Taehyung can't see. Nor light, shadows, images, words, or colours. He wasn't born this way, hence, he wasn't always like this, but now it is his life, and it's something that never fails to hinderance him.

It's not only the darkness but also the monsters that come with it. These monsters who are ever so persistent. Imaginary now, but prominent in the past. They taste like ghosted memories, and they feel like fire and tongues of pain.

Who can help him? Who will help him?

What happens when an ever so cheerful boy tries to brighten his unlit world?

A boy with a smile that could make the blind see again.
or a story in which a blind, struggling teen, meets a person that can heal him again. (with funny dialogue!)
prologue

Chapter Summary

dark, cold, afraid.

What terrors lurk in the night?

Certainly, demons that you cannot reach.

Ghosts of our imagination.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

prologue: replay

Hands. They are all over him. Dark and lingering against his burning skin, each touch too sudden, too real, too sharp and acute and loud. It’s as if everything is amplified, the memories sinking into his flesh like fangs, his blood now poisoned with torment and relentless sorrow. The fingers wrap around his throat, seeming to suffocate him in reminiscent fractals. Taehyung can’t speak, breathe, think. All his mind is focused on is the lurking villains of his past, that somehow always seem to creep their way to his present. The fear is not so much what they will do now, but what they will do later, the anticipation of pain much scarier than the impact itself. The fingers turn to smoke, now tendrils of acrid darkness caressing his body, his face, his mouth and the very tips of his fingernails, before consuming his eyes unabridged. They puncture his skull, his sockets filling with a rush of darkness so opaque and brittle it seems to swallow him whole. It’s always his eyes. Then, it’s as if his body is floating in the emptiness, destitute of light yet with an intensity of feeling. The sting of glass absorbs his vision, and the blurry images of figures, no, monsters, that are unfortunately all that is left of his fragmented memory, appear. He can’t escape, he can’t move, and oh, how he can’t breathe, if someone would just stop squeezing his lungs he’d be okay!

“Please! Are you alright? I need you to answer me so I know you’re okay” a voice emits from the warp of Taehyung’s brain. It sounds clouded, foggy and unclear as if he were submerged underwater. Maybe that’s why he can’t breathe, he must be swimming in his own pool of agony. The voice is silent for a moment and Taehyung thinks he’s imagining things until he feels two hands on his shoulders shaking him, not with violence, but with urgency.

Taehyung jolts at the touch, awakening from his trance with a gasp, his eyelids fluttering open. All he sees is black, maybe a bit of red and watered light here and there, but for the most part, nothing. His shoulders blaze from where he is touched, burning with a pain more prominent than the laceration below his eyebrows. He wants to scream but can’t bring himself to, something indescribable still clogging his throat with immense pressure. He is only able to catch a shadow of movement before he returns to his mute state.
“Hey, you’re okay, I promise you’re okay, it was just a dream,” the voice soothes, concern etching in his eyebrows. The voice is deep with worry and holds a sort of dialect.

Tears are pooling in Taehyung’s eyes, the liquid loosening glass as he struggles to catch his breath. He turns away from the voice, quivering as the nebulous figure sits down next to him as quietly as possible. It’s like he can hear everything, from the worried breath of the person beside him to the drops of water rolling down the streets and into the sewers. He can hear the distant sound of businessmen talking on the phone, the bells of nearby shops announcing someone entering the premises and the sound of his own heartbeat hammering so hard in his chest he thinks it might break every rib in his body. Then, the once calming detailed sounds turn into giant uproars of traffic, cars, the train rumbling underground, the footsteps of crowds and the static from radios and televisions.

It’s all too much, this is too much.

Before he collapses from a sensory overload he feels a pair of hands cup over his ears. The contact brings a boil of fear inside Taehyung’s gut, twisting and stabbing until he almost feels nauseous from fright. However, the action slowly starts to eliminate the blaring noises and he can focus on the sounds of his own erratic breathing more carefully. The hands are cold yet comforting, the fingers long but not like the tendrils of smoke in his dreams, more like the indications of a piano player. He can feel the rough yet softness of them, and suddenly he finds himself able to think with a less clouded mind.

_Breath Tae, Breath_ he chants to himself. He can feel his lungs finally unlock a sort of restraint, and he intakes a huge gasp of air, coughing and sputtering and quite on the verge of choking. He doesn’t understand who this person is, let alone why they are helping some complete stranger in the back of an alleyway (especially considering that night’s falling soon). Yet, he is too perturbed to think about it in depth, and once he regains his senses, he quickly unlatches himself from the stranger’s hold with a shaky breath.

“Who are you?” Taehyung manages to whisper in a hoarse voice. His hands are still shaking a tremendous amount, but he is able to turn his head in what he thinks is the direction of the figure. He can still see some forms of light and shadows; however, all perception of direction is long gone at this point.

“My name is Yoongi, I live across the street and I happened to see you. I, pretty stupidly, didn’t bring my cell phone and I was too scared to leave you all on your own. If not I would have called for an ambulance,” the voice, Yoongi, replies. He's surprisingly very calm, or at least his tone is, and the more he talks the more Taehyung feels at ease.
A good thing about Yoongi is that he doesn’t pry. He doesn’t ask unnecessary questions, doesn’t remark on this absurd situation, nor does he even demand an explanation as to why Taehyung is having an anxiety attack on the floor of a damp alleyway. Instead, he uses lulling words and calming anecdotes to steady the other’s breathing, trying his best to avoid touching him. He just sits there next to him, a boy who’s too skinny, too shaken, and still terrifyingly pale. A boy who seems to burn with a fever, and is littered with bruises and cuts and paled scars. A boy with bleeding, hollow, grey eyes, that doesn’t even notice that he’s not staring at Yoongi, but rather the building behind him. Yoongi’s heart sinks, and he tries his best to guide the boy beside him out of his state of panic and distress. 

Once Taehyung’s breathing is as normal as can be, Yoongi begins to speak again. “Can you move?”

It takes a while for Taehyung to respond, and Yoongi almost thinks that he passed out, however, the boy eventually brings his hand upwards (slowly) as if to test its motion. He nods affirmatively and flexes his fingers, the digits still trembling but remarkably more still than when Yoongi found him.

“Okay good, that’s very good,” Yoongi praises softly, his eyes darting carefully around. The night is now upon them, and the dim street lamps aren’t much to guide them the way. However, looking down the seemingly endless alleyway, Yoongi decides that staying here is not the best option. “Can you stand?” he asks after analyzing the current predicament.

Taehyung doesn’t think he can, but he perceives the slight worry and fear in the other’s voice as a bad sign. He nods his head with hesitation before attempting to get up in a brisk motion. “Woah, Woah, I didn’t mean by yourself, kid!” In reflex, he grabs the other’s side carefully.

Taehyung yelps at the touch, instinctively escaping the hold as if he has been electrocuted with something stronger than lightning. Yoongi curses and lets out a sigh of concern. “Are you badly hurt anywhere?” he calls out again, refraining from searching Taehyung himself. It doesn’t take an idiot to notice the nasty bruises and marks on the boy’s skin, however, Yoongi is worried that he might touch a particularly sensitive wound. All Taehyung can do is use his hands to touch his face, feeling his way up until he reaches his eyes. He feels liquid, thicker than water, and his hands now stain with a colour he cannot see. “There.”

Yoongi feels like an idiot, his question should have been more direct. He nods but then remembers that the boy can’t see very well. “Okay, anywhere else?”

Taehyung takes a shorter time to respond. “Everywhere,” it comes out more as a groan than a whisper. The answer doesn’t help Yoongi but he doesn’t want to exhaust the boy more, especially with all the questions he needs to ask to ensure he is okay to walk. “How much can you see?” It’s a valid question since he doesn’t know if the boy’s vision is just partially out, or completely.
“Shadows, some light, I can’t see any colours” Taehyung relays, then after a pause. “or you.”

