ve come if y'all told me’

‘We hated you that year… Remember?’

‘Yeah… I guess so…’

The pair falls in an awkward silence, Baekhyun looking at the way Kai kicks at nothing, his mask still over his face due to the rising crowd inside the mall, his hood up and face barely being seen. Baekhyun had often wondered how the celebrity would kill time during his absence over the years and it looks like he hadn’t.
They pass through the glass walls of hair and nail salon, Baekhyun’s eyes subconsciously shifting to look at the different people doing their nails and getting their hair done, his eyes randomly falling over a sleeping boy whose hair is wrapped around in some kind of cloth, a circular machine hovering over him. Kai continues to walk, not realising that Baekhyun had stopped in his steps.

He realises he’s been smiling when he sees his reflection in the mirror contrasting next to Chanyeol, whose head was rolling around whilst he tries to sleep sitting down, his long legs outstretched across the floor, the hairdresser having to skip over it.

‘Baekhyun? Baekhyun?’, Kai turns around, his voice bringing Baekhyun back to reality, instantly turning around and catching up with Kai without a second look at the sleeping boy.

Sehun looks across for his phone, waiting for Suho’s message, yet the man hadn’t sent him anything yet. Sehun tries not to be clingy. He knows it’s not a good look, but he needed at least an update on Suho. He could barely hold himself up from calling his number. His hands itch inside his pocket as he feels his car keys inside, his mind contemplating whether to use his break time to run over at the police station to see if Suho is okay.

He walks inside the hospital reception, checking the time to see if visiting hour is still commencing, nodding to the nurse who has seen his face before, multiple of times, since all his friends chose to get themselves into shit accidents that have him leading his car in the same hospital.

He didn’t have to look for Kyungsoo to know where he is, it has been said that he has been transferred in the neurogenetic imperium department, or as Lay would so quickly put it as NID, being placed inside a private room that he has all to himself.

He slides the doors open to find Kyungsoo sitting on the window sill, his normal clothes on and forehead leaning on the cold glass of the window. The swaying of the door made Kyungsoo turn his gaze, his eyes falling on Sehun as he walks in with a shy smile on his face.

‘Well, if it isn’t Mr Lawyer himself’, Kyungsoo greets him with a welcoming smile, one which he still needs getting used to since Kyungsoo has been giving him a cold shoulder since his return to Korea.

‘How are you?’, he asks, walking over and giving the small police officer a hug, feeling guilty about not being able to visit him since his multiple operations.

‘I’ve been good’, Kyungsoo announces, and there doesn’t seem to be a hint of lies buried in his tone, so Sehun gives out a sigh of relief.

‘I heard about your situation’

‘The memory loss?’

‘Yeah… I’m sorry about that…’

‘Don’t worry. I just forgot about one person’, Kyungsoo shrugs, looking up at Sehun, ‘It’s not that
big of a deal

‘But… It’s Kai that you forgot about…’

‘Yeah… You also heard that I was dating a celebrity?’, Kyungsoo grins, pointing at himself, still n disbelief, ‘Me out of all people?’

‘He wasn’t a celebrity when the two of you were dating’, Sehun points out, sitting next to the window sill, looking out at the glass panes and seeing the view Kyungsoo will be stuck with within the next few weeks, or maybe even months, the field of the back hospital along with other patients walking around to get some fresh air.

‘I heard about that too…’, Kyungsoo looks down, playing with his hands as the silence looms over them, ‘So, how was Kai?’, Kyungsoo noticed the way Sehun turns his gaze to look at him, his face straight and non-expressive, just like how every lawyer is when you throw them a surprising question, ‘I mean… Before he was famous… How was he like? What was our relationship like?’

‘Annoying’

‘Huh?’

‘I mean, you guys were practically inseparable thanks to his goddamn powers’, Sehun chuckles at the old memories which came rushing through him, back in the simpler days of summer breaks and homework mixed with trouble and detentions, ‘You were scared of him… Only because there was a rumour that he was part of a gang back then… But… I guess, he fell head over heels for you first and you sort of just… Liked him back’

‘I liked him back?’

‘Almost instantly… We’re still undecided till this day who actually liked who first… My bet will always be on Kai though’

‘Kai? Why?’

‘When you remember how he acts around you, then you’ll know’, Sehun smiles, resting his hands on his knees and feeling slightly nostalgic at the old memories this talk has opened.

‘Does he still act around me like that?’

‘Now?’, Sehun breathes out, ‘I have no idea… Things started going downhill a year after Chen and Xiumin’s wedding’

‘Ain’t that the truth’, Kyungsoo chuckles, remembering the rest of his memories which never faded, the outburst of fights between Suho and Sehun. Chanyeol’s mysterious break-up and Baekhyun’s sudden interest in him, along with the growing tension between Xiumin and Chen during their first stage of trouble during their marriage, one which almost lost them each other.

‘Kai already left you for his job before I went to Japan, so I already knew how heartbroken you are after it, but everything that happened after that… I have no idea’, Sehun points out, ‘I don’t know if you guys have ever met up before the reunion so…’

It was enough information for Kyungsoo to piece together the growing blanks in his mind. Sehun’s words seem to align with everything he’s been feeling as of late, his growing infatuation over the celebrity which he seems to brush aside as nothing more than being starstruck, but now that Sehun had mentioned it… He may wonder.
‘Anyway, Kyungsoo, I have a question’, Sehun interrupts the silence and changes the subject.

‘What is it?’

‘Do you know if Suho’s okay?’

‘Suho? I thought he was with you last night’

‘He was… He just… Hasn’t spoken to me all day today’

‘And? I’m pretty sure he’s been busy. I’m not in the station so I can only imagine just how stressful it is for him’, Kyungsoo informs the worrying lawyer, reaching his hand out to pat his back.

‘Do you think he’d mind if I visit?’

‘Oh? Is this written Sehun acting all worried for Suho?’, Kyungsoo laughs the moment he hears Sehun’s whining voice, imitating a high-pitched tone of a child’s as he makes fun of the tall lawyer, earning himself a hit on the shoulder, ‘Wittle Sehun is upset that Suho hasn’t called him yet’

‘Just because you’re in the hospital doesn’t mean I’m not going to beat you up’

‘Try me and I’ll cry for assault’

Lay received a phone call from the hair salon midmotion in handing the cashier money for his bouquet of flowers, picking up the phone to find a whining child begging for him to come back or he’ll walk out of the salon without paying. Lay rolls his eyes, hearing Chanyeol’s high-pitched complains, bowing to the cashier girl as he turns around to walk away, the big bouquet of flowers resting on his arms.

‘You are such a child’, Lay points out the moment he walks back inside the small salon, looking at Chanyeol sitting on the chair with his arms crossed and his hair much shorter, ‘See, now you look nice again’, Lay claps his hands together, struggling since he had to balance the flowers on the side of his arm.

Chanyeol, amongst other things, now looks handsome, a little bit like his old self, his hair short and straight, smooth without split ends.

‘Now, if you style it well, you can look straight out of a magazine’

‘I don’t want to look straight out of a magazine’

‘You’re Park Chanyeol, you always want to look straight out of a magazine’, Lay pats his shoulder, ‘Now, hold this while I pay for you’, Chanyeol is thrust with a bunch of flowers, a colourful blow to his face as he smells the different scents of flowers. He looks down on them, staring at each different flower, different from each other but still looking perfectly beautiful with each other nonetheless.

‘You’ve got to do more than giving Luhan flowers if he’s truly pissed off’, he calls the moment
Lay returns to his side, urging him to finally get up and get a move on since the day is slowly drawing to a close.

‘I know, but flowers his weak spot anyway’

‘Minhyuk is seriously getting on my nerves’, Chen whines the moment he walks through the door, throwing his jacket on the sofas when he enters the room to find Xiumin sitting on the carpet floors, piles of paper around him as he revised and rewrites a few of his work for the musical. The process is going slightly slow, especially since their main lead is a rookie and their second lead is a busy celebrity, which makes it easier for Xiumin to continue his work to the last minute.

‘Tell me what’s new and I might actually pay attention to you’, Xiumin replies, ignoring the way Chen sat down behind him, snaking his arms around his waist, feeling his chin resting on his shoulders.

‘Rewriting again?’ Chen asks once he reads over some of Xiumin’s scribbling, seeing some of the new songs he had written for the musical that he had heard Kai was cast in, ‘Are you sure Kai can sing some of this? These are high for his voice’

‘Kai’s playing a mute prince in the musical’

‘Well, that’s not very musical, is it?’, Chen snorts, yet Xiumin elbows him on the stomach.

‘Don’t judge my team’s work’, Xiumin points an accusing finger, one which Chen just shrugs.

‘I would never’, Chen giggles, but before Xiumin can punch him again, he heard the knocking of their front door, one which forces him to get up, sighing as he separates himself from his husband, his footsteps making their way over to the front door, opening it to find a frustrated neighbour glaring at him.

‘Luhan?’, he tilts his head in confusion, Luhan pushing past him and walking straight into their house with Jia in his arms.

‘I cannot believe Lay!’ Luhan anguishes his frustration to Xiumin, his eyes widening at the sight of Luhan, seeing his small and somewhat babyface despite being in his thirties, looking frustrated, Jia sleeping in his arms.

“What is it?”

‘Lay is being ridiculously stupid, finding a cure? For neurogenetic imperium? Is he serious?’, Xiumin instantly stands up at the sound of the familiar word, his hands gesturing for Luhan to stop talking the moment Chen walks back to the living room.

‘Luhan-’

‘He can’t find a cure on something as ridiculously complicated as that? And all for what?’, Xiumin is just about to walk over and cover Luhan’s mouth, his eyes shifting forward to his husband, seeing Chen standing by the entrance of the hallway.
‘Chanyeol doesn’t even want to be cured’

‘Chanyeol? What’s Chanyeol got to do with it?’, Chen, at the obvious sound of his friend’s name, perks into the conversation, Xiumin’s hands shaking nervously as he gives Luhan a warning look, both men standing stiff and awkward at the realisation.

‘Nothing…’, Luhan hugs Jia closer to him, closing his mouth and resting it on her small head in regret.

‘No, you mentioned Chanyeol… What about him?’, Chen walks so he’s facing Luhan, ‘What about Chanyeol?’, Luhan is silent, eyes looking down at their feet, his shoes still on despite being inside the living room, avoiding contact with an adamant Chen.

‘He has Neurogenetic Imperium Disease’, Xiumin’s voice is the one which breaks the growing silence in the room, the tension rising the moment Chen turns around to stare at his husband in shock at the news.

‘He has…’

‘He’s had it since the year of our wedding and-’

‘And you knew?’, Chen interrupts Xiumin’s explanation, a rising frustration growing in his stomach, ‘You know about this?’

‘Only when he came back’, Xiumin responds, raising his hand in surrender, ‘I found out when he was having an episode outside the hospital’

‘Hospital? You mean when we were waiting for Kyungsoo’s surgery?’

‘No… When Suho got hit’

‘Back then?! You knew way back then?’

‘Don’t shout at me’, Xiumin stops Chen from rising his voice any further, ‘I found out accidentally. He didn’t just call me up one day and tell me all about his stupid problems’

‘I just don’t understand…’, Chen clenches his fist, his nails digging into his skin. The room becomes overwhelming small, the three of them standing in silence, one in regret whilst the other in anger.

‘Chen please, sit down and I’ll explain what I can…’

Chanyeol sits in his room, his old room which he spent during his youth since he didn’t have the nerve to stay over his parents’ old room. It’s bigger than he had remembered, probably because it was much tidier than before and most of his stuff from back then are either thrown or stored somewhere in the attic, his room looking less homely now that a bed and a closet is all there is inside.
But he didn’t mind it.

He remembers how much time he spent in this room, mostly watching TV or playing games with Chen, maybe wanking off now and again. But he did remember some the best moments were spent with Baekhyun, after officially becoming a couple all those years back in Senior year. He remembers the first time Baekhyun spent the night in his room, seeing how awkward it was when he tried to clear the room of all his shit and waste, Baekhyun laughing awkwardly when he spots a porn magazine open on the floor.

He didn’t think he’d miss the day he was brutally bullied by the latter for even keeping porn magazines when the internet exists.

He misses Baekhyun being himself around him.

He can still feel the walls around him whenever he’s around, even though he tries, every fucking day, to try and see the Baekhyun he once fell head over heels for even during his stupid hormonal teenage mind.

He looks at himself in the mirror, this time with his glasses on so he can see much clearer. Lay had a point, he looked a little bit like his old hair, sleeked back and styled a little. He was even wearing his college sweater which still fit him, his name the year he graduated pasted on the back along with his school logo.

After getting sick at looking at his face, he turns around to find one shelf still placed in his room by the corner which holds all of his trophies, from table tennis to bowling and even snowboarding, billiards and archery. He was one hell of a sportsperson in college since he didn’t have his powers to stand out from the others anymore.

Baekhyun taught him that he didn’t need his powers to be able to gain attention.

It sounded harsh, but he had wished sometimes that maybe he didn’t save Baekbeom all those years ago. He would still have his powers and maybe even the life he had originally planned with Chen back when they were still freshman.

But then he remembered Baekhyun’s face. The stricken expression the moment he realises his brother was still inside the building. The memory is still fresh in his mind and never really went away. During cold nights, in between the drunk sessions and missing Baekhyun, he’d see flashes of his faces, different from the other.

The expression of fury on his face when Chanyeol grabs hold of his arms in the middle of the canteen.

His soft eyes which glowed when they sat side by side in the library, in silence, but in peace.

The way he smiled, embarrassed and flushed, cheeks burnt red as the freshmen cheered him on, Chanyeol holding onto his guitar with a tired Chen cursing behind him.

*Tap. Tap. Tap.*

Chanyeol jumps at the sound of rhythmic tapping, too organised to just be a sequence of branches hitting his window. He slowly turns to the side of the room where the window is, pulling the
curtains aside.

‘Baekhyun?!’, his hands instantly opens the window, opening it as wide as he could, his hand already protectively around the boy’s arms as he watches Baekhyun try to squeeze through and inside his room. What the hell are you doing here?’, the questions, the thud of Baekhyun’s feet hitting the carpet floors, the school teacher huffing a breath after struggling to climb the small tree beside Chanyeol’s window.

‘I always wondered why you struggled so much sneaking into my room’, Baekhyun breathes in and out heavily, resting his hand on Chanyeol’s desk as he tries to regain his strength. ‘God, maybe I’m just old, but I didn’t think it would be this hard’

‘Baekhyun’, Chanyeol reaches his hand out, trying to see if he had any scratches since the branches can be quite piercing and sharp. ‘Are you okay? What are you doing? Why are you here?’, Chanyeol’s eyes gazed at Baekhyun, seeing him, still shorter than him, his hands fiddling on the sleeves of his shirts, the veins running down his arms lighting up a soft yellow glow which looked like fairy lights wrapped around his limbs.

‘Baekhyun?’

‘You haven’t visited me’

The question surprised Chanyeol. All because he never thought he’d feel welcome back into the apartment after their argument over at the hospital, Baekhyun’s piercing words still haunting him.

‘I thought you didn’t want me to?’

‘Who said I wanted you to?’

‘Now you’re just confusing me’, Chanyeol chuckles when Baekhyun suddenly becomes defensive, his long sleeves dragging down which hides his hands and his glow. ‘Do you want me to visit you?’

‘No’, Baekhyun huffs, folding his arms across his chest. ‘I don’t want you to do anything, who said I was desperate to see you?’

Chanyeol couldn’t help but laugh at how stubborn Baekhyun still is, shaking his head in humorous disbelief at the fact that Baekhyun can so blatantly lie at the obvious in order to keep his pride in check. It reminded him of the old times.

‘I haven’t cooked any food, but I can make you some popcorn if you want?’

‘Only if a movie is accompanied with it’

‘I’ll go get my DVD collections then’
this update was long overdue and I apologise... the song I used is basically the song that made me want to put chanbaek and kaisoo in the angst route, so blame this song tbh haha.
change of mind

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chen sits on his desk, playing with the pen which rested upon his hands, his eyes gazing down the trails of cubicles which can be seen through his glass walls, each movement of his employees swift and mechanical, going over paperwork, typing up reports, making calls and such – just everyday office work. However, his eyes lands upon a certain employee, his hair shorter than the last time he’d seen him, but it was unkept and curly, like a poodle’s, his tie loosely on him, his shirt barely

do young - hard for me

change of mind.
tucked in and his eyes drooping low since he probably slept late last night for reasons unknown to Chen.

Chanyeol acts exactly the same, messy and uncoordinated, unprofessional at times and just childlike at best. Chen observes the way Chanyeol attempts to use the fax machine, asking his colleagues how the photocopier works along with long conversations down the hall since it doesn’t take him long to make friends with other, not when he had a somewhat great sense of humour and oddly good enough listening skills despite his urge to try and swerve the attention back to him. Chen feels like Chanyeol hadn’t changed in the grand scheme of things.

Yet he has.

Without Xiumin’s words sitting at the back of his mind, gnawing at him, making him notice the tiny little movements that Chanyeol would make, the flinching of his fingers whenever he typed too fast or too long, the twitching of his eyes and cheeks which would happen at random and the limping – god, out of all things, how did he not notice the limping? He sees the small slump Chanyeol would make whenever he tries to walk from the coffee machine back to his cubicle like there are pebbles stuck in his shoes that he can’t get out.

And the fact that no one knew this whole time.

All the tempt up anger which continues to rile Chen further away from his best friend instantly disappeared when he sees Chanyeol struggling to lift up his coffee mug at one point in the afternoon hour, seeing his shaking hands which he tried to hide from the others, having to set the cup down and breathe rhythmic breaths to calm himself down and try again.

Had he known that Chanyeol was like this, his ass would’ve been on the next flight to Fiji with a crossbow to kill his ass for not telling him.

It perked up a small memory which had long been forgotten but resurfaced at the new revelation.

Chanyeol’s limp had been present even during the reception of his wedding.

Chen scrunches up the piece of paper he was holding, ripping it into pieces, taking it all out on the material in front of him, his eyes pierced in slits as he glares at his own reflection on the computer screens.

Baekhyun sits in his office during lunch hour, making a few phone calls for Kai about the interior design of the now new orphanage home for children, looking over the design plans without much thought of whoever walked in.

He feels the buzzing of his phone on the table, making him look at the device which lit up, his hands holding on to see Chen’s number on the screen, odd since the two haven’t socialised as a pair in years, always as a group but never just them two.

He picks it up anyway since he had no other excuse not to, the device resting on his cheeks.

‘Chen, what’s up?’
‘Hey, Baekhyun…’, Chen’s sentence didn’t finish, which made Baekhyun slightly worry, the line being silence for a few seconds, ‘Are you okay?’

‘Am I okay?’, Baekhyun repeats the question, not really understanding the sudden worry Chen has over him, ‘Of course, I am, why wouldn’t I be?’, Baekhyun replies, chuckling at Chen’s seriousness, but the silent response he got dragged him back to his initial feeling of confusion, ‘What is it?’

‘Do you wanna grab lunch now?’

‘Now?’, Baekhyun looks down on his old watch resting on his thin wrist which points out that he only had half an hour left until classes starts, ‘Lunch hours is nearly finished’

‘Don’t worry, I’m parked outside the guest parking lot in school and I already bought Subway’

‘You’re in school?’, Baekhyun stands up at the new information, his feet already making a move before his mind can process, ‘Why are you here?’, Baekhyun asks, again, not getting a response from Chen, so he hangs, rushing his way over to the front entrance where the school parking lot is, looking around to see if he can spot Chen’s car.

The black sleek car was parked right in front of the back entrance, waiting to be seen by Baekhyun, the windows rolled down with Chen in his suit sitting on the driver’s seat with a poker-faced expression.

‘Chen… What’s going on?’, Baekhyun asks, tapping on the window of the front passenger seat and hearing a clicking noise when Chen unlocks his car. His hands immediately open the car door, walking inside the feeling the cold ac hitting his skin the moment he sits down, his eyes falling on Chen’s figure, a businessman leaning back on his chair, his white button-down shirt unbuttoned at the top with his tie long gone, ‘Are you okay?’

‘Work was a bore, so I bailed’, Chen mumbles, picking up the plastic bag which holds their sandwiches, ‘Here’s yours, I didn’t put any onions’, Chen murmurs, still knowing Baekhyun’s preference despite it being years.

Baekhyun’s question was still ignored by the CEO, so Baekhyun carefully takes the sandwich, the ruffles of paper and chewing sounds filling the silence between them, Chen looking straight ahead and looking at the familiar place he once spent his youth in, the parking lot where everything and anything happened. Where Chanyeol showed him his first fire trick when they ditched class for the first time and hid here. Chen could think of countless of moments where he spent most of his time sitting in Chanyeol’s car, top open, reading his book or scrolling through his phone whilst Chanyeol leans his chair back and plays with his guitar.

‘Chanyeol still loves you’, Chen finally spoke out, Baekhyun choking mid-chew at his sudden voice, the barbeque sauce spilling on his jeans.

‘What?’, Baekhyun says as soon as he downs the food and wipes his face.

‘The prick is still pretty much in love with you’, Chen speaks out again, sighing as he looks down on his half-finished sandwich, ‘I don’t think he ever really stopped’

‘Chen what’s going on?’, Baekhyun turns his body so that he’s facing Chen, this time, not wanting to let go of the question, ‘Did something happen?’

‘Yeah’, Chen nods, looking sullen and somewhat stricken by something, ‘But it’s not in my place to tell you’
‘What’s not in your place to tell me?’

‘Look Baekhyun, out of everyone, pretty much us two have been giving Chanyeol a hard time the moment he came back to Korea’, Chen points out, once again ignoring all of Baekhyun’s advances in trying to find out what’s going on, ‘We’ve been shit to him since the moment he came back and…’, Chen’s fingers fiddled with the paper wrap, ripping the edges which fall on his lap, ‘And to think we’re the two most important people in his life…’

‘Chen, why are you being like this now? Can I remind you that Chanyeol bailed literally the day after your wedding’, Baekhyun points out, not understanding Chen’s sudden worry of how Chanyeol might act due to their coldness, to be honest, Baekhyun thought that Chen was much colder than him – he at least allowed Chanyeol to visit him from time to time – he knew Xiumin had to really persuade Chen to even give Chanyeol a second look.

Maybe Baekhyun had a point. Maybe he should still be angry at Chanyeol. He did, in fact, refuse to tell him, his best friend in the whole wide world, about his situation. He should be offended that Chanyeol didn’t even tell him, or at least alluded to it when he called Chen the next morning saying he’s just accepted a job in Fiji and is set to leave by the evening.

Chen couldn’t even make it to the airport since he was busy packing for his honeymoon set the day after.

‘Just give him a break Baekhyun’, Chen sighs when he notices Baekhyun looking down at his watch, stirring in his seat as he hears the faint noise of the bell ringing from inside the building, ‘He needs us right now’

‘And I need to get to lessons. Thanks for this by the way’, Baekhyun waves the unfinished sandwich, stuffing the rest in his mouth as he opens the door and makes his way back to school.

Kyungsoo looks ahead of the window, just finishing a session with the psychiatrist and failing spectacularly at trying to remember a hint of memory with Kai in it. He does remember something, a growing pain at the back of his head that’s bursting to come out, but other than that, he couldn’t picture a clear image with Kai in it.

‘Hard time?’, Suho calls out, sliding the door open, walking in with Lay by his side.

‘Don’t get me started on the warm-up I was supposed to do’, Kyungsoo whines as soon as he sees his partner walking inside his room, ‘The doctor made me count up to 100 and start jumping’

‘Don’t laugh at the technique’, Lay defends his colleague, ‘That’s too get you stimulated’

‘Yeah, because I’m definitely stimulated’, Kyungsoo sarcastically chuckles, reaching his hand out to catch the drink that Suho throws at him, opening the can of coke, making a fizzing noise.

Lay does his usual check-up, seeing the notes his psychiatrist made in today’s session, adding it on his files and asking Kyungsoo pretty much the same questions as the previous doctors.

‘Has anything triggered you? Any smell or touch? Seeing a type of colour?’
‘No, if I did, I would’ve already told the other doctor’, Kyungsoo rolls his eyes as Lay continues to press on the same set of questions, hoping to receive a different answer.

‘Don’t be too pressing, Kyungsoo is trying’, Suho points out, leaning on the wall and texting on his phone, waiting for Lay to leave so he can discuss a few things with Kyungsoo.

‘Look, it’s my job to be thorough about things and I-’

They probably didn’t know what Lay was going to say next, since it was cut off by a random gust of wind and a figure appearing bang in the middle of Kyungsoo’s room, Kai holding a plastic bag of takeaway.

‘I bought food!’

‘Kai! What the fuck? Didn’t I tell you not to come back?!’, Suho shouts the moment he sees Kai’s overly excited face, abandoning his phone and shouting straight at the celebrity.

‘Oh shit, I didn’t think you’d come today…’

‘Today? You’ve been coming in here more than once?’, Kyungsoo starts laughing when he sees Kai duck, dropping the plastic bag on the bed as Suho takes off his shoe and throws it in his direction, Lay trying to calm the two down, shouting over them, yet nothing seems to be working, Suho adamant in getting Kai between his fingers.

‘I just wanted to eat with him!’, Kai screams in defence, teleporting to the other side of the room before Suho’s hands can reach his neck, ‘I promise I just came here to eat!’

‘I don’t give a fuck! Come back here so I can beat your stupid ass!’

‘Guys! This is my workplace and I’d like to be taken seriously for once!’, Lay shouts in between the trails of curses and run-down insults from both Chief Police and celebrity, Kyungsoo being the only person who didn’t join the fighting, just looking at the mess ahead of him, laughing at the way all three interacted with each other.

*Fire. Bonfire.*

*Marshmallows.*

*Snow.*

*Rainbow Skies.*

Kyungsoo feels the gush of cold wind kissing his cheeks, the smell of firewood and ashes along with toasted marshmallows triggering his mind to create pictures of a rainbow sky, along with laughter, an argument between them. The shouts of Chanyeol’s voice overlapping Chen, along with Suho and Sehun’s laughter getting caught in the mix.
He didn’t know why his mind had decided to bring itself back in Chanyeol’s 18th birthday, but it did. The memory replays itself over and over again, but nothing new comes into the picture, no tanned skin or thick lips or playful smile.

But there was a faint laughter in the background, loud enough to be next to him but still very vague from his memories.

Deep and wheezing, it reflected the same laugh Kai is making when Suho grabbed hold of his torso, accidentally tickling the tall celebrity into submission.

‘You’ve got a lot of explaining to do’, Lay points out the moment he sees Luhan walking inside his office, his husband wearing his business suit, the day almost breaking into the evening so Luhan probably finished work early today, something Lay can’t relate anymore since the referral of the Prime Minister’s daughter.

‘I’m sorry about the whole Chen thing’, Luhan finally approaches Lay despite their fight the other day, but since they haven’t spoken for the whole day today and yesterday, this was getting ridiculous, ‘I was frustrated’

‘I know you were… But this is going to affect Chanyeol if Chen approaches him about it’, Lay sighs, placing his files down on his desk as he gets up to stand in front of his husband, feeling regretful that his job has once again strained his relationship with Luhan, ‘He’s never going to agree to be my patient now’

‘Chen’s not going to tell Chanyeol’, Luhan looks down, seeing bandages wrapped around Lay’s fingers and wrist, ‘What happened to your hands?’, he reaches his hands out, feeling Lay’s calloused hands.

‘Had to extract over a hundred rocks from a patient’s skin’, Lay informs him, seeing the way Luhan grimace at the sight of his hands, feeling his husband’s soft hands wrapped around his.

‘Look, I’m really sorry for getting frustrated… I know you would never try and meddle with my job, so I shouldn’t do it to you…’

‘Luhan, I understand your frustration, I know it… Especially when we have Jia now’, Lay feels Luhan’s hands still on him, no sign of letting go, ‘I promise you, even with the funds, you and Jia are still going to be my first priority’

‘How are you going to make time for us?’, Luhan looks up at Lay, his eyes worried at Lay’s decision.

‘Research takes time, months before you send it off to the chemist to try and make a test formula…”
I can be in my home office for months on end… We might not even need to hire a nanny, so that’ll save us a lot of money too’, Lay points out, snaking his arms around Luhan’s waist, seeing his husband slowly smile at his plans.

‘Then why did I even bother to be mad at you?’

‘You never listen to the full story. It’s not my fault you’re always like that’, Lay jokes, playfully poking Luhan’s side to which the latter punched him in the arm.

‘You think you can persuade Chanyeol?’

‘God knows. He needs to find a reason to start living again if he really wants to be cured’

‘Byun Baekhyun’, Chanyeol waves the moment Baekhyun opens the door, ‘I bought groceries. I have enough to make your favourite meal’, Baekhyun lets Chanyeol inside his apartment, looking at the way Chanyeol’s face perked up at the sight of him, Chen’s words gnawing at the back of his head.

He watches as Chanyeol moves along his apartment, opening the draws of where he keeps his pans and utensils, knowing it off by heart already, assimilating himself back into Baekhyun’s life.

It didn’t help that Chanyeol looked exactly like how he looked years ago, his hair short and straightened, distressed denim jeans along with an oversized shirt which still makes him look kind of adorable despite being way taller than him. He had a small dimple down by his left cheek next to his lips whenever he smiles.

Baekhyun looks down to see his hands glowing a soft pink, sort of a like blush for him. He quickly rubs his hands together, trying to make the glow disappear. Over the years, his light powers had become more of an emotional lighthouse, making him more readable to everyone as his emotions trigger some kind of glow for him.

He hated it.

‘Who said you can cook for me?’, Baekhyun points out, walking over to sit on the small kitchen island as he watches Chanyeol prepare the vegetables, cutting them perfectly, being reminded at how good Chanyeol is at everything, even at cooking.

Chanyeol’s chuckles at Baekhyun’s cold response, knowing that Baekhyun wasn’t going to stop him anyway, seeing how Baekhyun rested his skinny arms on the table, his hair messy and dyed light brown. It seems like the latter still likes experimenting with hair colour and it surprises him that Baekhyun’s scalp was still okay.

The moment is caught in silence as Baekhyun watches the way Chanyeol cooks, cutting the meat, preparing the pan and making his own sauce, everything surprising organic. Chen’s words once again made its way in his mind. He didn’t want to think of Chanyeol’s side of the story. He didn’t want to think about how lonely Chanyeol must’ve been in Fiji. He didn’t want to invalidate his anger. His anger was the only thing stopping him from making a fool out of himself and running back in Chanyeol’s arms like a fragile person he never wanted to be.
Baekhyun shrugs the thought of, standing up and leaving the kitchen, going back into the living room where he left his students’ books still open, midway into marking them. He probably should stop looking at Chanyeol if he wanted to get anything done, sitting down on his sofa and picking up his red marker again.

Yeah, it was probably because Chanyeol was in the vicinity that Baekhyun was thinking this way, so he probably needed to get his head around.

Baekhyun begins to mark his students’ work, leaving comments of well done and improvements when he hears something else which makes him freeze at the moment, his pen stopping mid-writing, his eyes looking up to see Chanyeol cutting up some vegetables, humming a song which he can’t remember if he’d heard before, but the soft melody of Chanyeol’s voice hits home and it brings Baekhyun back to simpler times, fingers intertwined, breaths collide and arms securely wrapped around him, Chanyeol’s breath on his neck whilst he hums him to sleep after a long day.

Chanyeol, you fucking idiot.

How dare he. How dare he so nonchalantly sing in front of Baekhyun, his deep voice turning into a sweet melody of oohs and ohs.

‘Hey Baekhyun, I haven’t finished cooking yet, you should go back and-‘, Baekhyun’s footsteps were already making their way over to Chanyeol’s side before Baekhyun can think about what he’s doing, his hands reaching out to grip tightly on Chanyeol’s collar, glaring up at him.

‘What the fuck do you think you’re doing?’

‘Um… I’m cooking you dinner… Like always…’

‘Like always…’, Baekhyun whispers, ‘You just came back and you’re talking about always?’

‘I… I mean… It’s just a meal… You don’t have to over analyse my every move-’

Baekhyun should probably never act on impulse. But he’s always been like this, so was it really a surprise when he interrupts Chanyeol and crashes his lips with the latter, his eyes closes when he finally feels Chanyeol’s lips around him after all these years. It’s slightly chapped, not the usual smooth and soft lips which used to kiss him every morning, day and night, but everything else still feels the same.

And Baekhyun hates it.

He hates how his stomach would still churn the same way as it did, how his arms would automatically wrap around Chanyeol’s neck, having to tiptoe to do so, how Chanyeol would snake his arms around his waist, the knife still in his hands and the pan still boiling.

He hates how their lips moved together like nothing has changed as if time hasn’t separated the two. He hates how Chanyeol still knows him, still knows what he likes and how he loves the way his lips grazed down from his cheeks and down his neck, kissing him softly, decorating his neck with kisses and bites.

No words are spoken between them, both eyes closed as they separate themselves from their own reality, colliding together for the moment, mixed with infatuation and desperation to keep their lips latched together, Chanyeol breaking out for a moment to turn off the stove and placing the knife down on the table, abandoning his cooking completely as he feels Baekhyun pulling him in,
dragging him past the kitchen and living room, walking backwards and kicking his feet to open his bedroom door, the room dark and still kept dark when Baekhyun pulls Chanyeol in.

Once Chanyeol feels the both of them land on the bed, his eyes finally open to see Baekhyun, a soft red glowing on his cheeks, seeing how flustered he is. He couldn’t help but lean down and place a small kiss on each cheek, feeling the warmth of the glow touch his cheeks.

Sometimes he thinks Baekhyun might have gained his powers when he sees Baekhyun’s veins glowing red, like fairy lights wrapped around him, the warmth of the light making him look like Chanyeol’s very own fire.

Chanyeol’s fingers are frantic, pulling at Baekhyun’s shirt, his eyes eager to see more of his glowing skin, his lips kissing Baekhyun’s collar, down to his chest, hands massaging his waist, the feeling of content when he hears Baekhyun moaning at the touch of his tongue on his skin, making him shiver at the melodious sound he’d never thought he’d hear.

The night is young and cold, summer breeze turns chilly when it passes through the open windows of the apartment, sending shivers down their spines and naked skin, two worlds colliding yet again.

Morning came in the flicker of a moment, Chanyeol groaning as he feels his muscles strain for a moment. His eyes flutter opens due to the touch of sunlight which hits him, his head turning slowly to face the open windows which welcomes a new day.

Yet he could’ve sworn his window was on the right-hand side.

Chanyeol looks around, his mind processing that he was not in fact in his own house, rather, in Baekhyun’s and with that new knowledge, he looks down to the boy wrapped around him, Baekhyun’s head sleeping on his chest, feeling his breath and even his drool on him, his arms wrapped around him like a teddy bear.

He couldn’t see Baekhyun’s face from this angle, but he didn’t need to, all those years pining in Fiji, he had memorised every structure of Baekhyun’s face, his bone structure along with the constellations of his moles smothered all over him, from his face to his back.

Chanyeol had wished for a moment to have the power of time so he can stop at this moment, to relish in the feeling of Baekhyun’s naked arms wrapped around his, to feel like how he’d felt last night, all the pent-up anger and frustration, along with the sexual longing and pining which had dug a great hole in the both of them.

But nothing lasts forever. He feels that when his hands start to twitch, small streams of fire already making their way out from his fingertips. He tries to get Baekhyun off him, to run as fast as he can before anything happens before Baekhyun gets hurt by him.

Pushing the boy off him, he’s about to jump out the bed and run into the bathroom for cold water when he feels a hand gripping tightly on his arm, cold yet warm at the same time.

‘Where are you going?’, Baekhyun groans, still half asleep but aware of the rash movement made by Chanyeol.
‘I… Need to use the bathroom’, Chanyeol whispers, slowly trying to get Baekhyun off him, ‘I’ll be back, okay?’, he reassures him, sending Baekhyun back to sleep, rushing out as soon as he sees Baekhyun laying back down on the mattress, head hitting the pillow.

Chanyeol runs, still naked, but he didn’t care. He runs to the bathroom, turning on the shower as soon as he feels fire being released from every part of his body, his muscles twitching and skin burning at the excess, Chanyeol burying himself inside, letting the cold water simmer the fire inside him, his eyes burning until he feels his vision blur to nothing, his nails meting into nothing, his screeches drowned by his hands which he bites into to stop Baekhyun from hearing him, his teeth digging into the already burning skin, causing a gash, his mouth tasting metallic blood.

Lay opens the door to the sight of Chanyeol, his skin still burning, mouth breathing out steam and his eyes flowing with red tears.

‘Lay…’

‘Fuck, Chanyeol’, Lay quickly wraps his arms around Chanyeol, feeling the burning skin around his, guiding him inside his kitchen, ‘What’s wrong? What happened?’, Lay continues to ask Chanyeol mountains of the question, Chanyeol sporting nothing but jeans, his upper body bare, allowing Lay to see the reddened skin, raw and bleeding.

Lay quickly puts a hand over Chanyeol’s back, relying his powers on him, seeing the skin slowly rebuild itself, his eyes tearing at the sight of Chanyeol’s hands, all his nails gone, his hair also patching in certain areas.

‘Please… Please… Help me’

‘Lay, who was tha– holy shit’, Luhan takes a step back the moment his eyes lands on whatever Lay was holding, a man or a monster, he wouldn’t know from this angle.

‘Luhan, get me a glass of water, now!’, Lay orders his husband, feeling Chanyeol’s healed skin turned dry from dehydration. Luhan legs it out of the front entrance, Lay carrying him so Chanyeol is sitting down on the foot of the stairs, his head resting on Lay’s shoulders.

‘Chanyeol, what happened?’, Lay had never seen such a severe episode, one that looks like it nearly killed the man.

‘I don’t… I… Don’t know…’, Chanyeol stutters, taking a breath each second, Lay’s hands still on him, only his lower torso healed.

Lay is about to ask Chanyeol more questions when they hear squealing, wails coming from the top
of the stairs to which Lay looks up to see his baby Jia looking down at them, frightened of the man with the red skin next to her dad, her face scrunched up in fear and uncertainty.

‘Jia… Jia baby no…’, Lay calls out to Jia, being separated by the baby gate placed by the stairs, ‘Jia, please don’t cry… It’s your friend Chanyeol, it’s your friend…’, Lay continues to comfort his daughter from below, yet Jia is only a child, she would never have recognised the friend she made with the soft skin and elf ears.

‘Lay…’, Chanyeol sighs into Lay’s touch when he feels a gush of soothing cold touch his skin, travelling all around him until the burning subsides, ‘Help me…’

‘I am, it’s only going to be a couple of minutes before I heal everything’

‘No… Help me’, Chanyeol repeats again, reaching his hand out to grip tightly on Lay’s shirt, burning eyes begging him, ‘Please find a cure… Please… Heal me’

Chapter End Notes

I was supposed to write smut but realised that I suck at it, so this came out instead haha - excuse me for slow updates since I'm having a bit of a writer's block. Sorry.
'Describe to me your previous episodes'

‘Um… Well, they hurt… Like a lot… But they never physically scarred me. I would throw up fire or burn my clothes, sometimes I might get a few blisters here and there, but mostly it’s just be exploding out a shit ton of fire, which obviously makes me a threat for others… But never to myself’

Lay looks down at his notes along with the dozens of files sent over to him from Fiji, rereading the analysis of Chanyeol’s situation and finding none with coincides with what happened this morning. Thankfully, right now, Chanyeol is all healed, his skin no longer looking like it was dipped in lava, albeit, it did take a toll on his energy trying to heal and regrow Chanyeol’s hair and nails for what seems to be hours.

‘Seems like this morning is something out of the ordinary…’, Lay points out, typing something in his database over his new patient admitted to his ward approximately thirteen hours ago.

‘Look, I know I agreed to be your patient, but do I have to be hospitalised?’, Chanyeol whines, looking down at his hospital gown which didn’t really cover up anything in the grand scheme of things, having to tug down to cover his thighs since they couldn’t find the right size for his height.

‘Chanyeol, you burnt yourself and melted your own nails’, Lay raises an eyebrow, tapping his pen on the table, ‘Of course, I need to hospitalise you, I don’t even know why you had such an episode like this’, Lay is now frustrated, looking over the notes again and again as if something might hit him and it’ll explain Chanyeol’s oh so ever confusing medical situation, reading the next question on his paper to ask patients who had recently had an episode ‘I mean… When was the last time you were even sexually active?’, Lay blurts out, not expecting to gain much of an answer since this Chanyeol was probably too busy being depressed to have sex lately, so he doesn’t make eye contact with Chanyeol, moving onto the next set of questions on his sheet, paying no mind to Chanyeol’s awkward shift in behaviour, his hands playing with his nails, new and quite healthy looking compared to his old ones which melted along with his patches of hair.

‘Yesterday’

‘Excuse me?’, Lay looks up, the answer taking him into a shock, Chanyeol biting his bottom lip guiltily.

‘You had sex… Yesterday?’, of course, this changes things. Sex could trigger so many hormones, someone with neurogenetic imperium might have hormonal imbalance if they have sex, ‘May I ask when the last time was you were sexually active before yesterday?’, Lay asks again, waiting for Chanyeol’s answer since the boy was taking his time to answer, or clearly, trying to avoid it all together, ‘C’mon Chanyeol, this isn’t gossip, I need to know’
‘Four years’

‘Four years?!’

Yes. This most definitely changes a lot of things.

‘Of course, you had this kind of episode’, Lay lifts his hands up in praise for finding out the reason, ‘This is normal… In a sense… Your hormones just got out of control for the first time in a long time and it triggered a pretty harsh episode’, Lay breathes out a sigh of relief, deleting all of the worst case scenario he had listed all in his head of Chanyeol’s condition, crossing them all out in one go, ‘Especially since you hadn’t had sex four years prior to yesterday, it’s only natural for your body to feel overwhelmed’

‘So, you’re telling me this happened because I had sex with Baekhyun?’

‘Yes, yes, having sex- wait… What?’, Lay was in the middle of his celebration when what Chanyeol said next made him freeze on the spot, his pen dropping from his hands, clutter on the floor, ‘You slept with who?’

Chanyeol shouldn’t have said that. He should not have said that. Because now Lay is looking at him like he’d just grown an extra arm and he didn’t really need Lay chocking the explanation out of him.

‘Uh… I…’

‘You slept with Byun Baekhyun? Our Byun Baekhyun?!’, Lay shouts the moment of realisation hits him like a ton of bricks, ‘How?!’

‘You want me to explain sex to you?’

‘No, you big idiot… How did you get Baekhyun to sleep with you? He hates you’

‘Hey, hey, hey, now don’t look at me like that’, Chanyeol points a finger at the doctor, giving him a warning look, ‘I didn’t do anything, he jumped on me’

‘He? As in… Baekhyun? Yeah, right’, Lay snorts, rolling his eyes as Chanyeol tries to explain himself, his words overlapping each other until he was a stuttering mess.

‘Baekhyun was the one who kissed me first!’

‘Whatever Chanyeol’, Lay dismisses any more arguments from him, ‘Right now we’re doctor and patient, so we need to build a professional wall between the two of us’, Lay explains, gesturing his hands for Chanyeol to calm down, ‘I think the first thing to have is, to be honest with each others’

‘And I’m being honest! He jumped on me!’

‘Chanyeol! We need honesty and calmness! We can’t have you having another episode’

‘You won’t fucking believe me when I’m telling the truth’, Chanyeol whines, folding his arms together like a child, Lay ignoring his tantrum and filling in his paperwork.

‘I told your workplace of the situation and they’ ve agreed to give you two weeks off the heal’

‘You told Chen’s company?’, Chanyeol stands up, the nerves kicking it at the sudden news, ‘Why?’
‘What do you mean why? You can’t go back to work for another week and they’re going to need a pretty good excuse for their new employee to skip work like that’

‘But Chen…’, Chanyeol sinks back onto his chair, his shoulders drooping low as he looks down at his hands.

‘I know… But he was going to find out sooner or later…’, Lay brushes off the fact that Chen knew even before them due to his and Luhan’s mistake – mainly Luhan’s – but Chanyeol didn’t need to know that.

‘I made sure you share a room with Kyungsoo due to your…’

‘Financial troubles?’, Chanyeol finishes his sentence, already being well aware that he can’t afford a VIP one-man room to stay in for a whole week, so he thanked Lay for at least putting him with someone he’s comfortable with.

‘Kyungsoo may not remember Kai but he remembers everything else, so don’t be afraid to confide in him if you can’t with me’

‘Fine…’

‘Welcome to the club dude’, Kyungsoo greets Chanyeol the moment he slides the hospital doors open, in his skimpy and lousy hospital gown which covers little to nothing. Chanyeol smiles once he sees Kyungsoo sitting on the bed placed right next to the window, his hair combed back but still slightly messy.

‘And why aren’t you in a gown?’, Chanyeol points out, slightly whining that he had to sport such an ugly thing compared to Kyungsoo who was just in his jeans and shirt.