Yoongi intakes a sharp breath.

So, not a very promising situation this is.

“Okay, two more questions and then I’m going to try and help you walk to my house. It’s only a couple blocks away, but I’m going to have to touch you. Is that okay?”

Taehyung’s mind whirls with emotion. He doesn’t want to be touched, he never wants to be touched ever again. However, the more he stays here, the more the blackness takes over, so he gulps down a whimper and nods. “What’s your other question?”

“What’s your name?”

“My name?” Taehyung repeats. It has been so long since he’s told someone it, so long since someone cared enough to ask him with the exception of one stranger.

“You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to. I just want to know who to call once you’re safe, and who I can give you back to. Of course, we need to get you to a hospital too.”

No, no, no. Taehyung doesn’t want to go back. He can’t go back, or they’ll surely kill him. The images of hands crawl back into his mind and he swallows a sob. He doesn’t want to go anywhere, let alone a place with people. What if he goes to the hospital and he’s found? His dirty secret revealed mercilessly to the minds of strangers? Taehyung shakes his head with fear, his hands shaking again.

“Okay, okay, you don’t have to tell me. You can stay with me for now, is that okay?”

“I thought you only had two more questions.” he musters to joke out miserably. Yoongi smiles even though Tae can’t see him, and wonders how a boy so unfortunate can be lighthearted in a situation so dire. He takes it as a yes and hauls him up with his two arms. Yoongi is short, and he may not be the strongest person in the world, but he manages to lift Taehyung without much resistance, his body quite skinny and light for a teenager. Taehyung uses his remaining strength to wrap his arm around the other, refraining from jumping at the contact and hissing as he is forced to stand up and use his bruised limbs. “Don’t run me into a pole or anything,” Taehyung mutters, trying to make the situation lighter, however, it’s hard to do so when his lips are quivering and his voice breaks at the
end of the sentence. Yoongi doesn’t comment on it, and instead, focuses his energy on making sure Taehyung arrives safely, and in one piece.

It proves to be a much more challenging task. The cars zoom by at alarming speeds, and even though they seem to be walking on a sidewalk, Taehyung can’t help but think that Yoongi is going to shove him onto the street and leave him to die at any second. Everyone has betrayed him in his life, so why would this be any different? The sounds become overpowering again, each honk or skid a vehicle makes slicing right through his body as if he’s made of butter. It’s consuming him, the shadows, and he can’t seem to shake off the feeling of dread and despair. “Almost there,” Yoongi states as if sensing Taehyung’s rising panic. “Just a few more steps, don’t worry, I won’t let anything bad happen to you.” Tae doesn’t know why this stranger is helping him so much. He refuses to believe it’s just out of the kindness of his heart, or just the ‘right thing to do’. That’s just a load of bullshit people tell themselves so that they feel good for donating to charities or giving money to homeless people. But it’s complete crap, at least to Taehyung. He doesn’t want to be someone’s charity case, but then again, if he doesn’t let this stranger help him, he may just about die in that cramped alleyway.

He lets himself be hauled, well, more like dragged, his strength not really providing much in helping him move. Of course, his legs are working (barely), but it’s his own weight that’s making him lean heavily on Yoongi’s slightly smaller frame. Is this stranger really that kind to help him? Or is this still his dream? Is he actually still back in that crouched position, battling his nightmare as people pass by? It’s hard to walk straight when all these thoughts are infiltrating his mind, especially when he can’t really see either, but Yoongi does a good job on avoiding any forlorn poles and randomly placed fire hydrants. Only then does he notice how many obstacles truly lie between such a short amount of space.

They almost make it.

Almost.

Fate just isn’t on Taehyung’s side and he feels himself begin to collapse onto the floor. Heavy yet weightless.

“Hey! Hey, you can do this, it’s just after this crosswalk. Then you can relax, okay? But right now, I need you to stay with me. Stay with me dammit!”

Taehyung finally feels the sounds dull, his ears filled with dense cotton, and his world of darkness spinning. The shadows around him tumble, its walls crumbling as he struggles to stay upright. He refuses to let his knees buckle, but the resilience to walk becomes overbearing. Yoongi’s cursing is a distant thought now, and Taehyung can’t remember when his arms become limp and his head lolls downwards, lifeless and swinging. All he hears is the traffic becoming louder in his dulled hearing,
and the movement of Yoongi practically lifting him off the ground and sprinting to the other side of the road. His vision is now completely black, and he doesn’t know if it’s his sight finally diminishing, or his body losing consciousness.

Maybe, it’s both.

Taehyung feels himself wake up.

Or maybe he’s not awake. He can’t tell. Everything is dark, and not just dark, it’s pitch black. Not an ounce of light filters through any sort of receptors. His heart is picking up again, why can’t he see? Are his eyes closed? Where is he? Why does everything hurt so much? He moans in discomfort, shifting his body as he tries to reach in front of him.

“He’s awake!” a shrill voice yells in surprise. The noise is sharp to Taehyung’s ears and he winces, his body still fatigued and heavy. Did someone inject lead into his veins? Everything feels so fuzzy, so heavy, so painful. He can’t escape, yet again. At this point, it’s not a surprise, but a looming and expecting dark fate. His reality.

Then, there’s a bunch of loud commotion. People shuffling, the rustle of sheets, the cling of metal against metal. Everything is so loud; doesn’t anyone have decent manners? There shouldn’t be this much noise when people are trying to rest. Taehyung’s head pounds, perhaps this is the worst headache he has ever had. Where’s the stranger, Yoongi? Is it truly all a dream, or has Yoongi also abandoned Taehyung to the implacable hands of his monsters?

“Hi Taehyung-ssi, can you hear me?” a woman’s voice asks, interrupting his doubts and frightful thoughts. The other sounds seem to diminish and Taehyung is eternally grateful. Taehyung nods, unable to use his voice. “Good, good. My name is Dr. Sung and I’m going to ask you a few questions, okay?” The lady’s voice is light, sweet, and pleasant. She seems kind and thankfully doesn’t touch Taehyung whilst introducing herself. Tae feels himself relax against whatever he’s on. Now that he thinks about it, he doesn’t feel like he’s back in the alleyway. He’s lying down, and his back rests on this incredibly soft material. Cotton? Whatever it is, Taehyung holds gratitude for whoever eased his pain, even if it’s only slightly.

Suddenly, it’s like he’s been hit with a hurricane, everything crashing down on him at once in a swirl of humid chaos. Wait, wait, wait a fucking minute. Doctor? Sheets? Questions? It’s as if his body is boosted with adrenaline, who knows, maybe it is, all Taehyung knows is that he has to get out of here. The longer he’s here in this hospital, the more time they can find him, and they will find him.
“I need to leave. I can’t be here” Taehyung croaks weakly. His voice is hoarse, scratchy, and dry, and gosh, doesn’t this place have any water? The doctor seems to notice his discomfort.

“Relax Taehyung-ssi, you are still under shock. You are okay, you were hurt, and now you are at ASAN Medical Center. You were in pretty bad shape when you first came here but after an emergency surgery you seemed to have recovered quite nicely. You are hooked with quite a few wires, but they will be taken out soon once you are bett- “

“I need to leave, who’s here? Is anyone here to see me?” Taehyung says, his voice rising. If they are here-no, they can’t be here.

“I’m sorry, we couldn’t find any information on your relatives at the moment as you came in as a sudden trauma case. However, we will be in contact with them as soon as we can, in fact, there are employees who are finding that information as we spe- “

“No, please don’t,” Taehyung whimpers. “They can’t come here.”

The doctor notices the distress in the boy’s face, curiosity arousing in her brain. “I’m sorry, are you not on good terms with your family? Did they hurt you? Did they do this?”

Too many questions. Where’s Yoongi? Taehyung can’t say anything. He can’t speak. It’s pathetic and it’s dangerous. What if they find out? What if nobody believes him? He’s a boy, after all, people often don’t sympathise with him.

Taehyung shakes his head. “No, they didn’t,” he says. “I just don’t have a close relationship with them. You see, I’m an orphan.”

It’s not a complete lie. Taehyung was once an orphan, and now, his ‘family’ is dead to him.

“Oh,” the doctor seems taken aback, perhaps with compassion. “Which orphanage are you from? Maybe I can contact them?”

“I don’t live in one. I’m on the streets” Taehyung replies. Again, not a complete lie. He does live on the streets, he just doesn’t live in an orphanage anymore. It’s not like he can say that though, his new
family not being officially dead and all.

The doctor is quiet for some time, processing the recent information. Taehyung isn’t an adult yet so he should be in an orphanage, but you can’t really complain to a patient about their decisions and life choices, so she leaves it at that. “Okay, before we move forward I want to ask you some questions. They are relatively easy and it doesn’t involve much talking.”

“Okay”

Dr. Sung grabs a small metallic flashlight from the bedside table. She holds it up to Taehyung’s eyes. “Here I have a device in front of you. Beside you is a button, if you need help finding it, let me know. I want you to tell me if you see anything. Every time you do, please press that button. Do you understand?” Taehyung nods. What’s up with everyone patronizing him? He feels his way for the button, soon finding a round plastic object that is smooth to the touch. His fingers tingle, and he can’t tell if it's because of an arising anxiety attack, or everything being so unusually sensitive.

Dr. Sung clicks the flashlight on, the light emitting a harsh beam against one of his cloudy eyes.

Nothing.

No flinch, no blink, just his eye boring straight into the head of an illuminating flashlight. The pupil reacts normally, dilating as such, however, an immense greyish blanket seems to cover his original brown colour. “Are you doing anything yet? I think it would be pretty hard to test if I can see if my eyes are still closed.”

The doctor intakes a breath whilst moving the flashlight towards his left eye. Taehyung sees a slight glimmer, barely noticeable but a bright contrast from the original pitch darkness. Taehyung presses the button softly. He hears the scribbling of notes and wonders if his other eye has been tested too. "On a scale from one to ten, how significant is this light?" The doctor asks.

"two."

“Okay, we’re going to try a different test now. I have a pen in front of me, I want you to try your best to follow the movement of it.”

Taehyung’s heart drops.
Dr. Sung takes out a pen from her front pocket and aligns it at the center of Taehyung’s face. She then moves it to his right side. The pupil stays in its place, staring straight ahead as if nothing is bothering it. The eye seems to glare harshly yet void of emotion, and the doctor breathes with a light sympathy. She then moves the pen to his left side, dragging the pen slowly across his vision.

There! His eye responds, moving sluggishly but definitively with the pen. Taehyung only sees the shadow, but it’s enough for his eye to follow the movement. The hope and happiness do not last long though, and Taehyung realises the sudden circumstance.

“I’m blind, aren’t I?” He voices his concerns, hoping that perhaps this is one big joke, one big prank or never-ending nightmare. The way the doctor remains silent confirms his suspicions.

“Along with critical optic nerve damage, you suffered from various head traumas that only worsened the injury. I’m very sorry Taehyung-ssi, if you would like some time to plan out your options and such, I will be happy to help you.”

Nothing seems to hurt anymore. Well, nothing hurts because Taehyung no longer feels anything. He’s numb, from the top of his head to the bottom of his toes. He feels like he’s floating in his nightmare, darkness enveloping him forever, a foe crueler than death.

“Where’s Yoongi?”

“I’m sorry, I know this comes as a great shock to you, and I am immensely apologetic, however, you still have options. Your left eye seems to still hold some working receptors, so with work, we may be able to get you to partially see. It’s a long shot, and there are risks, bu- “

“Where is Yoongi?” Taehyung repeats, this time with much more firmness and urgency.

“Is he related to you? He came in with the ambulance along with another gentleman, but as you are not connected by blood he is not permitted to see you.” Dr. Sung explains politely, it’s only protocol, but after just receiving the news that he is practically blind, he doesn’t care.

“Please, I need to see him. I need a friend. I need someone.” His voice breaks at the end, tears threatening to fall down his cheeks. Does he even consider Yoongi a friend? I mean, he did save his life, but he doesn’t know him whatsoever. Sadness consumes him. He feels so utterly numb and alone and sad and gone, and this is worse than death. Living in constant blackness. Living in a
constant nightmare.

How is he supposed to get the dreams out of his head if he’s always going to be stuck in them?

“I’ll see if he’s waiting in the lobby. He always visited, every day, I don’t know what connection you two have, but he cares about you a lot.”

With that, the doctor leaves to go find the boy. Taehyung is confused. He doesn’t even know the guy for crying out loud, how can someone care about you if they don’t even know you? Beats him, not like he knows much about loving or being loved anyway. The doctor said that Yoongi visited every day. If so, how long has Taehyung been in here?

Instead of worrying about it, he decides to feel his way around the bed for his phone. It's not like he can use it, but he needs to touch something familiar or his mind might explode. He searches the nightstand, it’s full of random things but he feels something quite strange on it. Something heavy, perhaps a vase or sculpture that’s smooth, is on the far left of the table. Then, beside it, there seem to be lots of cards, like, a whole stack of them. He runs his hands across them and feels lots of bumps along the surface. Bumps in specific patterns, certain structures, a coded message.

Is this…braille?

He can't understand it, but it’s much more useful than a card with ink he can’t physically see.

Beside the stack he is able to find his phone, identifying it with its cracked screen and peeled case. He clutches onto it like it’s a lifeline, practically cradling the phone in his hands in seek of comfort and recognition. Everything is just too different, too drastic, and it all happened too quickly. It sounds childish, but in moments like these, he really wishes for a kind, warming, and loving mother. A mother who hasn’t abandoned him. A mother by blood.

He hears the door to his room open, and then hesitant footsteps. They sound uncertain if they should approach the bed, acting like Taehyung is a bomb about to go off.

Maybe he is.

"I can you hear you, you know?" Taehyung speaks, his voice still hoarse from lack of water. Yoongi clears his throat and makes up his mind to sit down on a chair in front of the boy.
"How are you doing?" Yoongi asks. Taehyung scoffs. "Right, sorry. Dumb question."

There's a long silence. Taehyung can't tell if Yoongi is even still there until he hears the slight shuffling of legs and the dragging of a plastic chair.

"Thank you" Taehyung starts gently. "For helping me, I mean. I don't know why you did, but I would be as good as dead if it weren't for you."

"I thought you were dead" Yoongi responds with an unamused laugh. "I almost freaked out when I saw you. You were talking in your sleep...chanting no over and over again and my god, you were so pale. You could have been a ghost."

Taehyung swallows loudly.

"I didn't know what to do. I didn't see you until I was walking back from practice, and when I did, my heart practically stopped. You were filled with bruises, and cuts, and these red protruding marks. And then your eyes..." Yoongi trails off, realising that this is indeed a sensitive topic.

"What were they like?" Taehyung asks. He wants to know, no, he needs to know. His memory has been hazy ever since he woke up, and the only thing he truly remembers is fear. The fear towards them.

"They were red. Blood. It was everywhere. It just seemed to be painted onto them. I couldn't see much because your hair was covering most of your face, but I saw glass, and your pupils were nearly white. I-I saw your head." Yoongi pauses. "I thought you were going to die right in front of me."

Taehyung inhales.

"I shouldn't be telling you this, you already have enough on your plate," Yoongi states after a while.

"No, I wan-... I need to know."
Yoongi only nods.

"How did you help me?"