‘I have memory loss, not episodes’, Kyungsoo points out, turning so he can face the bed beside him, observing the way Chanyeol sits down, looking around at the familiar setting of white walls, the smell of antiseptic and the rough feeling of the stiff mattress and thin sheets.

It seems like it was too good to be true for Chanyeol to finally escape this fate.

‘You alright?’, Kyungsoo points out, bringing his knees together, resting his chin on them, his eyes comforting despite not smiling at Chanyeol. That was probably why Chanyeol was glad Kyungsoo was the first to know about his situation. Kyungsoo was calm and collected. He wasn’t the type to question either, he just saw Chanyeol as he is and helped him out without pressing too much. He also didn’t fake his worry with a smile, he didn’t bother to give Chanyeol the false sense of security, but his eyes did. His eyes gave way to his comfort and that eases Chanyeol more than a stupid smile.

‘Yeah…’, Chanyeol replies, and in a sense, he was fine. Lay had explained his situation and it had made sense. He didn’t need to worry about his situation getting worse when it was just one of those overwhelming triggers. After a few blood tests and a CT scan, it was clear that his illness didn’t get worse, just a little traumatised, ‘I didn’t know my body had been dying for sex lately’
‘What?’, Kyungsoo snorted out at the sudden odd statement Chanyeol made.

‘I had sex yesterday for the first time in years and my body just went… Poof’, Chanyeol made a bang gesture with his hands which got Kyungsoo chuckling at how lightly Chanyeol had taken it despite getting a picture of what happened by the looks of Lay’s sensitivity in handling Chanyeol, almost like he was a fragile glass.

‘Well, at least you still got it, haven’t you?’, Kyungsoo also tries to make a light of things, raising a teasing eyebrow at him.

‘Yeah… I guess’ since Lay isn’t there nagging Chanyeol, he is once again left in his own thought, and for the first time since yesterday, he thought about yesterday again. Despite his episode which melted the skin Baekhyun had touched, he can still feel his fingertips on him and it felt warm.

‘Psst… Is Suho here?’

‘What the fuck?!’, Chanyeol screeches the moment Kai appears right in front of him, blocking Kyungsoo from his view, ‘Jesus… Almost gave me a heart attack’, Chanyeol clenches his chest. Kai turns to see another person inside the hospital, eyes wide as he recognises Chanyeol.

‘What’s he doing here?’

‘Oh, Chanyeol has Neurogenetic Imperium Sclerosis’, Kyungsoo points out nonchalantly since everyone else pretty much knows.

‘Are you serious? Since when?’

Kyungsoo couldn’t really answer that since he didn’t know roughly when the episodes started for Chanyeol, so he turns his head slightly to look for Chanyeol.

‘During Xiumin and Chen’s wedding reception’

‘What?’, the pair call out at Chanyeol’s answer, not expecting that.

‘I know… Guys please I don’t want to talk about it’

‘Is that why you got into a fight with Baekhyun during the wedding?’, Kai points out, being reminding of the small scene he saw when he teleported to the toilets. He couldn’t remember what they were talking about since it was a long time ago and the music was blaring, but he knew he must have interrupted something important for them to be looking to each other like that.

‘I don’t know… I don’t remember much from the wedding’, Chanyeol murmurs, stretching his hands and finally laying on the hospital bed, looking blankly at the ceiling.

‘No one does really’, Kai points out, sitting next to Kyungsoo, slightly disappointed now that he can’t be alone with Kyungsoo, but the sudden news of Chanyeol’s illness worried and intrigued him to stay anyway, looking ahead and observing the way Chanyeol lays on his back, hand lifted in front of him, his fingers twirling around, a shed of fire streaming through before it disappears completely, like the last flashing light before sundown.

‘I didn’t even get to see Baekhyun in the morning’, Chanyeol whispers, feeling the instant wave of regret surging through his stomach at the thought of Baekhyun waking up and finding him long gone from his apartment.

If Baekhyun had even started to give him a glimmer of hope, he knew that it would be gone now.
Now he knows they’re back to square one.

‘What about Baekhyun?’ Kyungsoo asks curiously, pushing himself back when he feels Kai’s fingertips accidentally touching his when Kai got comfortable on his bed.

‘I slept with Baekhyun yesterday’

‘What?!’, Chanyeol is once again welcomed with a loud screech of disbelief, followed by two pairs of wide eyes and gaping mouths.

‘Yes. It’s really not that hard to believe’

‘Yes, it is… He hates you’

‘He hated me when we got together in the first place’

‘That’s a fair point’, Kai nods, pouting his lips in agreement, ‘So… You had sex?’

‘Yeah and apparently that’s why I had this massive fucking episode… Apparently, my hormones just imploded’

‘That’s a bit too much information’, Kai grimace, scrunching his nose and making a face to which Kyungsoo giggles at.

‘Not like that you hoe’, Chanyeol crosses his arms, ‘But what’s the point… It’s not like Baekhyun would want to see me again now that I ran off the morning after…’

‘You didn’t tell him?’

‘Tell him what Kai? That I melted like a candle in his shower and fucked myself up trying to get to Lay in the process? Oh, and I stole his clothes in doing so?’

‘Baekhyun still doesn’t know about your illness?’, Kyungsoo asks, slightly worried at the way Chanyeol shrugs his question, ‘Chanyeol… Everyone knows now… Don’t you think Baekhyun should know too?’

‘What difference is it gonna make? He’s only gonna be disgusted with me when he sees me after another episode…’

‘Chanyeol… You burnt his arms during high school… I highly doubt Baekhyun would’ve cared if you grew out the third arm… That guy got his head up your ass most of the time’

Well, maybe not this time’, Kai points out, earning himself a glare from Chanyeol.

‘Well, there goes my second chance’, Chanyeol murmurs to himself, combing his hair back as the stairs up at the ceiling.

‘You can always ask for a third’

‘Huh?’, Chanyeol turns when he sees Kai moving from Kyungsoo’s bed, sitting down on his instead, with an old sly smile he used to make whenever he’s stirring up trouble.

‘Want me to teleport you out of the hospital?’
Baekhyun gets the phone call from Chen. He had told him that he called Chanyeol in the morning for an emergency meeting, explaining to him the situation.

He didn’t know why Chen would call him about this and it wasn’t until he realised that he must’ve found out about him and Chanyeol did.

‘How the hell do you know that Chanyeol was with me last night anyway?’, Baekhyun asks over the phone as he microwaves his food that he bought earlier on that day but never finishing it.

‘Huh? I don’t… I didn’t know… I was just informing you that’s all’

‘You’re such a shit liar Chen’, Baekhyun snorts at Chen’s failed attempt to compensate for his unusual behaviour, ‘You’re talking to him again aren’t you’

‘Not as much as you apparently’, Chen fights back, which was fair enough for him and enough for Baekhyun to shut up.

‘Whatever’, he mutters, hanging up the phone and throwing it on the counter. He didn’t need a reason for Chanyeol to leave his apartment all of a sudden. It’s not like there’s a law for Chanyeol to always tell Baekhyun everything. He could leave whenever he wanted to. Even when Baekhyun finally wakes up properly to at least see Chanyeol standing by the kitchen making him pancakes or something. But he had no expectation.

‘Baekhyun’

‘Holy shit!’, Baekhyun once again throws his plateful of food up in the air when he turns around to come face to face with Chanyeol in an oversized hoodie, ‘What the fuck? How did you get in?!’, he screams, throwing the plate back on the counter and pushing Chanyeol out of his vicinity.

‘Hi Baekhyun’, he hears another voice, having to tiptoe to see Kai waving behind Chanyeol.

‘You…’, Baekhyun growls, but before he can push Chanyeol out of the way to punch Chanyeol, Kai had already disappeared with a wave of a hand, leaving the two of them by themselves.

‘Hi’, Chanyeol reaches his hand out to grab Baekhyun’s arm when the boy refuses to acknowledge his existence, ‘I’m sorry I didn’t come back to bed…’

‘I didn’t need you to’, Baekhyun interrupts him before Chanyeol can even begin to explain, ‘Now if you please can leave me alone, that’ll be great’

‘Wait… Baekhyun’, Chanyeol calls out, ‘I really wanna talk to you’

‘I’m busy’, Baekhyun uses the only excuse he can muster right now as he sees Chanyeol racing through the corridor. Their silhouette can be seen by the small fluttering of the kitchen light which ignites the end of the hallway towards Baekhyun’s room. Chanyeol touches Baekhyun’s arms which instantly turns a light pink glow, one which he only ever sees when the boy gets too shy or flustered. He wished he could talk to him, he wished he can pull Baekhyun into a hug and explain everything to him, slow and detailed so that he would never miss anything anymore.

Yet words never seem to be their thing.
Chanyeol pulls Baekhyun in, their lips colliding in one fast motion of anger and confusion mixing together with guilt and need. Lay had told him that it was okay, that it was even encouraged to have more sex to balance his hormones, so Chanyeol had no problem tearing Baekhyun’s clothes off and slamming the door shut behind him once the pair pushed and pulled each other in Baekhyun’s dark room, only lit by the glowing red of Baekhyun’s skin.
Kyungsoo didn’t know what he was doing outside the hospital, but Lay had advised him to maybe go for walks and hang outside the four white walls of the hospital room he has resided in for the past few weeks. He couldn’t agree more with Lay since he felt like a chicken waiting to be slaughtered when he stayed over in the hospital, but ever since he was given the freedom to leave, he suddenly realised that he had nowhere to particularly go.

Most of the time he’d spend his day at work with Suho whilst the other times he’d used to visit his family and hang out with Eun Bi, but he can’t do either at this very moment, so he’s left wondering the streets of Seoul with Chanyeol by his side, sipping a cup of latte and judging every person within a mile distance from them.

‘Look at what he’s wearing. Does he even know how to dress?’

‘Chanyeol, you looked like shit not too long ago too’, Kyungsoo points out, looking up to find that Chanyeol’s hair was actually combed properly, showing off his long legs with his ripped denim jeans which were complimented by his fitted jeans which showed off rather muscular arms for a man, ‘And since when did you start giving a shit about what you look like again?’, he randomly asks as they cross the street into another residential area.

‘I don’t. I always look this fabulous’

‘God you sound like your old self too’, Kyungsoo rolls his eyes, finishing his drink and throwing it to the nearest bin.

‘I don’t sound like anything’, Chanyeol continuous to deny everything that’s thrown at him, but ever since he’s been hospitalised, he’s been looking good, more so then he was before, having been discharged after Lay gave him some medications for his recent episode, but since his skin has been healed and he hasn’t shown any signs of future episodes any time soon, he was free to go and start work by tomorrow.

‘You prepared for Chen’s wrath for tomorrow?’, Kyungsoo asks, feeling a vibration in his back pockets, pulling it out and finding Kai’s name at the top of his recent notifications.

‘I don’t even wanna think about it’, Chanyeol sighs, looking down at his shoes and imagining Chen walking up to him with an axe, ‘He scares me’

‘Same’, Kyungsoo agrees, ‘Where are we going by the way? We’ve been walking around for an hour’
‘Oh, I thought you said you wanted to visit Kai?’

‘Huh? Since when did I say that?’

‘You didn’t, but you kept on staring at your phone and not replying so I suspected you were pining over Kai again’

‘I am not pining over a stranger’

‘Really Kyungsoo? You’re going to pull the amnesia card when we all know that you at least know you and Kai were fucking in high school?’

‘Just because I was made aware of it doesn’t mean I remember it’, Kyungsoo pouts, the smaller finally seeing the rather large venue up ahead of them.

Chanyeol looks down at Kyungsoo, observing the way he nervously plays with the sleeves of his shirt whenever he’s wary about something, smiling at the thought that not a lot of things have truly changed since he left. Of course, now he can’t make fun out of Kyungsoo since the boy was legally allowed to use a gun on him, but the little actions and the way he says his words never changed. He didn’t know why, but it made him feel comfortable like his home was still there waiting for him.

‘I don’t think visiting him is a good idea’, Kyungsoo stops in his tracks, Chanyeol being forced to turn around and wait for Kyungsoo to make up his mind.

‘Why?’

‘Because… Kai… Sort of asked me to be his boyfriend’

‘Really?’, Chanyeol tilts his head, ‘But I heard that he totally dumped your ass’

‘Really Chanyeol? You’re going to word it like that?’, Kyungsoo folds his arms across his chest, yet Chanyeol’s exact statement is what’s holding off Kyungsoo from stepping forward and giving Kai a definitive answer.

‘I mean… I wasn’t there to see it happen, but I heard that he was pretty cruel to you’

‘That’s exactly what Suho told me… He said to never give Kai a second chance’, Kyungsoo states, yet there was sadness in his tone and Chanyeol can feel it.

‘You can only make that choice yourself’, Chanyeol’s stern voice gains Kyungsoo’s attention, ‘I mean, I’m not one to say fuck Kai since I’m literally in the same spot as he is’, Chanyeol points out to which Kyungsoo nods his head in agreement, ‘But… We’re here now so you either walk in with me or we head back to the hospital. It’s your choice’

*That’s right. It is my choice.*
The hall is lavished with colours, the lights illuminating the big stage, overwhelming Kyungsoo as soon as he stepped in, the well-polished floors reflecting the chandelier lights, the chairs covered in luxurious cushions and laminated in gold and silver.

The pair can hear screams of instructions being yelled out at the front with the loud music blaring from the sound system, screeches of trainers against wooden floors and performers practising on the stage for the first time, still getting used to the size.

‘Where do you think he is?’, Kyungsoo whispers to Chanyeol, his eyes already scanning across the crowd of performers at the stage, his eyes never stopping until he spots the tan skinned dancer.

‘I can hear Xiumin, that’s for sure’, Chanyeol whispers back, hearing the banging of Xiumin’s fist against the table and his argument with Kim Jongin unfolding.

‘Good performance coming right up’, Kai smirks at Xiumin in a rather arrogant manner, rolling up his sleeves and showing his toned muscles as he waits for the music to start, the stage being made for him as the crowd of people depart from the centre to allow him to reign over the stage.

The music starts slow, smooth and sultry, just like Xiumin, every beat unhurried and smooth, picking up in crescendo, Kai’s arms outstretched in excellence, his legs straight in posture and his eyes closed as he begins to spin with the music, his body just as smooth and sultry as the music, flowing elegantly with his limbs flowing with each other like water.

‘The guy can still dance, I’ll give him that’, Chanyeol murmurs as he sits down in the audience’s chair, his arms folded and cap blocking everyone else from seeing his awed expression at how Kai so easily moved along with the composition of the music, in account every beat and rhythm.

*Temps Leve Arabesque.*

*Soubresaut.*

*Retire Devant.*

*Grand Jete.*

Kyungsoo stares at the beauty in front of him, his feet glued to the floor as Kai’s spins trigger his mind to fog, blurs of colour coming to his vision, mixing with each twirl the ballet dancer makes, splurges of colour which starts to form into shapes of bright orange jumpsuits, the smell of old paper and a video of him smashing the canteen floors. All the memory are hazy, almost dreamlike, but one thing all linked to each other in a form of a tall high school kid with a threatening gaze yet a beautiful smile sitting next to him, stamping old library books whilst listening to him talk for hours about nothing and everything.


‘Kai?’
Chen sits in his office, typing away and listening to endless complaints from his manager about the previous meeting which ended in disaster when Minhyuk threw a surprise deal when offering to buy the company of him again.

He thought his workers were loyal to him, yet this meeting might put that trust to the test.

‘I’m not selling my company’, Chen voices off again as his manager continues to beg him to reconsider since $75 million is sitting on the fence right now.

‘But sir, can’t we just-’

‘What you’re asking me is to give up my position for you guys to share the $75 million to yourselves. Are you seriously begging me for such selfish things?’, Chen bangs on his keyboard which freezes whatever he was emailing, his eyes glaring slits at his manager who turns quiet when he spots yellow sparks emitting from his fingertips, breaking the keyboard and setting it on fire.

‘Oh, my… Your keyboard sir!’, the manager starts to freak out, running to the side of the office to grab the fire extinguisher and turning it on, not realising the full force of the impact and spraying Chen of the white foam, covering his suit and half of his face.

There’s a moment of silence when the manager realised what he had just done, the glass wall allowing the other workers to see their CEO in a hot white foamed mess.

‘Get the hell out of my office!’, Chen shouts as he wipes the foam out of his face, clenching his hands and making the whole floor’s light flicker off then on in frantic patterns, the manager placing the fire extinguisher on the floor and making a run for it, the other workers trying to look like they’ve been working instead of staring at the glass wall when Chen looks out at them.

‘God, what am I gonna do?’, Chen sighs, grabbing a tissue from his office desk and wiping his neck and shirt, throwing the used tissue on the floor and spinning around in his chair with his eyes closed, trying to get away from it all.

‘Baby’, Sehun calls over when Suho enters his apartment, seeing the Chief Police carrying a box of takeaway with them, ‘Didn’t I tell you that we were going out?’

‘I’m really tired Sehun’, Suho whines, placing the plastic bag on the kitchen counter, already knowing where everything is, getting out the plates and cutleries, ‘I really need a stay in, takeaway kinda day’, Suho states, preparing the food whilst Sehun snakes his way over and wraps his arms around Suho.

‘You wanna upgrade that to a Netflix and chill kinda day?’, Sehun whispers, kissing the back of
Suho’s neck.

‘It’s 2027 Sehun, no one says that anymore’, Suho chuckles, yet he allows Sehun to smother him in kisses and hugs, ‘I’ve been stress with work, that’s all’

‘I understand’, Sehun allowed Suho to whine and complain about his work as he slowly undoes Suho’s button down shirt.

‘Sehun not now, like I said, I’m really tired’, Suho moves Sehun’s hands away from him, buttoning up his shirt and walking over to the microwave. Sehun sighs, but he complies with Suho’s wishes, sitting down on the kitchen chairs and waiting for the takeaway to be heated.

‘Where have you been by the way? You’ve been cancelling our dates again’

‘Work. All I’ve been doing is work and it’s been killing me’, Suho replies, ‘I hate having to cancel our dates, but you know how it is’

‘Yeah, I do… Which is why I’ve been thinking’, well… To be completely honest, Sehun hasn’t really been thinking much about it, but the spurt of the thought jumped out at him whilst he was jogging this morning and the idea hadn’t left his mind yet.

‘What is it?’

‘Why don’t you move in?’

Suho stops moving, his hands in midmotion of scooping some fried rice from the plastic container, his eyes round and wide and his mouth slightly opened.

‘Say what?’

‘I just thought… Since we’re both so busy with our jobs, we won’t be able to find the time to truly spend time with each other… I mean… I haven’t seen you all week and I just thought… Waking up to see you in the morning is enough for me’

‘Sehun, moving in doesn’t just mean I sleepover here… It means—’

‘I know exactly what it means, and I’m willing to say that I want that’

‘Can’t we think about it some more? I mean, I have to think about selling my apartment, then moving all my stuff here… Then the extra paperwork… Urgh, then we have to make linked accounts to pay the rent and god knows I can’t fucking afford to pay for a place like this’

‘Who says you have to pay the rent?’

‘I do… Because that’s what moving in means’

‘Well… We can always mortgage—’

‘Okay, now that’s definitely out of the question’, Suho points out, stopping Sehun before he gets any more idea, ‘We are not going to buy a house together’

‘Why not?’

‘Think of the responsibility Oh Sehun, we have to be serious when it comes to these things’

‘Are you saying that we’re not serious?’
‘Huh… Wait, you know that’s not what I mean’

‘We’ve known each other for a decade and we’ve been together half the time’, Sehun stands up from his chair, walking closer to Suho until they’re face to face, ‘And you’re telling me we’re not serious?’

‘Sehun, that’s not what I mean, you know that- Ah’, Suho suddenly feels himself being dragged by Sehun, the younger’s hands gripping on his arms as he is pulled into the bedroom, feeling the air blow on him when he lands on his back on the soft mattress, Sehun already hovering on top of him, his lips pressed on his collar.

‘You want me to show you how serious we are?’

‘Sehun… Didn’t I say not now?’, Suho whines, though he showed little restraints, his hands stroking Sehun’s arms as he feels the latter lavishing his skin with soft touches and kisses, ripping his clothes off of him.

‘Let’s get serious, Suho’

‘So, here’s your new medical files, updated by yours truly’, Lay slides the files to Chanyeol, Luhan sipping his tea as he sits beside his husband in their dining table in the middle of the night, Chanyeol sitting in front of them, carrying a bag of new sets of medications and a lot of papers he needs to sign after agreeing to be Lay’s lab rat.

‘If you put anything in me that’s going to mutate me into an ugly beast, I’m going to set your whole house on fire’, Chanyeol threatens him before signing the last piece of paper which Lay has handed to him.

‘And kill our baby, Jia? Have some compassion Frankenstein’, Luhan laughs, reading over Lay’s shoulder about the contract.

‘I’ll have you know that Frankenstein was the scientist’s name and the actual monster didn’t actually have a name’, Chanyeol says matter of factly, both Lay and Luhan looking at him weirdly at the random fact he’d thrown.

‘What the hell do you think I’ve been doing in Fiji?’, Chanyeol responds when he spots their expression, ‘I am very knowledgeable about random shit’

‘Well, that’s nice to know’, Lay nods, still looking at Chanyeol a bit oddly at his sudden rise of energy which he didn’t expect, especially since Chanyeol has been nothing but a pessimistic ball of depression ever since he came back to Korea.

‘Now where’s baby Jia so I can say goodbye to her?’, Chanyeol finally stands up, calling it a day and ready to head home to sleep the remaining day away, Luhan abandoning his coffee on the
table as he walks over to the living room to where baby Jia was still playing despite the late hours.

‘Don’t you set this kid a bedtime?’, Chanyeol spoke out, watching Luhan picking the baby girl up who was still wide awake and full of energy, flailing her arms in the air and wanting to get a hug from Chanyeol.

‘We gave up ages ago’, Lay points out, rubbing his daughter’s chubby cheeks as she smiles at Chanyeol’s embrace, giggling when Chanyeol leaves kisses on her cheeks. The three adults coo over the cute little baby, smiling at the way she interacts with Chanyeol.

That is until she starts burning.

‘Chanyeol! What the fuck?!’, Luhan screeches the moment the blue flames climb over his daughter’s little arm, Chanyeol’s arms outstretched and screaming as well.

‘That’s not me! It’s not me!’, Chanyeol shouts back, trying to hand baby Jia back to Luhan but couldn’t since the moment he touched her, his hands started to burn.

‘Chanyeol, stop it!’

‘I said it wasn’t me!’, Chanyeol shouts again, Lay trying hard to grab Jia, but just like Luhan, his hands start to burn. He’s about to shout at Chanyeol when he noticed that Jia wasn’t at all distressed at the fact that she was now fully on fire, even laughing and clapping her hands at their reaction.

‘Wait…’, Lay steps closer, looking at Chanyeol’s hands and not seeing the usual shaking seizure he would have had he been in the middle of an episode, but his hands were calm and secure around Jia, ‘This isn’t Chanyeol… This is Jia’, he comes to a revelation, seeing the way Jia laughs, flailing her arms to hug Chanyeol again, her hands all of a sudden shooting out lasers, Luhan and Lay ducking away, seeing the lasers aim for the vases around the living room, breaking them in an instant.

‘What the fuck was that?!’

Jia laughs at the action of breaking vases and freaked out parents, clapping her hands and making a screeching noise which forces all three adults to squirm to the floor, Chanyeol dropping Jia accidentally to the floor as he blocks his ears from whatever noise Jia was making.

‘What the fuck?!’, Luhan screams the moment he looks ahead to see Jia crawling on the carpet, leaving trails of orange fuming lava behind her, ‘The floor is lava!’ he screams, picking up Lay and dragging the both of them on the sofa, Chanyeol having to save himself and run to the other sofa when the lava starts to grow.

‘Your baby is a human nuclear bomb!’, Chanyeol shouts, hugging the pillow and screaming to both Luhan and Lay.

‘Honey please tell me this is normal!’, Luhan shouts, hugging his husband tightly when he sees all of Jia’s toys getting melted by the lava.

‘Fuck… This game isn’t fun when it’s real life!’, Chanyeol whines, having to jump over to the other chair when he sees he sofa he’s standing on slowly melting by the lava’s touches.

‘It’s normal… If the baby is showing early signs of powers, it’s normal for it to have multiple ones because their genes are still trying to find one dominant one to hold onto and keep… This is just her body choosing which one is dominant’
'Good Jesus… I pray her laser beam eyes isn’t the dominant one’, Luhan whispers, seeing his beautiful living room turning into hell itself, all of his collectable figurines and expensive furniture slowly turning into ashes and mush.

‘I’m never having a kid!’, Chanyeol shouts, seeing the way Jia starts to cry when she sees her toys all melted and broken, her cries of scream turning into colour and lighting up the room into bright rainbow colours, the three adults screaming for her to stop.

‘Babe, did you hear that?’, Xiumin walks into the bedroom, his hair still wet, a towel wrapped around his neck.

‘Hear what?’

‘I heard a bunch of screaming… I think it was coming from Lay’s house’, Xiumin tells Chen who was too busy writing an e-mail to look out of his window to find a house wrapped in colours, like a Christmas tree.

‘I didn’t hear anything’, Chen points out, finishing his e-mail and finally setting his laptop on the bedside table, ‘Now come to bed, I haven’t snuggled with you for the whole day’, Chen opens up his arms for Xiumin to jump into, wrapping his arms around his husband as they close the lights, ending the day with each other, ‘How was your day by the way?’, he asks half asleep.

‘Alright. I found out Kai’s still an amazing dancer’

‘Was that even a shock?’, Chen chuckles, resting his chin on Xiumin’s head as he feels the latter snuggle deeper on his chest.

‘No… But it was still nice to see’, Xiumin whispers, smiling at the memory of the exchange he had with Kai, seeing the fury in his best friend’s eyes, one which he misses since whenever he turns the TV, he doesn’t see the old expression on his face, rather a bored looking one.

Baekhyun crosses his arms as he sees Eun Bi waiting by the steps of his apartment with a bruised cheek.
‘Kyungsoo is going to kill you and me when he sees you’

‘Which is not why he’s not going to’, she points out, walking inside Baekhyun’s apartment and sitting down on his sofa, Baekhyun walking inside his bedroom to open his drawer where a small first aid kit box was hidden.

‘You’re gonna tell me what happened to you?’, he asks as he sets the box next to Eun Bi, getting to his knees and looking at the girl’s bruised face.

‘Nothing happened’

‘I’m not afraid to call Kyungsoo now’, Baekhyun warns her, finally getting to her as she sighs in defeat, pouting her lower lip.

‘They called me an attention whore’

‘Who did?’

‘Some classmates at school’

‘And why would they call you that?’, Eun Bi was silent for a moment, looking up at Baekhyun guiltily.

‘I’ve been hanging out with Kai recently’

‘What?’

‘It’s not my fault! He just happens to be at the right place and at the right time!’ , Eun Bi tries to explain herself, ‘He’s always there when they’re about to hit me or bully me so whenever he shows up I just wanna hide behind him and let him tell them off! But now they all think I’m a whore because I know him!’

‘Eun Bi, Eun Bi, calm down, calm down. No one’s going to kill you for hanging out with him’, Baekhyun tries to comfort Eun Bi when she continues to shout, wrapping his arms around her and giving her a hug when he sees her breaking down, crying on her shoulder.

‘I’m not a whore!’

‘Yeah, I know, we all know. It doesn’t matter what everyone else says, okay?’, Baekhyun pats her back, letting her cry on him for however long she needs.

‘I didn’t mean to be with Kai’

‘I’m not offended by it’

‘I still want you to be with my brother’

‘Oh god, here we go’, Baekhyun rolls his eyes, pushing Eun Bi back so they can make eye contact, Eun Bi’s eyes puffy and her cheeks still bruised. Baekhyun sighs, trying to get his feelings together since it doesn’t look like Eun Bi has the energy to see him lash out at her about it again. Instead, he grabs the first aid box and starts getting the antiseptic gel for her cuts.

Everything is silence for a moment, Eun Bi flinching when the alcohol touches her open wounds, Baekhyun taking his time to clean her face and bruise before getting the plaster and putting it on.

‘You know, your brother and I aren’t going to happen, right?’, Baekhyun finally points out when
the both of them are calmer, his hands crunching up the plastic and throwing them in the nearest bin.

‘You’d never know’

‘Eun Bi… Why are you so desperate to set me and Kyungsoo up?’

‘Because he’s weak for Kai… And now that he’s back… He’ll come crawling back to him again’

‘And is that really a bad thing? I mean, you may not remember all of it, but Kai was really good to your brother’

‘That doesn’t mean a thing’, Eun Bi sighs, ‘You didn’t see him afterwards. He was a mess… He was torn’, Eun Bi closes her eyes and leans her head on Baekhyun’s shoulder who sits next to her now that he’s finished fixing up her face, ‘He was everything to my brother… And for him to easily just move away and leave him… It made my brother… The person who means the world to me… It made him feel worthless. I don’t ever want him to feel that way ever again’

‘Eun Bi… Everyone has their version of every story… There’s never truly one side’, Baekhyun responds, triggering his own mind which rushes to the picture of Chanyeol, waiting behind his closed door, ‘You’d never know what truly drove them to the actions they took… So you have to listen to them if you truly want to know the reason…’

Baekhyun dips his hands into his pocket, pulling out his phone and looking at Chanyeol’s contact details.

There’s always another side of the story.
Chanyeol is shit scared. Of course, he is. He’s standing in front of his boss who had just asked his secretary for a new keyboard since he electrocuted the previous one. He thanks the stars and Jesus above for the glass walls of the office, so everyone can see him. That is his insurance.

‘Sclerosis, huh?’, Chen looks up at him, Chanyeol feeling like a bad dog who’d upset his owner, bowing his head down and gulping nervously.

‘I… Surprise?’, Chanyeol tries to lighten the mood which didn’t help since he had to step back in fright at the sound of the lightbulb exploding above him, ‘Look, I’m sorry… I didn’t want to tell anyone about my situation-’

‘Not even your best friend?’, Chen tilts his head, his eyes still glaring daggers at him. Chanyeol looks out to the office walls, trying to make eye contact with someone to ask him for help.

‘Don’t even try asking for help’, Chen noticed his motives the moment he sees Chanyeol’s brows crunched like he used to do whenever he felt uncomfortable, ‘I cannot believe you would allow yourself to suffer like this when you had a great support system back at home’

‘Barely normal to be a system if you want me to be truthful-’

‘Chanyeol, for once in your life, can you take this seriously? This is an incredibly serious illness and we should’ve known’, Chen exclaims, his voice rising and making Chanyeol scour in fear, ‘I mean… At least I should’ve known…’

‘It’s not like I didn’t want to tell you… I just…’, Chanyeol sighs, looking down at Chen’s left hand to find the lightning bolted ring around his finger, resting so comfortably like it should’ve always fitted there, ‘Your life was finally starting, and you were so happy with Xiumin… Why would I tear it apart by bringing shit news on your wedding? Isn’t that a dick move?’

Chen stops glaring at Chanyeol, seeing how uncomfortable the latter was standing in front of him and behind his desk. He noticed the truth resting in Chanyeol’s eyes and noticed that his best friend wasn’t lying. He didn’t know whether to be angrier or feel guilty at the thought that Chanyeol would rather suffer alone then bring his situation to Chen’s, who at the time, didn’t think he
could’ve been any happier.

‘My marriage was always going to take a tumble… Even without your help’, Chen sighs, buttoning his jacket and sitting back down.

‘What the fuck are you talking about? You and Xiumin are practically perfect’

‘I guess you missed out on a lot of things… Did you know we nearly got divorced?’

‘What?’ Chanyeol chokes on his saliva, sitting down on one of the chairs which face Chen’s desk, ‘Tell me more’

‘There’s really nothing much to it...’

A few years ago:

Chen wakes up to an empty bed, a dip beside him which was supposed to be where his husband is but when he stretches his arms out, all he can feel is the cold sheets on his skin. His eyes flutter open to find the left side of the closet completely open and completely empty, with a few jeans and shirts splayed over the floors and hanging on the chairs and vanity desk.

Xiumin has left the house.

Yet Chen didn’t give any account of worried expression. He just sat up on his bed, yawning and stretching his arms out as he stays sitting for a minute, waiting for his sleepiness to finally leave his system before walking out the room and towards the kitchen.

The house is quiet. Which is the first in months since their constant fights just never seemed to stop. He finds it peaceful, relaxing and dare he say maybe even relieving to finally wake up without the dread of having to argue with Xiumin over the little things like the empty milk carton still inside the fridge.

He finds himself making a bowl of cereal, munching on the grains whilst looking out of the kitchen window to see little children walking hand in hand with their parents on their way to the school bus. His eyes land on the way the father would pick up the excited child, making the mother worried but at the same time, there was peace between them.

Chen looks down on his watch to find that it was past eight. He’s probably going to be late for his meeting, but for once he didn’t care all that much. He had just beaten Minhyuk out for the executive director position and ever since his cousin’s resignation letter had been dropped off, he’s been having nothing but bliss in his workplace for the past couple of months.

If only his bliss also correlated in his home life.

He brushes off the lint on his suit before walking out of the house and locking the door, looking out and feeling a sense of ominous atmosphere when he realises that Xiumin had taken the car.

Looks like he was going to take the bus for today.
‘You should talk to him’, Kyungsoo tells him when he enters the police department in search of the car once he had finished his morning meetings, choosing to clear all of his afternoon schedules.

‘I don’t want to talk to him’, Chen rolls his eyes for the millionth time after hearing Kyungsoo speaking about Xiumin for god knows how long.

‘Then why do you want me to find your car that Xiumin had obviously taken? You want to know where he is’

‘No, I don’t. I want you to file a car theft report because that car is under my name and my name only, so if he thinks he can take it then he can think again’, Chen bangs his fists on the desk, Kyungsoo looking up at him in shock.

‘How did the two of you get to this?’, Kyungsoo shakes his head disbelievingly, but nonetheless, since it was his job, he typed in a file of report, ‘I wouldn’t think you would ever do this to Xiumin’

‘And who’d’ve thought Kai would drop you like air for a contract?’, Chen bites back, Kyungsoo stomping on the floor and creating a crack to which Jongdae nearly tripped on.

‘Hulk! What did I say about property damage!’, the officer in command yells at him when the whole room felt the small quake, Kyungsoo standing up to bow an apology at him before resuming to the task at hand.

‘Be wise with your words next time Chen’, Kyungsoo glares back at him, typing quicker than lightning, wanting to get rid of the grumpy CEO.

‘We both got fucked by the both of them. Who’d’ve thought those assholes will leave us dry and gone’

‘Kai didn’t leave me dry and gone’

‘Kyungsoo, my friend, we all know he did’, Chen reaches his hand out and pats Kyungsoo’s shoulder, ‘Stop making excuses for him’

‘It was the right thing to do’

‘I guess a job of a lifetime will always be better than your loved one’, Chen nods, ‘I can see where Kai is coming from’

‘Right’, Kyungsoo has had his limits with Chen, ‘I finished your report and it looks like Xiumin is staying nearby, still in Seoul, so why don’t I just give the address and you can sort it out with him instead of-’

‘No’, Chen interrupts him, pulling out his phone once he felt the buzzing in his back pockets, ‘Make sure you send the police and maybe even sue his ass for stealing my car’, Chen spoke out, using his CEO voice to which Kyungsoo had to take into account even though he wanted to slap Chen out of it instead.

‘Fine. If you want it that way’
‘Asshole!’

Chen is sitting on the sofa, chugging his third bottle of beer and watching some soap opera that was on reply in the evening, the living room tarnished with open packets of crisps, empty bottles scattered around the floor and clothes hanging everywhere.

He would’ve loved to continue peacefully living, but he had a feeling Xiumin would come storming back after Kyungsoo texting him saying Xiumin got a fine of almost a thousand for stealing his car.

‘Your fucking car? Who the fuck do you think you are? I chose this car!’

‘Choosing is very different from swiping your card to buy it’, Chen calls out, not seeing Xiumin yet, but he can hear the stomping footsteps coming near him, so it was only a matter of time before he sees a fuming Xiumin standing in front of him.

‘Why can’t you just leave me alone? Haven’t you had enough of this?!’, Xiumin finally enters the living room, kicking the clothes out of his way and facing Chen who was still sitting on the sofa, licking the crumbs off his fingers.

‘I’ll leave you alone once you give me my car back’

‘Is that all that matters to you? Your stupid fucking car and company?’

‘Oh, here we go again’, Chen rolls his eyes as he feels the same argument they’ve been arguing over for the whole year starting again.

‘No, you’re always glued to that company, all because Minhyuk wanted it first. Is that all life is to you? To keep beating Minhyuk in everything? Is that all you care about?’, Xiumin continues on. Chen sighs, looking down on his watch and knowing that this stupid rant was gonna go on for another hour or so before Xiumin stomps back out and stays over at a hotel for another day or so.

‘Look, I would love to argue over the same thing again but I’m tired’, Chen stands up, ignoring Xiumin’s loud voice and pushing past him, exiting the living room and hopefully give enough signal to his husband that he wasn’t going to argue with him tonight.

‘Is that why you married me? So Minhyuk can’t have me?’

Chen freezes at the accusation that brings a heavy tension in the air, a course of frustration surging through him as he turns around and glares at Xiumin.

‘You dare think I would do something like that?’, Chen clenches his teeth in frustration, ‘You think I would ever view you as an object that I fight with Minhyuk?’

There’s another motion of silence as the pair just continue to stare at each other, both in frustration yet there was a glimmer of disappointment flashing in Chen’s eyes at the thought that Xiumin would even think that.

‘Or is it because you regret picking me over Minhyuk?’, Chen bites back, ‘You’re probably thinking you got the shit one’

‘Chen, no-’
‘Well, the door is open’, Chen stretches his arm out and points at their front door, ‘Go back to him for all I care’, Chen throws the half empty bottle of beer which shatters into a million pieces by the entrance of the living room, making Xiumin take a frightened step back, ‘Go to him and don’t even dare step back into this house’

Baekhyun steps out of his room with a warm blanket hanging from his arms, turning to his lounge to see Xiumin sitting with his legs crossed on his sofa with a warm cup of tea as he stares blankly.

‘You okay?’ he asks as he sits down next to his distressed friend, a reassuring arm wrapped around him. Baekhyun had heard vaguely about Xiumin and Chen’s troubles at home but since they never meet up as often as they once did, he never really knew the extent of the problem until he hears a banging on his door late at night and a frantically crying Xiumin stepping foot in his home.

‘He told me never to come back’, Xiumin sighs, trying to wipe the tears that were once again threatening to leave his eyes, his cheeks red and puffy and nose blocked from crying previously.

‘You woke up and left him first. Surely he would’ve been frustrated first’, Baekhyun says, not knowing anything that has happened since none of them has been talking about their personal life, even when they do meet up, it had become an acceptable action to smile at each other and mask their real problems away.

‘I’ve done it before. I’ve done it loads of times, but I always come back… And he always lets me come back’

‘Xiumin, when you’re having problems, you just can’t keep running away. Talk to him, say something and have a long conversation. Sort it out. He’s never gonna know what to do if you don’t tell him what’s wrong’

‘I have told him! Time and time again’, Xiumin replies, setting the cup down on the coffee table, ‘I told him he needed to stop spending all his time in the company. It’s unhealthy and he always comes home late and tired and… and…’

‘Is he not giving enough time for you?’

‘I sound needy…’

‘No, you don’t. Everyone wants even a little time to spend with whoever they love’, Baekhyun points out, cringing at how cheesy that came out, but he decided not to judge himself just yet since he was too busy trying to comfort Xiumin.

‘He won’t even admit that he stopped making time for me… He always makes excuses and every time it seems to be my fault’

Baekhyun stops talking. It didn’t seem like words were going to help Xiumin, so he just wraps the blanket around him, patting his back as the pair falls into a deep silence.

‘Maybe I should get a divorce’
Chen sees the paperwork mailed to him under his husband’s name, handwritten in a brown envelope, sitting on his front desk along with all his other letters. He had sensed that it was coming since Xiumin actually listened to his bluff and refused to return home for the rest of the month.

He had just come back from his meeting with an American company and it was rather successful since it had become his first solo project to fully start operating with no hiccups. The plan was for his team to celebrate with a company dinner, but once he opened the envelope and saw the divorce paper, he no longer felt like celebrating.

‘Always out to ruin the mood’, Chen sighs, throwing the papers back on his desk as he swivels in his chair and looks up at the ceiling, spinning, spinning, spinning until his vision blurs and headaches.

He spends the rest of the day in his office, his eyes never leaving the papers displayed right in front of him.

He knows he didn’t want to sign in. Deep down, he didn’t. But god, this past couple of months, he felt more torture than he’d ever felt just by sitting next to Xiumin and either being in awkward silence as they eat dinner together or raising their voices to the top of their lungs accusing each other and arguing over the littlest things.

Maybe it was for the best.

They didn’t seem like they fit.

Out of impulse, he grabs a pen from his desk, flipping through the last page of the papers to find the line which awaits his signature, Xiumin’s signature already signed on the opposite side.

Just as he was about to dip the pen on the paper, he feels a buzzing in his front pockets, making him delay his decision as he pulls out his phone to find Lay calling him.

‘Lay, what’s up?’

‘Hey, Chen! I’m visiting Korea today for a charity party for the evening and I was hoping you could be my plus one!’, Lay yells excitedly, almost too excitedly as Chen takes his phone away from his ears due to the noise.

‘Um… This evening?’, he asks, looking at his computer to see his schedules which were luckily empty in the evening, ‘I mean… I guess I could?’, Chen confirms, resulting in Lay shouting at him again, screaming the address and time before hanging up.

Chen didn’t know why he agreed since he usually postpones any type of event that had nothing to do with his business or company, but maybe he needed a break from it all. It wasn’t like Chanyeol was here to distract him. In fact, even the thought of his former best friend was enough to rile him in rage again.

‘Whatever’, he whispers to himself, abandoning the papers on the desk and standing up, ‘It’s just a dinner party’
Like any other dinner party, it was glamorous, a hall in a grand hotel full to the brim with wine and champagne along with a jazz band playing at the front, dresses and suits to the nine filling up the venue. Shades of sophisticated colours and curtains draped by the windows, sparkling jewels. Professionals, doctors, businessmen and women all lounging and conversing with each other over their work and charitable activities which are just for show.

Chen is in place, with his business and his suave looks. It looks like he fits in place. Yet he felt otherwise. He felt too informal with his talk and way of thinking. He laughs when he needs to laugh, yet he found nothing funny with what the other guests were saying.

Had Chanyeol been present, they would’ve spent the entire night making fun out of everyone and their facades.

‘Chen! I’m so glad you could make it’, Lay jogs towards him, his way of exaggerating his movements also looking out of place, yet he didn’t care as he wraps his arms around the CEO, ‘I’ve missed you! I haven’t seen you in ages!’

‘Sorry… I haven’t had a free schedule to visit China’

‘I’m sure you and Xiumin will visit soon’

‘Yeah… Maybe’

Chen didn’t feel the need to tell Lay about his problems, so he just fakes a smile and continues to laugh and nod at whatever Lay was talking about, which was mostly what he’s been doing with Luhan after they decided to travel the world for a bit before getting hitched – and when they meant hitched – they meant signing the marriage papers in the office.

‘Are you sure you don’t want a wedding?’

‘We’re not into that type of stuff’, Lay shrugs it off, ‘Plus, we saved up all our money to travel the world instead. We went to Italy, France and Switzerland before going over to Russia. It was amazing’

Dickhead.

Chen didn’t mean to think it, but he couldn’t stand Lay flaunting off his relationship with Luhan when his own husband doesn’t even want to live with him anymore. It made him feel bitter and it brings him back to the papers still in his office.

He couldn’t imagine even staying in the same room with Xiumin let alone travel the world with him and that thought triggered him to feel the urge to sign the papers. His thoughts on Xiumin had changed so drastically that he didn’t even feel like spending time together would be productive let alone pleasurable. The thoughts and dreams that he had the day before the wedding, the sheer happiness in just waking up in Xiumin’s arms was enough for him.

So why wasn’t it enough now?

Sign the papers.

‘Hey, Xiumin!’, Lay’s voice brought him back to reality – almost punched him back in – as he looks ahead to see him, his husband, standing on the other side with a glass of champagne in his hands, in a three-piece suit, his hair slightly longer and combed back.
Their eyes met for the first time in weeks.

*Don’t sign the papers.*

Chen sees Xiumin approaching with his fake smile, hugging Lay and feeling a sense of familiarity with the way Xiumin just automatically edged closer to him. Xiumin was probably faking it so they wouldn’t raise any questions, but out of instinct, he just wraps an arm around his waist.

It was uncomfortable. Awkward at first, but since Lay never bothered to detach himself from the pair, they relax a little with each other, Xiumin sliding his hand down to intertwine it with his.