"I tried to get you to walk. You were doing great for the most of it. I was trying to get us to my house so I could call for an ambulance since you were in desperate need of one, and my friend for help," Yoongi takes a moment to catch his breath, reliving the moment scarier than he thinks. "You collapsed on the street and I couldn't just leave you there so I tried my best to lift you up. Some people helped, not a lot since it was night and all, but one of them helped call the ambulance. You almost made me freak out, and I was trying my best not to."

"I'm sorry for causing trouble."

"Are you kidding? Don't ever be sorry for something like that! How could you even think that? If anything, I'm glad I was able to help you!"

"I know, but if you hadn't, you wouldn't be in this situation."

"That's not something you should worry about. It's not your fault. This is not your fault."

But it is his fault, or at least according to Taehyung, it is. He feels as if this is all because of him. He made this stranger's life more complicated than it needs to be, he's the one who couldn't seem to control his anxiety attack, and he's the one who's such a disgrace that he got his sight taken away. He thinks maybe he did deserve to be beaten by those monsters. A sudden feeling of melancholy washes over Taehyung and it's harder to breathe.

"Hey, relax, okay? Let's not focus on any more details. What matters is that you're alive. You will get through this," Yoongi encourages, moving closer to the smaller boy. He's still skinny but colour has begun to return to his features. He's tan, sun-kissed, a golden honey hue glazes his skin.

All Taehyung can do is nod as he feels the bubbling sadness in him grow.

The sadness starts off as a seed, an emotion so small it is barely recognisable. Then, it evolves into a blue sapling, the misery developing and coursing through each stem, leaf, and growth. The last stage is the tree, where the bark is strong in anguish and the leaves thick with despair. The once harmless seed now an azure evolution that only sheds tears. This is what everlasting pain feels like. It doesn't
come all at once, but it builds in small junctures until it consumes you whole. Until you become the embodiment itself.

Taehyung begins to cry before he even realises it. It's not an ugly cry or an episode of wrecked sobs, but rather a subtle tremor of the shoulders. Sluggish tears run down his cheeks, not in streams but in individual droplets, each one shedding their own reason for falling. Before he knows it, there are arms around him, yet Taehyung lets them comfort him, too tired to shun them away and too despondent to care. He has become familiar with the touch, and instead of a hit or a strike or a rush of pain, he has associated this touch with kindness, and with comfort. The touch is light and not overbearingly warm, and it reminds him of music. A fluttering tune with a prominent melody and gentle accompaniment. It reminds him of kindness.

Taehyung leans into the touch, grabbing onto the other's clothes in seek of support. Yoongi lets him, embracing the boy in compassion as his shirt grows wet with liquid sorrow. Taehyung is unsure how he becomes accustomed to the other's presence, but soon he begins to feel like they are no longer strangers, nor acquaintances, but friends. It's Taehyung's first friend, perhaps the only one he'll ever have, but it's there. He holds on tighter to Yoongi's body to prevent a whimper from escaping his swollen lips, and for the first time in his life, he never wants to let go. Normally, he's so quick to avoid anyone's touch, whether it's receiving a handshake, or brushing shoulders on a packed shuttle. He used to think that he doesn't need anyone's help, anyone's sympathy, and certainly anyone's touch. This time, Taehyung feels that if he lets go he might fall deeper down than he already is.

He holds on to prevent from being sucked into his own nightmare. A constant terror. A brooding past, present, and future.

An everlasting nightmare, that is.

Chapter End Notes

hey there!

welcome to my first and certainly not least vkook fanfic
I don't really expect views, comments ++ likes on this, but I just thought of this idea and decided to write it down as a story to amuse myself and some of my friends.

If somehow you DO like it, then feel free to stop by my instagram (@amfics) for updates, summaries, pending works, and just random things about my writing life (note: it's not my personal).

Orrrr if you don't want to do that, then I don't know just keep living your life, I mean that's what I would do.

Also, an important note, I am in no way trying to romanticise blindness or disabilities,
this is just a concept I wanted to try out (I am not blind therefore I do not know what it truly is like to be so). In addition (wow we're being formal), I did a lot of research to try and represent someone who is actually visually impaired as best as I can, however, if things are inaccurate I'm sorry this is just based on knowledge I have acquired via books and the internet. This may or may not be a precise portrayal so I'm sorry if I've offended anyone (I take full responsibility).

I am but a measly 15 year old trying to get by uwu.

have fun reading ;)

さようなら。
Chapter Summary

6 years later and Taehyung has grown used to the pain. The injury. His fate.

Reality.

However, it's not all bitter. Time has created scars and these scars, however eminent, messily hide the demons of the past.

They also allow him to make friends. To escape the shelters of his home, and breathe a normal life.

But dreams still lurk, and although he's striving to make his goals a reality, these images stalk him with cloaking arms.

It's a struggle. A fight of dreams. The ones from his darkened mind, and the ones he plan to make for his future.

It's essentially,

A dream in a dream.

Chapter Notes

so I actually updated!

I had drafted this chapter a while ago but I finally decided to stop procrastinating and finish it.

I don't know why I make such emo and angsty stories but hey, apparently I'm feeding people with the hurt they need (I mean I always love a good hurt story too).

Again, I have this really inactive instagram account (I'll put a link at the end of the chapter) which basically will update you on future chapters AND (there's more :) ) I'll probably make polls of what side ships, future stories, and plot additions you want. It's all about being ~interactive~

anyways, I hope you enjoy this chapter!

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

6 years later
The funny thing about dreams is that they are supposed to mean something. Each envisioned picture apparently holds a purpose, telling your mind what your subconscious has been aching to present you. A conflict at school, an argument with your siblings, maybe even a rude remark from a customer, they all nestle comfortably in your dormant mind, waiting for the realm of dreams to escape.

For Taehyung though, dreams hold no purpose other than to remind him of his stark and desolate past. It isn't his subconscious telling him new things or present events, but his subconscious repeating unsparing incidents he long wishes to forget.

These dreams follow him every night. It doesn't matter what had happened during the day, whether good or bad, they don't arrive by triggers but by ritual. Tradition. They follow him everywhere, anytime, and especially at night. They're sort of like shadows, depicting images of dark relentless monsters no matter if the light shines, in fact, worsening the more light there is. It's ironic really, considering that Taehyung can't even see shadows, let alone light itself, yet they are still such prominent aspects in his life.

The dreams have been more creative recently. Instead of the usual eerie monotone faces that spit blood and venomous words, Taehyung has several images of choking, scratching, stabbing, and of course, his broken eyes. His eyes that he hasn't seen since the accident, and is something he unknowingly fears. They are red, splotchy with blood, dull and lifeless like the beady pupils of dolls and laced in glass. He sometimes fears that when he wakes up, that's what they'll look like. That they'll adapt to the images in his dreams. Yoongi has constantly assured him that they look normal, quite beautiful in fact, but Taehyung shakes off the compliment as him just being nice (which is something Yoongi doesn't express often). His dreams always depict his eyes, but recently, they have been more detailed. They show the way they were smashed, the pain he felt and still feels, and most definitely, the people who did it to him. It's vivid, cruel, inhumane, but what's worse is that it never seems to stop.

Blood. The only colour he ever sees in his dreams is crimson. Not a bright shade, but a dark and devilish one, the shade that reminds you of Satan himself. The funny thing about dreams, well, nightmares, is that they are supposed to end, or at least when you wake up. Taehyung never seems to wake up from them because the images are never completely washed away. They stick to his mind and paint his black vision like a permanent movie, which is why he'll often find himself having them during the day. Taehyung won't call them flashbacks, but more like daydreams, which is a poetic and
angelic way of describing such scenes. Sometimes he wonders if he should call them daymares, yeah, that sounds more fitting.

_Taehyung, for god's sake wake up._

Taehyung jolts up at the impending noise, frantically feeling around with his hands to identify the voice. He feels arms, a soft cotton shirt, and then piano hands with heavy rings. His heartbeat relaxes significantly, eyes blinking with no purpose, and he feels his face heat up in embarrassment.

"Sorry, I forgot where I was for a second," he answers sheepishly, feeling tired even though he just woke up. It's funny how sleeping seems to _drain_ his energy rather than replenish it.

"Don't worry about that. You were muttering again...Do you want to talk about it?" Yoongi asks, their hands still entwined.

"I don't really, but I'm guessing it's not up for discussion. I'm going to have to tell you anyways, aren't I?" Taehyung replies with a subtle bite to his words. It's not like he doesn't like talking with Yoongi, it's just that this particular day, he feels wired up. His body operates as if he's a timer ready to finish, elasticity ready to let go, and when he's wired up, it's difficult for him to open up to others.

"I'm just concerned, that's all. Was it the same dream?" Yoongi questions again, and despite Taehyung's initial hostility, he can't help but give in to the other's worried demands. Yoongi did save him after all.


Yoongi nods even though Tae can't see him, and picks up his white stick leaning on the bed. Taehyung doesn't like to use it, stating that "he doesn't want the whole world to know he's blind", but after fresh images and dark paintings, it helps him stabilize himself from the two worlds. The world of reality and the world of the mind. Taehyung smiles gratefully when he feels the familiar object in his hands, and he gets into a sitting position, using his hands to guide him near the end of the bed.

"I think the dream didn't last as long though," Taehyung reassures, but it's more to himself than anyone else.
"It's because I was yelling for you to wake up, doofus." It's a weak attempt to lighten the situation but Taehyung still cracks a small grin and using the other's shoulder, he manages to hoist himself out of the bed. He wavers slightly, unsteady on his feet and a wash of dizziness overtakes him. He has to refrain from stumbling.

"Hey, you sure you're okay? We can always call in sick, I'm sure the school wouldn't mind," Yoongi says, and it's obvious that he's worrying again. Yoongi doesn't worry often, but when it comes to Taehyung, it seems like it's all he ever does and knows how to do. Taehyung just nods hastily, vaguely unaware of his surroundings. Ever since they moved from Yoongi's old beat up flat to this somewhat newer apartment, Taehyung feels as if everything is misplaced. The bed is on the left side of the room for one matter, and his memory often fails him when he's so accustomed to plopping down near the centre of his old room. Even after a couple of butt injuries from landing on the wooden floorboards, Taehyung hasn't learned his lesson. The desk also seems to be everywhere he tries to walk, a nuisance really in a room that's otherwise quite easy to walk around, and the closet, well the closet is a completely different story as he can never even find it.

It's different, and difference means obstacles. Difference, however, also means change, and sometimes change isn't always a bad thing.

"No, I can manage. It's just school, what's the worst thing that can happen?" Taehyung walks with more reassurance, using the white stick for guidance.

"You could get paired up with Hoseok for the art project. Now, the guy's talented at everything, but drawing...oh man, why do some people decide to minor in art,"

"Aha, that's funny coming from you since you're practically in love with the guy," Taehyung laughs. "I swear, you-"

Yoongi gives an embarrassed laugh. "I don't like him, I just appreciate talented people;"

"Oh really? Is that so?" Taehyung begins, before starting to imitate his shorter friend in an unnecessarily high voice. "Wow, Hoseok, such a talented guy, he's just soo attractive and smart and-"

"Okay! That's enough. You find one leverage over me and now you become a brat about it," Yoongi huffs in annoyance. "I'm not in love with the guy...I just admire him,"
"Uh-huh, sure, and I can see,"

Yoongi flicks the other's head with his finger. "Watch your mouth, I'm still your elder,"

Taehyung laughs with a mixture of a scoff, the conversation distracting him enough to forget about his weariness and distinct dizziness. That's another good thing about Yoongi, he's so naturally calming that just a simple humorous conversation can uplift Taehyung's spirits.

...That is until he runs face first into a remarkably hard door.

"You let me run into that door, didn't you? Weren't we supposed to get rid of them? And why are they so damn hard geez,"

"Don't be a smartass then."

"So, you DO like him?"

Yoongi threatens to run him into a wall next and Taehyung shuts up, stifling an amused laugh. Even though they aren't related, their relationship is close to brotherly. After the "accident" Taehyung had nowhere to go. He had explained to Yoongi a brief explanation as to why, and it didn't take an idiot to connect the dots, so from then on, he moved in with Yoongi. Tae is still confused as to why he helped him and continues to help him. They were strangers before, and one quick hospital trip suddenly changed their relationship? Taehyung can't wrap his head around it but chooses not to go into depth with it because he knows it will only cause a headache. He has tried to get an answer out of Yoongi, but after five years of living with each other, he has learned to accept his ultimate defeat.

"You have a checkup today," Yoongi begins, and the warmth and banter of the earlier discussion immediately dissolves in the air. The air which is now dense and heavy, thick with hesitation and concern. "I can't take you because I have my summer project due, but I can get Jin hyung to drive you,"

Taehyung mutters a simple 'okay', not wanting to drag the topic further. Hospitals are touchy subjects, something about them always making Tae go silent. Maybe it's the fact that he holds bad memories there, or maybe because he doesn't like to confront the fact that he truly is blind. Whatever it is, it knows how to sour a good mood, especially one as bittersweet as sarcasm.
"I know you don't like them, so if you prefer I go with you, I can always ask my teacher for an extension."

"Yoongi, I'll be fine. You've been working on your project all summer, it would be unfair for you to lose marks for handing it in late. Plus, I like hyung."

Jin has helped Taehyung in the past as well. For one, Taehyung couldn't even afford the hospital bills in which he received, and Jin had been kind enough to pay them for him. Granted, he is loaded, however, most people with money don't just help a complete stranger in such a drastic way, so he appreciated, and still appreciates the gesture. Alongside that, Jin is a likeable character. He does pry a bit too much, but that's just his good nature. He's kind, responsible obviously, and is like the parent-figure Tae never truly had. He's also the master of all things cooking and culinary, and while Taehyung can't see, it allows him to appreciate and indulge different flavours to their full potential.

"Okay, as long as you're sure. Remember you have my-"

"Your phone number? Yes, and yes, I know when and where you will be,"

Yoongi sighs. "I don't mean to nag."

"I know mom," Taehyung gives a soft smile, a mischievous smile at that, and manoeuvres his way to the bathroom. He considers throwing the white stick out of his hand, already fed up with the damn thing and the big red sign it seems to label him with. 'HEY, LOOK AT ME, I'M BLIND!' is what the entire object screams and Tae despises it. It's supposed to be helpful, but it's just another hard undeniable truth, and Taehyung hates facing that truth.

Turns out, Taehyung does end up placing the white stick somewhere else. He wants to throw it, he really does, but then realises that he might trip on it later, and decides not to. Using the wall, he guides his way down the hall, thankfully no unwanted hindrances in his way. The new apartment is bigger and evidently more spacious, so it's easier to move around at the least. It's also a lot colder, and the bite of the frigid floorboards is enough to help stabilize Tae so that he can afford to discard his white stick.

The bathroom.

Showering is always a difficult task. It's why Taehyung prefers baths, because at least then he doesn't need Yoongi waiting for him outside the glass door, essentially witnessing him in his bare nakedness.
It's not really the nude aspect that makes him uncomfortable, but the sense of vulnerability. If being blind isn't bad enough, being naked AND blind, now that tops the cake for maximum impotence. He manages though, six years of experience treating him well more than it should, and after putting on a towel, he calls out for a pair of clothes.

Taehyung doesn't like being dependent, but he has grown accustomed to it, much to his dismay. It's something about reliance and having to burden somebody with his disability that frustrates him. He'll always be a nuisance, to his parents, to himself, and now to Yoongi, and he hates it. He hates it almost as much as his white stick, and that is saying a lot.