Everything was silent between them. They didn’t even bother to look at each other, but as the party continues and the night comes, they were still beside each other, not a hint that neither wanted to leave.

The jazz music started to change gradually, one the overwhelming sounds of trumpets and horns now turning into a soft and mellow piece. The centre of the hall was slowly being made up of pairs dancing together to the slow music, the essence of intimate silence flowing into the room as the conversations turn into more of a murmur.

‘Do you want to dance?’, one man says to Xiumin once their hands let go for a moment, yet Chen was still standing next to Xiumin so he heard the offer.

‘No, he’s with me’, Chen brings himself out to say before Xiumin can respond himself, his hand once again grazing back to Xiumin’s.

They had no choice but to start dancing once the man leaves since Chen did announce it to him, so without further ado, Chen saunters to the middle with Xiumin by his side, the both of them awkwardly resting their hands on each other, their eyes meeting for the second time that night.

‘Do you really wanna dance?’, Xiumin asks, a hint of cold in his voice, but Chen ignores it.

‘We’re here now’, he shrugs, both their feet moving with each other perfectly, from left to right. It was silent for a couple more seconds, Chen closing his eyes to feel calm for the first time with Xiumin.

‘Have you signed the papers yet’, Xiumin interrupts the moment, bringing Chen back to reality.

‘Do you want me to sign them?’

‘Why else would I send them to you?’

Chen nods, looking at Xiumin’s expression to see it blank, almost unreadable.

‘Okay’

‘What?’

‘If you want me to sign them, then I will. I’ll have it sent back to you by tomorrow morning and I’ll set up my lawyers to finalise everything’

Xiumin laughs at Chen’s response, shaking his head in disbelief.

‘Even with our divorce, you sound like a businessman’

‘How else am I supposed to talk about it? Like a sad lonely man begging for you to stay?’
‘Don’t you want me to stay?’

‘I can’t make you do anything. You’re your own person and if you don’t want to be with me anymore, then there’s nothing stopping you. I made a vow to you that I will never think of you as mine nor treat you as if you’re mine. I promised to treat you as a partner and to see you as someone to spend the rest of my life with, not to keep forever like a toy, and that means if you want to bail, then there’s nothing else for me to do then to let you go’

They continue to dance together, probably for the last time since Xiumin just nods at his decision. The music begins to simmer to an end, other couples already finishing their dances and walking off to the bar. Xiumin senses the change in mood and was ready to let go of Chen and move along, but Chen holds him tight and close for a few more seconds.

‘I know you probably don’t love me anymore, but before we part ways, I just want to make it clear’, Chen whispers to Xiumin’s ears, ‘I never married you because of Minhyuk. You are your own person and I fell in love with you. Only you. Not the idea that you’ll anger Minhyuk. Just you. I hope you know that’

Come morning, Chen is back in his office and the papers are still there. Before he can even rethink his decision, he grabs a pen and signs his name in clear black ink right next to Xiumin’s and orders his secretary to send the envelope back to Xiumin.

‘You’re getting divorced?!’, Suho shouts at him as he slams a shot on the table with Kyungsoo sitting next to him, wiping the table which was mixed with alcohol and water.

‘That’s what Xiumin wants’, Chen responds, filling himself up with another shot of vodka.

‘But what do you want?’, Suho asks, reaching out and taking away the shot glass before Chen dies of alcohol poisoning.

‘I don’t know…’

‘What do you mean, you don’t know?’, Suho shouts at him, shaking him sober, ‘You have to want something. Do you also want the divorce?’

‘Of course, I don’t!’, Chen shouts back, ‘I’d rather die than get divorced!’

‘Then why did you sign the bloody papers?’, Kyungsoo chimes in, taking away the metal cups out of Chen’s reach as he sees sparks emitting from the man’s fingertips.

‘I can’t force him to stay…’, Chen mumbles, barely audible as he feels his body turn light and his vision blurs, ‘He doesn’t like the idea of me anymore… All I ever do is work, work, work… And all he ever does is work, work, work… He doesn’t make time for me, I don’t make time for him. I haven’t even seen his recent work even though I promised to attend the opening the night… God knows he’s not interested in my work either’

‘It’s called trying’, Suho huffs in frustration, ‘It just looks like the both of you want the other to try without even trying yourself. Why don’t you take a week off and visit Xiumin during his musical rehearsals? Or the both of you take a weekend off to Japan or something?’
'What’s the point?’, Chen whines, banging his head on the table and sending sparks to fly across, ‘We’re never gonna get along at home. He’s gonna bring up my work and I’m gonna bring up his clinginess then he’s going to throw a fit and then I’m gonna throw a fit and we’re both gonna throw a vase or a shoe at each other… There’s no point’

‘You’re giving up so soon? How disappointing’, Kyungsoo looks at the defeated Chen whilst holding the bottle of alcohol and cups in his hands since the table was still sparkling.

‘I don’t want him to leave me… But I can’t be selfish to make him stay if he doesn’t want to’

‘Then what do you want to do?’

Xiumin looks down on the signed paper, both their signatures on it. He continues to look at it.

‘Why the fuck did he sign it’

‘You told him to’, Baekhyun points out, handing him another cup of tea, ‘Look, I’m going to school. Are you going to be okay here?’

‘I’m not a child’, Xiumin replies, picking up the piece of paper and looking at the signature, ‘Maybe if it’s pencil, I can rub it out…’

‘It’s clearly black ink Xiumin’, Baekhyun rolls his eyes, grabbing his bag with carries a pile of his students’ notebooks, ‘If you didn’t want a divorce, why even bring out the paper’

‘I didn’t think he’d give up on me this easily’

‘Give up easily? You packed your bags and left him and never bothered to come back’

‘He told me not to come back’

‘He filed a car theft report just to find you’

‘He didn’t do it to find it. He did that because he’s petty’

‘Either way, he still wanted to contact you. If he didn’t care, he wouldn’t have bothered trying to reach out, even if he was only trying to be petty’

‘So, what are you trying to say?’

‘What I’m trying to say asshole, is that the both of you still love each other and the only reason why you’re like this is because none of you can adapt to change’, Baekhyun shouts at Xiumin, ‘You and Chen love each other, but when change happens, you don’t know what to do. Now that we’re not in high school and you guys actually have jobs and responsibilities, you don’t know how to adapt and balance with each other, but since marriage is supposed to be for life, you have the rest of your life to figure it out’

‘And how am I supposed to balance it out? We’re both leading different lives outside the house’

‘Stop telling Chen to choose you over the company and let Chen balance the both instead. You think he’s going to be happy with just working all the time? You think he doesn’t work his ass off,
so he can provide for you too? *Think*, Xiumin. Think before you go assuming that Chen loves his job more than you’

Chen walks into his office with a banging headache and dark under eyes. Unprofessional of him, but since he had nothing to do in the house but sit by himself and watch another dry soap opera rerun, he decided that going to work hungover was better off.

‘Mr Kim, we’ve already sorted out the final paperwork for the previous project and our new team manager will be mainly handling our new project which you’ve pitched in, so your morning schedule is clear’

‘Well, make up a meeting or something. I came here and I ‘m not gonna stand around doing anything’

‘You can always go home’

‘Why would I do that?’

His secretary looks at him oddly, as if he said something absurd by actually wishing to stay in the company when he’s free to go whenever he wanted.

‘I guess… You could… Maybe…’

‘It’s fine. I’ll just go home’, Chen sighs in defeat once he noticed that his company was doing brilliantly without his constant supervision, ‘Call me when you need me’, he announces his departure, sauntering off back to the entrance to exit just as quickly as he came in with his phone out to see if he can go anywhere other than his home.

He had always wondered why he was so eager to go to work. For the past year, all he’s ever wanted to do is finalise his position as CEO so he can get back to spending more time with Xiumin instead of being in constant battle with his cousin, but now that everything’s done and finalised, he realised that he was so busy fighting that he suddenly had nothing to go back to.

He couldn’t ask Xiumin to keep waiting for him and he didn’t think he’d finally have the company in his reach, so all his motivation has paid off but now, he has no goal.

He has no goal.

Chen has no idea what he’s going to do now that there’s suddenly no reason for him to wake up in the morning. What’s the point of working? He earns more money than he needs to provide himself.

He could always take Xiumin to the Bahamas.

But then he remembered the divorce papers. He remembers that he’s not going to wake up with someone in his arms anymore.

He doesn’t know how to live by.

Chen continues to walk past the parking lot and towards the high street full of restaurants and cafes, opting to grab himself a latte and go to the nearest park to unwind.
Autumn is still in its fullest and the once blooming trees were no a matted brown, it’s surrounded decorated in dead leaves which swirl around in winding motion since the fall breeze was imminent.

He hears a group of children’s laughter as their parents sat down on the nearest park tables, having their own gossip session whilst the kids play around in the field. He had noticed a growth of people around the area, especially young families with their small children.

‘I thought you’d be here’

Chen didn’t expect someone to tap on his shoulder, but when he turns, he sees Baekhyun standing behind him, peculiar since he hadn’t seen or made an effort to meet up with him for a while.

‘Baekhyun? What are you doing here?’, he asks, seeing the boy sitting down next to him on the park bench.

‘Xiumin has been staying over at my place’, Baekhyun starts off, not even a hello or a greeting before he speaks to Chen.

‘Oh’, Chen let out a huge sigh of relief he didn’t know he was holding, ‘At least he’s staying with someone he knows’

‘Yeah… Anyway, I heard you’re getting divorced’

‘Wow. Blunt as ever, Byun Baekhyun’

‘I’m only keeping it real’, Baekhyun raises his hands up, ‘Look, I live around this area and I was just about to go to work when I noticed you sitting here’

‘Yeah, well I had some free time’, Chen points out, holding out his coffee and taking a sip before going back to people watching, observing the people passing and those who chose to sit down like him.

‘Xiumin threw away the divorce papers’

‘Pardon me?’

‘I saw it in the trash on my way out. It was shredded, but I still saw enough to see what it was’

‘He…’

‘Chen’, Baekhyun calls out before Chen can finish his sentence, ‘Xiumin clearly doesn’t truly want a divorce and it clearly looks like he’s still unhappy with the marriage so… You either come back to him and promise him to fix up or make him want that divorce. It’s up to you’. Baekhyun warns him, looking down at his phone to check the time, ‘I’ve got to go now, but think about it, Chen. Xiumin is only a couple of steps away from you. Choose now or you might not get the chance at all’

Due to Baekhyun’s words, Chen was expecting Xiumin back at their house by the time he came back from his afternoon meeting and so it seems like life was finally brought back into the house once he stepped foot to smell the aroma of coffee and black bean noodles along with the noises of clattering pans and running water.
‘Xiumin?’, he calls out, turning towards the kitchen to find his husband clearing the kitchen counter and washing the dishes whilst there was a pot of food ready and waiting in the dining table.

‘Suho told me that you’ve been eating nothing but takeaway recently’, Xiumin calls out once he senses Chen’s presence in the room, the pair still not looking at each other since Xiumin had his back towards Chen.

‘Your home’, Chen’s words made Xiumin turn, their eyes gazing at each other in awkward silence – until it wasn’t awkward.

Xiumin smiles at him.

‘I made a contract’

1. Chen is to attend all of Xiumin’s opening nights.
2. Xiumin is not allowed to force Chen to cancel his meetings (unless emergencies)
3. Sunday nights will officially be date nights.
4. Xiumin to visit Chen at work on Tuesdays and Thursdays
5. Chen to sing all of Xiumin’s demos before sending it off
6. Groceries shopping must be done together (and it’s also considered a date)
7. Chen to visit Xiumin at work during weekends and Mondays.
8. To discuss with each other when it comes to important work changes.
9. Kiss every morning, before we leave for work, and to kiss the moment we see each other when we get back.

‘You really think a contract will save our relationship?’, Chen looks down on the scrap piece of paper, chuckling lightly to himself as he reads them out.

‘I don’t want to divorce you. And god knows I’d rather die than see counselling’, Xiumin points out, tapping his fingers on the table, ‘I don’t want to let you go just yet’, Xiumin reaches out and touches Chen’s arm, ‘I don’t think I’d feel okay if I just gave up on our relationship without even trying’

‘We have tried’

‘Not hard enough’

Chen observes Xiumin’s expression, seeing his serious determination and he found out that he’s also in the same boat as Xiumin. He didn’t want to give up just yet either.
‘Fine. I’ll sign the contract’, Chen admits to Xiumin’s unusual tactic, ‘Under one condition’

‘What?’

Chen didn’t say anything, just grabbing the pen out of Xiumin’s hand and writing down something else before signing on the drawn-out line at the bottom of the page.

10. To have a son when the time is right.

‘Why son?’, Xiumin looks down at Chen’s neat writing, his eyes bulging out at the request.

‘I feel sorry for any girl growing up with the both of us’, Chen points out, ‘At least with a boy, we can always say he’s always been a disgusting pig’

‘A boy…’, Xiumin should be against the idea. Especially since they’ve barely patched up the months-long argument about work and not having enough time for each other. He would never agree to add a third person, let alone a baby, ‘I mean, I don’t think we’ll ever be ready…’

‘We’re still young. I don’t even expect us to have kids ten years from now but…’, Chen shrugs it off, signing the paper and sliding it back to Xiumin, ‘I don’t mind starting a family with you’

‘Okay’, Xiumin nods, crossing out the last line and rewriting it in his own messy handwriting before signing his name right next to Chen’s.

10. To have a son kids when the time is right.

‘You fixed your marriage by signing a contract?’, Chanyeol scoffs at Chen when he tells him the story, ‘How disappointing’

‘What? You think we’d separate then I’d swerve the car and drive past the speed limit in the pouring rain and chase down Xiumin at the airport and beg for him to try again?’, Chen laughs, ‘That’s more your style, not mine’

‘I don’t have a style’

‘Overdramatic and unnecessary is your style Chanyeol’, Chen says matter of factly, to which Chanyeol is about to argue back, but his predicament didn’t really help him pick up a valid debate,
so he just stays silent and looks at his best friend who seems more relaxed than he’s ever been.

‘So, you’ve never fought ever since?’

‘Are you serious? Of course, we still do’, now it was Chen’s turn to scoff at Chanyeol, ‘The only difference is, we never let it fester. Once you let the argument sit in the room then you’ll be resentful towards each other the next day’

‘You fix it in one night’

‘We talk about it in one night and fix it together’, Chen corrects him, ‘Plus, now that I’m CEO, I don’t have to do all of the hard work, so I can get off now if I want to’

‘You still have Minhyuk to worry about’

‘Only in my workplace. I don’t let him get to me anywhere else’

‘Well, good for you’, Chanyeol nods, standing up and tapping his legs, ‘Can I go now?’

‘You sure you’re ready to get back to work?’

‘I just listened to the most boring marriage turbulence story. I think I’ll be fine’, Chanyeol rolls his eyes, stepping forward to take away some of the paperwork in Chen’s desk, ‘I’ll need a lot of catching up to do anyway’

‘You bet you do’, Chen chuckles, ‘That includes a family dinner at my parents’ house’

‘I’ll make sure to keep my schedules clear’
The Truth.

Kyungsoo sits down next to Chanyeol, flinching as he looks down and sees Lay injecting something on his arm for about the fifth time.

‘Is this okay? I mean, this is his fifth one today’, Kyungsoo groans, seeing the small yet sharp injection slowly coming out of Chanyeol’s forearm.

‘This is just some extra medications since his hormones have been rising more than normal’, Lay points out, giving Chanyeol a playful wink to which the latter did not appreciate.

‘Not that much’, Chanyeol murmurs to himself, walking in for his daily check-up. Chanyeol was free to go and live in his house again, but he would often come back to the hospital and even stay for the night with Kyungsoo since the man was still stuck in the same small space for god knows how long now. Kyungsoo didn’t press for Chanyeol to stay, but he didn’t complain either.

‘So, when is Kai going to sneak into your hospital room again?’, Lay asks after fixing up Chanyeol and handing the used injection to the nurse who was supposed to do it in the first place, but Chanyeol had an odd request for his doctor to personally do it instead.

Chanyeol and Kyungsoo give each other a warning look after Lay’s comment, Chanyeol trying to act like he doesn’t know anything and leaving Kyungsoo to fend for himself.

‘I… I-’

‘Don’t worry’, Lay laughs, seeing the way Kyungsoo uncomfortably plays with his sleeves, ‘I won’t tell Suho’, he gives Kyungsoo a wink as well, ‘I practically live here. Don’t think I don’t know who comes in and out of this hospital’, Lay continues to tell Kyungsoo, but there wasn’t a hint of darkness or warning in his voice, unlike Suho’s, ‘I’m not here to stop anything. You’re a grown man Kyungsoo. You do whatever you want’

Kyungsoo shed a small smile, something warm, with a sheer sense of relief when he sees that Lay’s words didn’t have any underlining tone of worry or even a warning. It made him feel at ease and not like he was committing a crime whenever he spoke to the celebrity.

‘Speaking of which, I should probably leave so he can zap in’, Lay looks down on his watch and sees the night welcoming itself in, the sun disappearing earlier since winter was coming.

‘I probably shouldn’t stay overnight here then’, Chanyeol readies himself to stand up but Kyungsoo reaches his hand out and rests it on Chanyeol’s wrist, stopping him from getting up.

‘No… Stay’, Kyungsoo asks, and this made Lay and Chanyeol look at him, wondering why the sudden request.
‘Is anything wrong?’, Chanyeol asks, Kyungsoo shyly looking down at his shoes the way he usually does back in high school. The usual Kyungsoo now, the tough and strong motherfucker who just got stabbed by a mafia gang leader would never do such a thing as looking down on the floor to hide his blushing cheeks, but here they were.

‘I still haven’t answered Kai’s question… And…’

‘Dude just say yes’, Lay points out, being the first person to interrupt Kyungsoo and comment on his ongoing crisis with Kai, ‘Kai might’ve been a dick once but so was he’, Lay points at Chanyeol, who looked up at him with wide rounded eyes, unknowing why his doctor was dragging him into this situation, ‘But we’re still rooting for him and Baekhyun, right?’

‘Now that’s not fair. My situation is slightly different’, Chanyeol defends himself, feeling slightly offended to be compared and put on the spot.

‘You left without a second word and didn’t let Baekhyun have a say or even tell Baekhyun why you’re leaving. How different can you be?’

‘Ouch, dude. So unsympathetic’, Chanyeol wrinkles his nose and looks at Lay in betrayal, ‘At least be nice to your patient Mr Zhang’

‘I’ll be nice when you tell Baekhyun of your daily visits to the hospital’

‘You still haven’t told him?’, Kyungsoo asks.

‘You still haven’t said yes to Kai?’, Chanyeol bites back, the two of them finding surrender, a common ground of cowardice found between them with only Lay shaking his head and looking at the two of them.

‘I mean I understand Kyungsoo, but Chanyeol? Come on man. You’ve always been the type to stand up and get what you want. Why aren’t you doing it now?’

‘Because my arms are numb from medication and I feel like exploding every goddamn second, that’s why’, Chanyeol again bites back, ‘Why is it popular for all of you to gang up on me?’

‘Because it’s fun’

‘Kyung–’, just as the three of them started to laugh amongst each other, a figure pops up out of nowhere, right beside Lay, holding a big ass bear, one which blocks his entire face from being seen, Chanyeol turning to look at Kai as he struggles to keep hold of the stuffed animal, his arms wrapped around it tightly.

‘Oh, look who it is’, Lay points out, once again looking down on his watch, ‘And just on time’

‘I thought… You usually leave his room around this time…’, Kai drops the bear once he sees Lay standing beside him, in shock and trying to look like he hadn’t just broken Suho’s demand, ‘I was… Visiting Chanyeol actually!’, Kai says aloud once he turns to see Chanyeol also sitting down on the other bed, stifling a laugh at how shit Kai was at handling the situation.

‘Sure you were’, Lay coughs to also hide the laugh that’s been trying to punch its way out of his throat, ‘And I supposed that bear is Chanyeol’s ‘get well soon’ present?’, Lay points on the big bear in the room, the four pairs of eyes looking down on it.

‘Umm…’, before Kai can say or do anything else, Chanyeol chuckles, getting up and picking up the big stuffed animal.
‘Well, this definitely compliments my height, doesn’t it? I think it’s perfect for me’

‘Wait!’, Kai tries to reach his hand out to grab the bear from Chanyeol and it seems like the latter must’ve pressed something that he shouldn’t have since he slowly sees Kai’s soul leaving his body and the sound of some voice which wasn’t coming from any one of them, but instead coming out of the bear.

‘Can I be your boyfriend, can I?’

‘I want to show you a world you’ve never seen’

‘Is that you singing?’, Kyungsoo asks as he looks up to see Kai burning bright, covering his face with his hands as a voice recording of him continues to play on of him singing one of his songs.

‘Oh Kai… I didn’t know you feel that type of way about me’, Chanyeol says between his fits of giggle, even Lay having to use his clipboard to hide his watering eyes as he pinches himself to stop from laughing.

‘That’s not funny’, Kai stomps his foot down like a twelve-year-old, ‘You’ve ruined the moment’, Kyungsoo couldn’t help but also break into a smile as he sees Kai trying to salvage his remaining dignity whilst Chanyeol and Lay poke fun at him. But instead, he found it cute, adorable that Kai would make such a huge gesture, although very corny and not something he would appreciate without feeling the wave of embarrassment of having received a singing teddy bear that is taller than him – but it’s the gesture that still counts.

‘Of course, I can be your boyfriend!’, Chanyeol shouts in between Kai’s rant, ignoring the celebrity’s attempt to explain himself, walking over and giving him an unwelcoming and slightly violent bear hug, squishy the bear in between them as Kai almost chokes.

‘Guys! Guys!’, Kyungsoo stands up, trying to join in but with Kai and Chanyeol arguing and Lay stepping in between them to try and save the bear, it didn’t seem like he was going to get much attention now.

‘You better shut up!’

‘No way, boyfriend’

‘Guys leave the teddy bear alone’, their voices were loud and it probably sounds like a fight was breaking loose if you pass their room, and Kyungsoo feels too left out, which he shouldn’t be since technically this whole situation should be about him. He sees Kai trying to get away from Chanyeol to which the tall giant only wraps his arms around him tighter.

‘Can you stop chocking my boyfriend?! I need him alive please!’

Lay drops the bear and Chanyeol stops him every movement, Kai looking up, still wrapped around Chanyeol’s arms but smiling at Kyungsoo once their eyes meet.

‘What did you say?’, Kai couldn’t help but show his teeth, he couldn’t stop smiling and Lord knows his smile always makes Kyungsoo crack, a small smile also forming on his lips.

‘This got so corny so quickly’, Chanyeol lets go of Kai, the two of them still staring into each other’s eyes, Lay coughing as a cue for them to leave the two alone.

‘So, Kyungsoo just grew the balls to say yes to that idiot. When are you gonna tell Baekhyun?’, Lay whispers to Chanyeol as he closes the door and the pair of them walk out.
'You’re saying yes?’, Kai asks, not really believing that any of this was real. He almost expected Kyungsoo to say ‘sike’ and change his mind right in front of him, but Kyungsoo didn’t say anything, he didn’t even break his smile as he steps forward a little closer.

‘I mean… That’s if… You still want me to say yes’

‘Yes!’, Kai shouts in reflex, just in case he’s just messed up, ‘I mean… Yeah… Yeah, I still want you to say yes’, he tries to say again, but this time with a calmer voice, scratching the back of his head and trying to look bored.

‘Kai, if you’re trying to look cool, it’s failed since the moment you stepped foot in here with this stupidly large bear’

‘Stupid? You don’t like it?’, Kai looks up with puppy eyes.

‘Anything that is taller than me I don’t like’

‘Then what am I to you?’

‘An exception’

‘You still haven’t told Baekhyun?’

‘Can you guys shut up too?’, Chanyeol whines, twirling his fork around the pasta as he senses Chen and Xiumin’s eyes shooting lasers at him.

‘I’m just saying’, Chen lifts his hand up in surrender, but he turns to his left to his husband, the pair of them eyeing Chanyeol worriedly like parents looking at their odd son with love life problems. Xiumin didn’t feel weird after hearing that Chen had invited Chanyeol over for dinner. He got a text from Lay about them talking it out and making up – which took years longer than he had expected.

‘So, how’s your treatment going anyway?’, Xiumin asks, relieved that Chanyeol has finally stepped up and asked for proper treatment.

‘Well, it hurts like hell, but that’s something I’m used to’

‘You did the same treatment back in Fiji?’, Xiumin wonders, eating his food nonchalantly and not noticing the way Chen started to slow his actions, paying attention to Chanyeol speaking whilst looking down on his plate.

‘Well, yeah pretty much. The first couple of years were just a bunch of surgeries since my nerve system was always busting out and leaving me from time to time to randomly lose control of my muscles… I mean there was a time when I needed two knee operations after I busted them after falling down the stairs’

‘You lost control of your muscles while you were walking down the stairs?’, Xiumin looks appalled and saddened by Chanyeol’s anecdote, and even more so for Chen who continues to avoid eye contact. He felt a surge of guilt running through him once again at the thought of Chanyeol living like this on his own. Had he been with him, like he promised him, he wouldn’t have fallen
down the stairs, he would’ve caught him before that happened.

‘Yeah, but it was no big deal, just a few physiotherapy sessions’

‘So, where did you work?’, Chanyeol smiles at Xiumin’s question.

‘I was a music teacher for kids’

‘You don’t even know how to read notes’, Chen points out but Chanyeol smiles at him, lifting up his fork.

‘Oh contrary’, Chanyeol smugly interrupts his best friend, ‘I watched a lot of YouTube videos on how to read a note and even took some online classes’, Chanyeol smiles pridefully, ‘Plus, I only need to teach them the basic, which I also know’

‘Well, did the school know about your… Situation?’, Xiumin asks, although slightly uncomfortable, he was curious as to how Chanyeol was allowed to be near children with his condition, especially when it comes to his powers.

‘Well… I was actually teaching in an institution which cares for children who’s had an early diagnosis of my condition’

‘Oh’, Chen and Xiumin simultaneously awkwardly smiles at Chanyeol. The table grows silence and Chanyeol can sense it, so he smiles and tries to change to subject, or at least alleviate it from this awkward mess.

‘I mean, my sister would visit me once a month with her family and they would stay over every summer. I taught my niece how to surf’

‘You know how to surf?’

‘Well, of course, I lived in Fiji, so I had to pick up the sport’, Chanyeol chuckles, ‘Plus, it helps when I’m going through something stressful which might kick in my random fits… It made me feel safe that I was out of anyone’s reach and water to extinguish me’

‘Well, trying to be good at everything sounds about right’, Chen mumbles to himself, Chanyeol laughing when he hears them, the pair of them sharing a moment of just laughter without being awkward and trying to avoid the subject which they mention but never really go into detail.

‘Next time why don’t we all go Fiji?’

‘We were actually supposed to go there for our anniversary’, Chen points out, turning back and pointing an accusing fork at Chanyeol, ‘Until you ruined it’

‘Look, we all went to jail for a reason, you just stood there and did nothing which is worse’

‘Baekhyun can take care of himself. He’s Byun Baekhyun’

‘So? A little electrocution would’ve helped’

‘I’m a CEO. I can’t afford to do something stupid like electrocuting someone in public’, Chen rolls his eyes at Chanyeol’s stupid suggestion, something that hadn’t changed at all.

‘You married a person who almost froze someone to death back in high school!’

‘I didn’t freeze them to death’, Xiumin defends himself, ‘I just injured them badly’
‘Pfft, and that’s supposed to be okay?’, Chanyeol argues back.

‘Please don’t me make mention that one time your burnt Baekhyun’s arms and got us in some serious shit’

‘I hated him at the time’, Chanyeol points a fork at Chen, as if he was in court trying to defend his case. It seems like it’s been an eternity the last time Chanyeol has ever stated he’s hated Baekhyun. Xiumin had always envisioned Chanyeol as being someone totally whipped over the high school teacher that he almost forgot there was once a time he’d rather commit arson than be standing next to Baekhyun. It’s a wonder how so many years have gone by and things have happened to each of them, their lives different yet still present in each other. It made him wonder if he owed much more to Chanyeol than just an occasional dinner invites once in a while. If it wasn’t for Chanyeol, then their paths would never have crossed; they would’ve been just been classmates who may have exchanged words during class and asked for some help for their assignments. They would’ve gone their separate ways and most likely forgotten each other’s names, probably running into each other during school reunions but never more than that.

‘Can you even remember the last time you felt hatred towards Baekhyun?’, Chen asks as he finishes his food and wipes his mouth, ‘Because all you seem to be doing is pining over him since you got back’

‘I’m not pining’, Chanyeol continues to argue with his best friend, ‘Am I not allowed to reconcile with my ex?’

‘Not if you left that ex-stranded with no explanation’, Xiumin adds on, standing up and starting to clear everyone’s plates.

Chanyeol was about to say something to Xiumin, probably another defence which deemed useless since even he knew he fucked up in this situation, but before Chanyeol can argue at a loss cost, they hear slamming coming from the front door before Luhan and Lay walks in with a fire-breathing Jia resting on Lay’s arms.

‘What the fuck?’, Chen calls out, standing up and taking a step back away from the demon baby in the couple’s hands.

‘I am about to call the police on my own daughter’, Lay sighs, putting her down on Chanyeol’s lap, ‘Chanyeol, make her calm down’

‘How am I supposed to do that?’, he calls out, picking her up before she burns his denim jeans through.

‘What the hell? Jia is a fire bender’

‘And an amplifier, magnetic field controller and telekinetic’

‘Excuse me?’, Chen didn’t understand why Luhan was listing pretty much everything, walking over to be beside Xiumin as, Chanyeol attempt to calm the baby down, but every time she laughs, they see blue flames flaring out of her.

‘What do you want me to do? I can’t get her to calm down’

‘At least hold her till she’s asleep! All my oven gloves are burnt because of her’, Lay takes out his blackened gloves and throws them on the table in defeat and utter frustration, ‘I know this happens when babies develop their powers too early but did she really have to have fire as one?’
‘And what’s wrong with fire?’, Chanyeol glares at Lay only to be disrupted when Jia sneezed and blew fire towards the table, the fire being caught on the wide-eyed and shock as they watch their favourite tablecloth set on fire in front of them.tablecloth to which Xiumin and Chen stare

‘I’m going to sleep on the sofa for a bit. Call me when everything’s done’, Luhan gives up, leaving the dining room for Xiumin and Chen to raise for the water jug and stop the fire before it reaches anything in the household.

‘And where do you think you’re going?’, Chanyeol looks up to see Lay following his husband towards the living room.

‘I’m going to sleep. I need to do some extra test on you tomorrow so if you don’t want me to accidentally puncture your heart, then I suggest you let me close my eyes for a bit’, Lay also gives in, reaching his hand out to hold onto Luhan’s, both their eyes having considerably dark undereye to the point that neither Xiumin or Chen argued when they bailed their burning child to them and escapes to the living room.

‘So, you really don’t have feelings for my brother?’, Eun Bi asks for the hundredth time as she walks beside Baekhyun towards her neighbourhood. After spending the evening at her teacher’s place, talking about her troubles at school, they’ve come to the conclusion to tell her parents about the bullying and a school meeting that Baekhyun had promised to conduct for her.

‘No. Sorry for getting your hopes up’

‘It’s fine’, Eun Bi shrugs, looking down on her shoes and hiding her cold hand inside her coat pockets, ‘I had a feeling that what you guys had wasn’t serious’

‘Really? What gave it away?’, Baekhyun asks sarcastically, chuckling when Eun Bi kicks at his feet.

‘I just thought…’, she whispers, the cold night becoming chillier now that Autumn was underway, ‘You’re one of his closest friends and you’ve always been there for him. I don’t think you’ve ever disappointed him so maybe, you were more suitable for him’

‘Eun Bi, let me tell you something’, Baekhyun sighs, looking down to see Eun Bi, now a teenager but still had a mind of a naïve child, ‘There will always be people who will disappoint you. If you push everyone who’s ever disappointed you, then there’ll be no one by your side’

‘If they care about you, why would they disappoint you?’

‘Because we’re humans. We choose to live with complicated lives where things like work and lifestyle will affect your relationship with other people. You’re being selfish if you keep caging someone who should be somewhere else… Don’t you think it’s selfish for Kyungsoo to keep hold of Kai when he could be a massive star like he is today?’

‘But that’s what Kyungsoo did for him’

‘What?’

Eun Bi is silent for a moment, avoiding Baekhyun’s gaze and looking straight ahead. The teacher
wonders if he should press on and he contemplated on asking what Eun Bi meant, but they made another turn and they’re already in her neighbourhood.

‘I’ll see you tomorrow morning, Mr Byun’, Eun Bi bows to him, odd now that she was treating him like her teacher. He bows to her as well as he watches her walk towards her house, waving to him before opening the door and leaving his sight.

‘God, this is stupid’, Sehun whispers as he receives a text message asking him to pick up a stalking case. He didn’t have time to pick up any trivial case now that he’s part of the team involved in a gang case, added onto the fact that he’s barely keeping his relationship with Suho afloat. What he doesn’t need is extra hours away from his boyfriend.

‘Oh Sehun, I take it you’ll do this for me?’, he hears his colleague shouting out for him, but he ignored him, continuing to walk past the many cubicles of desks and office workers until he reaches his own office.

‘You’re the one taking my case?’, he looks up to find Kai sitting inside his office, with his manager as he looks up from his phone to find the lawyer looking down at him.

‘How’s it going Kai?’

‘Wow’, Kai takes off his glasses – which were most likely fake – looking up and down at him, ‘It’s been a good minute, hasn’t it Sehun?’, he says, standing up and waving at the lawyer, informal in their first meeting together.

‘You know each other?’, Kai’s manager whispers to the star, Kai giving a brief explanation of sharing the same school before Sehun bows at the pair and makes his way over to his desk, beckoning for Kai to sit back down.

‘So… Stalking fans…’

‘Yeah… I didn’t want to press charges, but they’ve stolen my tenth boxers and it’s getting really creepy’

‘I see’, Sehun looks down on his briefing and sees the same group of girls and boys who have trespassed Kai’s residence, ‘That is quite gross’, he reads and find out someone has even taken a picture of him whilst he was sleeping in his own apartment, ‘Why didn’t you press charges earlier?’

‘I’m not one to punish my own fans’

‘Fans? They sold your underwear for half a million’

‘Well… People need to get by, right?’, Sehun laughs at Kai’s tolerance. He never imagined Kai to have such tolerance on bullshit since he wasn’t much on taking people’s shit back in high school. Although he remembered Kai not being like Chanyeol, he didn’t approach any situation hot headed and would, in fact, tried to settle it as calmly as possible so maybe the star didn’t change as much as he’d thought.
‘So, will you be able to press charges?’

‘This is a walk in the park. We have enough evidence to sue and they each have more than one charges and warnings already, so it won’t be hard to at least give them 100 hours of community service’

‘Community service’, Kai chuckles to himself, ‘Remember when we had to do that?’

‘You did community service?’, his manager whispers frantically, ‘Did you tell the company about this?’

‘Relax’, Kai waves at his manager in dismissal, ‘This was ten years ago, I hadn’t gotten in trouble ever since’, Kai shares another moment of argument with his paranoid manager before Sehun coughs for their attention.

‘I’ll handle everything from here and I promise that I’ll try my best’, Sehun finalises everything, not wanting to spend any more time on the case that’ll probably take him less than five minutes to win, ‘You guys can go now’

‘Actually’, Kai stands up, ‘Now that we’re here, I haven’t had a proper conversation with you in a long time, why don’t we grab lunch?’

‘I’m not hungry’, Sehun points out, turning on his computer and waiting for Kai to give up and leave his office.

‘Your dad used to make amazing tandoori chicken, why don’t we have some?’

‘I’m not going to force my dad to make chicken for us’

‘Then why don’t we go to a restaurant’

‘There’s no Indian restaurant in Korea that resembles my dad’s cooking’

Kai laughs, looking down at Sehun, looking professional with his suit and glasses, hair swept back and his expression calm and collected, yet he still the kid inside of him, the whining kid who takes forever to decide where to eat.

‘Come here’, Kai reaches his hands out and they disappear in mid-air, the manager almost dropping his phone when he realises that Kai had once again used his powers to run away from him.

‘Goddammit, Jongin!’

‘Where the hell are we?!’, Sehun asks the moment his visions clear and they’re standing in the middle of what seems to be a plaza, everyone staring oddly at them as they appear out of thin air. Sehun noticed how much warmer it was, almost saying that it was humid despite it being October. His brain finally collected what his eyes were seeing when he sees people that were obviously not Korean walking around him.

‘Did you just take me to India?!’, he screams at Kai the moment he sees the celebrity standing in front of him with a playful grin on his face, ‘Are you fucking insane?!’

‘What I am is fucking hungry’, Kai whines, walking away from Sehun, ‘Now, I saw a restaurant here whilst I was doing a shoot and I never got to try it, why don’t we go?’
‘You’re fucking insane. We are not doing anything but coming back home in Korea and in my office’, Sehun shouts after Kai, but the man keeps on walking away, ‘Now get back here and take me home!’, he ordered Kai, but the boy just turns around and winks at him.

‘Let’s eat first!’, he shouts back, walking away until his figure becomes smaller. Sehun should’ve been persistent and asks for Kai to come back so they could go home and he could do his work, but the idea of being by himself in a foreign country, lost and confused, didn’t appeal to him, so he jogs forward, catching up with Kai.

The restaurant is local and busy, Sehun taking off his blaze and rolling his sleeves as the heat of the open kitchen along with the general warmth got to him, his forehead already beading with sweat.

‘This is wrong’, Sehun whispers to himself, ‘And illegal’

‘Oh, relax. No one knows us here and no one’s taking pictures’, Kai comfort Sehun as he drinks a cold glass of water, waiting patiently for his food. Sehun is still hesitant, glaring at the way Kai looks so calm.

‘We could get fired for this…’, Sehun whispers, worrying about his future as a lawyer. He could get his card revoked and a whole mess could’ve ensued and ruined his perfect score as the best lawyer in his law firm.

‘Oh good! The food’s here!’, Kai smiles to himself, clapping his hands together once the waiter brings out their food just simple tandoori chicken which Sehun’s dad could make easily. It did smell pretty good and he didn’t eat lunch yet so when Kai started to dig in, so did Sehun, the pair quietly eating for a moment as they relish on the strong flavours.

‘So, how are you and Suho doing? Heard it was rough, a few years ago’, Kai starts to talk, wiping the side of his mouth as looking up to watch Sehun.

‘We’re back together again. That’s all that matters’, Sehun responds, trying to avoid the obvious topic Kai was trying to stir them to. Sehun didn’t want to talk about his or Suho’s past mistakes and would rather leave the past the way it is.

‘I always wondered how someone like you would do Suho dirty’, Kai didn’t seem like he knew how to phrase his words nicely, offending Sehun t stop. Him from eating and glaring back at him.

‘You out of all of us can’t say anything. You left Kyungsoo for a job. We were already having problems before I left so you can’t even solely blame me on the breakup Anyway, who even told you about this? It’s not like you were here’

‘Kyungsoo’, Kai points out, completely ignoring another round of everyone comparing their situation to his and exclaiming that at least they weren’t as evil as him.

‘You’ve been speaking to Kyungsoo again?’

‘Yeah. We’re dating again’

‘What?! Does Suho know about this?’, this particular direct didn’t sit quite well with Kai, seeing as
every time he wanted to approach to Kyungsoo he would always be wary of Suho’s presence and even have to ask his permission from time to time and he’s kind of getting sick of it. They weren’t kids anymore and Kyungsoo doesn’t need his permission to do whatever he wants.

‘It’s none of his business’, Kai sips on his drink, continuing to eat his food but the food is the least of Sehun’s worries as he continues to stare at Kai.

‘You’re thick-skinned to use Kyungsoo’s situation to your advantage but let me tell you, once he gets his memory back, it’s over for you’

The table is tensed, the awkward and piercing tension being drowned out by the loud restaurant and screaming costumers. But that didn’t deny the fact that Sehun was glaring at Kai whereas the celebrity can only sigh, looking down on his half-finished food and trying hard not to argue back at the lawyer, but it seems to get harder the more pressing Sehun became.

‘Yes, I know once Kyungsoo’s memories come back, he’ll be wary of me… But it’s not like that’

‘Like what? He hates you. You left him for a job without even a warning. You and Chanyeol are both on the same dickhead level when it comes to leaving everyone behind… I mean at least Suho knew beforehand that I was leaving for a bit and-’

‘Look, Kyungsoo knew about my job offer’, Kai interrupts Sehun, finally breaking from his usually calm demeaned when it comes to being accused, ‘He knew I got scouted for a company because he heard me reject their offer’

This was new information. Information that Sehun didn’t believe at first since he scoffed at Kai’s attempt to try an victimise himself. He puts his fork down and folds his arms across his chest, raising a suspicious eyebrow at Kai’s sudden new side of the story that was far different to what everyone else had been told.

‘Look, you don’t have to believe me, because you’re a fucking lawyer I know you’d probably want to ask for proof or shit but Kyungsoo heard me reject the company offer because I knew it was going to strain our relationship and I heard about the no dating contract that companies would put in and I didn’t want that…”

‘Okay… you rejected the offer initially when Kyungsoo heard, but that doesn’t change it because you still accepted it in the end and left’

‘That’s the thing… I didn’t’, Kai sighs, combing his hair back, ‘I didn’t call the company ever again, but later on that week I received a text from the company about setting up my contract… I was so confused. I specifically told them that I wasn’t going to go through with it and it wasn’t until I called them back did they tell me that someone had come into the building claiming to be my representative and said I was going to go through with it’

‘Someone said yes in your place?’

‘Yeah… I thought it was my dance instructor who found out I rejected it or maybe even the head of Performance in my academy, so I spoke to them first, but even though they wanted me to accept it, none of them actually went to the building and accepted the offer for me’

‘So who was it who came to the building?’

‘Kyungsoo’

Sehun’s eyes are less suspicious but more shock. He loosed his cross arms and continues to look at
Kai. He’s still questioning whether to believe in this bullshit but for a story, it was compelling enough to keep listening to.

‘You’re telling me it was Kyungsoo who wanted you to literally choose your job over your relationship?’

‘You know how Kyungsoo is. He doesn’t like the idea of giving something you’ve worked hard on just for a relationship. Remember the time he stopped me from applying for a college near him?’

Sehun remembered and it made sense for a bit, enough for him to maybe believe in Kai, but he shrugs it off. Despite Kai’s look of sadness, he knew that the boy could act. He could be making this all up for points and they couldn’t confirm it since Kyungsoo had lost his memories and he seems to be the only person to either confirm or deny this new information that Kai had given him.

‘Look, I know its not the story that you guys know about, but Kyungsoo was the one to break-up with me. He was the one who went to the company and then told me that it was for the best. I tried to argue with him, saying that I didn’t need to be a big pop star to achieve my dream… But… He can be stubborn…’

‘That doesn’t sound like something Kyungsoo would do or say… Plus, even if what you said is true, I know for a fact that Kyungsoo wouldn’t be the type to let rumours spread that you were the one who broke it off. He would’ve told us straight away’

‘Yeah, you would think’, Kai didn’t mean to sound bitter and in a sense, he did have the rights to, but he understood why Kyungsoo may have let it simmer among the group for a bit. Their argument did get a little intense and he knew that Kyungsoo was hurt, just as much as he was.

‘Look, Kai, I’d like to believe that you’re true, that you’re somehow still the cool one who wouldn’t do anything to hurt anyone intentionally, but I can’t see you like that anymore. I can’t even see you as Kai most of the time since Kim Jongin is the only person that’s showed himself in front of my screen for god knows how long’, Sehun took this time to get up from his seat, turning back to grab his blazer and leaving his half-finished food, ‘now can you take me home? I have a meeting in ten minutes’

‘Kim Jongin, you are really asking for it!’, is the first thing they hear when they teleport back to Sehun’s office, seeing Kai’s manager still waiting inside the office, probably too scared to call for help just in case he got in trouble, ‘I could’ve gotten fired!’

‘Yeah, well you didn’t’, Kai rolls his eyes at his over-exaggerated manager, walking past him and out of the door, ‘Now come on, we have a practise we need to get to otherwise Xiumin will kill me’, his manager calls out after him, but Kai was already out the door, slamming it along the way to which Sehun can only sigh at the tantrum the celebrity was giving. He turns to the manager and before he can race up after Kai, he stops him for a moment.

‘Hey, by any chance, have you been Jongin’s manager since the beginning?’

‘You’d think I’d quit after being tortured by the knobhead’, the manager didn’t per se answer Sehun’s question, but his response was enough for Sehun to figure out that he was there at least in
‘Do you know if Jongin had accepted the company’s offer for a contract himself, or did he get a representative?’