Morning routines went a little something like this. Taehyung wakes up, sometimes in cold sweats, other times normally, whatever situation it is Yoongi is always there. He gets out of bed, showers, puts on clothes, how any normal person would essentially get ready and grabs his belongings for school. Then, the two of them take turns making breakfast. Despite his obvious impediment, cooking is something Taehyung finds pleasure in. He likes using his other senses: smell, taste, and touch, to perfect a dish or just relieve stress. He may not be as great as Jin's, but he sure as hell knows how to make a mean batch of pancakes. It had taken Tae quite a bit of time to convince Yoongi that he won't burn the whole house down, but after slowly doing things on his own, first cereal, then toast, and finally eggs, Yoongi entrusted him with the stove and oven. It's another aspect which Taehyung appreciates about the other. Trust.

It's a foreign concept to him but seems to come so naturally when it comes to the shorter boy. Trusting each other, whether it be small or large, is something they both value deeply. Yoongi is Taehyung's constant, and Taehyung is Yoongi's constant, they remain with each other through thick and thin, and despite some occasional quarrels, they can't help but reconnect with a bond stronger than fibres and skin. An unstoppable yet dysfunctional duo, an incredulous link that Taehyung doesn't seem to understand, but figuratively, and most literally, blindly follows.

It's an unspoken truth, and unlike his other one, is a truth he can openly accept with warm and welcoming arms.

"Hey! Watch where you're fucking going!"

A common remark.

A reasonable remark.
It hurts, but it's not so much the statement, but rather the impossible command that the person is asking.

Taehyung mutters a soft 'sorry', avoiding confrontation because announcing you're blind is a lot more chaotic than just simply removing yourself from the situation.

A rush of wind indicates one of the train’s taking off. They must be in a hurry.

Taehyung continues to walk, pretending to be unbothered, and adjusts his sunglasses, his white stick tucked in his pocket just in case. He looks ridiculous. It's a foggy day, the clouds packed compactly in a blanket of grey, and the mist of moisture enveloping the air in thick ribbons. There's no need to wear them, the sun diluted by opaque shields, but it conceals his grey eyes, and that's enough.

Taehyung sucks in a breath.

These types of things happen frequently, but it never gets any easier. From experience, the best thing to do is just shrug it off.

Yoongi squeezes his hand, apologizing for not guiding him around the person, and bites his lip to prevent cursing the guy out. Taehyung has told the other multiple times to not intervene, and instead, to just apologize and look away. Be passive, and maybe they'll leave you alone without showering you in pity.

"I could have easily told him," Yoongi speaks out his desired words.

"I know, but it's better this way."

They continue walking. Usually, they drive to school, but after an unexpected parking incident (which was more the other's fault than Yoongi's), their car is now being fixed. This also means they have to take the subway, which is a whole other story in itself.

"I know you don't want people to know, but doesn't it bother you?"

They've been through this conversation before. It's the only time Yoongi does pry.
"No," it's a lie. "And I don't know why you care more than I do."

"But if they knew, they would be more understanding."

"It's always going to happen, hyung. It doesn't matter if I tell them, or the next person, someone new will always say it, and it'll be a bother to explain it each time. It won't change anything. It's easier and quicker to just keep walking anyways."

Silence.

Taehyung doesn't want to burden strangers with his disability. It's bad enough that Yoongi already has to, but if he can now choose who knows, he much rather prefers to not let them.

Yoongi holds on to his hand tighter, trying to give him reassurance without words. It helps, for the most part, but then another comment resounds like fire in his ears.

"Fags."

He feels Yoongi tense, anger pulsing and choler bubbling in his grasp.

"Why you little shit-"

Taehyung interrupts him. "Don't"

Yoongi stiffens with a burning rage, tightening his already iron grip until it starts to hurt.

The person leaves, his comment quick and sharp, yet forgettable.

Taehyung emanates a soft smile, it sparkles with such sincerity and earnest that Yoongi can't stay mad for too long.
"You're too nice. At this rate, you'll be the biggest pushover of the century."

"What was getting mad going to do? Maybe you get too upset over little things."

"Seriously? He just called you a fag."

"I mean, he's not wron-"

"You may not respect yourself, but I do." Taehyung's breath catches. Another Yoongi-lecture. "And if someone calls you a fag in a degrading way, you bet your ass I'm going to retaliate."

Taehyung makes a dismissive motion with his arms, his way of rolling his eyes. "And getting mad will accomplish what?"

"It'll teach them a lesson."

Taehyung wants to snap. He wants to yell at Yoongi that his logic makes no sense and that he doesn't really care who calls him a fag or not. He suffices with a scoff, loosening his hold on the other's hand but not letting go completely.

This is why they usually drive.

Arriving at school is something Taehyung relishes. The way the wind hits his face, the commotion rumbles beneath him, and the sounds of students and chatter fill his ears, all emit a feeling of belonging and tranquillity.

It's also when he's most distracted, which helps with his so-called 'daymares' and lurking thoughts. It's common knowledge that the majority of college students absolutely hate school, work, and deadlines, but for Taehyung, these stressful attributes act as diversions to his own mind. His mind which is much darker than he likes to think it is.
Unfortunately, it is also when he and Yoongi have to part ways, the struggles of being in different grades and all.

"Taehyung, I'm serious, if you need anything or feel sick, call me. Please."

Yoongi can't stress it more.

"I promise, but honestly, I'll be fine."

Taehyung has had bad experiences at school before. He once fainted in a lecture (most likely due to lack of sleep) and had to be sent to the health centre after falling down a flight of stairs (which wasn’t necessarily his fault, but Yoongi doesn’t let him live it down). However, that's in the past, when he used to struggle with his affliction, and now he's used to the symptoms that come along with blindness and trauma itself.

"Tae."

"Yoongi, please promise me that you won't worry too much, okay?"

He hears a forced exhale. "Fine, but update me."

Taehyung nods understandingly, taking out his white stick to show Yoongi that he is capable of being responsible, and hopefully easing the other's fried nerves.

The first day of sophomore year. It's quite exhilarating, especially after a whole summer break of doing practically nothing except boring hospital visits. He suddenly yearns for the busyness of workloads and assignments, hands tapping tunes and erratic beats, this time in a good sort of anticipation.

They part ways, Yoongi walking towards the language building for his English class, and Taehyung walking towards the science one. He didn't always go to a 'seeing' school, in fact, after the accident he was home-schooled for a good couple years with the help of Jin's financials. Of course, Taehyung had offered to get a job at the time, but Jin refused, obviously conflicted with the idea of newly hindered Tae going out in the public by himself in order to receive the money for a decent education. However, after four years of the patronized training, Taehyung realized that he would much rather prefer the speed of a regular school, and worked up to the standards of a typical student.
It wasn't all sunshine and rainbows, nor was it easy, and sometimes Taehyung wonders what it would have been like to go to school with others like him. He certainly wouldn't stand out as much as he does now, and maybe then he'd feel comfortable revealing his eyes and confidently using his white stick. Then again, he always did have a passion for challenges. He’s also naturally reserved, so maybe the different outcome wouldn’t have changed anything. Who knows? Taehyung certainly doesn’t.

It's odd because he can feel the stares upon him as he walks toward the building. They glare like daggers, cut and direct, almost judging in a way. He doesn't know how he can tell, but he just can. It's like another sense that replaces the one he lost, a perception for a perception, a trade he never asked for yet now indubitably has. He grimaces at the thought and tries to concentrate on the concrete beneath his feet to stabilize his wild ruminations. He’s memorised the width of steps, how many there are, how long the path is that'll take him to where he wants to go, and the sudden cracks near the left side of the staircase. He knows where he is, he can feel where he is, everything is so familiar yet so distant in the darkness. The grass tickles his feet and he can tell that there’s a garden near him, probably littered with flowers and trees and small bees and green leaves. He can smell the fragrances through the railways of the wind, sweet and rosy, like floral candy, and he can sense the humidity of pending rain. It tastes thick and dewy.