‘Oh, he accepted it himself’, his manager told him, Sehun nodding and confirming Kai’s bullshit, about to let the manager go and run after Kai but the manager stops and looks back at Sehun, ‘He accepted it after rejecting it twice actually’

‘Huh?’

‘Well, Jongin initially rejected it at first, then I heard someone came in and said he changed his mind only for him to come back into the building rejecting the request again. We all thought he might’ve still been weighing in some other important factors in his life and we were about to give up on him when we received a text from him asking when the meeting for the signing is’

‘So he did have a representative come for him?’

‘Not so much as a representative… He wasn’t an agent or anything… I heard rumours that it could’ve been just a friend, but a lot of people assume it may have been an ex-boyfriend’

What?
Chanyeol looks ahead of him to see Baekhyun’s apartment, his hands shaking as he looks down at Lay’s prescription note of his new pile of medicine which cost him another sum of money that he had to ask his sister for help. He looks down on the note and sees Lay’s messy handwriting threatening Chanyeol to tell Baekhyun the truth otherwise he will. He didn’t think it was professional for his own doctor, but he knew Lay wasn’t going to budge now that the doctor was adamant in his confessing everything. If he was to pinpoint, he would probably blame Kyungsoo for the new rise of a threat he was experiencing from Lay since he had pretty much started acting like the old Kyungsoo from high school with his shy behaviour and his goo-goo eyes over Jongin.

He feels a slight numbing pain on his right hand, looking down to find that it had started burning without his control, so he quickly patted his hands on the damp lamp post beside him to try and snuff it out. Thank god it was raining a few minutes ago.

‘Chanyeol?’, he hears his name being called, his eyes landing on the short high school teacher with a side bag resting on his shoulder, ‘What are you doing here?’

‘Oh Baekhyun’, Chanyeol straightens his posture and folds his prescription note, sliding it in his back pockets, ‘I was just…’

‘Going to visit me?’, Baekhyun chuckles, Chanyeol seeing his white teeth and box-shaped smile that made him look younger. Had Chanyeol not known Baekhyun, he’d probably think he was still a high school student. Not a lot has changed for Baekhyun, except his hair which was now cut short and dyed a modest brown, unlike his red streaked mullet.

‘I hope you don’t mind’

‘No, it’s fine. You make me dinner anyway’, Baekhyun shrugs it off. He starts to walk and Chanyeol can only follow close behind, ‘So how’s Yoora doing?’

‘She’s good. Being a working mum is a pain but she’s handling it pretty well’, Chanyeol informs Baekhyun.

‘Why didn’t you move to America instead to help her with the babysitting?’, Baekhyun joked although Chanyeol knew that the topic of him leaving Korea was still an uncomfortable one. He felt sorry that Baekhyun tries his best to keep it past him.

‘I don’t think she’d let me near her kids’

‘Why not? You may be annoying, but you’re entertaining enough to keep the kid's company’
'Haha, that’s not really the problem’, Chanyeol points out as soon as the elevator doors open and the pair of them walk inside.

‘Then what is?’, Baekhyun asks, Chanyeol having to pause for a moment. He didn’t know whether to mention it now or maybe later.

‘You know me. You think I’m responsible enough to take care of kids?’, Chanyeol jokes, trying to diffuse any suspicion that Baekhyun may have due to the previous silence.

‘That is true’, Baekhyun chuckles, the dinging of the elevator doors making them move and walk towards Baekhyun’s apartment door, ‘So, what are you going to be cooking for me tonight Chanyeol?’

‘Probably just spaghetti since you haven’t been doing your groceries recently’, Chanyeol tells Baekhyun off, ‘You really should because your fridge looks empty’

‘I don’t have the time for it’, Baekhyun whines, dropping his heavy bag on the sofa and sitting on one of the kitchen chairs, ‘I’ve been doing extra revision classes for my senior class and it’s been hell’

‘God, I remember those extra classes’

‘Do you? Because you barely showed up to any of it’

‘It was boring and I and Kai had better things to do’

‘Like teleport to Jeju for the hour? You know you guys could’ve gotten caught’

‘You’re just jealous that we didn’t take you’

‘I wasn’t jealous. I wanted to pass my exams and actually get into college’, Baekhyun argues back, but Chanyeol only laughs at him and how defensive he got.

‘Don’t lie. You got mad at me because you saw a photo of me and Kai on the seaside’

‘I wasn’t pissed. I was worried’, Baekhyun points at him, ‘There’s a difference’

‘Stop making excuses Baekhyun. You missed me’, Chanyeol laughs, opening the drawer and getting out a tin of readymade spaghetti sauce.

‘Of course, I fucking missed you, you dumbfuck’, Baekhyun whispers and Chanyeol knew in an instant that he wasn’t talking about the high school trip to Jeju. Chanyeol places the tin down on the counter and slowly turns towards Baekhyun.

‘I think it’s time for me to talk about that, huh?’

‘It’s time? Your time has been well overdue Park Chanyeol’, Baekhyun raises his voice, feeling slightly frustrated by Chanyeol’s response to him, ‘I should’ve gotten your explanation before you boarded that plane’

‘I know… I’m sorry’, Chanyeol looks down, his hands twitching uncontrollably. He tries to hide it by sliding it into his pockets.

‘So?’, Baekhyun urges him on, ‘Why did you leave?’

The rising nerves got to Chanyeol and he knew it wasn’t going to be good for his health and he can
feel his tremors begin to worsen. He closes his eyes and tries to relax his body, breathing in and out but the moment he opens his eyes and sees Baekhyun staring patiently at him, he explodes.

‘What’s going? Is that Chanyeol?’ Kyungsoo walks out of his room to find Lay rushing in the emergency room in the department, Kyungsoo peeking in to see Chanyeol sitting on one of the chairs with his arms all burnt.

‘I don’t know what the fuck happened… He just exploded and… Caught himself on fire?’, Kyungsoo walks inside and hears Baekhyun trying to explain something to Lay but Kyungsoo can only look at Chanyeol. His face is okay but from his neck and all the way down to his arms he sees Chanyeol’s skin burnt and surging red. It looked painful. But not as painful as his eyes when they made contact.

‘Have you told Baekhyun?’, Kyungsoo whispers to him and Chanyeol shook his head.

‘Told me what?’, Baekhyun turns at the sound of his name, his eyes falling on Kyungsoo who stands next to Chanyeol.

‘Chanyeol has-’

‘I have neurogenetic imperium’, Chanyeol beats Lay to it, looking up at Baekhyun, ‘My hormones go crazy and I end up losing all control of my powers’

‘What?’, Baekhyun looks down, his eyes focusing on Chanyeol’s burnt arm, ‘You have neuro imperium? But that’s a rare disease… Not a lot of people have that…’

‘Chanyeol does’, Lay points out, injecting an IV in Chanyeol’s arm.

‘But…’, Baekhyun can be seen backing up a few steps, his eyes blank as he starts to think, ‘Is it because of Baekbeom’s-’

‘It’s not about the incident during high school’, Chanyeol was quick to deny that, ‘Baekhyun, you had nothing to do with it… It’s just genetics’

‘Although the incident ten years ago could’ve triggered it’, Lay points out, earning him a glare from Chanyeol, ‘What? If you’re going to tell Baekhyun, you need to tell him everything. There were signs of benign cells that carry neurogenetic imperium and it was harmless at one point, but something may have triggered it and an accident as big as the fire that happened ten years ago can be one of its main triggers’

‘But like Lay said… I was already born with it, so it could’ve been a lot of triggers… You know me… I used my powers a lot’, Chanyeol tries to explain to Baekhyun but the boy continues to back away the more he thought about it.

He remembered it. He remembered Chanyeol being right next to him, pinning him down as he tries to scream for his brother. He remembers realising that Chanyeol had suddenly disappeared from his side and straight into the burning building. He remembered the feeling of panic when he hears the others scream Chanyeol’s name, begging him to get out. He remembers hearing Chen
screaming and how he thought Chanyeol was going to die if he tries to reverse the fire.

Then he remembers Kai teleporting back with Chanyeol’s body. Bruised, battered, bloody and unconscious.

Chanyeol has neurogenetic imperium. A rare disease which causes too man hormones that their powers become too strong and uncontrollable for them. It’s a fatal disease with many dying due to their own powers.

‘You left me because of this?’, Baekhyun asks, his voice barely above a whisper. Kyungsoo and Lay slowly turn to face Baekhyun, their facial expression uncomfortable as they watch Baekhyun slowly start to piece everything together.

‘I didn’t want you to see me like this…’, Chanyeol whispers back, his voice also hinted in pain.

‘You left me because it was my fault’

‘No’, Chanyeol tries to stand up but he only grimaces in pain due to his burnt sides too, ‘No Baekhyun, this was never your fault. It’s genetics. It’s all down to me… I would never blame you for this’

‘But it is my fault…’, Baekhyun’s voice is slowly breaking, ‘Here I was being angry that you left when you were slowly dying anyway’

‘Baekhyun, Chanyeol isn’t dying… He’s a special patient and-’

‘Don’t touch me’, Baekhyun interrupts Lay as soon as he approaches him and attempts to reach out for his hand, ‘Chanyeol was dying and all I did was be angry with him’

‘You didn’t know’, Kyungsoo pointed out, ‘You still had every right to be angry’

‘And did you know?’, Baekhyun eyes, his vision glasses with tears as he stares at Kyungsoo.

‘I only found out when he came back to Korea’

‘You already knew about this?’, Baekhyun was shocked to find out that Chanyeol had already told Kyungsoo before him, ‘Who else knew?’

‘Me, Lay… Xiumin and Chen… Recently Kai, Suho and Sehun too’

‘Everyone found out except me?’, now Baekhyun was looking at Chanyeol, ‘Why didn’t you tell me?’

‘Because I knew you were going to use every excuse to blame it on yourself… I didn’t want you to. I don’t want you to believe that-’

‘Baekhyun!’

Chanyeol didn’t get to finish and Lay tries to call out for him but Baekhyun had already backed away and sprinted straight out of the door, running as fast as he could away from the hospital.

‘Someone call Kai to check up on Baekhyun. I don’t want anything to happen to him’, Lay orders both Kyungsoo and Chanyeol as he also walks out and talks to the nurse to care for the burnt victim. Kyungsoo was quick to text Kai but Chanyeol just sat there, his eyes also brimming with tears as he sees the pain that he never wanted to see in Baekhyun’s eyes.
Kai feels the cold of the winter air as soon as he leaves his apartment and teleports on the rooftop of the old community centre. There were already scaffolding in place and construction was already going underway but Baekhyun had managed to sneak himself inside and walk all the way upstairs. Kai sees Baekhyun standing at the edge, his skin glowing blue.

‘You okay?’, he asks as he stands next to Baekhyun, turning to see the boy’s scrunched face, his eyes closed and his lips quivering. He gives Baekhyun a moment, a pained silence between them. He could hear the faint sniffling of Baekhyun and he didn’t know how long it was going to take until Baekhyun was okay. To everyone, it was already a big shock to find that Chanyeol had been suffering by himself all these years, but they all knew Baekhyun was going to get hit hard by this. Of course, Chanyeol will always be the one at fault for leaving them without explaining, but the more they emphasise with him, the more they realise why he did it. Kai knew Baekhyun. Kai was there during the incident too. They each hold their own guilt for allowing Chanyeol to go in. They all felt guilty about Chanyeol’s incident, but none as guilty as Baekhyun.

‘Neurogenetic imperium is the hormonal imbalance of the cells that activates and gives us powers. A slight imbalance can cause excruciating pain to the person and will slowly start to deteriorate when the body can no longer fix itself from the damages down’, Baekhyun whispers to himself, his voice slowly rising as he lets himself cry, ‘Chanyeol spent all these years feeling torture without anyone to hold him…’

‘You don’t know that’, Kai points out, ‘He may have made a friend back in Fiji… His family could’ve visited too’

‘But I wasn’t there to hold him…’

‘Baekhyun… Chanyeol didn’t want us to be burdened by him’

‘He was my fiancé. It’s my job to be burdened by his stupid ass’

‘Fiancé? Since when were you guys engaged?’, Kai quickly turns his head and raises his brows in confusion.

‘The night before Xiumin and Chen’s wedding’, Baekhyun sighs, closing his eyes and remembering the soft memories, the times when he as truly happy.

The night before the wedding.

‘I can’t believe we’re old enough to start getting married’, Baekhyun whines, looking in the mirror
and double checking if his suit was okay.

‘I’m surprised Xiumin and Chen didn’t get married straight after graduation’, Chanyeol laughs as he brushes his teeth, the pair staying in a hotel room right next to the wedding venue. Chanyeol was in the bathroom brushing his teeth after a long day of trying to calm both Chen and Xiumin before their wedding. He needed his rest because he knew the next day everything was going to be thrown at him and he needed to be responsible for everything.

‘That’s true. They’ve been in love since high school’, Baekhyun smiles at the fond memory. He fixes his bow again and smiles at his achievement in learning how to tie a bow. It’s been years and he’d only just mastered it now just for the wedding.

‘So have we’, Chanyeol smiles, opening the door and walking out of the bathroom in his loose shirt and jogging bottoms, his hair yet and a towel wrapped around his neck.

‘Barely’, Baekhyun laughs, ‘We hated each other at first’

‘You hated me first’, Chanyeol walks over and wraps his arms around Baekhyun’s waist, resting his chin on the boy’s shoulder as they both look into the mirror to see their reflection.

‘You were fucking annoying’

‘No I wasn’t. You just didn’t want to accept the fact that I was hot’

‘Hot? Pfft’, Baekhyun snorts, laughing when he feels Chanyeol’s lips on his neck, ticking him, ‘You and your candy floss hair? I don’t think so’

‘I was hot, don’t deny it’, Chanyeol also laughs with him, continuing to run kisses up and down Baekhyun’s neck, ‘Plus, I’m still hot’

‘Oh I can’t wait to see the day when you’re old and sagging just so I can say you’re ugly’, Baekhyun turns his head to kiss Chanyeol’s lips.

‘So you agree? That I’m hot now?’, Chanyeol smirks, his hands gripping on Baekhyun’s sides, guiding him towards the queen sized bed.

‘Chanyeol stop! I can’t get this suit wrinkled! The wedding’s tomorrow’, Baekhyun whines when Chanyeol pushes Baekhyun on the bed.

‘Don’t worry, I’ll take it off’, Chanyeol smiles, already unbuttoning Baekhyun’s shirt and untying his bow.

‘Chanyeol wait… You need to fold it properly, so it won’t crease’, Baekhyun pouts, getting up and taking off his blazer himself. He turns to his side to take off his watch too, but he accidentally hits his arm on the bedside table, causing Chanyeol’s bag to drop, ‘Ow, shit’, Baekhyun whines, feeling the slight pain in his arms, but he sits up on the bed, his feet touching the floor again as he picks up Chanyeol’s bag.

‘Wait… Baekhyun no!’, Chanyeol noticed what Baekhyun was doing an instantly rolls over the bed in an attempt to cover his bag, most importantly the velvet box that had slipped out and landed on the carpet floor.

‘It’s no big deal Chanyeol’, Baekhyun misinterpreted Chanyeol’s frantic actions and picked up Chanyeol’s fallen stuff quicker, ‘Nothing broke’, he informs his boyfriend, picking up a blue velvet box which had accidentally opened due to the impact on the floor.
Chanyeol tries hard to grab it off him but Baekhyun was already looking at the ring that resting inside the box, a big crystal which reflects the light straight back at Baekhyun whenever he moved it.

‘What is it?’, he asks, his voice quieter than before as his brain slowly tries to piece everything together. A diamond ring in a box? If he didn’t know any better, he’d think it was an engagement ring.

‘I was going to do it after the reception…’, Chanyeol shyly scratches the back of his neck, his cheeks blushing as he looks at Baekhyun, confirming what Baekhyun thought was impossible.

‘You want to get married to me?’

‘You’re asking as if I’m being forced to propose to you’, Chanyeol laughs, ‘I wanted to make the proposal a little bit more romantic than this actually… Since we kinda hooked up during Sehun’s parents' wedding, it seems only fitting to ask you to spend the rest of your life with me after Xiumin and Chen’s’

Chanyeol is still sitting on his bed looking like he’s ready for bed and not the hot piece of hunk he planned to look when he proposes to Baekhyun and the latter is also half naked and still looking at the box as if it was on fire.

‘So… Will you marry me?’, Chanyeol finally asks, laughing when he sees Baekhyun’s round eyes.

‘Are you sure you wanna get married to me?’

‘I haven’t been with anyone else since high school but you… And I don’t want to be with anyone else but you… So yes, I’m sure’, Chanyeol reaches his hand out and combs Baekhyun’s hair back, ‘So what do you say?’

‘You said yes?’, Kai asks, the both of them sitting down on the cold sofa on the rooftop.

‘Of course, I did’, Baekhyun rolls his eyes at Kai, ‘Why wouldn’t I say no at the time?’

‘Where was the ring? I didn’t see you wearing any ring that day’

‘We didn’t want to take the spotlight away from Xiumin and Chen so we were planning on telling everyone the next day, but…’

‘Chanyeol left suddenly’, Kai nods, remembering the initial shock of the news, ‘Did you keep the ring?’

‘No, it was still inside Chanyeol’s bag so he kept it’

‘Damn… I mean, why didn’t you race to Fiji and kick Chanyeol in the balls? I would’ve’, Kai whistles after hearing the full story on Baekhyun’s part, ‘He proposed and left at the same time’

‘That’s why I thought it was cold feet… Him regretting the fact that he proposed to me… But then he didn’t come back after weeks and it turned into years. I’d just given up trying to look for
reasons…’, Baekhyun sighs, his eyes still slightly swollen from crying, his skin still glowing blue.

‘Chanyeol loves you. You have to at least know that’, Kai points out, ‘I don’t know if after everything that’s happened that it’s too late for the two of you to work something out but just know that Chanyeol really did love you’

‘If he loved me, he’d trust me enough to tell me, so we could get through this together… As a team’

‘I love Kyungsoo. I let him go but there’s not a day that goes by when I didn’t stop loving him’

‘You chose your career over him. That’s your fault’, Baekhyun points out, ‘I never wanted to let Chanyeol go’

‘I know, but I understand Chanyeol. He was put into a position where he had to choose. Be selfish and tell you or be selfless and leave’

‘How is he being selfish if tells me?’

‘He didn’t go to Fiji just to run away from you. Kyungsoo told me that there was a neurogenetic specialist who works in Fiji who can treat him and maybe possibly cure him one day. That’s what sold Chanyeol, the fact that there might be a cure waiting for him. He didn’t want to tell you because he knew you were going to follow him there’

‘Of course, I would’

‘But you’d be leaving behind your family, your life and your dreams… Do you think Chanyeol would let you do that?’

Baekhyun closes his eyes. He’s too tired, too torn to be thinking about the what ifs. He didn’t want to think about it but deep down, Kai had something. He loved Chanyeol. He loves Chanyeol. But was it really going to work when he had to sacrifice a little bit too much of himself just to follow him?

‘And here we are again… At the motherfucking hospital’, Xiumin whines as soon as they enter Chanyeol’s room, the smell of antiseptic becoming familiar to Xiumin the more he comes back in this goddamn hospital.

‘Hey guys’, Chanyeol smiles at them as soon as the couple walks in, Chen holding a bouquet of flowers.

‘I didn’t know what to get you’, Chen points out, looking down to see Chanyeol’s bandaged arms, ‘Lay said I’m not allowed to bring you food’

‘He’s been force feeding me to eat hospital food for the past few hours’, Chanyeol whines, sitting up and thanking Chen for the flowers.

‘I heard you finally told Baekhyun’, Xiumin points out, looking worried as Chanyeol gives out a sigh.
'It obviously went badly to be honest'

'Sorry’, Chen pats his best friend on the back, ‘At least you got it off your chest’, Chen wasn’t the few who forced Chanyeol into telling Baekhyun but he did still encourage him to do so now that Chanyeol had decided to try again and look for the cure after Lay’s persuasion. No one really knew how Baekhyun was going to take it. Was he going to be angry? Upset? Disappointed? It wasn’t clear if he had been all of those emotions a few hours ago. Maybe he was, maybe he wasn’t. All they knew it that they can’t force Baekhyun to forgive Chanyeol or to even come back.

‘I don’t think Baekhyun and I will be seeing each other anymore’, Chanyeol looks down on the flowers, picking at the petals as he lets it sink in. Whatever chance he had with Baekhyun is over the moment he ran out of the hospital.

‘You should’ve told him earlier’, Xiumin comments, but at this point, there was no use. There was nothing to make Chanyeol happy and it was too late to dwell on the what ifs, it’s not like it was going to help them now. Chen touches Chanyeol’s bandaged arms, seeing how his friend twitched at the touch.

‘Did you burn your whole arm?’

‘Yeah’

‘God, that sounds grim’

‘Could be worse. My powers could be lightning, and I would’ve electrocuted myself’, Chanyeol points out and Chen agrees. He didn’t think he’d survive if he had Chanyeol’s condition, ‘I mean, no one would like their powers to fuck themselves over. Imagine Xiumin trying to compose music whilst freezing himself’

‘I’d probably freeze my whole studio too which is not going to work since they cost a lot’

‘Why are you complaining? I bought it for you’, Chen elbows Xiumin playfully on his side.

‘I paid you back like I promised’

‘You let your own husband pay you back?’, Chanyeol snorts, raising an eyebrow at Chen, ‘So lame’

‘He was going to freeze my dick off if I didn’t take the money’, Chen shouts at Chanyeol, defending himself as Chanyeol continues to make fun out of him. Chanyeol continues to laugh as Chen tries to punch his shoulder without actually injuring him, Xiumin standing and also laughing with Chanyeol.

‘Hey guys, what’re you laughing at?’, they hear Kai teleporting in Chanyeol’s room, but he wasn’t the one that brought them to their silence. Baekhyun was standing next to Kai, his hand holding on a plastic bag.

‘I bought Chinese’, Baekhyun whispers, trying to avoid everyone’s stares, the ringing silent becoming more obvious.

‘He’s not allowed to eat food outside the hospital’, Xiumin was the first to break the silence between everyone, pointing out Lay’s request. Baekhyun’s eyes look down as he hung his head low.

‘Oh. I didn’t know that’, he tries to hide the plastic bag behind his back, ‘I guess I’ll just-’
‘Chinese wouldn’t hurt, right?’, Kai pushes Baekhyun forward, giving the shorter boy a warning look, urging him to go to Chanyeol.

‘Actually, I’m starving, and I don’t think I can eat another carrot soup’, Chanyeol calls out.

‘Is that what Lay’s been feeding you?’, Baekhyun places the Chinese takeaway on the table beside the bed, looking down at Chanyeol, his eyes seeing the wrapped bandages around his arm, feeling his stomach churn at the memory of Chanyeol screaming in pain due to his own flames.

‘He’s a strict doctor’

‘And you need to eat. You’re already skinny as it is’, Baekhyun opens the plastic and brings out the noodles he had bought for Chanyeol, hoping that it was still his favourite. Xiumin stands next to Kai and the pair couldn’t help but smile at the sight of Baekhyun silently – and awkwardly – taking care of Chanyeol, grabbing the chopsticks and feeding the idiot himself. They still felt the tension high up in the air, but the fact that Baekhyun was here was enough for all of them to heave a sigh of relief.

Maybe Baekhyun and Chanyeol still have a chance.
Sehun looks over at Kai who was back in his office finalising the lawsuit against his sasaengs. He hadn’t managed to talk to Kai since the day he found out about him and Kyungsoo. The office was quiet, and his manager was looming behind him like a shadow which covers his space. Sehun noticed the way Kai would ignore his manager whenever he told him something, but he didn’t say anything. He just continued to type in the files so Kai can sign it and leave after finalising and agreeing to the punishment he had sent the sasaengs.

‘So, after this, you’ll able to sleep soundlessly’, Sehun comments as he grabs the freshly printed paper and slides it to Kai’s side ‘Jail would be the least of their problem’

Kai didn’t say anything, just signing the paper and ignoring Sehun which he had every right to since Sehun didn’t exactly seem supportive when Kai was telling him the truth. He knew that he deserved the silent treatment. But that didn’t mean it didn’t annoy him. He tries to get Kai to talk, but despite being a stern lawyer, he was never one to be good at starting a normal conversation.

‘How’s practice going? I heard the musical announced the dates already’, he comments to which Kai merely nods at.

‘Yeah, it’s alright’, Kai responds, ‘I’ve been in and out of practice here and there’, the particular response didn’t make sense with Sehun, but the lawyer didn’t press on too much. It was in these moments that the old Sehun would seep through, the shy boy who had no idea how to start a conversation let alone hold one together. He coughs awkwardly trying to break some of the tension floating around his office and it wasn’t until Kai signed the last page did he breathe out a sigh of relief. Standing up, he shakes hands with the celebrity and bows to his manager, guiding them to the door – quite enthusiastically – as if that’s the only thing he’s been thinking about doing.
‘Thank you so much’, he manager bows to him one last time, the pair walking out of his office and pass the corridor towards the front entrance of the law firm. Sehun should’ve apologised to Kai before he left. He knew he should’ve privately spoken to him about everything they’d talked about last time, but Sehun was too much of a pussy to say anything so he just let Kai go. Maybe next time.

‘Sehun’, he hears his name being called, his superior walking towards him in his tailor-made three-piece suit, holding his cup of coffee, ‘There’s someone at the front for you’, he points out, Sehun peeking at the end of the corridor to see Suho sitting down on the waiting area with other clients, typing something on his phone, waiting patiently for him.

He smiles unconsciously at the sight of his boyfriend. He hadn’t seen Suho in a week and he feels ecstatic at the thought that his boyfriend was giving him a visit.

‘Babe!’, he shouts, professionalism threw out the window as he paces his steps and gives Suho a hug before the latter can even stand up. The receptionist gives Suho an odd look, almost like something foreign and abnormal had happened due to his presence alone – which is not necessarily a lie either – Sehun was a lawyer who kept to himself and stayed in his office, often declining night outs with the rest of the group, choosing his spare time to drive to his boyfriend’s house and spend the night there. So, to see the usual kept to himself Sehun screaming and hugging someone in public was something that doesn’t usually happen.

‘Hey Sehun’, Suho pats his boyfriend’s back before pushing him off so he can break the hug, ‘How have you been?’

‘I’ve been good’, Sehun smiles, sliding his hands down Suho’s arm and reaching for his hand, intertwining his fingers with Suho’s, ‘I’ve been working nonstop, but I just finished one case which means I’ll have a little bit more time to spend with you-’

‘That’s great. Look Sehun I’m here to talk to you about the drug case’, Suho stops Sehun before he can finish his sentence, looking back down on his phone and receiving a text message from his team, ‘It seems like we have a suspect, but since we’re dealing with someone with the power of memory manipulation, I need you to go over some files to make sure that this person is truly associated with the gang’, Suho’s eyes looks hopeful and somewhat desperate since this is their first possible lead after Kyungsoo’s accident and without the strong police officer, Suho’s team has been struggling to say the least.

‘Oh. Is that all you came for?’, Sehun asks, Suho too busy to notice the disappointment in Sehun’s eyes. Suho, despite also missing Sehun, didn’t have the privilege to gloat at his situation since his superiors were putting pressure on him to finish up the case and they’re not even halfway successful. He didn’t need his superiors to drill on him whilst he’s already under so much stress, so
all his thoughts on Sehun had to leave his head for him to focus.

‘Yeah, I could do that for you’, Sehun points out, ‘I’ll check it out and tell you by the end of today’

‘Oh thanks’, Suho smiles, tiptoeing to kiss him on the cheeks before turning to leave, ‘I’ll see you later’

‘Wait… That’s all?’, Sehun calls out to Suho before he can leave the building, the Chief Police tilting his head in confusion as he looks up at the lawyer.

‘What else would I be here for?’

‘To see me maybe?’

‘Sehun, I’m in the middle of work, I’ll see you later’

‘No you won’t’, Sehun points, which looks odd since he looks like a serious person with his suit and swept back hair yet his facial expression says otherwise, ‘You’ll be too tired to come to my place and I’ll be sleepy to drive to yours’

‘I won’t be tired. Didn't I promise that I’ll come over tonight?’

‘But what if I won’t be there to open the door?’, Sehun asks, ‘Last time you just left and texted me that you wanna sleep at your place anyway’, Suho notice the whiny voice that Sehun always seems to make whenever he wants something from him and he couldn’t help but sigh.

‘Then give me your keys’

‘But what if I’m the one who comes home early?’

‘Then what do you want me to do?’, now it’s Suho’s turn to whine since Sehun refuses to cooperate with him, making him feel a little annoyed at the way Sehun was pressing him to go back to the conversation he refuses to revisit.
‘Move in with me’

‘I told you time and time again Sehun. I’m not going to move in with you’, Suho responds trying to keep his voice quiet since they were still at the front reception and what he doesn’t need is for Sehun’s colleague to hear their private conversation, ‘Can we not talk about this now? I’m busy and we’re in your workplace, this is not professional’

‘I don’t care. I need to know why you don’t want to move in with me’, Sehun presses on, ‘I think it’s a great idea. It’s economic, convenient and it’ll give us more time to be together’

‘Sehun, we’ll talk about this later’, Suho points out, ‘Right now I need to go back to the station and sort some stuff out’, Suho didn’t give Sehun any more time, rushing out the door before the latter could argue back.

The receptionist flinches at the banging of the front doors as he looks up to feel the wave of strong winds forcing itself in, making the revolving doors spin faster and the paper on her desk to fly every.

Kai sways his body, his feet fleeting from one side of the stage to the other, his eyes focusing on his lover on stage, the sweet silence of the music to which he slowly walks over to him before the melody of the strings come back, the sweet symphony of the orchestra followed by the harmony of the choir forcing his feet to gain a life of its own.

Echappé, grand jeté, développé.

Kim Jongin has never been known as a ballet dancer. His songs never allowed him to move in slow, elegant movements. It was always about short, sharp movements, harsh to the bones and faster than he could breathe. This is the first time he’d taken the time to craft his work, to feel every turn and see every move he makes without having to go onto the next choreography.

‘Good Jongin! Keep going! Look at him more, he’s your lover, look more intense!’, he hears the screaming of the director above the loud orchestra but he didn’t let that get to him, he allowed himself to follow his instructions without breaking character, his eyes lowering and gazing at the man in front of him, his eyes trying to induce the pure love that he had read in the script.
‘Shit. Is that really Jongin?’ the director whispers when he sees Kai naturally pick up his instructions whilst never missing the beat.

‘Yeah, it seems like it’, Xiumin smiles fondly at the way the celebrity moves. He’d yet to see Jongin move like that. It wasn’t Jongin who was doing the movement, it was Kai and this was Kai at his best. Xiumin didn’t need to keep attending the rehearsals every time since his job as a composer was done, but he wanted to see how the celebrity was going to bring his work to life. If he remembers anything about Kai’s performances back then, he remembers how the boy manages to steal the show even if he was given a secondary character. Everyone would always be drawn to him and he can see that Kai had never lost it.

‘Okay!’, the director claps his hands as the music slowly fades to a stop, ‘Fifteen minute break!’, he shouts hearing every sigh a relief, retiring to the corner of the stage to where they left their bags, bottled water laying on the stage, half empty and in need of refilling. Xiumin didn’t waste any time, standing up and approaching at the dancer.

‘You were great’, he points out, chewing on his smarties and leaning on the railing by the stage.

‘Of course, I was. I practised all night’

‘With Kyungsoo?’, Xiumin jabs at Kai, chuckling when he sees the dancer tense a little, ‘Don’t worry, I won’t tell Suho’.

‘You seem relaxed at the fact that Kyungsoo and I are dating again’ Kai points out, still breathless and shirt seeped through with his sweat. He sits on the edge of the stage, his legs hanging off as he takes a gulp of water, finishing his bottle in one go.

‘I’m not relaxed. I’m just not someone who has the rights to object. Kyungsoo decided to take you back which means you’re forgiven. His forgiveness is more important than mine’, Xiumin looks up at Kai, ‘But indulge me’

‘What?’

‘Once upon a time, I was your best friend’, Xiumin says, ‘I’ve always had a feeling that maybe I still was’
‘You are’, Kai replies, ‘You’re the one who refused to talk to me’

‘I’m sorry about that’, Xiumin looks saddened, almost regretful as he looks up at Kai, ‘I didn’t want anyone else in our group to leave… Ever since Chanyeol left right after the wedding, plus Sehun’s plans to go abroad, I was scared… Of losing someone else’, Xiumin confesses, sighing as he fiddles with the ends of his sleeves, kicking at nothing, ‘I always believed that maybe we would always be together, as friends. I mean, we’ve been through a lot together and for it to slowly fall apart… I was too scared’

‘We were always going to stay friends. Distance has never been my problem. If you needed me, you know you could just call me and I’ll be by your side within a second’

‘It’s not about distance though is it?’, Xiumin points out, ‘It’s more about differences. You were Kim Jongin, one of the most popular celebrities in Korea and the rest of the world. You were hanging out with A star celebrities, social elites… I mean, I highly doubt you’d say no to the Grammys to spend the weekend with us just watching some dumb movies Chen chose’

‘I would’ve chosen a tacky movie night in any day’, Xiumin hears Kai’s whisper, looking up to see Kai looking down on him, his face blank but there was a hint of sadness in his eyes ‘You have no idea how lonely it been for me. To feel the rest of the world love you for three hours with me on stage but to feel absolutely empty for the rest of the night when I went back to my hotel, sitting in bed by myself and thinking how better it would’ve been if I could share this with someone’

‘So why did you choose singing over Kyungsoo? That’s what I’ve always wondered’, Xiumin asks, ‘It’s something that we’ve all asked ourselves. Why would you choose singing? You don’t even focus on singing’

‘Being an idol means also being a performer’ Kai shrugs at the question, ‘Plus, it’s not like I can’t hold a tune’

‘That’s true’, Xiumin chuckles, remembering old times at the campfire during the breaks where they can go and have a weekend getaway from their lives. He remembers Chanyeol sat beside Baekhyun, strumming his guitar as Baekhyun sings a soft tune, followed by Kyungsoo before Kai joins in, harmonising with each other, sometimes singing sad songs, sometimes singing happy songs. Now he doesn’t even have time to spend with Chen let alone the rest of the gang. It made him nostalgic, missing his youth and the free time they had just to lay around and do nothing, Xiumin feels his fingers freeze, looking down as he plays with the snowflakes he’s made.
‘You still do that when you’re bored?’, Kai laughs, looking down to see a ray of snowflakes dancing around his feet, each different and uniquely shaped. Kai remembers the first time he ever saw Xiumin, sitting in the corridor right next to the principal’s office, his eyes looking at the water dispenser which had magically frozen right in front of him.

‘I do it all the time, especially when Chen’s showering. I would sometimes make it snow’, Xiumin tells Kai the story of the one time he pranked Chen after work when his poor husband just wanted to take a warm shower after a long day. Kai couldn’t help but laugh, imagining how pissed Chen must’ve been.

‘Did he scream?’

‘He tried to leave the shower, but the floor turned icy and he slipped’, Xiumin adds on, making Kai snort at the thought, his laugh loud, making everyone turn to see what was going on. They see how comfortable Kai was with Xiumin and it made them wonder what relationship the two had with each other and how someone could make Kai laugh like that.

Eun Bi visits Kyungsoo in the hospital after school since their mum forced her too. She didn’t say much, she just sat right next to Kyungsoo as they watch a show together on her phone, her head leaning on her brother’s shoulder.

‘How was school?’, he asks, looking down at the way Eun Bi whines, pausing her phone and looking up at him.

‘Didn’t I tell you not to ask me?’

‘I may have amnesia, but I still remember what Baekhyun told me… If the school isn’t doing anything about it, then I suggest we transfer you somewhere else’

‘No, it’s fine’, Eun Bi stops Kyungsoo before her brother starts overreacting, ‘Kai’s been helping me’

‘Oh?’
‘Yeah, he’s using his celebrity status to make me look cool and it’s working’, Eun Bi points out, abandoning the show on her phone and sitting up to smile at her brother, excitement in her eyes, ‘No one’s bullied me in over a month!’

‘Is that so?’, Kyungsso smiles, feeling elated at the thought that his sister can go to school without feeling alienated. It’s been something that’s been worrying his mind too, especially since Baekhyun pointed it out to him. He never wanted Eun Bi to have a shit experience in school, or her to have self-esteem issue as he and everyone else did back in high school – well, everyone apart from Chanyeol and Kai that it. Eun Bi noticed the way Kyungsso relaxed whenever she mentioned Kai’s name, different from the usual tension that would occur before his accident.

‘Are you and Kai really dating?’, she asks, and she can see her brother blushing at the thought. Eun Bi couldn’t help but roll her eyes. She knew this would happen. As soon as Kai came back to town, she knew Kyungsso was going to drop everything and be with him again. She had hated the idea of Kai hypnotising her brother, but now, for some odd reason, she didn’t mind it anymore. It’s not like Kyungsso was getting back to Baekhyun and Kai has been treating her well since he came back, so she didn’t seem anything wrong with how things turned out. Maybe Kyungsso forgetting about Kai was a good thing; a clean slate and a start to forget everything and try again. Maybe this time it’ll work. Maybe this time Kyungsso doesn’t need to sacrifice himself a little. She’s still in her school uniform, her skirt slightly creased since she’s been laying in bed, when Kai teleports into the room, holding a bag of takeaway.

‘Oh, Eun Bi. I didn’t know you’d be here’, Kai turns to see the teenage girl laying on the hospital bed with Kyungsso.

‘And I didn’t think you’d have the nerve to ask my brother out again, but here we are’, she calls out, earning a hit from her brother.

‘Be nice’, Kyungsso hisses at her before standing up, shyly smiling at Kai, ‘Did you buy food again?’

‘Yeah’, Kai smiles, stretching his arm out to hand Kyungsso the food, awkwardly feeling tensed due to Eun Bi observing him. He didn’t feel particularly awkward with Eun Bi per se, but it’s usually just the two of them whenever he visits the hospital – or the occasion Chanyeol – but never with anyone else so this is something awkward for him.

‘Oh, thank god you bought Italian. I was getting sick with Chinese food’, Kyungsso gleams once he opens the container to see pasta instead of the usual sweet and sour Kai would always pick up.
‘You said if I buy you anymore Chinese, you’ll punch me in the face’

‘That sounds like my brother’, Eun Bi laughs, sitting up and crossing her legs as she reaches out for her phone, ‘Hey, do you wanna finish the show?’, she turns to ask Kyungsoo as her brother sits back down next to her, grabbing two forks and giving one to his sister whilst holding the takeaway.

‘Yeah, I’ve been dying to know if she still lives’, Kyungsoo points out, already waiting for Eun Bi to press play, but his sister looks up, waiting for Kai to make a move.

‘Aren’t you coming?’

‘You want me to watch with you?’, Kai asks, perplexed as to why Eun Bi and Kyungsoo were waiting for him to jump into bed – which was already small – he knew there wasn’t going to be enough space for him.

‘Kai get in here. We’re watching that stupid show that you’re obsessed with too’, Kyungsoo urges Kai to come forward, welcoming and smiling that Kai almost lost his sense of thought as he takes off his jacket and squeezes in, hugging onto Kyungsoo as the pair of them sit closer together so they can fit in the bed. Eun Bi rolls her eyes as she turns to see Kyungsoo leaning on Kai’s chest and making gagging noises only for Kyungsoo to hit her.

‘Get a room’, Eun Bi whines as she presses play, Kyungsoo and Kai making fun out of her by pretending to make out, the three of them arguing to each other as the drama continues to play on Eun Bi’s phone.

‘How are you?’, Lay asks, looking down on Chanyeol who's arm he’d manage to heal, with no scars in sight. He looks down impressively at his work, feeling the smooth new layers of skin to which replaced Chanyeol’s burnt one.

‘Fine’, Chanyeol replies, but his voice was monotone and eyes avoiding his contact, looking out of the window and watching the city lights from a distance. Lay had a feeling that Chanyeol’s feelings may be mirroring the fact that Baekhyun hasn’t visited him since the last time he came bearing Chinese takeaway.

‘He’s a high school teacher Chanyeol’, Lay points out, ‘And school is nearly over for the winter so
he’s really busy’

‘Yeah, I know’, Chanyeol responds, but it seems like he’s still not understanding the situation. Lay didn’t know why Baekhyun wasn’t visiting and he didn’t have time to call him up and ask since he was always in and out of the lab whilst taking care of his patients and juggling parenthood, so he could only give excuses for Baekhyun at the moment. The hope was there when Baekhyun decided to come back but it quickly faded when he never came back after that and it has already been a week.

Chanyeol lays on the hospital bed, still avoiding Lay, turning his back towards his doctor and looking out of the window, keeping quiet and giving short responses when Lay would ask his usual doctor questions about how he was feeling and if he felt new pain during the day. It was the same answers, he felt pain whenever he moves, and the new medicine seems to be swelling his hands and feet. He honestly felt like a lab rat and that was the one thing he didn’t want to feel anymore.

‘I’ll check on you later. If your blood pressure goes down and your heart rate levels stabilises then I’ll be able to discharge you’, Lay explains to Chanyeol before leaving, reaching out to stroke the boy’s back, trying to soothe him, ‘Everything’s going to be fine’, he whispers, turning around to finally leave, feeling sad as he turns around to see Chanyeol just laying there, not doing anything, not even talking.

Chanyeol slowly lowers his gaze to his hands which were slightly swollen due to the side effects. At least it wasn’t red anymore like earlier in the day. It was hard to clench his hands since he didn’t have much control over his muscles at the moment, but he tried anyway, seeing as though he’s going to be forced into physiotherapy sooner or later. He feels a twinge of pain, but he kept on going, clenching until the tip of his fingers reached his wrist. He whines a little, but the force in his hands created a spark in between his knuckles, colour of blue flames to which he managed to make. He smiles at he unclenches his hands slowly, trying not to burn out the flame he had created, seeing the way the small fire travelled down and rested on the palm of his hands. It was small and dimming but Chanyeol felt calm at the sight of it. It didn’t burn him, he knows his flames would never hurt him, even after all this time, he trusts his flames to never harm him. His true flames.

Just as he was about to blow away the shimmering blue flames, he sees something approaching it. He blinks a little, shaking his head to get rid of his odd vision, but it seems like it wasn’t just his mind hallucinating. He sees the small flicker of light bouncing on his hand excitedly as it dances around his shy flames. It was a bright yellow glow, brighter than his fire but it didn’t burn him out, in fact, it decided to mix with him, turning the dim flame into a brightening orange, making it more confident and brighter than what it was. Chanyeol looks confused, dazed to see his flames becoming powerful, his palm now lighting up in orange wonder. He feels himself relax at the thought that even though the fire burns brighter, his skin was still smooth and cold, not one pain being inflicted on him as he had thought. He feels like himself again.
Suho knocks on Sehun’s door, waiting impatiently as he taps his foot on the ground, looking down on his watch and waiting for another few seconds before knocking again, this time louder so that Sehun can hear him. He had a feeling that he pissed off Sehun and it was confirmed when he got a phone call from his boyfriend talking about the favour that he asked but using his monotone voice and hanging up straight away before Suho could ask if he wanted to grab something to eat before going home.

‘Sehun, open the fucking door babe! I know you’re in there! I saw your car!’, he shouts, banging on the door continuously, not stopping until the door swings open and he sees Sehun, his eyes glaring at him, his blazer off and his shirt half unbuttoned. He leans his arm on the doorway, blocking Suho from coming in and just staring at the officer who is now in his casual wear and out of uniform.

‘What do you want?’

‘Wow, it’s nice to see you too’, Suho greets him sarcastically, ‘Can you let me in?’

‘Why? You should just go home and get some rest, why even bother coming here?’

‘Are you seriously going to kick me out? Do you really wanna do that?’, now it’s Suho’s turn to glare at the tall lawyer, crossing his arm together, ‘Because when I leave, I’m not coming back here’

‘Fine by me’

‘Fine’

‘Fine’

‘Okay then’

‘Okay’
‘I’m leaving!’, Suho stomps his foot, angry at the fact that Sehun could be so stubborn, refusing to make Suho stay. He’s just had three meetings and all of them making him feel defeated since they still haven’t found a lead yet and the one thing, he doesn’t need is Sehun’s bitchy attitude pissing him off even more. He turns to leave, not wanting to entertain Sehun any more, about to walk towards the end of the hallway where the lifts were when he feels something grabbing at his wrist, spinning him around and dragging him inside the apartment.

‘I can’t believe you were actually going to leave?’ Sehun huffs, crossing his arms and glaring at Suho once he shuts the door.

‘I can’t believe you didn’t stop me’, Suho shouts back, throwing his bag on the side of the hallways and ignoring Sehun, pushing past him and making his way to the kitchen.

‘Don’t you know that I’m pissed at you? Am I not allowed to be pissed at you when you’ve rejected living with me twice already?’

‘And don’t you understand that I want to be independent? I actually like living alone and taking a breather from the rest of the world. I can’t do that if we’re sharing the same roof’

‘I’ll give you the space that you need. We can even sleep in different rooms if you’re that fussy’

‘Then what’s the point of moving in?’

‘Then what the hell do you want to do?’, Sehun raises his voice, Suho closing his eyes and trying hard not to reciprocate and shout back at him. The one thing he didn’t need it to keep fighting with Sehun whenever they do find the time to meet up.

‘I want you to understand that I also want my independence’, Suho sighs, ‘The reason why we fought so much last time is that of how close we were. We were barely apart from each other, we lived in the same dorm and we got sick of each other… I don’t want to feel like that anymore’, Suho looks down on the floor, trying to avoid Sehun’s eyes, but the tension in the room died down and all that’s left is silence between them.

‘Suho…’

‘I’m just not going to make the same mistake as last time, because what if this is our last chance?’
What if we mess it up again but this time there’s no second chance?’, they’re brought back to the times where their relationship was anything but perfect, the cycle of blaming each other and taking out their frustration on the smallest actions the other did, the harsh words and banging doors. Their relationship didn’t end on a good and it was almost a relief when Sehun was placed abroad for his placement since he used it as an excuse to finally break it off with Suho, and the latter didn’t want to admit it, but he was relieved at the time too.

He didn’t want to feel suffocated when he’s with Sehun.

‘We were young back then’, Sehun sighs, leaning on the kitchen counter and putting his hands in his pockets, ‘We were selfish, and we only thought about what our relationship could do for us… But it’s been years Suho. I’m willing to sacrifice to make this work’

‘You don’t know that Sehun. You don’t know what’s going to happen’

‘Nor do you’, Sehun replies, stepping closer so that he can stand next to Suho, he reaches his hand out to hold onto his, ‘I wanna try, really try. I’m not going to be a bitch anymore, I promise’, Sehun whispers, leaning in and pressing his lips on Suho’s forehead, Suho sighing as he melts right in Sehun’s arms, his hands resting on his waist as he leans his head between on Sehun’s shoulders, tucking himself into his neck.

‘Fine. I’ll think about it’

‘How are you feeling?’, Lay asks the girl who was silent during her medication, her skin still blistered by most of her scars had been healed by Lay already. He had to be careful with her since her bodyguards were standing outside the door, looking in and observing his every move. He didn’t think the Prime Minister’s daughter will fall in his department as a patient, but if he knew that the news of her illness spread, he’ll be the first one to go and he didn’t need that pressure along with his experiment which had just been given the green light after Chanyeol signed the contract.

‘You know, another side effect that patients have is depression’, Lay points out as he sits on the chair, waiting for the silence patient to at least give him a nod in response, ‘You need to talk to me not for my case, but for yours. Don’t you hate being here all alone?’, Lay asks, reaching his hand out to hold her, but as if he was fire, she quickly retracts her hand away from him, bringing her knees up and hugging it as she turns her head to face the window, looking out at the sky.
‘I know someone who’s just as stubborn as you. He’s right next door to you as well. Maybe you should meet one day’, Lay chuckles to himself, giving up for today and standing up. He looks down on her, wanting to approach her once more but he knew his attempts would be futile. She hadn’t spoken since she was admitted in.

‘Hey Lay, do you mind if I give Chanyeol some food? Kai bought Italian and we couldn’t finish it’, he hears a knock on the door and he turns around, seeing Eun Bi standing in front of him, the bodyguards whining in pain and leaning on the doorframe. Eun Bi was wearing Kyungsoo’s hoodie and plain sweatpants, her hands holding on the plastic bag with the leftover takeaway.

‘Did you just punch her bodyguards?’, Lay asks as he moves to check up on them.

‘They said they couldn’t let me see you’, she says nonchalantly, placing the bag of food on the bedside table, ‘What am I supposed to do?’

‘Not hit them?’, Lay tells her off, bowing to the two bodyguards who have regained some strength and started shouting at him.

‘Who is she?’

‘What does she want from you?’

‘Who does she work for?’

‘Guys, calm down. She’s my friend’s little sister and she just wants to visit me’, Lay tries to calm them down, turning around and reaching out for Eun Bi’s hood, dragging her out of the room and back into the hallway before the guards start throwing a tantrum, ‘Eun Bi, apologise to them’

‘Why should I?’, she rolls her eyes and scrunches her nose, burying her hands inside the pockets of her hoodie.

‘Because you’re gonna go to jail for assault’, Lay hisses at her, elbowing her towards the two guards and giving her a warning glare. She resists for a second, but she sees Lay giving her his disappointed look so she bows anyway, giving a half ass apology.
‘Good, now go back to Kyungsoo’

‘How about the takeaway?’

‘I’ll give it to Chanyeol’, Lay urges Eun Bi to leave, earning trails of whining as the teenage girl clings herself onto Lay’s arm.

‘Please don’t let me go back to Kyungsoo’s room! I was only using the takeaway as an excuse! I don’t want to be in the same room as them anymore! All they do is hug and do disgusting cute shit’

‘Hey, language’, Lay slaps her head, but Eun Bi, being Kyungsoo’s little sister, didn’t back down and continue to whine to Lay, hugging his arms and making a scene, everyone looking at her, including the girl who never spoke, her eyes peering, curious to see who was making such a loud noise so late into the day.

‘Don’t let me go back!’

‘Okay fine! I’ll let you take the food to Chanyeol… Lord knows he needs someone to distract him’, Lay whispers the end of the sentence, walking back into the room and quickly grabbing the back, Eun Bi waiting outside since she’s not allowed in.

‘Is he still depressed?’, she asks, pouting as Lay nods at her, the pair of them sighing. She saw Baekhyun this morning during morning period and he seemed to be doing okay, so she wasn’t sure why he wasn’t visiting Chanyeol anymore, ‘Don’t worry! I’ll make sure he smiles before the end of the day’, Eun Bi grabs the bag, making it her mission to cheer up Chanyeol, stomping through the corridor until she reaches Chanyeol’s room. Lay couldn’t help but smile at her, seeing her enthusiasm to which her own brother can’t keep up with. He then slowly turns back to see his patient looking at him, finally making eye contact with him since they first met a month ago. Upon realising that she had been caught staring, she coughs and quickly turns away, laying on the bed and turning her back towards Lay.

A smile slowly grows on Lay’s face.

Chen sits inside his car, looking out at the traffic ahead and closing his eyes. It’s been a long day at the office and he’s half asleep already. He sets his car on auto drive and leans back on his chair,
He [unbuttoning the top button of his shirt and loosening his tie. Minhyuk has been trying to make his company lean in with the partnership and it won’t be long till his board members will begin to sway at his offer. Minhyuk has that type of power over people like he has the power of persuasion instead of his useless power of sound. Maybe he uses sound waves to hypnotise people. Chen has always hypothesis that since they were young. He never knew why they were so loving towards him and yet to dismissive towards him.

He hears his phone ringing and he picks it up just as his car starts moving again, seeing Xiumin’s name on his screen.

‘Hey, babe, what’s up?’, Chen asks, looking out of the window and seeing the open lit shops and people walking with bags in their hands, preparing for Christmas. He probably should start his Christmas shopping too since he has more than one person to buy for now. He had to worry about what Chanuveol would like too.

‘Hey, I’m good. I just got home, are you gonna be here soon?’

‘I’m driving there now’

‘Good, I’m making dinner so come home quickly’

‘Okay babe’, Chen chuckles, hanging up the phone afterwards and smiling to himself. At least he has Xiumin waiting for him. He couldn’t help but keep smiling at the thought of coming home to Xiumin, having a nice meal and watching a movie before calling in and spending the rest of the night sleeping with his arms around him. Plus, today he might get some good sex too.

He finally pulls up to his driver, excited to get some alone time with his husband, hopping off his car and making his way towards the front door.

‘Baby!’, Chen shouts as soon as he opens the door, ‘I’m home!’, before he closes the door, he sees a shadow looming behind him, smiling as Xiumin greets him in the hallway. ‘Hey baby, what are we having for-’, Jongdae stops midsentence as he turns around to see that it was not his husband standing in front of him and smiling down on him – it was Kai – the motherfucker.

‘Jesus Kai, what the hell are you doing in my house?’, Chen flinches as he takes a step back in shock at seeing him.
‘Xiumin invited me’

‘Did he now?’, Chen sighs the moment he hears that sentence, walking past Kai and into the kitchen to where Xiumin was, preparing their dinner.

‘Our house is not a hostel. We can’t keep inviting people over’

‘We only ever invite Chanyeol’, Xiumin defends himself when he sees his husband walking in, slightly annoyed at the fact that they can’t have dinner with just the two nowadays.

‘Plus Lay and Luhan’, Chen says again matter of factly, ‘Added on the fact that one time we had a day off and you invited Baekhyun instead of just spending the time with just me’

‘Are you saying you’re jealous of Baekhyun?’, Xiumin snorts, tasting the food he’s bought home with him before putting it in the microwave.

‘No, what I’m saying is that the group are not our kids that we need to take care every day’, Chen points out, getting freaked out when Kai teleported back into the kitchen, sitting down on his chair in the dining hall.

‘Don’t be a tight pussy and let me stay for dinner. I haven’t eaten anything but take away these days’, Kai points out, stretching his legs and making himself at home despite it being his first time in Xiumin and Chen’s house.

‘Why do you bother to teleport from the hallway to the kitchen when you can just walk?’, Chen asks once he sees Kai teleporting to the living room to look at the photos which are hung everywhere in their house, Chen following him.

‘I haven’t used my powers in years and I’ve been getting dusty at it. I need to start practising again’

Chen remembers the stigma celebrities have when they use their powers and he needs to remind himself that this dickface is, in fact, the Nation’s boyfriend.

‘Why are you using it now?’
‘To visit Kyungsoo’

‘Ah’, Chen nods, remembering when Xiumin told him about Kyungsoo giving Kai another chance. He, unlike his husband, was not comfortable with the fact that Kai was using Kyungsoo’s amnesia to real himself back into the police officer’s life, ‘What are you gonna do when Kyungsoo’s memories come back?’, he asks curiously, seeing Kai turn as he looks from one photo of Xiumin and him whilst they were on holiday and another photo which was taken from their wedding day.

‘He’s forgiven me, and he already knows since all of you have been telling him 24/7 that I broke it off with him, so it doesn’t really matter if his memories come back’, Kai shrugs, although that wasn’t entirely true. He was nervous for Kyungsoo to say the least. It’s been years and Kyungsoo and him haven’t talked about it whenever they met so he didn’t know if Kyungsoo ever felt guilty of breaking it off with him, but once Kyungsoo’s memories come back, he’s going to make sure that it was him being forgiven and that Kai still wants to be with him no matter what. He’s not going to lose Kyungsoo again, even if that meant losing his pride.

‘Was it worth it? Giving up Kyungsoo?’, Chen asks bluntly, which Kai didn’t mind since Chen has always been kind of blunt – the whole group is known to be harsh and blunt.

‘No. It wasn’t’, Kai replies honestly, one which Chen didn’t think he’d do.

‘Why? Don’t you love your fans?’

‘I do’, Kai turns around and teleports to the sofa, sitting down and looking down on his calloused hands, ‘It’s not them… It’s everything else. The restriction, the limitations… I wasn’t allowed to go anywhere, my friends were chosen for me, I barely got to see my family and I wasn’t allowed out of my hotel room after concerts, so I would be by myself most of the time. For someone who’s never experienced being caged, it feels like shit’

Chen can only imagine. Kai has never been one to feel restriction. He can teleport from one place to another when he needs to when he wants to. Hell, he even teleported straight into the fire when Chanyeol was in trouble. To suddenly tell someone like Kai that they weren’t allowed to go somewhere must’ve been more torturous than anything else. He felt pity for the celebrity.

‘You must’ve used it once though’, Chen asks, ‘Maybe once when your manager wasn’t looking?’
Kai thought about it, remembering all the years that he was all by himself, in dark hotel rooms and lit concert halls. He never once thought of breaking any rules set by the company. He wasn’t the same rulebreaker anymore, he didn’t want to sacrifice his career because he sacrificed everything else for it.

‘There was that one time’

‘See’

‘But it was only for two and a half seconds’

‘Two and a half? That seems too precise…’

‘I was in the middle of a concert’, Kai points out, ‘It was a set where there were a lot of lights flashing so I could afford to run away for only two and a half seconds’

‘And where did you go?’

‘To him’, Kai whispers, and that was all Chen needs to know. They both know exactly who he went to. For two and a half seconds, Kai left the roaring shouts of his fans, the adrenaline of the song and the melody of the music. He left the flashing lights, the loud fireworks to the silenced room of Kyungsoo’s apartment, seeing the boy sitting on the sofa and reading a book whilst he let the noise of the television drown his thoughts.

For two and a half seconds, he saw Kyungsoo. And it made his whole night.

It’s the next morning and Kyungsoo is sitting in the hospital bed after being asked the same questions. He still doesn’t remember the Kim Jongin everyone remembers. He remembers the celebrity greeting him the moment he woke up in the hospital and he feels himself falling for him a little every day and since Kai visits him almost all the time, Kyungsoo ended up falling head over heels for the singer. Suho is still iffy about the relationship, he keeps on reminding Kyungsoo exactly what Kai put him through in his old memories, but every time he is reminded, he just couldn’t place an emotion. He couldn’t place an emotion other than happy when he sees Kai. He knew it was stupid, to suddenly have feelings for someone he only knows for less than a month, but as the others have stated, they already had a history together.
He tries to remind himself of his high school days where Kai’s presence is more prominent but other than late night conversations with Suho and a few study sessions, he doesn’t remember Kai ever popping in. Even during community service, he is reminded of Chanyeol and Chen’s antics, Lay’s over-enthusiasm, Sehun’s shyness, Xiumin’s mysterious appearance, Baekhyun’s loud voice and his constant argument with Chanyeol but nothing in between those memories could he fit the boy with tanned skin and a precious smile.

‘Lay, how was Kai?’, he suddenly asks once Lay walks in the room to check his session, the doctor looking up from his paperwork and staring at Kyungsoo, seeing the way he dozed off into another daydream.

‘He just visited a few hours ago’

‘No, not now. I mean… Before… When we were young. How was he?’

‘Well, out of everyone, I’m not the one you should be asking since I only met you guys during Senior year’, Lay points out, chuckling as he scratches the back of his neck, something he does when he’s nervous and Kyungsoo couldn’t blame him. He’d heard Suho shouting at the doctor too many times to get the picture that he’s been warned by his best friend not to mention anything from the past that might cause him stress.

‘What was he like during Senior year then?’, Kyungsoo asks, the curiosity building up inside him since everyone seems to love playing the game of avoiding all of his questions regarding Kai.

‘A sly motherfucker’, Lay laughs, ‘I remember the first day I did community service with you guys and he was low-key already head over heels for you but he hasn’t even admitted that to himself yet and I think we were all too invested in Baekhyun and Chanyeol’s stupidity to even notice’, Kyungsoo chuckles because that part he remembers. The part where Baekhyun and Chanyeol would always start a fight with each other, he remembers that all too well.

‘Everyone always betted who was more whipped between the two of you and it had always divided the group, but I think it was him who liked you more’, Lay confesses, sitting down by the edge of Kyungsoo’s bed, looking to see his friend and feeling slightly guilty for opening up something he knows Kyungsoo wouldn’t want to talk about had he still had his memories.

‘It’s hard to believe that now’, Kyungsoo laughs, ‘I haven’t said this to anyone, but I think I like him more now’
Lay noticed the way even the smallest mention of Kai brings a smile on his face, the same exact smile he would see whenever they hanged out and Kai would intertwine their fingers together, the way Jongin would lean on Kyungsoo’s shoulder and close his eyes in comfort, the way Kyungsoo felt glad that Jongin felt secure around him.

‘He was so in love with you, you have no idea’, Lay whispers, standing up and ending the conversation before Kyungsoo can ask any more questions and land him into trouble with the Chief Police. A few questions and answers were exchanged about his daily counselling and it seems like Kyungsoo shows no signs of getting better. Lay didn’t know whether to feel worried or relieved, worried that Suho might end up suggesting for Kyungsoo to get an operation to gain his memories back but relieved that this might be the only way for Kai to knock back into Kyungsoo’s life.

He leaves the room and not a moment after, Kai appears right in front of Kyungsoo, smiling at him as he holds a bag, waving it in front of Kyungsoo.

‘Hey’, Kyungsoo smiles, laughing when Kai jumps onto his bed, hugging him as he sets the bag down, ‘What have you got in there?’, he asks, and Kai was too ecstatic to show Kyungsoo, his grin showing his teeth, his eyes folding into a crescent shape.

‘They’re a bunch of gifts I got from my fans. It’s really cute, they got me a small teddy bear’, he pulls out the first item and Kyungsoo couldn’t help but hold onto it, taking the small bear in his hands and reaching his hand out to place the stuffed toy right beside Kai’s face.

‘It looks just like you’, Kyungsoo points out, laughing when Kai tried to imitate the bear’s face, scrunching his nose and pouting his lips. He couldn’t help but giggle when Kai continues to make the same exaggerated faced, leaning his head in and resting it on Kai’s chest as the pair laugh together – not because of anything particularly funny – Kyungsoo was just ecstatic that he could be with Kai like this.

After spending their first few minutes laughing together, they found themselves sitting on Kyungsoo’s bed, their backs leaning on the wall as they stare out into the window, looking at the starless night skies, Jongin leaning his head on Kyungsoo’s shoulder, their hands intertwine with each other.

‘So, you never told me why your nickname is Kai’, Kyungsoo points out suddenly, Kai looking up at Kyungsoo, seeing his cute round eyes and his heart-shaped lips which looks bigger from this view. He remembered the sun hitting down on them as the pair sits on one of the ramps in the skatepark back when they were in high school. He remembered hanging with Kyungsoo during his
first day of suspension.

‘I wanted it to be my stage name when I became a big star one day, so I forced everyone at school to call me that all the time and it kinda just stuck’, Kai explains, laughing at himself now that he’s looking back at his old thoughts. He genuinely thought Kai would be an amazing stage name when he became the dancer that he’s always wanted to be.

‘But you don’t use Kai as a stage name. You’re Kim Jongin to everyone’, Kyungsoo noticed, remembering checking out Kai’s albums on Spotify, seeing his birth name pasted on every album cover.

‘Yeah, well, the name held too much memory for me to keep using’

‘What type of memories?’

‘Of you’

Kai’s whisper was followed by silence, Kyungsoo looking down on him and feeling something tug in his stomach. He stares at Kai’s face, not remembering him in his past, but why does he feel like this? Why does he feel like crying at the sight of Kai’s eyes which looks down? Why does he feel like his soul had just been sucked out of him? Why does he feel his heartache at the sight of him? Why does this stranger give him so many emotions?

Kyungsoo leans down, his hands breaking away from Kai’s hold as he rests it on the latter’s cheeks, leaning in to kiss him, softly and nervous at first, but in time, he deepens it, feeling Kai’s arms snaking its ways around his, their eyes closed, and their minds focused on the way they make each other feel.

Bliss.

They feel at bliss in each other’s company, Kai’s breath sending shivers down his spine as each second, they become closer with each other, loss of clothing, skin touching, lips cursing and the feeling that Kyungsoo felt, so familiar yet new at the same time.

They laid together that night, all their secrets laid out in the open, with Kyungsoo’s hands holding onto Kai’s hair, their lips never leaving each other’s. He feels like crying, he didn’t know why but
every time Kai looked at him, his loving eyes which makes his skin feel hot made him want to close his eyes as if he didn’t want to see it.

Why didn’t he want to see Kai? Why did he feel like a million pins were seeping through his skin whenever Kai touches him?

‘I don’t want to be with you anymore’, Kyungsoo’s statement causes silence to occur in the room, Kai’s hair messy from having been tugged by the frustrated boy once he found out that Kyungsoo was the one who went to the company, asking them to take him in.

‘What the fuck are you talking about?’, Kai shouts back after a minute of just the pair of them staring at each other, Kai feeling a flood of anger.

‘I can’t be with you when I know I’m the only thing that’s holding you back’

‘Kyungsoo, I don’t even want to be a singer’, Kai shouts back, ‘I’m fine with where I am. Once I graduate, I’m sure I’ll be able to pass some auditions’

‘But that’s not enough. I know you. You want something bigger than that’

‘I don’t want anything if it means I can’t be with you’

‘Kai... We promised each other’, Kyungsoo sighs, closing his eyes and clenching his hands, his nails digging into his skin to stop himself from quivering, ‘We would never stand against our dreams’

‘So, what? If I intervene with you and the law firm, you’d drop me within a second?’

‘Of course’.

Kai couldn’t help but feel like a ton of bricks had just been punched on his chest, looking at Kyungsoo’s expressionless face.
'I’ve wanted this all my life and I’ve worked hard for it. You’re not going to stand in the way of that'

'Are you fucking serious?'

'What? Do you want me to give up law just for you?'

'No, not in the slightest. I-'

'I’m not having you lose out in an opportunity of a lifetime. That’s not right of me'

'But I don’t want it. Not like this'

'How else are you going to have it? There are rules and regulations and it clearly says no dating’, Kyungsoo doesn’t shed a tear even though inside he’s dying, even though inside he wants to take back every single word he’s said. He doesn’t want Kai to look at him like that and the thought it was him who was making Kai feel this way made him want to rip his own pride and conscious out of his brain and run to Kai right now. But this isn’t right. He knew despite Kai’s nonchalant dismissal of the offer, he saw the way his excitement built up as soon as received the business card.

'Kyungsoo, come on. I can achieve my dream some other way’, Kai takes a step forward, but he takes a step back, closer to the door and away from the boy he loves. He can feel it, the welling of sadness which is threatening to escape his eyes and he knows he needs to leave because as soon as tears are added into the equation, Kai’s going to cave in and run to him and he’s not going to have enough strength to push him back.

'I’m gonna stay with Suho for a while’, he whispers, looking down on his feet. There’s a pregnant silence between them before he hears soft whimpering coming from Kai.

'Kyungsoo, please don’t fucking do it'

'Sign the contract Kai. Otherwise, you’ll regret it'
Those were the last words he ever told Kai because the next day, he had heard from Lay that Kai had immediately signed with the company and that he was set to move into his dorm a week from now. He showed no signs from moving out of Suho’s room, choosing to lock himself inside the dorm room as he listens to Suho talk to Sehun about this. He didn’t answer any of Suho’s questions the moment the news broke out that Kai had signed the deal since they knew that with the news comes with the notion of Kyungsoo and Kai’s relationship shifted in the grey area.

Kyungsoo’s silences caused a commotion, misunderstanding mostly from Suho’s part who concluded that Kai must’ve signed on the company and dropped Kyungsoo quicker than he can teleport. Kyungsoo didn’t mind Suho thinking that way since he knew Kai was going to tell everyone that it was him who suggested it.

The only problem is, he didn’t.

He left their apartment without arguing with anyone when they approached him which made everyone make their own conclusions that Kai did, in fact, leave Kyungsoo.

Kyungsoo didn’t want to carry the lie on, all those dinner and meetups when all they ever talk about is Kai. He wanted to tell him that it was all him, that he was the one who broke it off and he didn’t know why Kai didn’t tell them and allowed them to paint him into the villain of the story. But all he could ever muster to do is cry, cry into Suho’s arms and watch them comfort him without knowing that he wasn’t crying because he was sad, but because he was guilty.

Weeks turned into months which turned into years and Kyungsoo didn’t see the point of telling everyone the real story, not when every time he turns a corner, he sees Kai’s face in every billboard of every high street, his posters hung up around stores along with his songs playing wherever he goes.

Kyungsoo wakes up, his eyes blurry as the sunlight was too much for him. He’s been crying in his sleep, he feels his throat swollen, his eyes red and his cheeks weak with dried tears.

Luhan rests Jia on his lap after the baby starts to fall asleep, his under eyes darker than a panda as he filled the whole room in bubble wrap just in case Jia explodes. The baby has started a phase in using her most destructive power whenever it was time for her to go to bed and she still doesn’t want to.
He looks down on his watch and it reads 2.12am and he couldn’t help but feel his soul leave his body. He’s so fucking tired and he wished Lay didn’t have to work the night shift, so he can share the torture with his husband. Luhan is soft in his movements, slowly setting Jia down in her crib without waking her, sighing in relief when he sees Jia cuddling her blanket instead of crying when he feels go of her.

A knock on the front door made him almost have a panic attack as he looks down in Jia, but the baby is still asleep, so he uses this time to tiptoe out of her bubble wrapped room, walking down the stairs and opening the door to welcome Baekhyun smiling at him.

‘Oh, hey’, he smiles, not sure why one of Lay’s friends was suddenly visiting him at 2 o’clock in the fucking morning, ‘Lay’s not here’

‘I know, and I know this is a weird time, but can I come in?’, Baekhyun asks, almost pleads and Luhan, despite how tired he is, welcomes Baekhyun inside his home.

‘How can I help you?’

‘Lay says he has a cure for Chanyeol’, Baekhyun begins to ask, floods of questions which hasn’t stopped interrupting his thoughts since morning comes rushing out of his mouth. He couldn’t even sleep since he was too caught up on the rising questions he’s had until he’s had enough.

‘Lay told you?’, Luhan asks, yawning and walking into the kitchen, the lights automatically turning on, ‘Would you like some coffee?’

‘No thanks’, Baekhyun dismisses Luhan’s tired state, getting straight to the point, ‘When do you think Lay will find a cure’

‘This isn’t a cold Baekhyun’, Luhan sighs, ‘This disease is intense, and it might take years, maybe even his whole life for him to find the cure’

‘Doesn’t he have a team?’

‘Yes, he does, but there are only a handful of specialists in this field. No doctor wants to have more
patients die than live in their department, so no one chooses this job’, Luhan explains to Baekhyun, the latter feeling his breath hitch at the reality of the situation. Chanyeol’s disease is critical. He could lose Chanyeol at any moment in time yet here he was, wasting his time instead of being by the man’s side.

‘Is he going to die?’

‘Huh?’, Luhan asks, still too sleepy to be answering any of Baekhyun’s question, but he sees Baekhyun’s expression, the intense worry on the boy’s face made him pity him, ‘He’s not going to die. He would’ve died years ago if that was the case’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Chanyeol’s special. His power should’ve already killed him by know, but his flames seem to pick and choose whether to harm him or not. Sometimes his flames will burn his skin to the bone during a few fits but other time it’ll only give him burns that will self-heal in no less than an hour. He still feels pain but not as much and now there are other times where he doesn’t feel the flames and it doesn’t burn his skin when he explodes, he just explodes without no injuries’

‘What does that mean?’

‘It means there’s something in Chanyeol’s body that’s trying to stop the flames from harming him. We don’t know what it is yet, but if Lay takes some samples of his imperium hormones, maybe Chanyeol could be carrying something that could help form some kind of treatment’

‘Are you telling me they’re going to use Chanyeol as a guinea pig?!’, Baekhyun’s voice is raised at Luhan’s statement, the idea of people piercing and injecting into Chanyeol’s skin not sitting well with him since he knew that boy was afraid of needles.

‘There’s nothing we can do. Chanyeol agreed and Lay thinks he’s onto something’, Luhan tries his best to calm Baekhyun down, shushing him just in case Jia wakes up, ‘This is their only hope of finding a cure and the whole world is desperate’

Baekhyun stands still, his mind making up even more questions the more he thinks about it, but his curiosity is the least of his problems. What he needs is to be with Chanyeol now, before something happens and he’s ripped off of him again.
Kai smiles as he teleports in the hospital corridor, carrying another bag of takeaway. He’s just finished practice and he’s been excited to spend another night with Kyungsoo. He couldn’t help but feel giddy, especially after last night when he felt Kyungsoo around him once more, a feeling he thought he could never have again. He looks up to see Lay walking towards him, closing the door to Kyungsoo’s room and he smiles, walking his way over to him.

‘Hey’, he waves at the doctor, not noticing the deep concern that was plastered on Lay’s expression, ‘How was your day today?’

‘Kai…’, Lay whispers, seeing the man in front of him, in his casual clothing, his hair straight and down, covering his forehead, his skin makeup free. He sees the way the boy felt so calm and casual, with a smile casually hanging off his lips and he couldn’t help but feel guilty for urging the boy on, because now he’ll be the one to break the news.

‘I was just heading towards Kyungsoo’s room, but you know that right’, Kai winks at him, about to walk past Lay but the doctor reaches his hand out and pulls him back towards him.

‘I don’t think that’s a good idea’, Lay calls out to him. Kai tilts his head in confusion, the pair of them looking down on Lay’s strong grip on Kai’s hands.

‘Is Suho in there?’, Kai asks when he sees the panic in Lay’s eyes, misinterpreting it and looking back at the closed door with just as much worry since he was still on Suho’s bad side.

‘No, Suho’s not here’

‘Oh, so what’s going on?’

‘Kai… I think it’s best to stay away for a couple of days’

‘No, not when you sound like that. Did something happen?’, Kai asks, trying to tug his arm out of Lay’s hold, but he was too strong, and he kept him pinned, ‘Is he okay? Is he sick?’

‘His memories are back’
Kai looks up at Lay with wide eyes, his whole vision slightly blurring from the shortness of his breath.

‘He doesn’t want to see you right now’

‘No wait… That’s not fucking fair’

‘Kai!’, Lay couldn’t hold back Kai after the boy realised what just happened. Kai’s hands disappeared and Lay was left with nothing but the cold air in the hospital corridor.

‘Are you serious?’, is the first thing Kai says once he teleports inside Kyungsoo’s room, seeing the boy sitting down on his bed with his legs crossed, looking up from his phone, their eyes meeting each other.

‘Kai…’

‘You don’t want to see me? Really? Even after last night?’

‘Kai, I don’t want to-’

‘I don’t know why you’re so keen to avoid me’, Kai’s voice is rising, and he didn’t care if Lay could hear him, he didn’t care if Lay walks in on them right now, ‘Me wanting to be with you right now is enough for you to know that I’ve forgiven you. I’ve shed my pride for you, I should be the one telling you to leave me the fuck alone, yet here we are… What else do you want from me? Now that your memories are back, you should know that I still love you and that I’m willing to for-’

‘I don’t want your forgiveness’, Kyungsoo shouts back as soon as he hears Kai’s voice, the same angry tone he had when they had their last argument together. He couldn’t help but feel like ripping his skin off as he relives the painful memory, ‘I don’t want it’

‘What the hell is wrong with you? I know you obviously still have feelings for me, so I don’t know why the past is making you change your mind’
'There are just some things that you won’t love me for’, Kyungsoo whispers, ‘I’d rather you leave me now whilst you still think the world of me than to stay and see something else’

‘Kyungsoo what the fuck are you talking about? I lov-’

‘I said leave!’, Kyungsoo shouts, clenching his fist and breaking his phone in half. Kai freezes at this action, his eyes looking down on Kyungsoo’s bleeding hands, the glass stabbing into the palm of his hands, ‘I don’t want to see you’

And just like last time, Kai didn’t fight. He disappears into thin air, leaving Kyungsoo all alone in his room, dark red blood seeping out of his hands but he couldn’t care less, he was too busy closing his eyes and forcing himself not to cry.

He couldn’t believe he would be so selfish to let Kai back into his life again when all he’s ever done is hurt him. He couldn’t believe he gave himself the rights to miss him, to yearn for him, to fall in love with him again when he knows he has no rights to. He didn’t deserve Kai. This was his punishment.

‘What the fuck?’, Suho opens the door and rushes in Kyungsoo’s room after getting a phone call from Lay about Kyungsoo’s sudden change, ‘You’ve got your memories?’

Kyungsoo smiles when he sees his best friend looking frantic, still in his uniform. He nods, and he sees Suho sighing a deep breath of relief.

‘Thank god’, Suho approaches Kyungsoo, hugging him as he sits on his bed, ‘Did the counselling work this time?’

‘It wasn’t the counselling’

‘Oh, so did your memories just come back?’
‘No. I slept with Kai’

‘What?!’, Suho, out of everything, didn’t expect that answer, but now that he knows, he feels anger bubbling inside of him when he realises that Kai must’ve been sneaking off to visit Kyungsoo without his permission, ‘Darn him and his fucking powers’, Suho hisses, ‘Kai is such a selfish asshole and I’m going to punch him in the face when I see him’

‘Suho, don’t’, Kyungsoo feels pained when he sees Suho’s angry expression, reaching his hand out and stopping Suho from saying something else which might pain him.

‘No, this is exactly what I’ve warned him not to do, yet this fucker goes and does it. Just because he thinks he’s the most important person in the country doesn’t mean he should do whatever the fuck he wants. I mean, he walked away from you so why is he pushing himself back in–’

‘Suho can you fucking stop?’, Kyungsoo interrupts him, his best friend freezing the moment he sees Kyungsoo, his eyes drenched in tears and his hands shaking under the bed covers.

‘Kyungsoo, are you okay?’

‘I can’t take it anymore’, Kyungsoo says in between cries, his head hung low, ‘I can’t hold it in any more’

‘What? Hold what?’

‘You shouldn’t be angry with Kai. He doesn’t deserve all the shit you guys always give to him’, Kyungsoo tries to breathe, but with the crying and talking, it was hard not to catch a moment of silence.

‘Kyungsoo, what are you talking about–’

‘I was the one who did it! I broke off with him, not the other way around’, Kyungsoo confesses, feeling the weight that has pierced its way down to his soul being lifted as he finally said what he should’ve said all those years ago, ‘Kai didn’t want to sign with the company, I was the one who broke it off so he could do it’, Kyungsoo whispers, his voice barely audible, but Suho picked up everything he said. He didn’t say anything. At first, he thought Kyungsoo was bullshitting, but he knows his best friend. He knows when he’s lying and when he’s telling the truth and the way
Kyungsoo cried by himself made him feel like maybe Kyungsoo was telling the truth.

Kyungsoo continues to cry, all the guilt building up to him all at once, hitting him in the face every time he wakes up. Suho sees the way Kyungsoo collapse after the confessing that the person at fault was not Kai but him all along, but there was also one thing Kyungsoo felt guilt over, crying his eyes out as he begins to hate himself, hate himself even more as he couldn’t even confess the next part to Suho because he was too embarrassed, too ashamed to be the hypocrite that he swore he never would be.

2 years ago.

‘Kyungsoo’, he is greeted by his new colleagues, his steps are light and giddy as he wins his first case as a defence lawyer. It was a small case, but for a newbie like him, it was an achievement of his life. He felt soft knowing that his superior was looking optimistically at him. After the dreary process of exams, placements and kissing a lot of asses, Kyungsoo has finally found himself being hired by one of the best law firms in Seoul and be mentored by one of the best teams in the industry.

‘Mr Lee’, he bows to his superior, smiling when he feels the man’s hand patting his shoulder.

‘Good work on the drug case’, he smiles, patting Kyungsoo’s hair, ‘I’m glad you did well’

‘Same’, Kyungsoo couldn’t help but confess.

‘Yes, well I’m happier since I’ve been meaning to add you to the team on a case we’re currently doing’, he says and this tugs Kyungsoo’s attention, feeling this excitement the moment his mentor mentions him joining a big case, ‘I don’t really like making the newbies take part in a big case like this, but I’ve been observing you for a while Kyungsoo and I have enough confidence for you to be a good use to us’

‘Of course, sir. I try my absolute best’, Kyungsoo is already agreeing with him before he even knows about the case, bowing his head.
'I know you will. This case is important. We'll be taking down a whole company and if we win, this will be all over the news. Our firm will be at a more impressive standard'

'What company are we going against?'

'Well, it's an entertainment company. Majesty Entertainment, one of the biggest companies right now and if this case is true, we'll be revealing the company's involvement with the underground mafia that the government has been after for so many years now'

Kyungsoo freezes at the sound of the name. Majesty Entertainment? That was Kai's company. A case like this will crumble the company into pieces, he didn't think they'll ever recover from a scandal like this and if they win, what would happen. All of a sudden, the idea of joining the case doesn't sound appealing to him.

'So, are you in?', he hears his mentor asked him, the pair of them standing just outside his superior's office and Kyungsoo fakes a smile.

'I'll think about it', Kyungsoo says, 'I'll get back to you soon'

And he didn't. He refused to be part of the case which hollowed him down from the most to the least favourite in the firm. It didn't help when he became restless, listening in after the meeting, sneaking in to check up on the progress until he was sleepless, unfocused and unmotivated to worry about his own cases.

Kyungsoo's performances begin to fluctuate and the whole firm could sense it. His stuttering, his lack of research, his lateness, tiredness, lacking skills in presentation. Kyungsoo couldn't hold onto the fact that the moment this case is won, Kai will be the first to feel it since he's Majesty's leading artist at the moment.

He promised himself that he will never let anyone ruin his dream, his dream to be a lawyer, his dream that he's been working on for years. He had told Kai that he would leave him within a second if it means that his dreams will be achieved, yet here he is, losing himself as he looks onto the case and sees that his firm might be onto something.

Kyungsoo quits the next day after the evidence mysteriously disappears.
It wasn’t suspicious at all since Kyungsoo’s performance was the worse of the firm for two whole months in a row and the firm was strict on their quality, so everyone sensed Kyungsoo was going to be next on the chopping board, so they didn’t pin anything on him as soon as he sent his resignation letter.

Till this day, no one knows where the evidence had gone, but one thing was clear. They lost the case because of it.

Kyungsoo, the man who preached to everyone that he wouldn’t let anything stop him from achieving his dream has not only left his dream job after only six months but had done something that, if found, will lead him to go back in court, this time, to plead guilty.

Chapter End Notes

*sneaks in some angst and runs to the door immediately*

sorry for the bad timing, but the kaisoo angst was supposed to come right about now.
Kyungsoo, after gaining his memories back, was allowed to go back to work after a few running tests and Lay going over his vitals for the fifteenth time. It felt odd coming back to his old crummy apartment, cold and slightly dusted since Junmyeon was a shit housekeeper. Overall, he didn’t mind being back since he got his job to distract him from everything that’s happened within the past couple of weeks, instantly coming back brighter and more determined than ever.

Junmyeon is surprised by Kyungsoo’s sudden rush on anguish, walking into the police station with an arrest every hour, dragging criminals from petty muggers to vandalisers, sitting them down one by one until their cells are full by the end of the day. Junmyeon had never seen so many arrests made in less than 24 hours, and he also didn’t witness the interrogation desks being abused so much that they had to order for a new set of tables to come in the following week since the rest of been punched into two.

‘You alright?’, Junmyeon finally made the time to walk over the cafeteria where Kyungsoo was busy bandaging his splintered knuckles, handing the angry boy a cup of coffee and observing Kyungsoo. It had been a week since Kyungsoo had admitted to him about his past relationship with Jongin and he didn’t want to believe it at first, but the more Kyungsoo acted, the more he realised that maybe the idiot was telling the truth.

‘I’m fine’, Kyungsoo responds, not even bothering to look at his best friend as he downs his coffee in one go, ‘I need to go, I’m on duty’

‘Kyungsoo’, Junmyeon reaches his hand out to stop Kyungsoo before he leaves, ‘Can I talk to you for a minute?’

‘Is it work related’

‘Yeah’, Junmyeon says, which made Kyungsoo sit back down and face Junmyeon, waiting patiently as Junmyeon sighs and feels his warm coffee on his hands, ‘You said you were the one who broke up with Jongin.’

‘This isn’t about work’, Kyungsoo glares as soon as that name slips out of Junmyeon’s lips. He stands up, about to leave, but when he turns, he’s faced with a wall of water blocking him from walking away from Junmyeon, ‘Stop that Junmyeon’, he looks to warn his friend.

‘It’s boiling hot water Kyungsoo’, it was Junmyeon this time to give him the warning, both their eyes noticing the steam coming out from the wall of water, ‘I wouldn’t want to walk past that if I
were you?

‘What do you want from me?’

‘I need you to tell me why you let Jongin go and why you let everyone believe it was Jongin at fault’, Junmyeon asks, continuing to grow the wall of water when Kyungsoo tried to walk over it until they’re both hidden inside the four walls of boiling hot water, no chance of escape without receiving a burn, ‘You’re my best friend and that’s just something you would never think of doing to anyone, let alone Jongin, so why did you let everyone believe he was the one who broke off with you’

Junmyeon spots his colleagues walking in and staring at them in curiosity, not sure why Junmyeon was using his powers in the workplace, their eyes glued onto the pair of them.

‘I don’t know’, Kyungsoo sighs, finally turning to face Junmyeon, the latter seeing his glassy eyes, threatening to spill a tear, ‘I was so guilty for pushing him away and I didn’t think I deserved to be sad… And then I found out that Jongin didn’t tell you guys about the whole story and that he just left and I… I saw how angry you all were and I… I didn’t want you guys to be angry with me when you find out that it was me, I was already angry with myself and I didn’t need any of you guys to say anything else to me’

Junmyeon sighs, looking down on his coffee then back up at Kyungsoo. He keeps forgetting that under all that strength, Kyungsoo was just as fragile and insecure as they all were.

‘Kyungsoo, had you explained your side of the story, we would’ve understood. Because of you, we all thought Jongin’s left you and called him a dickhead. He didn’t deserve that, and you should’ve told us’

‘That’s why I tried to avoid him’, Kyungsoo explains, ‘I refused to talk to him because I know I don’t deserve it’, Kyungsoo closes his eyes and let a tear run down his cheeks, ‘I don’t deserve him’

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‘Kyungsoo and Kai broke up again’, Eun Bi whines as she sits on the end of Chanyeol’s bed after school, still in her uniform and looking out at the window, ‘I expected it since my brother can hold a grudge’, Eun Bi sighs, remembering the phone call her parents got about Kyungsoo gaining his memory back. She found out through Yixing that it strained his relationship with Kai, and they’d broken up again because of it. She wasn’t surprised since she expected it, but she wasn’t pleased either since she just started to warm up to Kai again, ‘Now who’s going to protect me at school?’

Chanyeol, who stopped paying attention to her, looks down on his phone to see the text Junmyeon had sent to everyone, explaining Kyungsoo’s outburst which led into their breakup. It was long and detailed like most of Junmyeon’s text, but it felt like Chanyeol was reading a script from a drama, his mouth hanging open and his eyes glued on his phone.

‘What are you looking at?’, Eun Bi asks, crawling closer to Chanyeol, peering over his shoulder to read what he was looking at.
‘Did you know about this?’, Chanyeol turns to ask Kyungsoo’s little sister after finishing reading the text, Eun Bi grabbing Chanyeol’s phone and skim reading everything, her eyes growing big as she reads the last few sentences.

‘Kyungsoo broke up with Jongin first?’, she shouts, looking up at Chanyeol then looking back down on the phone, ‘That’s not true… Kai broke up with him. I saw Kyungsoo, he was a crying mess… He… What?’, Eun Bi was speechless, to say the least, dropping the phone on the bed and standing up, walking around Chanyeol’s room and remembering all the times she had cursed Kai whenever he approached Kyungsoo or her. If what the text said was true, then she had no rights to be cold to him like that.

‘You didn’t know?’, Chanyeol asks, looking down on his phone and second thinking Junmyeon’s words, ‘It seems out of character for Kyungsoo to do something like that and to not even tell you or Junmyeon about it…’, Chanyeol didn’t want to believe the text but things have changed. This may not sound like something Kyungsoo would do, but him leaving Baekhyun without a warning wasn’t something he would do too.

‘Kai… Wanted to get back together with my brother after all he’s done?’, Eun Bi whispers to herself, feeling slightly guilty at treating him so bad. She also suddenly remembered the day Kyungsoo came back home, telling their parents that he had quit in the law firm and was thinking of applying to a Police Academy. She didn’t ask Kyungsoo why he had quit but during their late-night conversations, just two siblings sitting on the bedroom windowsill with a cup of hot chocolate, she had remembered Kyungsoo mentioning the law firm trying to take down Kai’s entertainment company and how badly it will affect him.

She didn’t think much of it, but over the few days, she realised that maybe the reason why he quit was to try avoiding being put in the team to take down the company. She remembers just how much he sacrificed for Jongin which fumed her anger even more to Kai but now her thoughts are all messed up.

‘I need to go see Kai’, she whispers, grabbing her school bag and bowing to Chanyeol before running out of the hospital and grabbing the next bus to Seoul’s Performance Art Studios.

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‘Dude, Kyungsoo was the one who broke up with you?’, Xiumin looks up from his phone to stare at Kai who was busy warming up. The dancer ignored him and looks at himself in front of the mirror, turning the stereo up and beginning to perform the final act’s choreography.

Xiumin wanted to leave Kai alone since it looks like a sore topic, especially since the whole group just found out that they’d broken up again. But his ass was curious, and he needed the full story now, so he stands up from the floor, walking over to the stereo and turning it off, stopping Kai mid-spin to which he turns to glare at Xiumin.

‘Do you mind?’