He feels the end of the railing approaching, the ascending curves hinting the top of the metal structure, and is about to retract his white stick when he feels a soft bump across his shoulder.

"Oh god, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to run into you I just-" the voice stops abruptly, perhaps the person behind it noticing Taehyung's predicament. "Fuck, I'm the shittiest person alive, I can't believe I just-"

"Hey, relax" the person takes a deep breath, words faltering with uncertainty and hesitation. Tae can feel the regret beaming off the other, and smiles reassuringly to help calm them down. "Don't worry about it, I barely even felt it."

The person lets out a breathy laugh. "I'm such a clumsy shit, I sincerely am sorry." there's a pause but Taehyung can still hear the other's shaky breath. "I'm Namjoon by the way, if you cared at all, which you probably don't considering I just shoved you," another pause. "God, I'm normally not this socially inept but I'm late for my lecture and can't find the damn science building."

It's Taehyung's turn to laugh. "Well, it's kind of right in front of you,"

Namjoon looks around, spotting the sign that very boldly says 'Science Department'. "I'm an idiot, sorry for causing trouble." he bows down apologetically and then smacks himself, realizing that Tae
can't necessarily see him. "I hope to see you around!"

And then he's gone, well, at least Tae thinks he is. He just knows that the anxious breathing is gone, and the air around him is silent.

What a strange guy.

Taehyung likes him.

He arrives in class a couple minutes early, surprisingly, and checks with the teacher that he's in the right class. The last time he didn't do that, well, let's just say that's a nightmare of a story on its own. He doesn't want to explain his situation but after the teacher comments on it, he feels the need to reassure them that no, he won't have a problem taking notes, or understanding the topic. The teacher simply gives a word of approval at that, before guiding him to a seat somewhere in the fourth row.

Taehyung lets out a breath, readjusting his sunglasses in hopes to look the least bit normal. Now, people will normally just assume he's high or something, which is quite a funny muse on its own. The bell rings jarringly, a stab to his attentive ears, nonetheless signalling the beginning of lessons. He searches for the recorder in his bag, pulling it out with familiarity and places it in his hand. Although inefficient, he likes recording the lectures in case he misses something, a habit he picked up ever since the accident. It's good for taking notes, he guesses, but it's a pain to have to keep rewinding and finding the right time placements for specific topics and the right information. He has his special gadgets too, and sometimes he likes to pretend that they are normal devices and regular tools that anyone would use, instead of specially developed equipment for the visually impaired.

The lecture is interesting. It revolves around bonds and particles, explaining the structures of evolution and biological components. It's a blend of topics, a mixing pot of physics, biology, and chemistry, and it proves to be the best remedy after waking up from a nightmare.

Then, his once regular lesson takes quite an interesting turn, starting with a gentle tapping sound coming from beside him. At first, Taehyung tries to ignore it, focusing on the teacher's steady voice and fervently typing away on his braille notetaker. The soft clicking sounds almost drown out the noise, but soon, it becomes so prominent in his mind that all he can think of is that damn annoying tick that only seems to get louder as time goes by. He's just about had enough of whatever or whoever was making that noise when he hears a whisper.

"Pssst,"
Taehyung stops typing, his irritation bubbling slowly but most evidently. It's silent for a bit so he resumes typing, thinking that the noise is maybe not intended for him.

"Psssssst,"

The noise comes again, louder this time, and Taehyung stops to turn in the direction of the noise. He's slightly embarrassed, realizing that his head may be pointing right past whoever is trying to get his attention but tries not to dwell on it as he speaks quietly.

"What do you want?"

It's quiet for a bit, and he flushes in even more embarrassment at the thought that the noise may truly not be intended for him. The worry settles however when he hears a clear yet hushed voice respond, the person almost right by his ear.

"I-uh, I forgot a pencil...Do you have one by any chance?"

Taehyung stills, his emotions twisting between amusement and anxiety. It's funny because the person only now says this half-way through the lecture, but it's also nerve-wracking because Taehyung doesn't carry around pencils for obvious reasons. Taehyung tilts his head a little to the side, giving an apologetic smile.

"Sorry, I don't have one."

The person beside him physically deflates, humming a discontent sigh but nodding at Tae anyways. "Ah-it's okay, I just forgot my charger and my computer just died."

Taehyung wishes to help the guy, but he realises with dissatisfaction that he doesn't really HAVE a laptop charger or at least one that would work with the other's device. He continues typing to avoid awkward confrontation until the guy decides that now, of all places, is the perfect time to start up a conversation.

"Um, I see that you're recording the lecture...Could you, ah, perhaps send it to me later? I can give you my email address."
Taehyung nods. "Yeah sure, what's your name and er-email?"

"Jimin." the boy speaks. "And my email address, well, it's kind of embarrassing."

"Is it now? I mean you started the topic, now I have to know."

Jimin laughs softly. His voice is gentle and light to listen to. It reminds Tae of feathers, pastel balloons, and soft clouds, a blend of all things bright and airy. He likes it.

"Aha, it-it's, you know what, I'll just give you my number."

"I'm sorry what was that?"

"Are you really going to make me say it?"

"I'm curious."

He's not.

"How about this, you send me the recording and then I'll tell you."

"That's not how it works, you see, I have leverage. If you give me the address, I'll send it to you."

Taehyung adds a smirk of victory.

"God, you can't let me live, can you?"

Jimin finds himself regretting even mentioning having an email.

Taehyung's going to snicker and add a snarky comment, perhaps grin and continue his teasing to a certain extent. It's how he builds friendships, well, used to build friendships at least. A not so fantastic perk of being home-schooled is that you don't get the opportunity to make much, or quite
frankly any, friends. His reactions are suspended, however, with an imminent surge of pain, a bite similar to a sting that seems to spread inside the crevices of his mind. It works its way like rattlesnakes, following an illuminated path across his temple, his forehead, the back of his neck, and the centre of his face. It chews his skull and spits venom through his vessels, toxin mixing with tainted blood. It seems to protrude an ache that throbs through his entire face, saturating near the bridge of his nose and corners of his black vision. He can't help but flinch, a grimace etching on his lips at the familiar yet painful sensation. He wants to clutch his head but refrains, instead, clenching his shaking hands to help alleviate the pain by hopefully directing the pressure somewhere else. It's what Yoongi told him to do in the past.

It helps, but it takes significant concentration, and Taehyung finds himself unintentionally biting his fallen lips, the faintest droplets of blood bursting on his tongue. It doesn't taste poisoned, but it certainly feels like it.

"Uh, hey, are you alright?"

The voice is soft but stabs like daggers. He winces, trying not to cry out as the pain intensifies with noise.

"I'm fine,"

He grits his teeth, trying to focus on something, anything really, to help relieve the discomfort flooding in like giant waves. They aren't quite tsunamis yet, but on their way to be.

"You don't look so," Jimin frowns with concern. The mood always has to be ruined, doesn't it? "I can take you to the health centre if you wan-"

"I said I'm fine!"

He doesn't mean to snap, but the more the other talks, the more he wants to rip out his eyes that serve no purpose anyway. He wants to leave but he can't, not trusting himself to not make a fool of himself in front of the entire class. What to do, what to do...he can call Yoongi, but then again the other's ALSO in class, and despite what he said, Tae doesn't want to bother him. He's already such an inconvenience in his life, so why add on to it?

A period of relief opens and Taehyung thanks every God he can think of. It comes similar to how nausea comes. It evidently comes in waves, and it either worsens or gets better, but it always comes
randomly, spasmodically, and most undoubtedly in the worst possible situations. Sometimes the ache is dull, other times the pang is all he can think of, whatever the case, it happens and there's no telling when it will begin or when it will end.

"I'm sorry, I just got a headache." he stays quiet for a bit. "I didn't mean to snap at you."