‘No, not really’, Xiumin folds his arms and stares at Kai, ‘Start explaining before you practice’

‘I don’t need to explain anything’
‘Kai, we thought for years that you were the one who broke it off with Kyungsoo. Why didn’t you stop us from thinking that? You made us hate you’

‘It was your fault for assuming’, Kai spits back, trying to push Xiumin so he can get to the stereo, but Xiumin pushes him back, squirming when he feels something cold on him, looking down on his sleeves to find ice wrapped around him from Xiumin’s force, ‘What the fuck is wrong with you?’

‘I’m trying to be nice and ask for the full story, but if you don’t want to give it to me then you don’t have to be bitch to me’, Xiumin growls, to which Kai whines, trying to shake the ice off him but it was wrapped tightly on his shirt.

‘Get this off me’, Kai looks up, Xiumin rolling his eyes and flicking his wrist so the ice turned into water, seeping through Jongin’s shirt and making him wet. Kai didn’t say anything to Xiumin, he just turned and took his shirt off, grabbing his bag which was in the corner of the room and grabbing another shirt he packed during practice.

‘Why did you let Kyungsoo let go of you?’, Xiumin asks again, this time his voice is soft as he looks ahead to see Kai stop midmotion, his back still facing him, but he can tell Kai was looking down, his shirt still in his hands.

‘He let me go first. He told me he would drop me if he had to choose between his work or me. He said he would easily let me go and I got mad. I felt like I wasn’t important enough for Kyungsoo and I…’

‘Then why did you make everyone think that it was you who broke it off?’

‘He needed you guys more than me…’

Xiumin curses underneath his breathe since Kai had a point. Their group had a habit of being outspoken assholes who would shout their opinions over the other and that could seriously hurt someone’s feelings. It made sense for Kai to be worried that someone like Baekhyun or even Junmyeon might judge Kyungsoo to the point where he felt uncomfortable.

‘You don’t have to keep protecting Kyungsoo. You’re only hurting yourself when you do’, Xiumin sighs, walking over to be closer to Kai, bending to his knees and resting a hand on Kai’s shoulder, ‘I’m sorry for being a dick to you by the way’

‘It’s okay’, Kai whispers, finally putting on a shirt, ‘I kinda deserved it’

‘You didn’t!’., they hear a foreign voice interrupting them, their heads turning to see the door opening and Eun Bi standing, her bag slipping off her shoulder and landing on the floor, her face red and flushed as if she just ran here.

‘Eun Bi?’, Xiumin stands up, ‘What are you doing here?’

‘I have something you tell Kai…’
Yixing left Chanyeol alone after the latter requested to have some alone time for the evening. It worried the doctor that Chanyeol had gone mute and he wondered if Baekhyun was going to be visiting him soon since Chanyeol really needed something to bring him back from the darkness that was slowly suffocating him. He called Luhan to check up on Jia and he wished he was with his family now, but he needed to be with Chanyeol since no one else will. Kyungsoo had also just recently left the hospital so Chanyeol doesn’t have him to visit anymore either.

‘Jia’s doing well. She stopped breathing fire but she’s still liquifying stuff’, Luhan comments, making Yixing laugh and his heart hurts, even more, when he hears his husband’s chuckle over the phone. He wishes he could come home and spend more time with Luhan.

Before he can continue pitying himself, he hears a knock on the door. Lay looks up, smiling when he sees Baekhyun opening his door, greeting him for the first time in weeks.

‘Baekhyun, I’m so glad to see you’, Lay stands up from his desk and hugs him, ‘I didn’t think I’ll be seeing you any time soon’

‘Yeah… I was busy’, Baekhyun mumbles an excuse despite everyone knowing why he hasn’t shown up. They couldn’t blame Baekhyun from wanting space from Chanyeol. The news of Chanyeol’s illness is a shock and something that needs more time to think about.

‘What can I do for you’

‘I was wondering if I’m allowed to visit Chanyeol today… I know it’s late and visiting hours are over, but-’

‘Don’t worry about it!’, Lay brightens up at Baekhyun’s question, smiling as he realises that Chanyeol as someone to spend the night with so he can go home and spend time with his own husband and baby. He grabs Baekhyun’s wrist and without another second wasted, Lay was already dragging Baekhyun down the corridor and towards Chanyeol’s room, ‘I needed someone take care of him tonight anyway’, Lay calls out, his voice excited and loud in contrast to the quiet and dark hospital corridor.

‘I can stay the night?’, Baekhyun asks curiously to which Lay nods in approval, giving Baekhyun permission despite the fact that it was against the rules not to let visitors stay over, but the board members don’t usually tell him off when it comes to that since his department is always dealing with the worst case scenario, the least they could do is allow the patients to be with their family.

Lay was all too welcoming at family members keeping the patients’ company, especially when the statistics of his patients being more likely to have depression has risen within the last five years due to the hopeless attitude the society has over the illness. Baekhyun, still a little awkward in his place, holding onto nothing but his last remaining pride which had been telling him not to come, telling him that Chanyeol’s illness makes no difference, that he was still abandoned at the end of the wedding reception right after he had coloured him all those promises of forever the night before. Baekhyun hasn’t forgotten all of those memories and it still pains him till this day, despite his cold façade and anger towards Chanyeol. Take that all away and he was still the same hurt Baekhyun he was all those years ago.

But he followed Lay towards Chanyeol’s room, the hospital dim and gloomy, almost look like it was from a horror movie. Chanyeol probably hates this setting since he can’t stand scary movies. Baekhyun can only wonder how Chanyeol can sleep all by himself.
‘How has he been?’

‘Chanyeol?’, Lay turns to face Baekhyun, a clipboard resting on his arm, ‘He’s doing okay’, he assures him, although, to him, he’s anything but, refusing to eat, barely talking and having numerous episodes at a time due to the stress and lack of food. Maybe, in a sense, he had hoped Baekhyun would be his cure. At least in calming him down.

The finally arrive at Chanyeol’s door and Lay knocks on it three times before he enters, at least giving Chanyeol that he was entering.

Baekhyun rests his eyes on the bed, seeing Chanyeol curled up in a foetal position, the soft whining of his voice breaking him when he finds that Chanyeol had been in pain.

‘Chanyeol, are you okay?’, Lay, who also noticed the discomfort in Chanyeol’s body language, runs up to him, checking his surrounding to see if there’s been anything burnt, then checking his patient’s skin for cuts and burns, sighing in relief when he hasn’t found any.

‘I feel like shit’, Chanyeol mumbles, closing his eyes and shivering. Lay took it in his instinct to check Chanyeol’s temperature.

‘You have the flu’, Lay records, adding it in his paper on Chanyeol, the clipboard still resting on his arm, ‘Which is nothing to be worried about’, he continues to comfort the aching boy, ‘Your immune system isn’t performing normally due to the increase of episodes, but I’m sure it’ll go down once you do your regular exercising’

Baekhyun listens in the background. He still hasn’t entered the room and Chanyeol had his eyes closed, not noticing him standing by the door.

‘God, why did I agree to be a rat experiment’, Chanyeol whines when he feels Lay’s cold hands trying to straighten his body, whining since his muscles ache from the previous episode not long ago.

‘Because you wanted to come back to Baekhyun’, Lay whispers, but he was hoping Baekhyun would hear. The boy needed a catalyst to step forward.

‘And, where is he? Clearly not here, so I don’t know why I bothered’, Chanyeol’s voice is hoarse, as if he hadn’t had a sip of water in days, his skin pale, even more so when the moonlight touches it from the window. He didn’t look like Chanyeol and it pained Baekhyun to have to watch, ‘I knew he wasn’t going to love me again, so why do I even bother?’

‘I’m here’, Baekhyun whispers, softly that no one can hear him, but they didn’t need to, his lights spoke for him. Chanyeol flutters his eyes open when he sees a small wave of yellow streak pass him, hugging him close. His eyes widen when he sees the different colours fluttering near him, almost as if wishing they can touch him, comfort him, splurges of green and red, a mixture of different hues of blue, all wavering around him, giving him warmth and dragging him out of the darkness.

Lay looks around the room, in wonder to see the darkness disappear with the appearance of a polar light, sparkling around the room. He can see Baekhyun’s shadow on the ground and he looks up to see that the boy was still standing behind the door, hesitant and slightly scared.

‘Baekhyun…’, he calls out his friend’s name, which triggered Chanyeol to finally look up, his hazy vision falling on the figure in front. He didn’t have his glasses on so he could barely see Baekhyun’s face since he was too far away, a figure with a blurred face. Lay steps aside a bit,
urging Baekhyun to come forward to maybe try again, to come to Chanyeol one last time.

‘Baekhyun?’, Chanyeol’s voice calls out to him.

‘Yeah’

‘Baekhyun…’

‘Chanyeol’

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‘You need a new secretary’, Chen rolls his eyes when he hears one of his employees pointing it out to him for the umpteenth time during the meeting.

‘Yes, I know. I’ve opened applications for that’, Chen calls back one again, trying to ignore them, his concentration on his computer.

‘I was wondering, Minhyuk made a propositions’

‘I’m not hearing it’, Chen cuts him off before he goes off and ass licks Minhyuk again. Over the few months, since Minhyuk had decided to barge himself in his company, calling in meetings and making offers whilst sweet-talking his employees, Chen had been too busy with other matters in his life to notice just how successful Minhyuk has been in infiltrating his company. Every meeting, by the end of it, the mention of his name would pop up and he had no choice but to keep turning down his employee’s hopes in working with him over and over again, making him one of the most unpopular people in the building.

‘Chennie, Chen, Chen, Chen!’

*Speak of the fucking devil.*

Chen clenches his knuckles to stop his hands from creating sparks, faking a smile as he looks up to see Minhyuk barging himself into his office without even knocking, an arrogant smirk hanging off his face as he approaches him.

‘What do you want?’, Chen stops smiling once his staff exits his office – not before bowing and smiling to Minhyuk, he noticed – glaring at his cousin, wanting to punch him when he sees him lounging on the chair in front of him, stretching his legs and lifting it up to rest on his desk.

‘I just wanted to see how my dear cousin is doing’, he points out, looking around his humble office. It was chic and minimal, something that Chen would have, along with glass walls so his staff can see what he was doing, because that’s the type of boss Chen is, clean cut, minimal and open.

‘Well, I’m doing fine. Now, can you leave me and my company alone?’

‘Ah? Is that jealousy I’m hinting?’, Minhyuk decides to poke him, smiling when Chen rolls his eyes, clearly agitated that he’s still around, ‘Why should you be jealous? Is it because I get along better with them? Well… That only shows the difference between us, starting with competence’

‘I’m competence’, Chen stops typing, glaring at Minhyuk as his cousin continues to have that nasty
smirk on his face that he deeply wants to punch off, ‘And unlike you, I’m not a snake. I do what I can to make my employees happy without using them’

‘Since when do I use my employees? I am just as competent as you… In fact, I think I’m more competent since my company’s rates of deliverance have increased over the next month’

‘Good for you. Why don’t you go to celebrate elsewhere? Because I clearly don’t give a fuck what you or your company is up to’.

Minhyuk and Jongdae’s rivalry didn’t seem to end in just business and the former knows it. He forms his ever so arrogant smirk back on his face and he continues to lean his feet on Jongdae’s desk, his hand adjusting his tie which was pressed along with his entire suit.

‘How’s Xiumin?’, Jongdae continues to glare at him, his fingertips infusing sparks at the sound of his husband’s name rolling off Minhyuk’s tongue.

‘None of your goddamn business’

‘You really do have a thing for taking my stuff’, Minhyuk sighs, looking up at the ceiling and observing the office again, ‘I would’ve painted the ceilings black if this was my office’

‘It’s not. So, if you so kindly please fuck off’

‘Keep up cousin’, Minhyuk laughs, succeeding in pushing Jongdae’s buttons and feeling a sense of victory at seeing the keyboard slowly melt and malfunction due to Jongdae’s heated hands. It won’t be long until something in this office explodes, either the keyboard or Jongdae, he didn’t mind, ‘I’m only here to take back what’s mine’

‘The company was never yours’

‘You think I’m only coming back for the company?’

‘Xiumin doesn’t love you’

‘I’m not after him either’, Minhyuk finally stands, straightening his suit and looking down on Jongdae, ‘Although I still hate you for stealing my first love from me’, his smirk is gone, but what was left wasn’t all that pretty either, his face grimacing at Jongdae, his eyes full of frustration, one which Jongdae knows too well, ‘But, I guess you’ll always have to live at the fact that your own husband loved me first’

‘If you don’t get out of my fucking office, I’m not afraid to use my powers on you’

‘In front of all your staff? Oh my… It looks like my cousin is being unprofessional’, Minhyuk puts on a fake concerning voice, condescending in his tone, almost like he was talking to a child, ‘I wonder what the rest of your team will think once they see you electrocuting your family’

‘You’re doing a pretty good job of making that situation a reality’

‘Good. Because I’d love to see it’, he gives Jongdae one last thing to hate him for, winking at him before walking out of the office, sauntering off, his own staff bowing to him in a pleasant manner, smiles on their faces.

He wished every day that maybe they’d grow out of their stupid rivalry towards one another, but he knew now that it wasn’t going to happen. Not when Minhyuk is after the company.
'You okay?', Baekhyun asks, stroking Chanyeol’s bangs off his forehead, wiping off the sweat which had cascaded down his face due to his temperature rising.

‘I’m fine’, the latter answers, although his croaking voice didn’t seem to help persuade Baekhyun. Chanyeol seems to notice Baekhyun’s skin gleaming in worry, a darker shade of blue which upsets him since that colour once shows when Baekhyun is really upset, ‘I’m sorry’

‘What are you sorry for?’

‘For making you look like a smurf’

Baekhyun looks down, looking on his arm and chuckling when he sees the blue gleaming underneath his skin. Chanyeol couldn’t help but laugh when Baekhyun’s face gleamed a bright yellow, a colour he often loved making Baekhyun make since it showed that he was happy, even for a slight moment.

‘Well, at least you didn’t throw up on me’, Baekhyun comments and despite Chanyeol’s slight pain on his sides, he gave out a hearty laugh followed by a cough. Baekhyun didn’t want to let it get to him but seeing Chanyeol in pain was something he didn’t think he can stomach for very long.

‘Have you been this way all this time?’

‘No, it only comes in floods’, Chanyeol sugar-coats, ‘It usually gets better over time’

‘But it comes back’

‘Well, yeah, because there’s no cure yet… But Lay’s working on it. We know if anyone can find a cure, it would be him’

‘True’, Baekhyun sighs, wiping Chanyeol’s forehead with a damp cloth. Chanyeol had always wished for Baekhyun to be by his side, and these past few days without him has been a painful one, always looking at the door, expecting Baekhyun to open it and walk in, but now that he’s here. He didn’t want it anymore.

He didn’t want Baekhyun to see him in this state, nor did he want to see his saddening expression and his skin which was slowing glowing blue again. He’d rather be alone than seeing all of this. Now he remembered why he left Baekhyun and everyone else all those years ago. He didn’t want to see any of them looking down on him with pity, to take care of him like he was a fragile vase, vulnerable to breaking into pieces with one slight push.

‘Baekhyun, do you mind getting me something to eat from the vending machine. I’ve been eating disgusting hospital food for a week now’

‘Of course’, Baekhyun gets up, almost too instantly, dropping the towel on the bed, ‘I’ll be right back’

Chanyeol begged for Baekhyun to stay but now all he wants to do is for him to leave. Maybe if he heals quicker or if Lay finds a cure soon, then maybe he wouldn’t mind Baekhyun sticking around. But then, he knew he’ll go back to being depressed if Baekhyun stops visiting him. In fact, he was
eled the moment he saw Baekhyun standing at his door, like seeing the light at the end of his excruciating tunnel. Can he be selfish like this? Is that allowed?

He feels his phone vibrating on his bed, and he goes to check it, quickly distracting himself to find his sister has messaged him with another photo of her family enjoying a meal out, her smile so big, along with her husband and kids, their eyes shining brightly as they smile to the camera. His sister loved updating him from time to time, making sure that they kept in touch since Chanyeol had a bad habit of not replying to his messages regularly. Chanyeol couldn’t help but break out into a smile looking down at the photo. He misses his niece and nephew, he wishes he could go see them, but he limits himself from seeing them once a few months due to his condition, especially when it was at its worse all those years ago.

A chance of having a kid is less likely for him. The doctors have spoken to him about it when he was talking about his dreams. They turned it down pretty obviously since he wasn’t fit enough to take care of himself, let alone a child, added onto the fact that he could explode any minute.

‘Chanyeol?’, he hears the door opening and Baekhyun walking back in with a bar of chocolate in his hands. There was a moment of silence and Chanyeol didn’t know why they weren’t talking. It seems like all the hiding and burying stops and they’re looking at each other as if they were still high school kids sneaking in each other’s room.

‘I’m sorry’, Chanyeol says after the silence is finished, ‘I didn’t get to say it, but I’m sorry’

‘If you’re sorry, then don’t die’, Baekhyun calls out, still standing by the door, his hand gripping tightly on the chocolate bar.

‘I’ll try’, Chanyeol chuckles, ‘But then again, I died twice already, the grim reaper probably has his own vendetta against me’
'How does it feel to win album of the year?'

'I worked a little bit more in the writing process for this album, so I’m very pleased that people liked my songs and I’m glad there’s been a good reception for it'

'So, you said that you’ve participated in the writing process of this album, how did that make this album different from your other album?'

'I put a bit of myself in it I guess. My fans and everyone who listens to this album can hear my thoughts and my feelings more now that it’s coming straight from me. I’m not pretentious enough to say every artist should write their own songs, because some of us aren’t necessarily songwriters, some of us are just storytellers which I think is just as important, to be given someone else’s story and to interpret and perform it to a crowd takes just as much talent as writing a song, but with that being said, I wanted to see if I was good enough to be a songwriter and to push myself into doing something new'

'You seem to like stepping out of your comfort zone. It says here that you used to be a dancer and you tried being a singer when your company approached you'

'Yeah, I was never much of a singer, to begin with, and dancing will always come first for me, my passion is through dance, but at this point in my career, singing has become part of me and I want to keep improving'

'Did you have any support from anyone when you were shifting from dance to singing?'

'My dance instructor was actually very supportive and was the one who persuaded me to pursue being a singer. Also, my family was just as supportive and came to my debut showcase. They’ve been my pillars'
Now, you said you’ve written quite a few songs in this album. Which song do you hold dear in your heart?

‘Dear to my heart? Hmm, there’s this song called Wait that I find special’

‘Can you elaborate why?’

‘Well it’s actually a song I wrote quite some time ago, but I only managed to finish it recently’

‘And what does the song means for you?’

‘Just like what it does in the title. The feeling of always waiting, even after all these years, just thinking about the old memories and being brought back to a time you miss. Now all I do is wait for the same feelings I felt back then to come to me now’

You got so cold easily,

Telling me you were used to catching colds,

But I hope this winter will be kind to you,

You know that’s one of my wishes, baby.

Kyungsoo sits down on the staff canteen, looking down on his phone and getting a message that Suho will be late for at least five minutes. He sighs and takes a bite from his meal. Suho knows how much he hates tardiness but he has no choice but to wait for him since he’s needed for this interrogation.

Suho was hesitant when it comes to bringing Kyungsoo back into their gang case, especially when a gang out there knows his face. He faces more danger than anyone else now that his identity is exposed. But with slow persuasion, Kyungsoo manages to get Junmyeon to change his mind and let him back into the case.
Everyone chose to leave Kyungsoo alone, he was already scary back then but now, fuelled with vengeance to try and get the motherfucker who stabbed him to jail, they didn’t feel like Kyungsoo was the type to have a friendly conversation. He didn’t mind it, he’s had a lot on his mind lately to be talking to anyone, chewing his food and daydreaming, he wonders about his time in the hospital with Kai. He remembers the silent nights but also the meaningless talks, just days full of conversations that had no importance to him but it made him laugh, Jongin tend to have that kind of effect on him. Even after all these years Jongin still has that effect on him.

‘What are you daydreaming about?’, a voice breaks him out of his daydream and brings him back to reality, his eyes focusing on the man who had made himself at home in front of him, sitting down with his suit fitted perfectly on him, his hair gelled back and his briefcase placed lightly by the side of his feet.

‘What are you doing here Sehun?’, Kyungsoo asks, watching as the young lawyer reaches out and steals some of Kyungsoo’s food. He stretches his arm and hits Sehun on the head when he tries to steal more food from him.

‘Ow’, Sehun pouts, glaring at Kyungsoo but still chewing on Kyungsoo’s fries, ‘I just finished questioning my client. She’s all yours’

‘Are you taking one of our cases again?’, Kyungsoo whines, ‘I thought you said you’ll lay off for a while’

‘Things are getting tensed in the office’, Sehun explains, leaning his arm on the table and looking around the canteen, ‘People are accusing the firm of defending the rich to try and stay privilege so they’re making me do pro bono’, Kyungsoo doesn’t really have a choice but to take Sehun’s words on board. He used to work for the same law firm and they were of high quality and either only the privilege or the smartest lands a spot in the law firm, it’s not far fetched for them to be accused of such thing.

‘Don’t try and plead not guilty. She was part of the gang and will definitely receive punishment’, Kyungsoo points an accusing finger at Sehun, ‘I am not having you let my criminals run free again’

‘Don’t worry, she’s already pleaded guilty to a few crimes so all I need to do is lessen her prison time’, Sehun shrugs nonchalantly, not really giving that much of a care for his client. Kyungsoo noticed Sehun’s emotions vary from client to client. The motherfucker can be empathetic to someone who has been unjustly persecuted but can be passive to someone he knows has down wrong but still needs to defend.
‘We need her’, Kyungsoo says out loud at Sehun, something he probably shouldn’t confess to a lawyer, ‘She may have internal knowledge about the gang who…’

‘Stabbed you?’, Sehun finishes the sentence and Kyungsoo nods, letting him know that Kyungsoo is not fucking around. He needed her and he’s making sure that Sehun knows.

‘I’m not one to intervene on a case that’s not mine, so do whatever you want’, Sehun ends their conversation there, looking down on his watch, ‘Isn’t Suho supposed to be with you?’

‘Babe, what are you doing here?’

‘Speak of the devil and he will come’, Kyungsoo raises his eyebrows when Suho finally arrives after being ten minutes late, ‘What took you so long?’

‘I woke up late’, Suho comments, sitting down next to Sehun and grabbing one of Kyungsoo’s fries, ‘I had to drive here’

‘Not if you moved in with me’, Sehun subtly whispers but both Kyungsoo and Suho hears it and Kyungsoo couldn’t help but chuckle underneath his breath. He’d been made aware of Sehun’s advances in trying to get Suho to move back in with him due to a series of complaints coming from Suho himself whenever he walks into the station every morning.

‘Just move in. Your apartment is a stench anyway’, Kyungsoo adds in, standing up and finishing his meal so they can get started with the interrogation. Suho ignores Kyungsoo but Sehun made a look, pointing at Kyungsoo and making wide-eyed expression at Suho to try and take a hint.

‘I said I’ll think about it babe’, Suho says again, giving his boyfriend a kiss before separating from him, Kyungsoo making a fake gagging sound as he turns to look at them.

Kai and Xiumin rest on the edge of the stage, their legs hanging on the edge as Kai takes his second bottle of water, downing it in one go after having intense rehearsals. The performance date has been confirmed along with the cast so everyone was slowly feeling the pressure.
'So…', Xiumin tries to make conversation, but with the play giving him too much work and late night meetings, he never fully got the chance to approach Kai till now, ‘About what Eun Bi said…’

‘I don’t want to talk about it’, Kai ends it before Xiumin can even start to ask him. A few weeks ago, Eun Bi interrupted their dance practise to drop the bombshell, the reason why Kyungsoo had a sudden career change when all he ever wanted was to be a lawyer in the best law firm in Korea. Kai didn't believe her at first, Kyungsoo was willing to break up with him so he can pursue his dreams, it sounds too stupid to believe that he will quit just for him.

But with Xiumin’s help, they managed to find out which case Kyungsoo’s team had when he was still working as a lawyer.

It added everything together perfectly and Kai couldn’t help but feel angry fucking frustrated over what Kyungsoo had done for him, something he didn’t want the latter to do nor did he think he was capable of doing.

‘I think you should speak to Kyungsoo… he-’

‘I’m not speaking to a hypocrite’, Kai stands up, stretching his arms and trying to leave Xiumin behind and back to his other cast mates who were still eating their lunch. Xiumin could try and chase after Kai, but he knew once the dancer was mad, he wasn’t going to let anyone try to talk him into changing his emotions. Kai had always been driven by emotions and Xiumin just had to wait until he wears himself out.

‘God’, he hears himself whispering, ‘Kyungsoo has a lot of shit he needs to talk about’, he wondered whether he should talk to Suho about it since he’s the closest with Kyungsoo but life keeps on happening and he just couldn’t find the time in his schedule to make a quick detour to Suho’s place to talk it out to him, this isn’t high school anymore.

He just had to watch Kai as he drones on and uses his concentration to focus on the choreography.

Kai, on the other hand, has nothing to say to Kyungsoo. He couldn’t believe that after all the speeches of them prioritising their dreams over each other, Kyungsoo was quick to throw away his dream for him yet he pushed Kai to choose his job over him. He had no rights to risk his job when he was the one who wanted them to separate because of it. He wouldn’t have signed to the company if this is what Kyungsoo would’ve done anyway.
Fuck Kyungsoo. There’s nothing more he hates than hypocrites. And Kyungsoo was the biggest one of them all.

‘That’s so fucked up’, Baekhyun’s mouth is hanging open when he hears Chanyeol telling him what Eun Bi had told the latter about Kyungsoo, being more surprised about how many things Kyungsoo had been hiding from everyone.

It’s become a weekly habit of Baekhyun to walk the opposite direction of his house from school, driving to the hospital and being greeted by the nurses and doctors who were slowly starting to get used to him. He would have his usual conversation with Lay, allowing him to break down Chanyeol’s improvements and setbacks. For the first few times, he couldn’t help but close his eyes and clench his teeth at the update of Chanyeol’s recurring pain and episodes, it made his chest tighten and throat collapse and it surprised Lay that the usual hard-shelled Baekhyun was breaking down right in front of him, clutching at his collar as small whimpers came crashing in the cracks of his lips, crying out Chanyeol’s name in pity and pain.

Now Baekhyun is nonchalant about it, nodding his head at the small improvements and minor episodes. He sits on the end of Chanyeol’s bed, seeing the man slowly getting better, his arms clear of scars and bandages due to the help of Lay. Now all they do is talk. Talk about anything and everything, how his day was at work, the pesky little kids who annoy him, their favourite TV shows, what Chanyeol did in Fiji, Chanyeol’s sister and her family.

They talk.

‘I didn’t expect that from Kyungsoo’

‘It would explain a lot. Kai was head over fucking heels to let Kyungsoo go for a shit job’

‘But it didn’t explain how Kyungsoo can just give up his job like that’, Baekhyun whispers, fiddling with the thin bed sheets which covered Chanyeol’s lower half, the pair of them looking out of the small window, watching the blue cloudless skies, the birds chirping as the evening slowly draws to a close.
'If the company was truly working with the mafia and he tampered with the evidence… He might’ve left a bunch of perpetrators run free’, Baekhyun whispers, ‘Kyungsoo must’ve gone to the Police Academy thinking that. It’s probably why the fucker became a police officer. He’s been desperate to catch anyone even associated with the mafia’, Baekhyun bites the inside of his cheeks, not truly believing what had been told to him, but it fits perfectly to everything that he had ever questioned so he didn’t know what to think anymore.

‘When Suho finds out, he’ll have to make a decision’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Like you said. Kyungsoo tampered with evidence. He’s the Chief Police of Seoul, does he really want a member who tampered with evidence for the mafia to be in his team? Think what will happen if the whole police department finds out’

‘Shit’, Baekhyun hisses the moment he realises what Chanyeol was afraid of too, biting his lip due to the growing stress over their friend who is already going through a lot due to his accident and with Kai.

‘Hey babe’, Chen kisses Xiumin on the cheek when he sees his husband approaching the kitchen. Chen had finished work earlier, so he thought he should be the one to get started with dinner first, cutting up the vegetables, his sleeves rolled up, ‘How was work?’

‘Good. We only have two weeks left and our grand premiere will be happening. Everything’s going according to plan so I’m actually pretty excited’

‘That’s a wonderful baby’, Chen smiles, wiping his hands with a towel before wrapping his arms around Chen’s waist, stealing kisses now that Xiumin had taken off his coat and bag. It earned him a few chuckles from his husband when he would playfully leave trails of soft pecks on his cheeks, travelling down his neck.

‘Babe stop it. You need to finish cutting the onions’, Xiumin breathes out in between laughs, pushing Chen away and laughing when he sees his husband put his lower lip. But Chen compiles to his order and turns back to the kitchen counter, picking up his knife and carrying on where he left off.
‘How’s Kai by the way? Is he good?’

‘No’, Xiumin sighs, sitting down on the kitchen island and grabbing himself an orange, ‘He refuses to talk about it’

‘I can only imagine how pissed he is. I mean, I would be’

‘So would I… But I can see why Kyungsoo did it’

‘You do?’

‘You guys always say that Kai was the one who’s head over heels for Kyungsoo, but it’s always been the other way around. Kai might’ve fallen for Kyungsoo first, but fuck Kyungsoo was the one who would do anything for Kai’, Xiumin explains, ‘I kinda expected this from Kyungsoo’

‘It’s a bit hypocritical of him though. He pushed Kai away so he can achieve his dreams only for him to quit working for a firm he’s been dying to work for since we were in high school’, Chen points out to which Xiumin agrees, nodding his head and peeling his orange, taking a bite and breathing out another sigh.

‘Kai’s mad. And like really really mad… I don’t know if he wants to see Kyungsoo ever again’

‘We’ll just see who approaches the other first’, Chen says, finishing cutting the onions so he can add it to his stew. There’s a moment of peaceful silence between them as Xiumin watches his husband prepares dinner, smiling at the smell of garlic and onion.

Just when they’re about to have a moment of silence, they see an object passing through their wall and Xiumin stands up in fear, shouting as he points at the floating thing which once again goes through furniture, defying all types of physics.

‘What the fuck?!’, Chen screams, dropping his spoon on the ground and running over to Xiumin, hiding behind his husband, ‘What the fuck is that?!’
Both their eyes are transfixed on the thing floating around the air and it makes a turn and emits some kind of creepy baby laugh as soon as they make eye contact with it.

‘Jia?!’

Before they can confirm what they can see, they hear their doorbell ringing and the pair instantly runs to the front door, opening it to see Luhan and Lay with bruises and scratches.

‘Please tell me Jia floated into your house’, Luhan asks, his dark circles making him look like a panda, Lay, who’s still had a stethoscope hanging from his neck looks at them worriedly.

‘Yes, your floating baby is in our kitchen right now scaring the shit out of us’, Chen announces, widening the door open so that Jia’s laughs can be heard by her worried and tired as fuck looking parents.

‘Oh thank god’, both Lay and Luhan sigh, walking into their house without being invited in, calling Jia’s name.

‘Please for the love of God, tell me you don’t want kids’, Chen whispers to Xiumin after closing the door and turning around to see Lay giving Luhan a piggyback whilst they try to reach up for their floating baby who was too busy laughing and having the time of her life to notice her parents.

‘Nope, I think we should pass’, Xiumin whispers back, the two of them strolling back into the kitchen and resuming their activity with Xiumin finishing off his orange and Chen getting another spoon to taste his stew whilst Luhan and Lay were still playing catch the baby in their living room.

Eun Bi stays in the hospital. She’s made it her habit to visit Chanyeol and talk to Baekhyun after school since she hasn’t got any friends in school to hang out with. Her status was a boost to popular when the whole school found out her friendship with Kim Jongin, but that never garnered her any new friends and the people who do bother to approach her were only asking for his autograph.

‘Lay has a day off so I don’t know what you would be doing here’, one of the nurses calls out to Eun Bi, instantly recognising her.
‘It’s cool, he gave me a job to do!’; she shouts back at the nurse, waving at her and passing by even though visiting hours were over. That was the beauty of Lay’s department. It was sullen most of the time and would often be treated as a hospice since most of the patients and their family had concluded that there was nothing more they can do than wait for the inevitable. It wasn’t so much a good thing, but it allowed the department to be open to unlimited visiting hours, animal visiting and other things which other departments aren’t usually allowed to have.

Eun Bi remembers Lay telling her about a girl her age who was diagnosed and had become reclusive, barely talking to anyone. It had gotten to a worrying factor when Lay noticed signs of weight loss and insomnia that wasn’t a symptom of her illness but rather symptoms of depression. She didn’t bother to entertain Lay in the beginning, since she was too occupied trying to piece together a past she never thought her brother would be capable of hiding from anyone. She had always known Kyungsoo to be the big brother that did the right thing and to pursue his goals without second-guessing. All she’s ever known of him breaks down the minute she finds out about what he had kept hidden all these years.

But then again, everyone makes mistakes. Even the most perfect humans can do dumb things.

‘Jiyeon’, she calls out the moment she opens the door. She looks ahead to see a girl the same as her age sitting on the bed, looking out of the window and ignoring her. Her skin is hard, almost like wood, bloodied and scabbed. Lay had told her that it had been her second episode this week and her skin keeps on ripping apart because of it. She had agreed on Lay’s offer for her to keep staying in hospital despite her brother being sent home weeks ago. She had no other place to hang out, not since Kai stopped all contacts with her and Kyungsoo and it’s not like she had any friends in school either, so spending her evening with Chanyeol and Baekhyun became a norm for her, which in a sense was okay due to Baekhyun helping her with her homework. Chanyeol even had the strength from time to time to teach her how to play the guitar.

She slowly walks over towards the quiet little girl. She’s frail and skinny, just like Lay had warned her. He had mentioned that her bones are too brittle for her to even move, so she’s trapped in this small cage, with nothing but the window to see out into the skies, which were now turning yellow as the day begins to fade.

‘I’m Eun Bi’, she calls out again, sliding the chair towards her for her to sit, her eyes still glued on the girl. Her hair was long but matted. It seems like she hadn’t washed her hair for some time, or maybe it’s because of her episode which turns her into stone, ‘I heard you sort of have the same power as my brother and I’, she attempts to make conversation, but the air is flat and there’s nothing but a silent response coming from her.

‘Leave me alone’, she finally hears a small voice, so fragile and almost broken into a whisper, if it
wasn’t for the croak in her throat which deepens her voice. Lay has also warned her about her lack of conversation. It’s probably why he was desperate enough to ask her to help.

‘My brother and I have the power of force, we can move rocks and manipulate earth too, I guess you’re more of an earth bender rather than force, but it’s the same thing isn’t it?’

‘I said leave me alone’

‘You know, I used to hate my power too’, Eun Bi continues to make conversation despite the hostility, ‘I mean, it was cool when I saw my brother use it, but I hated that I inherited it too. Only my dad and brother had it, but then when I started showing signs of it, I knew I was going to be different… Different from other girls. I was muscly and whilst the girls in my class started growing boobs and curves, I was stuck like this’, she points to herself, looking down at her body which had no curves, just straight down to the hips, she also had thick thighs and muscular arms due to her powers. She still didn’t look feminine, even with the long hair, ‘I hated my power because it altered my body to be different from everyone else. I hated it so much. It was a boy’s dream power but my worst nightmare’

Jiyeon slowly turns her eyes from the window and to Eun Bi, seeing the girl who’s loud voice dominated the halls for the first time. Eun Bi was right, she didn’t look feminine at all, she wore baggy jeans and an oversized sweater tucked in which didn’t show any shape, she had short nails due to her habit of biting it probably. Jiyeon scans her face to see her sharp jaws, broad shoulders and round eyes.

No, she didn’t look feminine at all. But she had soft skin, strong bones and the ability to bend her joints without feeling the excruciating pain of bones scraping stone and rocks which have started to accumulate her body.

Lay had been relaxed for a while since her skin and outer layer were the only ones turning into rocks, but after an X-Ray scan, it had shown pebbles forming in between her joints, grinding against her bones.

It won’t be long till her organs turn into rock. Then she’ll be gone, reduced to what the world calls the Medusa’s revenge. Many with her powers don’t last long until all of them turn into stone. All stone. She had met other patients when she was first diagnosed four years ago, one had the power of light and within three weeks he turned blind and his skin turned into translucent glow which ripped his veins and arteries due to the heat.

She can only imagine the pain from the patient with the power of fire. Setting himself on fire every
day sounds like hell. And she heard his screams once in a while, smell the burning which erupts and sets the fire alarm off at least once a day.

‘You’re lucky’, she croaks, her throat constricting, muscles aching, ‘You can still walk’

‘Walking is overrated’, Eun Bi points out, leaning back on her chair. She looks up to see Jiyeon, not at all pleased at what she said and she felt slightly guilty, ‘I mean, when Lay finds a cure, why don’t we go for a walk? I’m sure you’d like to see the park now that it’s Spring’

‘There’s no cure for me’, Jiyeon whispers, leaning her cheek on her knee, ‘I’m not leaving this place’

‘Sure you will. You have Lay as your doctor, you’re going to be fine’

‘He’s not a God. He can’t save me’

‘No, but he is a genius. So he can at least try’

Kyungsoo sits on the roof of the old community centre. Baekhyun had given him a heads up that Kai now owns the old abandoned building and the scaffolding which covered the whole thing was the celebrity was his attempt to salvage his remaining youth.

He wasn’t a big fan of visiting the old place, despite moving back home after resigning from the law firm.

But now he was all alone, just him and his thoughts, and he couldn’t help but find himself standing in front of the old building next to his old high school. He remembered all the memories which he had made in this exact building, all the good and bad. He remembered the times he had to drag Chanyeol off and use his powers just to stop him from throwing a punch at Baekhyun. He remembered Chen’s lightning powers which had resurrected a rat upon Chanyeol’s request.
He remembered dancing with Kai to an old song, wearing an uncomfortable uniform and surrounded by everyone who did nothing but make fun out of him.

Dancing.

He remembered watching Kai for the first time, gracing the spotlight and shining so bright, he had wondered how someone like him could fall for someone like him.

His eyes look out at the horizon, seeing the city line, the hundreds of cars driving past him, going by with their life. He looks up at the sky and sees the cloudless night, the moon in half as it shines by itself, all alone.

He taps his foot and the ground beneath him shakes. He taps again and he sees the pebbles vibrating. He taps again and not a sound leaves the ground. He had gotten better at controlling his powers. He stopped being afraid of it and once he did, he started using it more, practising his strength until he was no longer scared of his own power. The Police Academy taught him that. They couldn’t wait to exploit his powers, but before they can, they needed to know whether he was good enough to control it himself.

*One. Two. Three.*

*Tap. Tap. Tap.*

*One. Two. Three.*


Dancing.

*One. Two. Three.*

Spinning.

One. Two. Three.


The vibrations of the ground were gentle but strong. His arms were stretched out as he listens to the music inside his head. He closes his eyes and lets the cold wind rushes pass him, he spins and leaves the sofa, circling around the roof, his foot tapping the ground, making a beat with vibrated all over the ground, sometimes soft and missable, but others strong and loud.

One. Two. Three...


'Are you sure you’re okay to go?’, Baekhyun asked, looking at Chanyeol, seeing his thin frame being covered by his sweater which was now too big for him, but it was all he can find in Chanyeol’s family home.

‘Lay said it was okay’, Chanyeol assures Baekhyun, buttoning his jeans close and finally standing up without the need of a doctor. It’s been a month since he’s been fully admitted into the hospital. Unfortunately, despite Chen’s wishes, he had no choice but to let go of his best friend, therefore, Chanyeol is once again unemployed. He kinda knew that Chen had to give him the news since there were no signs from Lay that he was going to be released any time soon. It sent him back off into his own isolation, which worried Baekhyun since the former didn’t eat properly, nor did he socialise with anyone other than him or Lay.

It wasn’t until Chanyeol found Baekhyun crying, begging him to at least eat something, did he pick himself back up.

‘You should maybe ask for a walking stick from Lay, just in case-’

‘I’m fine Baekhyun’, Chanyeol dismisses his suggestion, ‘I don’t want a stupid cane’

‘But it’ll help you walk’, Baekhyun argues back, standing up and helping Chanyeol put on his jacket. The moment Baekhyun’s hands reached his zipper, Chanyeol took a step back and pulled the jacket away from Baekhyun’s grasp.

‘I told you, I’m capable of doing shit on my own’

‘Is it too much of a hassle for you to let other people help you for once?’, Baekhyun raises his voice, getting annoyed at Chanyeol’s lack of participation and patience. He took a step back also and glared at Chanyeol, ‘Or are you just used to being a pussy’
‘I’m not a pussy’

‘You’re acting like one’

‘Then leave me alone if you think I’m a pussy’, Chanyeol argues back, turning around and grabbing the small backpack Lay prepared for him, including all of his medications and other shit that he didn’t bother listening to. He was sure there was an asthma pump inside that bag too, just in case the worst happens and his lungs collapse.

‘I’m losing more and more patience if you keep acting as if you’re fine’, Baekhyun raises his voice again, ‘Stop acting as if you can magically do everything on your own because you don’t’

‘Yes, please do rub it in my face that I no longer have perfect control of my muscles or pretty much my whole body’, Chanyeol points back sarcastically to which resulted in Baekhyun rolling his eyes at his exaggeration.

‘I’m not rubbing it in, I’m only saying’-

‘Look, this is exactly why I didn’t tell you in the first place’, Chanyeol cuts him off before he can go off on another tangent that he has no care to listen to, ‘I knew you were going to be like this and I don’t want you to see me like this either’

‘Oh, so what’re you going to do? Not tell me?’, Baekhyun asks, ‘Do you still think it was better to hide this from me’

‘Look at me Baekhyun’, Chanyeol points at himself, ‘Just fucking look at me. Is this the guy you fell for?’

‘As a matter of fact, no’, Baekhyun replied bluntly, ‘This is the guy I hated in high school because he was selfish, self-conceited and a dickhead. Looks like he’s back’

‘I’m being serious Baekhyun’-

‘And you think I’m not?’, Baekhyun points out, ‘You’re a fucking prick, you always have been,
but underneath it, there was at least some good in you. Why aren’t you showing it anymore? Why are you afraid to be vulnerable in front of me of all people? I should’ve been the first person you told all of this to, not Kyungsoo or anyone else. Me,’ Baekhyun points to himself and there’s a moment of silence when Chanyeol spots the pained expression Baekhyun had that he always seemed to notice nowadays and it pissed him off that he was the reason Baekhyun was going through a stressful time like this.

‘I didn’t tell Kyungsoo. He found out…’, Chanyeol whispers, but Baekhyun heard it and just glared at him.

‘Look, act like a pussy all you want, but this isn’t about you. This is the premiere of Kai and Xiumin’s musical so the least you can do is not make this about you’

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‘Is he not coming?’, Sehun asks, fixing his tie in front of the mirror as he waits for Suho to finish ironing his blazer before putting it on. He looks around Suho’s stingy and messy apartment, seeing all the clothes and empty pizza boxes on the floor and grimacing.

‘You really think Kai would let Kyungsoo in the doors?’, Suho points out, fixing the creases in his blazer which he left crinkled on the floor of his bedroom for a week, ‘Plus, it’s not like Kyungsoo would wanna come. He’s been avoiding everything Kai related’

‘Good luck with that’, Sehun laughs, ‘I passed by two bus stations with his face plastered on it’, he mentions, ‘Plus the billboard signs hung up on all the buildings’

‘Yeah, well, we can’t force Kyungsoo to do anything. He’s a stubborn asshole’, Suho comments, sighing as he refills his iron with water before continuing to press on his blazer.

‘He should at least apologise to Kai. I mean he messed up big time’, Sehun mumbles as he fixes the cuffs in his sleeves, walking away from the mirror and towards the living room where Suho was. He leans on the sofa and observes Suho, seeing the police officer taking his sweet time in making sure his blazer looks presentable. Despite being such a messy person, Sehun laughs at the fact that Suho always keeps a tidy looking persona.

‘To be honest, what he did in not telling us that he was the one who dumped Kai was messed up…
But to be honest, Kai’s not innocent. He had every opportunity to set the record straight and tell at least one of us that it was Kyungsoo’, Suho defends his best friend, despite also being slightly pissed at Kyungsoo’s actions that he never bothered to confine with Suho. He felt betrayed for a little while at the thought that Kyungsoo never even thought to at least tell him and keep it a secret from the others. They’ve been friends since they were kids. He was sure, out of everyone, he was the most trustworthy in Kyungsoo’s eyes.

‘Well, that’s the last thing we can all be pissed about’, Sehun mutters, ‘Tampering evidence is a whole other level’

‘What do you mean?’, Suho stops ironing, lifting up the hot metal and looking at Sehun, ‘What did you say?’

Sehun chokes when he finally realises what he just said. His eyes widened and his mouth hang loose when he finally turns to make eye contact with his boyfriend who was glaring at him, his hands heated as hot boiling water flows out of his fingertips.

‘Babe, I was just joking, calm down’, Sehun quickly tried to grab Suho’s hands. Blowing cold hair in its direction, but Suho wasn’t having it. He let go of Sehun’s hands and stepped back a little.

‘You better start explaining things Oh Sehun’, Suho taps his foot impatiently when Sehun continues to grab his hands, ‘You’re made up of 70% water and my god I will make you choke on your own organs if you don’t start talking’

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‘Are you sure you’re okay with Jia?’, Lay asks Luhan one more time, stroking his husband’s hair as they both watch Jia playing with her toys inside her metal censored cage they bought. It’s heat sensitive just in case she decides to use her firepower and it also has a fire extinguisher.

‘I didn’t think this type of thing would be common enough for this to exist’, Luhan points at the cage-like crib, laughing, ‘This looks illegal’

‘It’s a legitimate crib’, Lay reassures him, ‘Jia’s not gonna go teleport into someone else’s house, this crib also has high energy level reading, so it’ll stop her cells from phasing into a different dimension and travelling’
'Good’, Luhan sighs, ‘I don’t want her teleporting to Mrs Potts house again’

‘She did give her a good scare though’, Lay couldn’t help but spill a small chuckle, ‘Even I heard her scream from across the street’, Luhan joins in his laughter, the couple looking at their little girl, seeing her smile when she touched her new soft toys, her eyes sparkling with curiosity. Lay and Luhan had been told how lucky Jia was to have parents like them, but Lay believed that it was they who were lucky to have someone special to be their daughter.

‘You should have a good time with your friends’, Luhan says, looking down on his wrist and seeing the time, ‘You’re gonna be late’

‘Okay, babe’, Lay gives his husband a quick kiss before he grabs his blazer.

‘Say congrats to Xiumin and Kai for me’, Luhan calls out, waving at Lay, giving him one last kiss on the cheeks. Lay had wanted Luhan to come and even Xiumin had asked, but trying to find a babysitter for their baby who has an infinite amount of powers didn’t work well for them, which meant one of them had to stay behind.

‘Love you’

‘Love you too’

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‘Wow, apparently, there’s already a crowd waiting outside the venue already’, Chen walks in the backstage, seeing all the actors looking out from the curtains with their eyes at awe at the stage lights. The stage director looks at the way the rookie actors glimmered in their expression from behind and smiles, excited to see their expression when the crowd starts to grow slowly when they open the doors.

Xiumin who had just checked with the sound director about the recent check-ins, smiling when he sees his husband walking over to him. He finalises his conversation before picking up his step, hugging Chen.

‘You’re on time’, Xiumin smiles, nestling his head on his shoulder. Chen chuckles, his breath being felt on Xiumin’s cheeks. He had remembered sometimes, the opening night of his musicals,
he would look out to see an empty seat near the front where he had reserved for his husband to sit, only to find that he was missing. Restless nights had happened between them, petty fights and days where he would question if either of them had slowly started to fall out of love with each other.

After their promise to try harder on their marriage, he’s still surprised that Chen would walk in the backstage, waiting for him, sometimes with a bouquet of flowers, sometimes with a small teddy bear. But he loves it the most when Chen just comes in with nothing but his briefcase, his tie slightly loose, knowing that he was probably in a rush trying to finish everything in the office so he can drive to the venue and be on time.

‘Thank you for coming’, Xiumin whispers, looking up and kissing his lips.

‘I wouldn’t wanna miss your masterpieces’

‘Get a room’, they hear another voice interrupting them, their heads turning to see Kai walking in, with his costume on and his make-up almost done. They just needed to create a fake scar on his cheek.

‘You look great Kai’, Chen laughs, seeing the way Kai chews on his salad, trying not to mess up his lipstick, biting with his mouth wide open.

‘Of course, he is, he’s our second lead’, Xiumin chuckles, ‘The voiceless prince, hidden from the world, much like how he is in real life’

‘I have a voice’, Kai defends himself, a chewed piece flying out of his mouth. Chen winces when it flies towards him, taking a step back.

‘Thank God I get to see you dance and not hear you sing’, Chen murmurs, instantly regretting it when Xiumin slaps his arm and Kai stops chewing, staring blankly at Chen as if he had said something in a foreign language, ‘I didn’t mean… I meant that I-’

‘It’s okay. You’re not the first person who thinks I can’t sing’, Kai shrugs, walking off and back into his own private dressing room, closing the door.

To say Xiumin was less than impressed was an understatement.
‘You didn’t have to say that aloud’, Xiumin glares at his husband, ‘You know how sensitive Kai gets sometimes’

‘I didn’t… I mean…’

‘His singing isn’t his strong point, but I’ve seen him singing in the practice room. He’s good’, Xiumin says, ‘And I don’t understand why people say otherwise’

‘I’m just saying, they should’ve put him in a group instead’, Jongdae tries to explain himself, ‘His vocals won’t strain if he’s sharing parts with other people’

‘He’s a good singer. He’s a good songwriter too’, Xiumin says again, ‘Give him a break and maybe listen to his work for once’

***

Kai has gotten used to other people’s judgements towards him, it didn’t faze him anymore that not a lot of people think he was talented enough to stand on stage or record an album. Hell, sometimes he wondered why his company had put faith in him when he had told them time and time again that he was not a singer, but rather a dancer that belonged on stage, not in a recording booth.

He sits down by himself in his private dressing room whilst the rest of the performers shared the main dressing room. He had attempted to persuade the director to let him share the main dressing room with the rest of the actors, but his company had almost threatened the staff to give him a private room for privacy reasons.

So, now he’s here all alone.

Wondering if people thought of him as bratty for having his own room when he himself wanted to be with the rest of the cast. He also wanted to hear their excitements and their nervous state, laughing and joking as they wait for the venue to fill up with their first audience. He had remembered playing a game of would you rather during his opening nights at theatre school with his fellow classmates, remembering how it took off the nerves.
It feels empty being alone in the room when he knew that just across, everyone was buzzing and talking.

He looks down on his hands, seeing it slowly disappear. He tends to leave his dressing room for a few minutes before he performs, knowing where he wants to go, he usually visits Kyungsoo’s apartment to see how the boy was doing, but now he has nowhere to go. He didn’t want to see Kyungsoo, but he didn’t want to be alone either. So he lets his mind take his body to the first thing he could think of.

His vision fades, blurs of lights and shapes changing in front of his eyes before he feels the cold breeze of the night touch his skin, giving him goosebumps.

He looks around, seeing that he was on the rooftop of the old community centre he had purchased and was now reconstructing. He looks down to see the scaffolding wrapped around the building, the bricks being replaced and redone.

Everything is gone. There was no sofa, no fairy lights, no blanket they used to prepare after community service where they would spend the rest of the evening looking out far into the city, laughing and talking amongst themselves. Kai misses it. He wishes that the old sofa Chanyeol carried all the way up to the rooftop was still here. He wishes he had the power to time travel instead, to go back to the time when Kyungsoo would lean on his shoulder as they stare up at the night sky, complaining about homework and their teachers.

If only.

***

Kyungsoo has taken the night shift to cover for Suho, finishing an evening meeting with their team before taking over Suho’s paperwork in his office. The rest of the department didn’t see any difference between Kyungsoo and Suho’s work ethic, so they didn’t mind him taking over as Chief Officer for the night.

Suho tried to tread around the reason why he wanted a night off, but he wasn’t stupid. The musical is one of the most talked about production and he sees adverts for it everywhere, on his phone, on the bus stop and on every billboard he drives past.

‘Kyungsoo, we still need the final report of the car theft this morning’, one of his colleagues asked,
opening the door of Suho’s office.

‘Yeah, I’m finishing that up’, Kyungsoo says, his fingers running across the keyboard, tapping away as his glasses slowly slide down to the tip of his nose. He picks up a few reports that he had already finished signing, handing it over to his coworker before going back to the screen in front of him. He didn’t speak as much compared to Suho, their ever so friendly Chief Officer, but the team understands Kyungsoo’s introverted nature, so they let him be by himself, checking up once in a while.

‘Are you not going to see the musical? I heard you’re friends with Kim Jongin too’, his coworker asks, ‘I couldn’t believe when I found out that you used to attend the same high school as him’

Kyungsoo nods, his poker face not giving much away.

‘We weren’t that close’, Kyungsoo explains, hoping that it was enough for him to drop the subject and let him work in peace on his own.

‘Oh okay… But still… Pretty cool to know someone famous. How was he in high school? Was he bratty like he is now?’

‘No, but as I said, I didn’t know him for the majority of high school’, Kyungsoo points out, which wasn’t necessarily a lie since they never spoke until senior year. His lack of participation in the conversation was enough for his coworker to get the picture, leaving the office with a stack of files for them to look over for their current investigation. It had taken much persuasion, but he was finally back on the team and slowly dismantling the mafia’s, main headquarters in Seoul and Busan. It had been a gruelling few weeks, but with his powers, he had managed to squeeze out a few confessions from arrested criminals which led them one step closer.

Kyungsoo just needed a few more evidence and key witnesses before their team can arrest essentially what’s left of the mafia in Korea.

A knock on the door comes again and this time he looks up when he hears Suho’s voice calling out his name.

‘Woah, what are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be at the venue by now?’, Kyungsoo looks down on his watch, seeing that it was nearly hitting 8 pm and the venue was at least an hour away from the station.
'I need to talk to you', Suho asked, his voice hollow and without the friendly tone, he looks disappointed and angry, his eyes observing Kyungsoo, ‘This is about Kai’

‘You know I don’t wanna talk about it’, Kyungsoo sighs, ‘Plus, he doesn’t want to see me right now, so you can’t force me to come, I’m-’

‘What else did you do for Kai?’, Suho asks, getting straight to the point, wanting Kyungsoo to answer this question himself. Despite Sehun explaining it to him, despite talking to Eun Bi on the phone, he still had to drive to the station and ask Kyungsoo himself.

‘What d’you mean?’

‘Tell me something I don’t know’, Suho says, his anger rising along with his voice, concerning Kyungsoo as he stands up and leaves the desk, closing the gap between them.

‘I’ve been holding up, for now, you don’t need to worry about me messing up. I’ve covered for your night shifts loads of times’

‘Why did you quit at the law firm?’, Suho asks, brazen and with a shadow of patience. Kyungsoo pauses, confused as to why Suho would be asking a question he’d refused to answer for so many years. Suho, as his best friend, will always help him with his decisions, but he also knows his limit in pressing Kyungsoo on subjects he had found discomfort in and they both know his short position as a lawyer was one of them.

‘Why do you wanna bring that up now? I told you I didn’t wanna talk about-’

‘Tell me you didn’t tamper with evidence’, Suho says as a statement rather than a question, hoping that Sehun was just splurting bullshit and that Kyungsoo, his best friend with more integrity than all the judges and Chiefs he’s ever encountered, would never do anything rash or stupid.

Kyungsoo can feel his blood slowly turning cold. Suho is mad and he wants to be felt. He grips on the desk, terrified of his best friend for the first time, his fingers making dents on the wood, splintering his skin as it slowly cracks in his grip.
‘Suho, stop… I-’

‘Tell me everyone is bullshitting and you wouldn’t do anything like that’, his best friend says again, and this time he can feel his blood boil, a mix of emotions rushing through Suho when he sees Kyungsoo’s expression, his tight lips and wavering eyes trying to avoid him. Kyungsoo has always been an honest man, and he would know the moment he stuttered is the moment he knew Kyungsoo was going to lie.

‘You tampered evidence and conspired against a case for personal reasons’, Suho finally states the fact that had been hidden all these years that Kyungsoo has been ashamed of the moment he stepped out of the law firm.

‘Suho, I was stupid and desperate... I didn’t want anything to happen to Kai, so I… I did something stupid… But I promised myself that I would make up for it, I promised-’

‘You’re fired’, Suho says, without a shred of emotion or empathy towards Kyungsoo.

‘What?’, Kyungsoo sighs, letting go of the broken desk, his breath caught up in his throat as he tries to interpret what Suho was saying, ‘What do you mean I’m fire-’

‘I’m not going to have a police officer who broke the law for his own selfish gains, no matter what it is or who it was for. Kyungsoo, if it wasn’t for you, we might not even have an investigation for this. We could’ve disbanded the mafia years ago’

‘The evidence wasn’t that important, they were just-’

‘Every evidence is important!’, Suho shouts, stomping his foot and flooding his office floors, ‘More people become victims the longer we take to arrest the head of this whole fucking group. More people are in situations like yours, spending days in the hospital, injured and critical. All because you wanted Kai to be a singer?? The bitch didn’t even want to be a singer! He would’ve chosen you over anything!’

‘I’m sorry…’

‘Pack up your stuff and leave. I’m filing your release for tomorrow morning, so pack up now whilst you still have the time’
'Suho please, I’ve been trying so hard… We’re nearly there and with my help, we can finally catch the head of the-'

'I don’t care Kyungsoo. You need to leave now'

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The lights blare on the stage, the orchestra playing a chorus of symphonies as the first act slowly closes to the end. The pink spotlight focuses on the voiceless prince who the audience has been waiting for since the start of the musical, his eyes closed and expression saddened, dipped in loneliness whilst the rest of his people enjoy the royal ball in the main hall, whilst he walked by the gardens. Only to be spotted by the main lead.

‘Kai looks hot’, Baekhyun whispers to Chen who nods in agreement. The makeup was stunning on him, despite the fake scar which runs down from his cheek to his neck, and by the way, the audience gasps when he finally opens his eyes to reveal his icy blue eyes, everyone agreed with them.

‘I used to be hotter’, Chanyeol whispers to which Lay chuckles, trying to keep quiet when he sees the people in front of him turning and giving him a warning look.

‘Not everything is about you, you idiot’, Baekhyun whispers to him, slapping his arm and looking back on stage, ‘And Kai has always been hot since high school, just admit it’

‘He had a shit neck tattoo that wore off after like half a year, how hot do you think he was?’, Chanyeol whispers back, grunting when he sees Baekhyun staring at the way Kai started dancing, opening up the second act so elegantly. Chanyeol had always been pleasantly better at things than Kai who he remembered was almost as popular as him, he was better at sports, always gets slightly better grades - which didn’t speak much since they both had shit grades compared to the rest of the year - and he had better hair, but the one thing he could never beat Kai was his dancing. He rolls his eyes when Baekhyun claps all too excitedly when Kai finished his solo dance.

‘He’s so amazing’, Baekhyun whispers to Chen.

‘He’s not that good’
‘Better than you and your two left feet’, Baekhyun argues back. Lay, who had observed and heard the pair’s argument couldn’t help but chuckle to himself at the way Baekhyun and Chanyeol had slowly started to act around each other like they used to, always bickering like Tom and Jerry.

‘Where are Sehun and Suho anyway?’, Chen asks, looking at the two spare seats next to them, ‘They’re missing most of it’

‘I have no idea, for all we know, they’re probably fucking’, Chanyeol whispers, but then the group is silenced when the people next to them once again turns around to glare at them, their eyes telling them to shut up and pay attention to the musical.

***

‘What did you do?’, Sehun asks as soon as he sees Suho walking out of the police station, Sehun getting out of the car as he approached him, ‘What did you tell him?’

‘I told him to pack up his stuff and leave’, Suho simply states to which forceful winds welcome him, his hair flying when Sehun walks up to him, his eyes glaring at him.

‘Why would you do that? To your best friend?!’

‘He broke the fucking law’, Junmyeon shouts back, ‘What else would you have me do?!’

‘That doesn’t give you an excuse to fire him! No one in your field is clean, they’ve all done some shady business, same goes for people in my law firm. As long as they get the work done-’

‘What the fuck is wrong with you?’, Suho asks, his hands in a tight fist, trying not to cause a storm from brewing since Sehun decides to anger him even more, ‘He tampered with evidence. That is not doing his job’, Suho shouts at him, ‘And if you think I can just easily turn a blind eye at that, then you think wrong. I’m not you’

‘Me? What the hell is that supposed to mean?!’, Sehun is now screaming at Suho, the winds around them becoming stronger.
‘You just said it. You admitted that the people in your law firm has done something shady yet you turned a blind eye. You and I may still be together, but I’m not going to conform to bullshit just to keep my job’

‘And you think I’m doing that?’

‘Why the hell else would you not report them then?’, Suho shouts back, the empty parking lot at the back of the station dark and isolated, making their voices sound ten times louder, with the winds brushing on them, stronger every time Sehun becomes angry.

Sehun couldn’t give an answer to Suho. How could he? Suho has always been one to stand for the little people, always doing what he can to follow the law. He was the only clean officer he’s met during his time as a lawyer. How is he going to understand that sometimes breaking the law might be the better options in certain situations?

‘Kyungsoo has been part of your team since your operation started’, Sehun says, breathing slowly as he tries to calm down, the winds around them slowly fading. ‘He has helped disband over fifty operations and has arrested over a hundred members. Don’t you think he’s paid enough?’

‘No, because with every day that we fail to arrest them, more people are put into a compromise. There are people dying because of this. Kyungsoo might’ve helped kill more people than he had saved’, Suho points out, ‘I love Kyungsoo more than anyone, and I promised him I’d help him in anything he needs, but this? My hands are off this one’

‘Then what is Kyungsoo going to do?’

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Kai feels his breath leave his lungs as the third act finally ends, his muscles aching from the different variations he’s been given for his solo performances. His voice is left unused, all of his dialogue presented in the form of his movements, his arms stretched out, expression full of sorrow and joy.

He couldn’t see the audience, the lights were too bright for him to focus on. He just tried to memorise his movements and listen carefully to the music.
Baekhyun noticed Kai’s expression. His eyes are strained and struggling. Kai spins a little too far to the left and he worried if he continued in that direction, he would fall off the stage. He reaches his hand out, trying to hide it by covering it with his jacket. He turns his wrist slightly to the left, dimming the stage lights until he can see Kai opening his eyes, now facing the audience.

The audience gasps at the sight of Kai’s glowing blue eyes, now clear for everyone to see, his lips parted as he breathes through his mouth.

Baekhyun smiles to himself, seeing Kai slowly realising his position and slowly turning back to the centre. He watches Kai like everyone else, his expression full of adoration and surprise that even after all this time, Kai still had it in him to grab everyone’s attention without saying a word.

Chen, who was sitting on the side, looks around the audience, curious of everyone’s expression.

That was when he noticed the pillars of the venue quaking.

*Kyungsoo?*

Chen looks around, trying hard not to be noticed as he slips past everyone, bowing his head down and walking away to the back entrance of the venue, opening the doors and departing from the main hall.

‘Kyungsoo?!’, he shouts now that he’s alone in the narrow corridor, the white walls suffocating. He walks forward, certain that Kyungsoo was in here, ‘Are you there?’, he asks again, his voice echoing due to the emptiness of the halls.

Chen was one of the last people to be told about what happened between Kyungsoo and Kai, but he still felt pity for Kyungsoo even after he heard what he had done. How could he not? Kyungsoo has always been the quiet kid in school, keeping to himself and not telling anyone anything about him. They didn’t even know of his powers until Senior year when he went Hulk smash in the canteen. Ever since knowing Kyungsoo, he had understood that Kyungsoo felt more emotions than any of them, he just knew how to hide it well.

‘Kyungsoo, come on and show yourself. I’m not mad at you’, Chen calls out again. He stopped walking, leaning on the wall instead and waiting for Kyungsoo to come out of the corners of the corridor.
It took a few seconds, but he sees a figure coming out from the park entrance from the outside.

‘I thought you didn’t wanna see the musical?’, Chen asks after Kyungsoo approaches him, not saying anything and just leaning on the wall next to him. He looks down to see Kyungsoo looking glum, leaning his head on his shoulder and staying silent, ‘You okay?’, he asks. Kyungsoo didn’t reply to him. Chen was about to ask again when he feels the ground rumbling from beneath him and he stops talking. He can feel Kyungsoo quivering in the same rhythm as the quaking on the ground and he thought it would be best to stay silent.

‘You know, when we were still in high school, I couldn’t wait to leave and start living my life’, Chen begins a conversation, filling in the silence between them, Kyungsoo’s head still leaning on him, ‘But then real life started and it was shit’, Chen laughs to himself, ‘I married Xiumin and I nearly divorced him for no fucking reason other than the fact that I was busy trying to be taken seriously by my family… Chanyeol, my best friend who risked his life to save mine before even knowing me had fucked off to god knows where right after my wedding. I only just found out about his stupid illness when he got back. Minhyuk is still being a pain in my ass and now I’m about to be kicked out of my company and dethroned by him if I don’t bring my A game. Life is fucking brutal’

‘I prioritised my dream job for as long as I can remember’, Kyungsoo finally spoke, his voice soft and barely above a whisper, ‘I compromised myself to reach my goal. But then I met Kai and I was terrified at the thought that he was the only person I’d give everything up for. I tried to push him away, and when Kai actually left, I couldn’t function. He’s always been someone who refused to leave me even though I asked him to over and over again, so when he finally did leave, I realised… I never wanted my fucking job. Not when I had to live alone and without someone to share my life with. It took me seconds to decide to help Kai out and give up my job, but even when I lost my memories, I always find myself coming back to him. Life fucking sucks’

Chen laughs, not because what Kyungsoo said was funny, but because he understood where Kyungsoo was coming from. He knew what it was like to choose between someone he loves and his responsibility in his job. It nearly cost him his marriage too. In fact, if Xiumin didn’t try one last time to fix their marriage, he probably didn’t know where he’d be now.

‘I got fired’, Kyungsoo finally says and this time Chen looks down at him, seeing his sullen expression, ‘Suho found out that I tampered with evidence’

‘Shit, did he really fire you?’

‘It makes sense. I expect Suho to do that’, Kyungsoo sighs, ‘He’s not going to let me back in’
‘What are you going to do about it?’

Wait’, Kyungsoo simply says, ‘It won’t be long till Suhho reports about it. I don’t know if I’ll be going to jail, but I expect I’ll get the worse’

‘You’re not going to jail’, Chen snorts, but Kyungsoo’s expression was serious.

‘Suho’s the Chief Police Officer. What do you think he’s going to do with this information?’ he asks and Chen is left silent, trying to process what Kyungsoo means. Surely Kyungsoo couldn’t possibly go to jail?

‘Tampering with evidence can be considered a felony, and the fact that this evidence has direct involvement with the mafia, the higher-ups are going to take this seriously’

‘Shit’, Chen whispers, ‘Kyungsoo, what the fuck did you get yourself into?!’

‘Tell everyone I’m sorry’, Kyungsoo ignores Chen since he didn’t have an answer to that question. He had no idea why he did it either, and he’s been feeling guilty about it ever since.

‘Tell Kai, I’m sorry too. Tell him I regret everything’

‘Tell him yourself. The show’s almost over’

‘I’ll see you soon. Hopefully’

Kyungsoo turns and leaves Chen standing in the corridor by himself. He watches Kyungsoo leave and looks down to see the ground cracked in the middle.
‘Congratulations!’, Lay shouts as soon as he enters backstage, a bouquet of flowers in his hands as he slides past the dozens of cast and crew, running up to Xiumin and Kai who can be seen talking to each other backstage.

‘Oh!’, Kai huffs out due to the force Lay had when he tackled him to a hug, ‘Thanks Lay’, he smiles, smelling the sweet scent of the flowers, as he hands it to him.

‘You were brilliant’, Baekhyun smiles, patting Kai in the back whilst he gives Xiumin a thumbs up. Chanyeol, who limped next to Baekhyun nods his head.

‘It was alright’, Chanyeol shrugs and Kai starts laughing when he sees Baekhyun’s elbow him, giving him a warning look before Chanyeol coughs, ‘You were amazing’, he corrects himself under Baekhyun’s request, ‘Although, I thought you were gonna fall on stage at one point’

‘Yeah, the lights got a bit too bright at one point’, Kai admits, scratching the back of his years, ‘Thank God the lighting guy fixed it’

Baekhyun gives him a warm smile, hugging him properly this time, feeling Chanyeol tugging at the end of his jacket, trying to pull him back. Kai noticed this and couldn’t help but chuckle.

‘I’m not going to steal your man, Chanyeol’, Kai assures him to which Baekhyun hears, turning back and shaking his head at the way Chanyeol continues to cling onto his jacket.

‘Everyone was drooling over you during the show’, Chanyeol points out, trying not to make it so obvious how peeved off he was, ‘Had they known how stupid you looked in high school, they wouldn’t bother’

‘As if your candy floss hair was any indication that you were cool’
‘Everyone wanted to fuck me’, Chanyeol shouts back, ‘And my purple hair was a fucking highlight!’, everyone turns to gaze at Chanyeol when he started shouting and Baekhyun can almost feel his skin being ripped out of him out of pure embarrassment, looking down and shaking his head. Chanyeol can get easily jealous and it looks like that trait of his hasn’t disappeared.

‘Everyone wanted to fuck Baekhyun, you came a close second’

‘I did not! I remember I was still first on that stupid list!’

‘Why’re you still mentioning about that goddamn list? Get over it, everyone else has’, Baekhyun groans, pulling Chanyeol’s hair to stop him from getting into another stupid argument.

‘Xiumin! Lay! Come here!’, Chanyeol shouts, clearly not over the argument. His arm caught on Lay, who was talking to Xiumin but was interrupted by Chanyeol.

‘What?’, he asks, looking at Chanyeol.

‘D’you remember that list in high school? Of who the girls wanted to fuck? I came first right?’

‘What the hell are you talking about?’, Lay asks, confused as to why Chanyeol was bringing up a list from high school, a list that he doesn’t even remember.

‘You mean the list where you got pissed because Baekhyun came close behind you?’, Xiumin asks, jumping into the conversation since Chanyeol stole Lay from him.

‘Ha! Baekhyun came second! I knew it!’, Chanyeol shouts in cheer, gaining another crowd of attention as the cast and their families look over to see who was causing such a ruckus.

‘Chanyeol, you honestly sound stupid’, the group hears Chen’s voice from the crowd, the latter finally showing up backstage.

‘There you are!’, Xiumin smiles brightly, walking over to Chen, his arms wrapped around his husband, ‘Where have you been?’
'Just needed to use the bathroom', Chen excuses himself, hopefully, the rest of the group not questioning why he left the theatre during the end of the musical.

'So, Suho and Sehun didn’t show?', Xiumin asks once he looked around to see that there were still missing people, ‘Did they call?’

'They didn’t call me', Lay says, looking down on his phone and finding that he had no calls from either of the two. Kai was slightly disappointed that Suho and Sehun didn’t turn up even though they promised that they would. He had a feeling that Suho might not feel as indifferent as he says he is with his current situation with Kyungsoo.

'Have you and Suho spoken?', Baekyun asks curiously. He hadn’t been keeping up to date with everyone’s bullshit since he was too busy taking care of Chanyeol, so this night has been the only night where he can have the opportunity to talk to each of them, wanting to hear from Kai himself what went on with him and Kyungsoo.

‘He’s apologised to me, but we haven’t had a proper conversation since then’, Kai says and Chanyeol tuts at them.

‘I’ve been hospitalised for one month and you’re all falling apart already’, he shakes his head, ‘Y’all have no honour’

‘Says the one who went and fucked off right after my fucking wedding’, Chen hits Chanyeol on the head, having to tiptoe to do so which makes his husband laugh.

Everyone, after a well-received performance, laugh and cheer amongst each other, but Chen couldn’t help but think of Kyungsoo in the back of his mind. He had wondered where the boy was spending his night since he had been fired from his job.

He couldn’t help but feel sorry for Kyungsoo.

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Kyungsoo is staying at his parents' house.
He didn’t have the guts to tell them everything that’s happened, especially now that he might have to face the consequences he’s kept hidden. He didn’t want to disappoint his parents, so he fakes a smile and makes an excuse to stay the night at theirs.

‘Are you okay?’

He turns to hear Eun Bi’s voice squeaking. She opens the door of his bedroom, hugging her pillow and looking sadly at her brother, her big eyes resembling his.

‘I’m okay’, he whispered back, leaning on his wall and looking out of the window. He stays silent for a moment, his hands tapping on his knees as his bed begins to shake. He was nervous. He knows Suho like the back of his hand and it won't be long till he makes his decision.

‘Are you gonna get in trouble?’ she asks and Kyungsoo didn’t answer. Eun Bi was a trouble maker who always bickers when fighting with her brother but for the first time, she kept quiet, sliding onto the bed and sitting next to him, her arms reaching out to hug a pillow.

His bedroom stayed the same even though he moved out as soon as he left for college. Most parents would turn their kid's old rooms into a small office or gym, storing their old posters and toys in the basement. But not their parents.

They kept everything the same. They duster the shelves and kept Kyungsoo's old anime figures decorated around his room, they even bought a frame to keep his posters from bending and gaining moss, hanging it up again with glass protection.

Even the transformers bed sheets were still being used.

Eun Bi thought it was stupid since her parents would invite people to stay over and they’d use Kyungsoo’s room as a guest room. It was embarrassing to show them a room that hadn't aged. All the toys and figures looked like they came straight out of the 2010s.

But she snuggles close to her brother as if she was five again and knocking at his door in the middle of the night because shes just had a nightmare.
No matter how many times Kyungsoo had told her he hated her, he never turned her down, allowing her to share his bed as they sleep with the windows open since he would sometimes talk to Suho before going to bed.

'I'm sorry', she whispers, snuggling her head on Kyungsoo's shoulder.

'What for?'

'I was the one who told Kai…', she could feel her chest tightening at the thought of her snitching on her brother. She might be the reason why he's going to be in so much trouble.

Kyungsoo looks down on her, seeing her looking up at him, her eyes sad and guilty. He sighs.

'It was gonna get out anyway', Kyungsoo says, 'Nothing is hidden forever', he comments, stroking her hair and combing with his fingers, feeling her soft hair against his callous hand.

'Are you really gonna go to jail?'

'What I did was a federal offence', Kyungsoo comments and even saying it aloud made him feel regretful. He could've done anything but steal evidence. He didn't know what he was thinking. Even now, Kai would have survived switching another company if the truth was told and his current company was working with the Mafia.

He could've handled it differently.

He could've called Kai and given him the warning to switch before the case was closed. But then that was also illegal to share information about a case to a third party before it gets released to the public. Had people found out Kai got a heads up, he would've been shunned as an artist.

Kyungsoo could sit here and wonder all the things he could've done, but what's done is done. There's nothing he can do.
'He what?!', Xiumin shouts the moment they arrive home, having skipped the grand dinner celebration since Chen had a meeting in the morning tomorrow and Xiumin didn't want to celebrate with his husband.

Chen, at this point, though this might be the only time to sit Xiumin and down and explain what Kyungsoo had told him before the musical ended without the others present.

'Suho will most likely report him, so most likely he'll be-'

'Surely a crime committed almost a decade ago can't be trialled now? Can it?'

'Don't ask me, I'm not a lawyer', Chen raises his hand in defeat, 'All I know is that Kyungsoo is fired and waiting to be arrested'

'Arrested?! This is insane', Xiumin breathes out, sitting on the kitchen chair and throwing his keys on the door, 'He can't be arrested, he's Kyungsoo… He's the most level headed out of all of us… He-'

'Xiumin, I don't want you to tell anyone about this', Chen interrupts Xiumin before his husband can start shouting. He holds onto his hands and stares at him, 'We owe it to Kyungsoo to not tell Kai about this'

'Kai deserves to know'

'Not from us', Chen replies, 'Kyungsoo needs to be the one to pussy up and talk to Kai. The things we heard about Kyungsoo, he never told it himself. We always had to hear it from Suho, but never from him. He needs to start talking for himself, it's the only way he'll learn'

Xiumin stays silent for a moment, thinking it through. He knows what Kai has been through more than anyone. He's seen Kai during practice, he's spent more time with the celebrity than anyone of them. He knew how mad and frustrated Kai is. But he also knows how heartbroken he was over this. He needed to know.

But his husband has a point.
Kyungsoo had to be the one to tell him.

'Okay… Fine… I'll keep my mouth shut', Xiumin nods agreeing with Chen's proposition. It pained him to think that Kyungsoo and Kai will have to go through this alone, but in a sense the two of them deserved it. They refused to be honest with each other and this was the outcome.

Luhan is sitting on the sofa, his eyes heavy and about to give in.

He had stayed the whole night watching other Jia, paranoid that his baby was going to disappear on him even though Lay had told him time and time again that the crib they brought was made for this situation.

Once he sees Jia asleep, hugging her small teddy bear, he decided it was time to retire, walking down the stairs and to the kitchen, grabbing a cold drink before sitting in the living room sofa.

He looks up at the clock hanging by the wall. It was midnight already and Lay still wasn't home.

This would probably be the time where he would get pissed at him, calling his phone and asking him to come home already.

Luhan was supposed to get angry. Especially since Lay and promised that he would do most of his research at home so he'll be there for Jia and him.

But Lay was in the hospital more than he had never been.

He had to handle Jia most of the time and it was getting worse since not a lot of childminders would accept the request of taking care of a baby experiencing random spurts of power.

It wasn't uncommon for babies to do so, but that didn't mean it wasn't a nuisance either.
Luhan should be fuming by now.

But right now he was more tired than anything. He also had work, all day sitting in the office and carrying meetings, countless phone calls and business deals. He was defeated because he couldn't get mad at Lay for working. He also had to work from 9 to 6 all week so for him to force Lay to stop working was out of the question because he knows he'll get angry if Lay ever asked him to stop working.

But they decided to have a child together, and they needed to hold that responsibility if they ever wanted to be good parents.

Maybe they should have chosen to have children at a later time in their lives.

He reaches his hands up in the air, waiting for the cold bottle of water to come to him, floating in the air before landing on his hands as he opens the cap and drinks.

His eyes are getting heavier and he sighs, bringing the bottled water down, leaning back on the sofa and resting his head up.

He closes his eyes and vowed he'd only take a quick nap, but not long after, he feels himself let go as sleep takes over him.

Chanyeol, Baekhyun, Kai and Lay were the only ones present for the dinner party, cheering with a glass of champagne in their hands.

Lay was talking to the other casts and crew, complimenting them for their wonderful performance as he downs another glass of champagne. It's been a long time since he's relaxed and had a good night. All he ever did was work, work, work, so this felt amazing for him.

Chanyeol laughs when he slowly sees Lay laughing, the tipsy doctor talking to everyone he got the chance to talk to.
Baekhyun, on the other hand, noticed Kai sulking in the corner of the table, not joining in the cheers from his cast mate, twirling his fork around the uneaten pasta. He hears everyone laughing and he flashes a subtle red light in Kai's direction as if trying to gain a cat's attention.

Kai sees the stream of red light hitting him and he turns to look at Baekhyun who was waving his finger in the air, making the light dance around him and he smiles, rolling his eyes when Baekhyun sits down next to him.

'You were fucking amazing tonight', Baekhyun pats him on the back, attempting to cheer him on, 'You should be proud of yourself'

'Yeah', Kai nods his head, but he didn't even bother to smile and Baekhyun can tell Kai wasn't happy.

'Look, I know you're still hung up about what happened with Kyungsoo but… It was his choice to make all of those decisions', Baekhyun says, seeing that Kai might need to have a conversation about the elephant in the room, 'He needs to deal with the consequences'

'I just didn't think he'd be such a hypocrite', Kai sighs, taking a drink from his glass, 'He's always gone on about achieving your dreams and not letting anyone stop your bullshit. Yet he's the one who did just that. Fuck, he broke the fucking law for me… How am I supposed to react? Should I be honoured? Pissed?'

'Look, Kyungsoo's always been quiet about his intentions. We didn't even know of his powers until Senior year. Kyungsoo takes his time to open up and-'

‘This is different’, Kai interrupts him, ‘This isn’t just some stupid secret you keep in high school. This is serious. I can’t believe Kyungsoo made such a dumb mistake’

‘Well, I could say the same thing about Chanyeol’, Baekhyun comments, ‘He left me, with no warning, right after he promised we’ll be together. I couldn’t understand him. I refused to understand him, but now I know why’, Baekhyun explains, ‘Now, everything is starting to make sense. So, if you want to understand Kyungsoo, maybe talk to him? For once why don’t the two of you sit down and tell each other everything you’ve been dying to say?’

Kai stays silent, playing with his food and looking down. Baekhyun was right. He wasn’t
Kyungsoo. He can’t get inside his head, so he’ll never truly know what Kyungsoo was thinking when he made all of those decisions. Not unless he asks him.

And without warning Baekhyun, he disappears from the dinner party into thin air, surprising Baekhyun look is now looking at an empty space.

Kai stands in front of Kyungsoo’s apartment, his eyes looking around an empty living room. It was quite late so he must be sleeping. He makes his way over to the corridor where his room is about to open the door when he hears whispers.

It wasn’t Kyungsoo’s voice.

‘Do you think he destroyed the evidence?’, a foreign voice asked that Kai couldn’t recognise. His eyes looked between the cracks of the door. He sees Suho in his uniform and a police officer scanning the room, opening Kyungsoo’s drawers, tipping over his desk and knocking on the wall, as if to check if Kyungsoo was hiding anything.

He tries to keep quiet, watching from behind as Suho sighs and leans on the wall, looking around Kyungsoo’s messy room.

‘If he destroyed it, then who knows how long his sentence will be once he goes in for trial’

‘How important is the evidence?’, the police officer asked, a worried tone in his voice.

‘Who knows, we’ll have to ask those who were involved with the case. But if Kyungsoo was getting rid of evidence which linked the company with the Mafia, I can only assume that it’s pretty fucking important’, Suho sighs once again, frustrated at the mess his best friend had left him to pick up. ‘That evidence could be the last thing we need to arrest anyone in relations with the Mafia, it might also give us names on anyone covering up for them’

‘So, how many years do you think Kyungsoo will get?’
'He’ll be detained and questioned first. Then, if we don’t find the evidence, or if he doesn’t hand it over, we’ll assume that he destroyed it. The prosecutors can decide up to ten years’

‘Ten years?!’, the police officer looks at Suho with wide eyes, ‘They can’t do that! Kyungsoo has done so much in our team! He almost risked his life dismantling the-

‘Look, I hate this more than anyone’, Suho stops him, seeing that all of his teammates are frustrated by his decision, ‘But this is on Kyungsoo. He broke the law, so he’s going to pay for it’

‘Because of him, we managed to arrest 20% of the international dealers that have been importing cocaine and methamphetamine into the country. Because of him, we manage to find the main storage of guns and other weaponry being transported’

‘I know goddamn well what Kyungsoo did. Yes, he led all of those missions, but as I said, we probably would’ve dismantled the Mafia if Kyungsoo hadn’t messed with the evidence’

‘That must be one fucking important evidence if that’s all it takes to break down a gang we’ve been trying to defeat even before you became Chief Police’, the other police murmured, talking about something else, but Kai stopped listening. He took a step back and walked away, his mind fragmented with different thoughts.

Kyungsoo? In jail? Ten years?

Kai disappears from his apartment.

Chanyeol is back in his hospital room, laying down on the bed as he massages his legs, aching since he’s walked back from the dinner party, which was the longest time he’d walked since he’d been admitted. Lay had told him that it was good exercise and that his muscles needed to be used.

‘Kai’s still got it’, Baekhyun comments, settling his bag down on the chair as Chanyeol watches him, seeing as Baekhyun decided to come back to the hospital with him instead of going back to his apartment.
Baekhyun had been staying more often with Chanyeol, the two bickerings, Chanyeol wanting to stay in bed for the whole day whilst Baekhyun forces him to go out for a walk every day so he doesn’t feel depressed.

‘Yeah, at least that’s one thing that hasn’t changed’, Chanyeol comments, laughing and laying down on his bed, whilst Baekhyun approached him.

‘You haven’t changed that much either’, Baekhyun points out, ‘You’re still an annoying piece of shit’

‘Sure’, Chanyeol chuckles, he stretches his skinny arms, looking at the small bruises from the injections, ‘I’m exactly the same’

‘Your appearance doesn’t matter’, Baekhyun comments, sitting on the bed and staring down at Chanyeol, ‘You’re still Park Chanyeol’

‘Barely’

Baekhyun sighs. There was no persuading the stubborn Chanyeol. Instead, he reaches his hand out to comb through Chanyeol’s growing hair. He sees Chanyeol closing his eyes at the feel of Baekhyun’s warm hands, feeling relaxed. Baekhyun noticed the little flames sparking from the tips of Chanyeol’s hair when he brushes it, like wood against each other, the friction of his hands causing a spark.

He had thought that Chanyeol’s powers were gone for good after the accident. There had been no cases of powers ever returning once the person had lost them. Many because they don’t produce the hormones of their powers anymore.

So when Chanyeol messaged him all those years ago about his powers slowly returning, he was baffled, confused. Park Chanyeol had become an anomaly that no one can understand nor explain. Park Chanyeol was the boy who can reverse his powers, was the boy who saved everyone twice, the boy who beat death and the boy who still looked young despite his disease and all those years spent inside the hospital after each of his episodes burnt his skin.

Byun Baekhyun can’t even begin to explain how one of a kind Chanyeol was.
He leans down, pressing his lips on Chanyeol’s cheeks, kissing his soft cheeks and feeling Chanyeol’s warmth on his skin.

‘What are you doing?’, Chanyeol whispers, clearly sleepy, his eyes still closed.

‘Nothing’, Baekhyun whispers back, continuing to comb his hair back until he feels Chanyeol’s breathing steady, watching him fall asleep.

It’s quiet between them, and Baekhyun wished to stay like this, combing Chanyeol’s hair, with the windows opened and the room silent. No monitor, no doctors, just them two.

Sehun left Suho after the argument, walking into his office and taking off his blazer, throwing it on the chair as he leans back, looking up at the ceiling in frustration. He felt deflated and angry at Suho after their argument. Their jobs have always made it hard for them to keep their relationship, but Sehun loves Suho, he was willing to make it work as much as he can.

He became different. He wasn’t the soft-spoken innocent Sehun anymore. Everyone, including his parents, was shocked at his gradual change, but he had to toughen up. He couldn’t wait for anyone to save him when he got hurt, but whenever he felt alone, he always had Suho. And he didn’t want to break that.

But Suho, unlike him, hadn’t changed one bit. He’s always tried to fix everything, to be the good guy and follow the rules. Everything that Suho did was different from what Sehun is now.

He wondered what would happen if he didn’t change. Would he become a whistleblower and reported half of his colleagues when he spotted them getting into shady shit? Would he risk everything, including everything he’d built for, just to be the bigger person? Why had he let things slide?

Why did everyone change so fucking much?
Sehun kicks at his desk in frustration, accidentally opening one of the drawers from the impact.

He should probably go home and get some rest. He didn’t need to stress out, especially since he’s got a case to finish, so he stands up, grabbing his jacket and about to close the drawers when he saw his files from his current case tucked inside.

He grabs it out of the drawer, reading the briefing, walking around his office as he flips through the pages, reading transcripts and other information about the case that had been passed onto him. He had already read it before, having scanned and highlighting it in a different file, but he reread it all again.

Something feels different.

He reads the defendant’s statement, over and over again, not knowing why this feels slightly different.

_I don’t know why I agreed to do it. One minute someone offered me a job and I really needed it, but then I would never agree to help with the drug trade. I don’t know. I needed the money. My mother was sick and we needed to pay the medical bills. Plus, my little sister was still in college. I needed to pay for her tuition. I promised them I would never resort to gang or drugs to help finance them. I was already working three jobs but it wasn’t enough so… I don’t know. I don’t know._

Sehun throws the files back into his drawers in a rush, walking out of the office and closing the lights, turning a corner to check if there was anyone still in the office.

‘Mr Ong!’, he shouts, running towards his Senior who was just about to walk out of the building, a briefcase by his side, ‘Can I ask you a question?’

‘Sehun, it’s getting late. What are you doing here?’, he asks, looking down at his watch and seeing that it was nearing 3 am.

‘Can I ask you something real quick?’, he asks again and his senior turns around to face him.

‘What?’
‘Doh Kyungsoo, he was a former lawyer here, right?’, he asks and Mr Ong stiffens, Sehun noticing his body language which mirrors a witness whenever he questions them and something triggers them.

‘Yeah. Bright lad’

‘Why did you let him quit?’

‘He said he had a different dream if I can recall’, Mr Ong says, ‘I can’t remember, he was only here for six months’

‘But wasn’t he one of the best lawyers? You let him go that easily?’

‘We can’t force anyone to stay with us’, Mr Ong mentioned, ‘Everyone has the right to leave any time they wish’

‘So, does that mean I can leave whenever I want?’

‘What are you talking about? You’re an important asset to our team, plus you’re part of an important case’

‘So was Kyungsoo. He was in the infamous case, the one our law firm lost. It was the first and only big case we’ve ever lost’, Sehun comments and Mr Ong coughs, tightening his tie.

‘Things were a little different back then Sehun. You should be lucky that we’ve improved and that was the only time we lost a case’, Mr Ong comments, ‘It’s getting late Sehun. I’m gonna head out and get some rest, tomorrow’s going to be busy. You should rest up to’, he says, patting the young lawyer on the back and leaving the building.

Sehun stays standing inside the building, looking out of the glass doors and seeing his superior walking away to the parking lot.

He quickly grabs his phone, walking inside the toilets on the ground floor and waiting for Suho to pick up the phone.
‘Hello?’

‘Suho, I need you to arrest Kyungsoo. Immediately’
Kyungsoo sits in a waiting cell, looking at the bland walls, scratched and dented. He's still wearing his clothes but his hands are bound by handcuffs.

Suho knocks on his parents' house and he watched how they broke down at the sight of him being handcuffed by his best friend. He hears Eun Bi crying, begging Suho to rethink things through but Kyungsoo didn't bother fighting, allowing Suho to take him back to the police station for questioning.

He wonders if he's colleagues will slowly find out what he did. He wonders if it'll change anything, how he's perceived. Everyone has always cheered him on as a value to their team, ecstatic that someone like him with the power of strength has joined them, at a low point after another case of murder linked to the mafia they've been tracking down for years.

He feels ashamed. The thought of disappointing them made him feel worse than he already has. He leans his head back on the wall, closing his eyes and trying to get rid of the frustration.

He feels a sudden gush of wind and he's confused. The cell has no windows.

Kyungsoo opens his eyes and looks in front of him.

'What the hell is going on?'

'Kai?', Kyungsoo sees him, sees the celebrity standing in front of him, looking down, 'What are you doing here?'

'They're planning to give you ten years', Kai says, ignoring his questioning look, 'You might end up
'I thought so…'

'What do you mean you thought so?', Kai raises his voice at him, pissed that he looks calm when he should be freaking out about it, 'Your life is about to be ruined! Why the fuck are you sitting there acting okay about it?!

'Because I did it to myself', Kyungsoo sighs, lifting his feet on the bench and leaning his arms on his knees, 'I should finally take responsibility for it'

'Why would you do it?', Kai asks, his brow furrowed and fist clenched up anger, 'Why the fuck would you do that for me? You fucking hypocrite'

'I know. I know I am', Kyungsoo says his voice quivering when he sensed how angry Kai is, 'I'm sorry'

'You should've let it be. If my company was linked, you should've let it happen! I had no connection to it! I don't care if my career falls because of it! I never wanted it in the first place!'

'You were Kim Jongin by then!', Kyungsoo shouts back, 'You were more than just the Kai I knew… I couldn't… I didn't want…', he couldn't bring himself to finish his sentence. It doesn't make any sense anymore. He didn't know why he would risk his dream job and his livelihood to save Kai. Maybe he did it because he still loved him, but even so…

'Kai, get the fuck out of here'

The door swings open and the two of them turn to see Suho standing on the other side of the door, glaring at the sight of Kai inside the cell.

'You're not supposed to be here'

'I can't believe you would arrest Kyungsoo. Why can't you just let this one slide?!!'
'Kai, if you don't fucking get out, I'll arrest you and lock you up in a different cell', Suho threatens him, not having the patience to deal with the celebrity when he's spent all night and the rest of this morning having to push his best friend down a line with results that don't look good, 'Now, before the reporters learn, I suggests you piss off back to your apartment'

Kai glares back at Suho, turning back to Kyungsoo who lets it happen, leaning his head back on the wall and closing his eyes again.

Kai disappears into thin air and Kyungsoo breathes out a sigh of relief. He opens his eyes again and turns to look at Suho, the two friends sharing a silencing moment before the Chief Police slams the door shut again.

Suho leans against the metal door, closing his eyes and sighing out a breath he's been holding in. He bites his lip and continues walking back to the office where the rest of his team is, fighting over Kyungsoo's ordeal.

'Is Minhyuk bothering you again?', Xiumin asks when he sees Chen's stressed expression whilst reading his phone, sighing and throwing it on the table as he drinks his morning coffee.

'He's suggesting a proposal', Chen whines, '60/40 partnership with his company'

'Let me guess, he's the 60%'

'I don't understand why he's so desperate', Chen admits, turning to Xiumin, 'He's a COO of another really big company, even bigger than mine. Why would he still want my one?'

'Minhyuk is proudful', Xiumin sighs, massaging Chen's back, 'He was like that even when we were young. He never wanted to settle as second best'

'But he wasn't second-best', Chen sighs, looking down at his half-empty cup, 'He always got everything. He was the favourite'
'Which is why he's probably mad that you got the company and not him', Xiumin points out, resting his chin on Chen's shoulder, giving him a light kiss on the cheeks to comfort his husband, 'Everyone was surprised when they chose you.'

'That's because I didn't spend the last year of my uni getting drunk and partying', Chen mumbles. He knows the company was originally going to be handed to Minhyuk, no one hid the fact that they preferred him, but the last couple of years Minhyuk started lashing out, refusing to hold any responsibility for his actions since he knew he was going to get what he wants. Little did he know, his actions had consequences.

'Fightback', Xiumin says to him, 'Don't let him take it. I'll be supporting you, I promise.'

'If only Chanyeol was with me', Chen says, admitting that he would be braver if he has his best friend beside him. Chanyeol has always defended him whenever Minhyuk came, and even with other people who would make fun out of him, Chanyeol would be the first to come by his side - but Chanyeol has his problems - he couldn't ask him to cater for him, they aren't kids anymore.

'If someone told me this is what it feels like to be an adult, I wouldn't have signed up for it', Chen says and Xiumin gives out a hearty laugh, hugging his husband from behind.

'It's gonna be fine.'

'Hey, little Jia', Baekhyun coos, holding Lay's little girl in his arms, cradling her as she laughs at the expression he's making.

'What's she doing here?', Chanyeol asks when Lay walks in his room with baby Jia in his arms. Chanyeol isn't a fan of people other than Baekhyun visiting him and to see a baby makes him slightly nervous. His control over his episodes have been getting slightly weaker, so he didn't know if Jia is safe to be in the same room as him. Lay notices Chanyeol's nervous state and he calms him down, resting his hand on his shoulders.

'You haven't had an episode in weeks', he states, assuring Chanyeol that his health is slowly getting better.
'That doesn't mean I'm not gonna get worse soon', Chanyeol points out.

'Stop being a baby', Baekhyun interrupts the two of them, walking towards Chanyeol who Jia instantly recognises, a smile on her face, showing her gums and small baby teeth, her arms outreached, wanting Chanyeol to hold her.

'That's not a good idea…'

'Chanyeol, it's fine. I wouldn't have taken her here if I didn't think you're okay. And I'm the doctor', Lay assures him and with slight hesitation, and looking at Lay, he slowly reaches out to hold Jia, hearing the baby laugh in his arms, her little hands reached out and tugging at his ears.

'Even Jia thinks you have Yoda ears', Baekhyun points out and Lay couldn't help but laugh at the statement, Chanyeol glaring at him, but the room is finally filled with laughter.

Until Eun Bi walks in.

Kyungsoo's little sister is still wearing her pyjamas, her eyes swollen and red from crying, dried tears on her cheeks as she swings the door open. Her muddling cries stop everyone from laughing.

'They took him', she says, announcing her entrance, her voice breaking and quivering.

The trio turns around to look at her, seeing her messy and rushed ponytail, her eyes puffy and red, the ends of her sleeves soaked with tears and snot.

'Suho arrested Kyungsoo'

'Oh shit'
'This might not be Kyungsoo'

'What the fuck are you on about?'

'Look, I'm not going to say anything without evidence, but maybe Kyungsoo could've been influenced to-

'Sehun stop. I don't wanna hear this', Suho interrupts before he hears Sehun making up excuses, 'I have prosecutors ready to check Kyungsoo's case. I have to prepare everything'

'There might be a chance Kyungsoo wasn't able to control his actions! I'm telling you we can get him out!'

'And I'm telling you he already confessed', Suho stands up, slamming the files on the desk and glaring down at Sehun, 'I can't do anything for him'

'Look, I know you want to be a good cop', Sehun stands up, his eye level reaching the same at Suho's, 'I know you wanna be one of the good ones with no dirt on his hands. I know you want your team to be clean too, but this is Do fucking Kyungsoo we're talking about. If there's a possibility of him being innocent, we should take it, because this isn't something he would do on a whim, not even for Kai'

Suho wants to believe Sehun. He wants to believe his best friend has another reason for his actions, that Kyungsoo wouldn't be so stupid. But he can't give Kyungsoo any special treatment either, as much as he wants to.

'Prosecutors are coming this evening', Suho says again, making up his mind, 'I have a case to finalise'

'Dammit Suho', Sehun kicks his desk and turns to see Suho walking away from his office, 'If Kyungsoo was manipulated before, that means they know him! How else do you think they knew him during the incident at the club?!

'That was a random attack'
'But what if it wasn't?'

The cell door opens and Kyungsoo looks up to see Sehun walking in.

'What are you doing here?', he asks when he notices the lawyer sitting in front of him.

'I requested for some time alone with you', Sehun says, 'I'm willing to take up your case, pro bono'

'Why the hell would you do that?', Kyungsoo's questions him, confused as to why Sehun would wanna take up his case, 'Why're you defending me? I'm guilty'

'I've defended worse', Sehun admits, folding his arms and staring at Kyungsoo, 'Tell me about the knife incident at the club'

'There's not much to say'

'Come on Kyungsoo. You sat on a gang leader's lap and spoke to him. Even if it's just for a few minutes, you exchanged words'

'And I told Suho everything we talked about. He said my name and I asked how he knew me. He said he's been keeping an eye which meant there's a rat in our division'

'Maybe he knows your name because of something else'

'How else? Someone who works here must be selling them information'

'Kyungsoo, do you remember what you even stole?', Sehun asks, 'What type of evidence was it?'
Kyungsoo freezes. He tries to go back all those years ago, remembering stealing a brown envelope and walking away from the office after working hours - but why didn't he remember what he stole?

'I don't know. It was years ago. It was probably a few bank statements of their financial exchange'

'Kyungsoo, no one just forgets evidence they stole from a case they were trying to prosecute', Sehun points out, 'Do you even know where you hid it?'

'I… Destroyed it', Kyungsoo says but the hesitation in his statement is enough to strengthen Sehun's assumptions.

'I'm not gonna let the prosecutors do anything. We're bringing this case to court'

'Sehun… There's no point'

'Memory manipulation and persuasion are all powers the government fears, especially if people use it for their benefit. The gang has kept a close eye on you Kyungsoo. If we prove your innocence, Suho and your team might be one step closer to dismantling the last of the Mafia currently residing in Seoul'

'What the fuck are you doing here?', Suho sighs when he gets a call from the reception about disruption at the front of the station, walking out to find Xiumin and Baekhyun standing around, shouting at the poor receptionist.

'You're gonna lock up Kyungsoo? Our Kyungsoo?', Xiumin shouts at him, 'Why?!'

'Why the fuck do you think?', Suho hisses at the two, dragging them away from the front, afraid that his other colleagues will hear them. He didn't need them to jump into conclusions about Kyungsoo, the whole station is already tensed.

'Dude, it was years ago, get over it', Baekhyun scoffs and Suho didn't know whether to be
frustrated at their lighthearted attitude on such a serious topic or the fact that they think they can come here and ask him to free Kyungsoo as if he was just in detention.

'We're not in school anymore and I'm not the president who can bail him out whenever I want', Suho reminds them, 'This is the law we're up against and there's nothing for me to do'

'Well fuck, what the hell is gonna happen to Kyungsoo then?'

Chanyeol walks into the building with a cane, much to his dismay, but Lay has persuaded him to take it. He wanted to throw it out as soon as he walked out of the hospital but he realised he needed it, leaning on the cane as he struggles to walk.

Lay has told him the news that he's allowed to leave the hospital once in a while. His health has improved vastly, but Chanyeol knows it's only temporary. He would spend months in Fiji feeling fine and alive, but one day, like a switch, it turns off and he's back to square one, screaming in pain and setting his clothes on fire.

He decides to visit his best friend now that he's given permission, waiting by the front after asking the reception to call him up.

Chanyeol noticed the receptionist recognising him, seeing as he's worked here for a few weeks, the word probably got around as to why he had to quit since he notices her giving him a pitiful look. He tries to brush it off, it's not like he hasn't received this treatment before.

'Chanyeol, what are you doing here?', Chen asks as soon as the elevator doors open and he walks out to find Chanyeol sitting in the waiting room, rushing towards his best friend, 'Have you heard the news about Kyungsoo?'

'Yeah…', Chanyeol nods, 'Baekhyun went over to talk to Suho about it… It's Suho who made the arrest'

'That's fucked up', Chen sighs, 'But why didn't you go with Baekhyun?'
'I wanted to see how you are', Chanyeol admits, 'With me in the hospital, I kinda forgot the shit you're in too… Sorry for quitting on you'

'No, it's fine', Chen pats his back, the pair walking out of the company building, 'I'm keeping afloat'

'How about your dick cousin? Is he still being a dickhead?'

'As always', Chen sighs, 'The board members wanna merge with his company but Minhyuk's offering a 60 to 40 deal'

'What does that mean?'

'That means he gets 60% shares and I only get 40% which is enough for him to kick me out of my positions and he'll become CEO'

'You're not gonna let that happen right?', Chanyeol asks but the silence coming from Chen didn't comfort him at all, 'Chen, come on, this is your company'

'I know… But… He's got more people on his side than I do, my board members wanna go for it and… I don't know… I don't wanna keep fighting him anymore'

'You do know why Minhyuk keeps fighting you right?', Chanyeol asks, having to stop and sit down on the street bench after feeling throbbing on his leg. Chen noticed and sits down next to Chanyeol, leaning his hand on Chanyeol's shoulder, squeezing it in comfort.

'You need to go back to hospital'

'Not until you listen to me', Chanyeol says, 'Minhyuk is out to get you because you stole the one thing he's wanted to keep for himself'

'The company?'
'No, you idiot', Chanyeol rolls his eyes, hitting Chen's shoulder, 'Xiumin, you fucking dumbass'

'Huh?'

'He's pissed that Xiumin chose you and he's pissed that you two are together after all this time. So, even if you give up the company to him now, he's still gonna come after you till the day he fucking dies. He's a prick who holds grudges'

Chen snorts, finding it stupid, not wanting to believe Chanyeol - but he realises - every time Minhyuk taunts him, Xiumin somehow becomes the centre of the conversation. Surely his cousin can't still be pissed off at him, it's been years, a fucking decade since they found out that they both fell in love with Xiumin and it's been ages since they both realise that Xiumin loves Chen enough to stay with him all this time.

'He's a prick but he's not an idiot', Chen says but Chanyeol just snorts at him, leaning on his cane.

'Your cousin in the definition of an idiotic prick', Chanyeol laughs, standing up after he feels the aching go away, 'I suggest you strap up and fight back now'

'How am I gonna do that?'

'Well, lucky for you, I have a lot of free time now that I'm unemployed with a life-threatening disease'

'That's not funny Chanyeol'

'All I'm saying is, I can help you out. I mean, we did pretty well when I was your secretary for a couple of weeks. Think of me as your ultimate secret weapon', Chanyeol says, reaching his hand out to the sky in a cheesy fashion, 'I can be your sidekick, about to kick the prick's ass… Hey that rhymes too'

'You're an idiot', Chen chuckles, standing up and hitting Chanyeol's head, but he couldn't help but laugh at his stupidity.
'What do you say?', Chanyeol reaches his hand out, waiting for Chen to shake it, 'You and me?'

Chen dwells on the offer. But not for long since he reaches his hand out and shakes Chanyeol's.

'Fine, let's beat the shit out of Minhyuk'

Lay sits Jia on his lap as he fills in the paperwork. Luhan had work and their nanny couldn't make it today, so Lay had to bring his little girl to work with him which he didn't mind. His patience loves Jia and she brought a smile and joy to the ward which is known to be dark and sad.

'Why don't you hang out with your friends?', Lay asks when he turns around to see Eun Bi still sitting in his office, her head leant on her knees as she blankly stares at nothing.

'I don't have any friends', she admits, her tears all gone, now just a numb emotion, not knowing the future of her brother, the only friend she's ever had since she can remember.

'Then make one. Don't sulk here, Kyungsoo wouldn't want that'

'Kyungsoo's going to jail', Eun Bi states as if Lay didn't already know, 'My only friend is going to jail…'

'Look, there's a little girl about your age acting just like you, so if you can bring your sadness to her instead of here then maybe you might make a friend. She's a lot like you, trust me'

'Is she the one that keeps turning into a rock?', Eun Bi asks, 'She still has bodyguards outside her room'

'Just say hello and keep your mind distracted. I'll tell you if there are any updates on Kyungsoo', Lay ushers her out of his office, shooing her until she walks over to the door with two guards either side of it, Jia in his arms and looking out at her. She gurgles, tugging at her dad's uniform, wondering where Eun Bi is going.
'She's gonna hopefully make a friend', Lay whispers to his little girl, 'And maybe she'll forget about Kyungsoo's situation for a little while'

Baekhyun and Xiumin have been kicked out of the police station after Suho's had enough, calling his team to usher them out to which Baekhyun gave the middle finger to all of them - which probably wasn't a good idea - but it didn't look like Suho is gonna budge from his decision.

'I mean this is stupid', Baekhyun shouts as Xiumin, the two walking side by side to the latter's car, 'I'm sure there must be a misunderstanding, right?'

'I don't fucking know', Xiumin confessed, opening the car door and waiting for Baekhyun to get in, 'I don't know what goes on in Kyungsoo's head… He's always been so secretive'

'Yeah, but that doesn't mean he's capable of committing a crime, right?', Baekhyun looks over at Xiumin, slamming the door shut as they drive away from the station, 'I would be more likely to commit a crime than he is'

'I know right', Xiumin says, 'But here you are with no criminal record whilst Kyungsoo's in jail… I mean if you would've told this to me ten years ago I would've laughed at your face and told you, you're crazy'

As much as Xiumin and Baekhyun can complain, at the end of the day, they couldn't do anything but wait for Suho to change his mind. Of course, they don't want Kyungsoo to go to jail, but then again, they had no fucking clue how the laws worked, so they can only wish a good enough lawyer can pick up the case and get Kyungsoo out of there.

Kai sneaks inside the community centre, teleporting on the rooftop and looking down to see the scaffolding. The interior is nearly finished and all that's left it the paint, so the scaffolding will come off in a few weeks.
He's been so out of his head, that he couldn't pay attention to the news about the building. He couldn't even focus on his performance most of the time. Luckily, he only performs on weekends for three months, but even then, his manager has been pushing him for a new album since his fans have been begging. It's getting a bit too much for Kai to handle and he has no one to turn too. He feels like he's about to cry.

'Ow!'

'Fucking fuck!'

'What the fuck!'

'What is this stupid thing doing here?'

Kai's interrupted due to the loud noises coming from behind him. He quickly turns and walks to where the door is, opening it slightly to find Chen and Chanyeol almost on top of each other, with a pile of wood all over them.

'Guys, what the fuck?'

'You'd think they'd know leaving a pile of wood next to the stairs is a fucking hazard!', Chen whines, standing up and offering his hand to Chanyeol who also fell.

'I've already got fucked up limbs', Chanyeol complains, massaging his legs to stop the waves of pain coming through.

'What the hell are you doing here?', Kai asks, finally grabbing the duo's attention as they look up to see him on the other side of the door, hands on his hips like an angry mother seeing her two kids messing about.

'We wanted to see if the rooftop is still the same', Chen says, walking up the flight of stairs, his suit covered in dust and with Chanyeol limping behind him.
'You do know you're entering and trespassing right?', Kai says, 'How the fuck did you even get in here?'

'We've sneaked in here before', Chen snorts, 'The door is practically a breeze to open'

'Then why did it take you half an hour to open?', Chanyeol points out, the pair finally making it on the rooftop, the latter hitting his cane on Chen's leg, 'You didn't do shit'

'Excuse me, I didn't see you try, did I?', Chen argues back, standing next to Chanyeol and grabbing his cane, 'And stop using this as a weapon', he leans on the cane himself and watch Chanyeol glare at him, trying to snatch it back but Chen takes a couple of steps back, sticking his tongue out.

'Guys! Can you stop acting like five-year-olds! Kyungsoo's going to jail!', Kai screams at them, annoyed that Chen and Chanyeol can be so calmly fucking about when Kyungsoo's fate in on the line.

Chen immediately stops, looking to see Kai's expression and seeing fresh tears leaving his eyes after trying so long to suppress them.

'Damn, did you find out too?', Chanyeol asks, limping forward and stealing his cane back from Chen, 'Who told you?'

'I went to visit Kyungsoo in his apartment... I heard Suho and someone else talking whilst searching his room instead... He's been locked up in a cell all night already'

By this point, Chen and Chanyeol shared an uncomfortable look as Kai slowly starts to break down. They hear Kai crying and Chanyeol hits Chen with his cane, edging him to try and comfort the poor fucker.

'Dude, I'm sure Kyungsoo's sentence will lessen', Chen says, coming over to pat Kai's shoulders, 'Plus, I highly doubt there are any good looking prisoners in jail, so you won't have to worry about him fucking someone else'

Kai stops crying only to glare at Chen, Chanyeol shaking his head at the farmer's poor attempt to comfort Kai.
'I fucking hate you', Kai growls, pushing Chen away as he walks back to the edge of the rooftop sitting down and letting his legs dangle off the edge.

'Look', Chanyeol calls out, limping towards him, 'I'm sure Chen's right. Kyungsoo's sentence will decrease to probably about half?'

'Still, That's five years in jail', Kai whispers, but his statement made Chen and Chanyeol pause, wide eyes and staring at him.

'What what?!

'You mean to tell me Kyungsoo's original sentence is a decade?!', Chanyeol shouts, and when Kai didn't say anything, he stares back at Chen, 'Dude, we'll be hitting forty by the time Kyungsoo gets let out'

'Well... I mean, fucking in jail might not be so bad after all', Chen comments and he feels strong winds before he realises Kai has teleported right next to him and pulled his hair.

'Stop joking about it', Kai warns him.

'What else do you want us to do?', Chanyeol shouts back, pulling Kai away from Chen, 'You have to admit, this is fucking ridiculous'

'Fuck, that hurts!', Chen whines when Kai let's go of his hair, reaching his hand up to massage his head, 'Dude, find the humour in things and stop being an uptight celebrity'

'The only person I've ever loved is going to jail, how do I put humour into that?'

'Well, my cousin is set out to destroy me and steal my company and I just trashed his car a few minutes ago!', Chen yells at him, getting slightly pissed off at how overdramatic Kai is being, acting like he's the only person having a shit day, 'And this one has a life-threatening disease that can blow over any time but he just helped me trash Minhyuk's car', Chen then points to Chanyeol, 'You're not the only one having a shit life you know'
Kai looks at the pair, he looks down at Chanyeol's cane and he couldn't help but laugh - he doesn't find anything amusing - he feels the complete opposite. He finds it all ridiculously unfair and life just seems to hate every single one of them.

'Life is a sick bitch', Kai says in between, 'A sick fucking bitch with no humour'

'Damn, I think this bitch finally lost his mind', Chanyeol whispers as they watch Kai laughing hysterically after he just cried his heart out.

The pair are about to stop Kai from completely losing it when they hear a car honking from below, garnering all three's attention as they look down to find a BMW parked right in front of the building.

'Hey, losers, what the fuck are you'll doing up there?!

'Babe?!', Chen looks down, the car window open and Xiumin's head popping out, 'What are you doing here?!

'Baekhyun needed to pick up some stuff from school. They're on holiday but apparently, he still needs to mark some shit!', he hears his husband shouting back.

'Baekhyun's here too?!', now it's Chanyeol's turn to ask, the three of them leaning a little too far out on the edge as they try to search for Baekhyun, looking down on the field in front of them.

'Yeah! He'll be coming back soon! Wanna grab lunch together?!', Xiumin shouts an offer and the trio didn't hesitate to accept, Kai finally calming down after Xiumin arrives.

'We'll be right down!', Chen shouts, about to turn around when he feels his foot slip off the edge.

And it's like the world's in slow motion, reminding him off his tomfoolery as he falls off the roof, his hand flapping out in an attempt to grab hold of something.
Chen!

Oh my fucking god!

'Babe!

Chen closes his eyes, feeling himself shit out a new asshole, his arms still flailing in the air. He imagines breaking every single one of his bones and the thought of it made him want to throw up and die already.

_Is this really how it's going to end? Are you fucking serious?_

Chen expects to hit the hard ground, his spine breaking, but instead, he lands on something cold and soft, engulfing him in white.

'Babe!', Xiumin runs up to his husband, climbing on the pile of snow he's created right beneath him, 'Babe, what the fuck?!', Xiumin reaches Chen, his hand touching every bit of his body, making sure he hasn't broken anything.

'Woah, I think I just shat my pants', Chen gasps, sitting up in shock, his heart still racing and his skin sweating despite being engulfed in a pile of snow, 'I genuinely think I shat my pants right now…'

'Are you okay?!', Kai and Chanyeol teleport down, standing on top of the snow and looking down at Xiumin and Chen.

'I almost lost my mind when I saw you fall!', Chanyeol shouts at him.

'You fucking idiot!', Xiumin screams the moment he makes sure Chen's okay, hitting him on the arm, 'You could've fucking died! You idiot! I will not have you die falling off a fucking building, you fucker!'

'Nice save though', Chanyeol points out, digging his cane deep into the pile of snow, 'I didn't know you could make this amount of snow', Kai and Chanyeol both look down to find that out of reflex,
Xiumin must have made at least ten feet worth of snow in the span of seconds right in front of the building.

'Damn, Xiumin are you dehydrated?', Kai asks, now worrying about Xiumin since he used his power in full force without exercise or preparation, 'We should probably head to someplace where we can eat, this might make you weak'

'Guys, I'm fucking serious, I think I just shit myself!', Chen screams when the attention draws away from him and he feels something wet on his ass.

'Dude that's gross', Chanyeol comments, watching Xiumin stand up and help Chen stand too since his legs decided to become jelly after the feeling of falling. They look down on the snow to check for shit stains but they didn't find any.

'It's probably just the snow you dipshit', Chanyeol points out, poking Chen's ass with his cane to which Xiumin glares, squatting the cane away.

'Why is it, whenever Chen hangs out with you, he loses all of his brain cells?', Xiumin points out, glaring at the two of them as he used to whenever Kai and Chanyeol dropped off a drunk Chen after a night out of partying back in college.

'Xiumin?! What the hell is all this?!

Baekhyun's voice joins the conversation, all of them turning to see the latter walking towards them with a folder worth of work from his student, confused to see a pile of snow in the middle of summer.

'Chen fell off the rooftop', Chanyeol and Kai explain simultaneously to which Baekhyun's mouth hangs open.

'Is he okay?!', he shouts back, looking at Chen who's still in a daze.

'I think I shit myself!!', Chen shouts back to him, leaning on Xiumin.
'Don't worry! He didn't! We checked!’, Chanyeol shouts back.

Baekhyun is about to ask them what they were all doing here when they hear police sirens from across the street, all their eyes turning to the angry vehicle heading towards them.

'Entering and trespassing, obstruction on the street, excessive use of power', Suho reads out the report right in front of Chanyeol, Kai, Xiumin and Chen, all their heads hung low as they feel Suho's anger on them, 'As if my day isn't already shit enough!', he shouts at them, slamming the report on his desk and making all four of them flinch, 'What the fuck is wrong with you all?'

'Are you gonna jail me for trying to save my husband?', Xiumin is the first to respond to Suho, 'He would've died if I didn't do anything!'

'Why was he inside a building in the middle of constructions?!!'

'Umm… I wasn't the only one in the building', Chen lifts his hand to defend himself, 'These two were there as well. I mean Kai was there first'

'I own the fucking building', Kai hisses at him, 'Don't throw me under the bus, I can have you sued for trespassing my fucking property'

'On second thought, it was only Chanyeol and me', Chen goes back on his word, leaving out Kai and pointing at Chanyeol instead.

'You're all fucking idiots', Suho sighs, leaning back on his chair and closing his eyes, 'I'll let you all off with a warning, now get out'

'You wouldn't mind doing that to Kyungsoo too, right?', Kai asks, 'I mean, it's his first offence as far as I know-

'Kai, get the fuck out before I change my mind', Suho stops him before he gets to finish his speech,
'Baekhyun's still waiting outside by your car, I suggest you all go'

'Come on Kai', Xiumin pats his back and they stand up, 'Let's go grab some lunch', he can tell Kai wanted to argue, he can tell that Kai's furious of Suho and his lack of patience. He knew that if he didn't stop, Kai would be screaming and it'll cause a huge stir in the station. Everyone's already shocked when Kai walked in, the last thing they need is for everyone to witness the celebrity screaming.

'He's your best friend', Kai whispers, pulling away from Xiumin who tries to drag him out of Suho's office, 'How dare you abandon him'

'Kai, let's go now', Xiumin says, going back and pulling him, staring at Suho before he closes the door, leaving the Chief Police alone in his office, contemplating on his decision as he watches them leave through his window. He closes his eyes and leans back on his chair again.

He can't do anything, even though he wishes he could. He's bound by law and he can only hope that Sehun can prove him wrong.

Sehun closes his files as soon as the door open, one of his colleagues walking into his office with a cup of coffee.

'I heard from superiors', he mentions as he sets down the coffee on his desk, sliding it to Sehun, 'You're taking a pro bono case'

'Yeah, I am', Sehun says, taking up the coffee and thanking him, 'It's Kyungsoo's case'

'Ah yes Do Kyungsoo', he nods, 'I heard he was amazing when he worked here, too bad he's a bad egg'

'He might not be', Sehun says 'We'll just have to see what more I can find'
'You're going to defend him? He's pleaded guilty and it explains his sudden change of behaviour during the last few months he was working here. Because of him, this law firm lost its first case'

'But like I said', Sehun presses on, 'I'm here to find out if it's all his fault'

'Drop the case Sehun', his colleague says without a moment of hesitation or time for Sehun to even explain himself, 'It won't look good if you're defending someone who tarnished the reputation of this firm'

'If he's innocent than he's not the one who tarnished it', Sehun says and there's a moment of silence shared between them before his colleague sighs and shrugs his shoulders.

'Do whatever you want Sehun. Maybe you need to learn how to lose a case once in a while', Sehun watches as he leaves his office, closing the door and leaving him to his work. He sighs and leans back on his chair. He's been told off by his superiors for taking up the case, especially when they heard that Kyungsoo is the one who stole their evidence. He's not the most popular person at work at the moment but Sehun couldn't give a shit. He knew Kyungsoo's innocent, he had a feeling something else was in play.

He brings the plastic cup on his lips, feeling the warmth as he's about to drink the coffee but he stops when he hears his phone ringing, looking down to see Suho's name.

'What's up babe?', he picks up his phone, setting the coffee back down on the table.

'I heard you persuaded the prosecutors to take this up to court with you as his lawyer'

'Are you mad at me?', Sehun asks, awaiting his boyfriend's frustration at the news that Kyungsoo won't be prosecuted right away.

'No', he hears Suho's whisper, 'Honestly, I hope you win', he confesses, his voice low and quiet as if he's hiding, 'Take care of Kyungsoo'

'You know I will'
'And take care of yourself', Suho says to him, 'If what you're saying is true, then there may be a snake in your firm out to get you'

'Yeah, I will', Sehun reassures him, sensing Suho's worry, 'I'll be fine'

He hangs up the phone and sits up straight, opening his files and looking through the case once more, wondering how he'll make a start. He looks over to find the coffee still waiting for him and he grabs it.

He stays still for a moment, looking at the coffee, at first without much thought.

*Drop the case Sehun.*

He sets the coffee back down on his table, feeling something itch on the back of his mind as he picks up his phone, calling the second number saved on top of his phone, waiting for it to be answered.

'Hello?'

'Hey, Lay. I need a favour'
Worst Mistake

'I'm not part of the forensics team, what do you want me to do with this coffee?', Lay asks as soon as Sehun enters his office interrupting his night duties.

'I can't have them knowing', Sehun tells him, 'I just wanna make sure that I'm safe', he explains to Lay about his decision to take up Kyungsoo's case, a controversial decision in his firm. He's already had numerous superiors telling him to drop it and he only accepted the case this morning.

'You don't really think they'd poison you though', Lay points out to which Sehun shakes his head. No, poisoning is too obvious, plus they'll need to solve a murder case if that happened. No, what frightened Sehun is the infinite possibilities of other means. Memory manipulation, power of persuasion, they're all powers that have been added to the government list. It's no longer fun and games if your power can put you above the law, chaos will ensue and things will become unbalanced.

'They might have put something in that drink that might change my mind', Sehun informs Lay, 'You're a specialist in our power hormones. You'll instantly recognise the chemicals used'

Lay didn't think he'd be part of something so outrageous as this. He's only seen these situations play out in movies he watched with Luhan, but even then, he takes the coffee and agrees to help Sehun out, keeping it under wraps.

'I hope you're doing the right thing', Lay whispers, looking at the young lawyer. It never fails to amaze him just how much Sehun has changed, the boy who would stay silent, hiding behind Junmyeon's back. Now he's going up against Junmyeon without a second thought.

'I'm gonna be fine. And I'll get Kyungsoo out too'

In all honesty, Minhyuk is giving the company a good deal', Chanyeol points out as Jongdae sits down on the chair beside Chanyeol's bed, watching his best friend read the contract that was sent to him after his meeting with his cousin.

His board members were almost drooling at the offer and Jongdae knows he's definitely on the losing side if more than half the members agree to pull through with the offer.

'But then again, the merging means the other company has the final say on staff wages, tax benefits and compensations. Surely that's an inconvenience'

'It is', Chanyeol nods, 'But then, the pay rise is promising to keep them quiet for a while, give it
three or four years before they start to feel the effect of the merging

'But they should be prepared for the long term, right? It's better to be an independent company'

'It is, but people want the immediate benefits', Chanyeol shrugs, passing the contract back to Jongdae, 'Have you discussed anything with your lawyers?'

'We're gonna have a meeting this evening', Jongdae sighs, leaning back on his chair and looking out at the window, 'I think it's going to be a mess on my end'

'Don't give up', Chanyeol encourages him, patting his shoulder, 'I mean this is personal, so if you pull Minhyuk to the side and discuss your differences, maybe he might offer an alternative?'

'Us putting our differences to the side didn't happen when we were young so why would it now?'

'Because you're nearly thirty and you're not kids anymore?', Chanyeol replies sarcastically, leaning back on his chair and crossing his arms, 'I mean look at me. I grew up'

'You ran away after my wedding with no explanation and completely cut ties with all of us only for me to find out you've been hiding a life-threatening disease', Chen rolls his eyes, 'I highly doubt that's growing up'

'Hey, come on, at least I'm trying'

'Kyungsoo!', Eun Bi throws herself in her brother's arms as soon as she sees Kyungsoo getting out of the car outside their house.

'Eun Bi', Kyungsoo sighs, feeling his throat constrict at the sight of his sister crying on his chest, gripping him so hard he could hardly breathe.

'Don't ever leave like that again!', she shouts and he tries not to look up because he knows what he doesn't want to see. His parents standing in the front lawn with their eyes looking down at him. He doesn't want to know what emotions they're feeling.

He doesn't wanna know how shameful it is for them to have a son like him.

'I'm out because Sehun picked up my case', Kyungsoo whispers to his little sister, 'I'll have to leave once the case begins'

'So, you're really on bail?', Eun Bi asks, looking up with her teary eyes. Kyungsoo nods and she hugs him again, 'Will you be staying here then?'

'No', Kyungsoo says and he hears his sister whine, 'I can't do this to mum and dad'

'They're not mad at you'

'Yes, they are', he whispers as he leans down and kisses his sister's forehead, 'I only came to see you. I need to go now'

'What?! Why? Where are you gonna stay?', Eun Bi pulls away, her eyes angry at her brother, 'I haven't seen you in days!'
'Eun Bi, I'm sorry. I really have to go. I love you', Kyungsoo pulls away from her embrace, albeit she complains, stepping back towards the taxi he got and opening the door again.

He stole a glance at his parents’ house and he sees his mum's expression for only a second but it was enough to hurt him.

She's angry and disgusted by him.

He closes his eyes and shuts the door, allowing himself to leave without making it worse.

'You're one tough motherfucker'

'Baekhyun shut the fuck up'

Kyungsoo drinks his beer, sitting in Baekhyun's living room and looking out of the window, seeing the landscape of downtown.

'You had to fuck up everything in your life for Kai?'

'Can you give it a rest?'

'You're going to jail D.O', Baekhyun presses on, slamming his hand on the coffee table, shouting Kyungsoo's old nickname he hasn't used since high school, 'Why the fuck would you let that happen?'

'I don't know', Kyungsoo responds, gripping the can until it splits in between his fingers, metal scraping his skin until blood appears, 'I don't fucking know'

'Why didn't you tell me when we were…', Baekhyun stops himself from finishing the sentence, looking down on his lap but he can feel the tension in the air and he knows Kyungsoo's looking at him.

'I wanted to forget everything about him… Including what I did for his sake'

'You could've told me'

'And what would you have done?', Kyungsoo asks and another moment of silence is shared between them. They didn't like to speak about it. They weren't particularly proud of the fact that they used each other to mend their heartbreak.

'At least you wouldn't have felt alone if you told me', Baekhyun whispers, 'I mean, we're still friends even now. You do know, that right?'

'Of course, I do', Kyungsoo sighs, feeling his guilt slowly rise again, 'We've been friends since high school. I don't think I've ever stopped thinking of you as a close friend'

'Same here', Baekhyun says, giving Kyungsoo an attempt of a comforting smile even though he's just as nervous and tensed about Kyungsoo's future, 'You're welcome to stay here at any time'
Mrs Do opens the door when she hears knocking, her tired eyes barely able to lift open, still swollen and red.

She looks out in shock once she faces the person on the other side of the door, seeing Kai himself standing before her with the same red swollen eyes.

'Mrs Do… I'm sorry', Kai's voice is broken, barely above a whisper as he slowly kneels in front of her, his actions abruptly making her swing the door open, 'I didn't know he would do this for me… I didn't'-

'I love you like my son', she interrupts him, 'Even after you parted with Kyungsoo, I still cheered for you from your very first stage till now'

Kai gulps air, closing his eyes as he listens to her broken voice.

'I supported you only to find out you're my son's worst mistake'

'Mrs-'

'I don't want to hear from you. Not until the trial is over and I know that my son is innocent', she slams the door shut, leaving Kai kneeling on the front porch, his eyes once again drowned in his tears as he silently repents.

If it wasn't for him, this wouldn't have happened. He knows that and he feels like shit for it.

'Baekhyun just texted. He said Kyungsoo's staying at his whilst he waits for the trial to begin', Chanyeol announces as he reads Baekhyun's message, silencing the dinner table at the news.

'Well… Way to make this day even more depressing', Chen whispers whilst he passes the salad to Xiumin, the pair looking at each other with worry.

They barely got any updates about Kyungsoo for the past couple of days and it's scarcely any good news.

'Is he… Okay?'

'I have no idea…', Chanyeol sighs, putting his phone down on the table, 'You know, I kinda liked it when the biggest problem we had was my jackass disease'

'Trust me', Xiumin joins, 'This is giving me more stress levels than work'

'Sehun picked up the case though. Isn't he a tough defence lawyer?', Chanyeol asks, still not believing that someone who was once quiet and in need of their protection is the one protecting.

'Yeah but he's not god', Xiumin reminds him, 'He can lose his trial if the odds are against him'

'And are they?', Chanyeol presses on but there's no answer, just another moment of silence where they loom over their friend's fate.
Suho stays in his office whilst he allows his team to go interrogate. He finds himself feeling distance from his teammate, especially after they’ve argued with him about Kyungsoo’s fate. Of course, some are clapping for justice, wanting Kyungsoo to do his time if need be, but the rest are adamant, begging him to do something to lessen Kyungsoo’s time or at the very least talk to the administration to persuade them not to take away Kyungsoo’s license.

He finds himself secretly cheering for Sehun for the first time since the boy decided to get into law. Their relationship broke down due to their dynamics, Sehun being taught to openly exploit the loopholes of the law for their clients whereas Junmyeon was taught to close every loophole he finds for his community. It’s been a long journey, far different from their dynamics when they were just teenagers in high school. Sehun doesn’t need protecting and Junmyeon is different from the pushover he once was. But he still felt guilty in cheering someone on which contradicts the oath he made during his ceremony after completing Police Academy.

‘Hey’, the receptionist knocks at his door, alerting him back to reality, ‘Someone’s here to visit you. They say they’re your friend?’

The friend in question is none other than Lay and Suho smiles when he sees the doctor with his little one.

‘Hello Jia’, Suho waves at the little girl, seeing her smile, ‘She’s wearing an awful lot of coats’

‘Yeah well, she’s been setting herself on fire lately’, Lay sighs as he looks down at his daughter, making Suho laugh when he looks down on the innocent looking baby, only thinking of ways in which she’s been keeping her dads awake in the middle of the night.

‘What is it that you need to tell me?’, Suho asks once the small conversation, ‘I need to get back to work, I’m on night duties today’

‘Gosh, that sounds awkward’, Lay squirms, ‘I know how that feels, I’ve been on night duties three times a row last week’

‘Luhan’s probably not pleased’, Suho chuckles, the two sharing a moment of solidarity of their hard labour.

‘I’m here because of this’, Lay finally explains his sudden appearance, pulling out a specimen from his jacket and subtly sliding it in Suho’s hands.

‘What is it?’, he asks, looking down at the jar.

‘It’s Sehun’s coffee from this morning’

‘Huh?’, Suho tilts his head, ‘Why do you have this?’

‘He told me to analyse it’, Lay whispers, ‘He was feeling suspicious and he’s right’

‘Right about what?’

‘I found the same chemicals of memory erasure that I found in Kyungsoo when he got stabbed’, Lay says and Suho’s eyes widen as he looks down on the specimen, his neck tensing at the thought.
that Sehun could’ve possibly missed the suspicious and drunk the poison so easily.

‘Does this mean…’

‘We don’t know if it’s the same person who poisoned the knife, but it can easily be linked’, Yixing whispers to him, ‘I needed an excuse to see you without looking suspicious, that’s why I bought Jia with me, but I need you to request for a trial and bring this as evidence because Sehun might be tied up right now’

‘How so?’

‘It was a colleague who gave him the coffee’, Lay says, ‘He might have someone in his workplace working with the gang’, this changes things completely and Suho feels nerves crawling all over his arms when he looks back down on the specimen of fucking coffee. The safety of not only his best friend but now his boyfriend is now on the line because of a few desperate branches of the mafia desperately keeping a hold on their last strands of power after they spent years dismembering it.

‘Where’s Sehun now’

‘In his law firm. And it won’t be good once the person learns he didn’t drink the coffee’

Kai teleports to Xiumin and Chen’s house. In the middle of the night. Whilst they’re fucking.

‘Are you fucking insane?’, Chen shouts at him the moment he sees Kai’s drunk ass falling on his carpet, grabbing the blankets as he pulls out, ‘Kai!’

‘I’m a fucking jackass’, Kai mumbles, his words slurred and his hands red from carpet burn.

‘Jesus Christ’, Xiumin groans, getting up from the bed and quickly grabbing his boxers, ‘Kai, are you okay?’

‘No! I’m Kyunggie’s biggest mistake!’, Jongin shouts at the top of his lungs, clearly wanting to be heard from Timbuktu but the looks of it.

‘This fucking bastard’, Chen mutters to himself, but Xiumin glares at him to shut up, knowing that Kai got a free pass for his tomfoolery since his ex-boyfriend might be going to jail because of him.

‘I’m going to jail with him!’, Kai screams again, trying to push Xiumin away from him.

‘Chen, help me get him up, he’s probably going to throw up’, Xiumin orders his husband to help him, to which Jongdae complies after covering his lower half with a blanket, grabbing one arm whilst Xiumin has the other, lifting Kai.

‘Kyunggie! Come back!’

And before anyone can even notice, Chen feels a sudden rush of coldness and a gust of wind which freezes him, the married couple looking around to find that they are no longer in their own home, but outside, in the middle of a field.

‘Kim Jongin!’, Chen screams at the drunk bastard as he lifts his blanket, ‘Where the fuck did you take us?!’
‘Kai, Kai, get it together’, Xiumin, in a much softer tone, shakes Kai, trying to get him to wake up, ‘Kai, tell us where we are’

‘Kyanggie’, Kai murmurs again, dropping to the ground and losing consciousness.

‘This motherfucker’, Chen growls, about to kick Kai awake, but Xiumin stops him, pulling Chen away before he can even lift his leg.

‘Stop’, Xiumin warns him, ‘Have some patience, he’s probably feeling a lot of emotions right now’, he tells him off once more, and like a sucker for his husband, Chen shuts his lips and calls for an uber, which was the most uncomfortable thing he’ll ever had to do the moment the taxi driver rolls down his windows and looks down at him, clearly naked with only a blanket covering his decency.

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