Jimin smiles. "Don't worry about it, I'm just glad you're okay."

Email long forgotten, Taehyung itches to get out of class. He's embarrassed, uncomfortable, and most of all, nervous for when the pain comes back because it will come back. His hands tap without motive, heart picking up speed and lungs constricting involuntarily. Did the room just get ten times hotter? He feels trapped, his vision stinging and body trembling, he needs to get out.

The bell rings, a pain but a relief at the same time. The noise hurts tremendously, but a pressure has been lifted from his chest, freedom tasting like golden jewels. With quivering hands, he takes out his white stick, shrugs on his bag and tries to get out of his chair as quickly as possible. He vaguely hears Jimin call out from behind him before he stumbles forwards, not noticing the small step down in front of him. He wants to curse but struggles to form words, and suddenly he's overwhelmed.

_No, remember you're in control, relax. Remember what Yoongi said? Breathe, in, out..._

He feels better. The world stills and the floor grounds his zooming thoughts. It's silent, most of the students already on their way to their next class, but he hears the familiar breath of his new friend beside him. Are they even friends yet?

He feels the tender brush of smooth skin and realises that his hands are being wrapped in much smaller ones. The warmth is reassuring although it blazes with something that's not quite discomfort, but not pleasant either.

He's guided to what he assumes is outside the classroom and a cool breeze hits his face.

"You're not okay," Jimin says after a while, letting go of Tae's hands. "Care to tell me what just happened?"

"It's none of your business,"
It sounds harsh but Taehyung doesn't care. The pain is gone but an unsettling feeling remains in his stomach.

However, instead of getting offended, Jimin laughs. It's such a bright, loud, and genuine laugh of happiness that Taehyung's mood is replaced with both confusion and amusement.

"What's so funny?"

"It's just-" he stumbles on his words through fits of laughter. "You sound like such a rebellious teenager, I didn’t expect you to be so angsty when you have the face of an angel!"

Taehyung blooms scarlet. "I-I didn't mean to come off that way,"

Laughing resounds in his ears, but it's not mocking or bitter. Not like the taunting laughs of his monsters, or the laughs of stone cold students. It's sweet and endearing, more like he's laughing with him than at him.

"Here, let me help you, and don't act like such a twat or I'll flick you."

Taehyung smiles at the words. He feels normal and comfortable again, glad that he's finally being treated like any other person, rather than the 'incapable blind kid'.

Jimin grabs onto Tae's arm, essentially dragging him through the building with a confident hold. "Now, you don't actually have to tell me what was up, but just know that I'm going to be there for you if it happens again."

He's shocked. Confused. "Why?"

Why would someone care enough to do so?

Jimin stops moving so quickly, their brisk walk turning into a leisure stroll. "Because, we are now officially friends, and friends are there for each other, okay?" he smiles. "You better return the
support too, this isn't some one-sided love."

Taehyung bursts out into laughter, his anxiety gone and the pain little to non-existent. "You're funny Jimin-ssi."

"Ah ah, you don't have to be so formal, as I said, we're friends now! No honorifics," he makes a noise of disbelief. "That reminds me, I never even caught your name."

Taehyung shudders internally. He knows that he owns his name, that it mirrors his skin and is embedded beneath his bones. He knows that he embodies it, and he has every right to, but he can't help but think of the person who gave it to him. The person who abandoned him. It's his name, but in a way, it's also hers.

"Taehyung."

"Well Tae, let's see if our schedules match up."

Taehyung feels his bag being snatched from his shoulder, the weight suddenly gone. He's unsure of the other's bubbliness, yeah, that's the word to describe him. Bubbly.

He's so casual, so normal about his impediment, he likes it but he's also confused. He also likes the way the nickname rolls of his tongue, it gives another meaning to his name, one that isn't associated with its giver.

Tae hears the other's breath catch in his throat as he views his schedule. "What our schedules don't match?" he asks, curious at the other's fallen demeanour.

"I don't know," Jimin's tone hitches back to normal, the initial odd behaviour disappearing as quickly as it came. To some, they wouldn't even notice the change, but Taehyung's all too used to analysing other people's conduct with his other senses, in fact, he's probably mastered it by now.

"Pass me the schedule uh, how should I call you? By your first name?"

He's unfamiliar with how to address others. He was taught to always show respect, and if he didn't,
consequences would surely follow.

“You can call me Jiminie-oppa!” Jimin winks as Taehyung blushes the deepest red he’s capable of. “I’m just kidding, just by my first name is fine.”

Jimin passes the schedule over to a now ablaze tomato.

He brushes his hands over the familiar patterns, rough dots outlining words, sentences, and speechless knowledge. He nods with understanding, eyes scrunching up in concentration in reflex.

"I'm pretty sure I have music, although I may be reading the wrong thing."

Jimin frowns again.

"What's up? I can feel your frown from here."

"Wha-how did u know?!"

"I'm good at reading people, and you, are pretty much an open book. So, what's up?"

The other hesitates, chewing his bottom lip with uncertainty.

"C'mon, spit it out already."

"I didn't know."

Vague.

"Didn't know what?"
That you were blind, and all.." he trails off.

Taehyung's walking stops. "And?"

"I didn't mean to pry into your business, or make you upset."

"Jimin, it's fine, really,"

"But I asked about t-"

"If you treat me any differently, then I'm actually going to get upset with you,"

Jimin interrupts himself with a sigh.

"Also, how did you not know? I'm wearing sunglasses, and my white stick is out."

"I thought it was a cane!"

"It is one dummy,"

"And you could have been high, or one of those douchebags that wear shades indoors."

Taehyung laughs and Jimin soon follows suit.

"I think I like you even more now."

They both share grins, a friendship brewing and in the making. Taehyung hasn't been this energetic and happy in a while, and he doesn't say it, but he's internally grateful. He represents this emotion through a light punch to the shoulder.
They make their way to class.

Chapter End Notes

oof are you emo yet?

one thing to know about me is that I'm basically a living meme, so I'll try to lighten the mood during these endnotes (and if you want to continue being depressed by my pretty crappy writing than just tell me not to do these and I won't).

but look! Taehyung made a friend, I'm soft. Lil boy is growing up.

This story is going to get really angsty and depressing in the future, and I'll definitely put more warnings in the tags but just be warned right here. Not to spoil anything but mentions of serious issues ++ topics will be discussed, so if you are uncomfortable with mental health issues, trauma, nightmares and childhood trauma (in other words, if it's a trigger for you) then I recommend to stop reading here.

anyways, I've been writing this long enough so I'll bid you all farewell (I'll miss you uwu), oh and the instagram link is: https://www.instagram.com/amfics/ (for all the lazy people that would check it out but can't be bothered to search up my username)

happy reading!

さようなら。
blooming day

Chapter Summary

Jeongguk's always been known for making terrible first encounters.

Whether it's him being late, making a fool of himself, or just in general, doing stupid things, he is a magnet for all things awkward and embarrassing.

However, despite this, he's a light of everything sweet. His laugh cures the soul, and his smile brightens the dark. He's a star among space.

And what happens when this star meets a space so dark that even it has a hard time brightening it?

It's truly a day where something interesting has bloomed.

Chapter Notes

ahh and the chapter is written! You should be proud of me, I got it done just in time before my flight took off so I was able to post it...it is my fault though, I shouldn't have waited till the last second to edit.

but! nonetheless, I hope you enjoy it. Even though it's shorter than my previous ones I like the dialogue and chemistry between characters.

also, I'm always down for criticism and ways I can improve my work, so don't be afraid to tell me what sounds like shit and what I could do better.

anyways, enough of me talking (I always make long notes don't I? and then I have to keep repeating that I should stop doing that skjdskh).

Here you have: blooming day

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jeongguk's late.

Very late.
It's not like he did it on purpose, the crowds are too fast but too slow, his alarm clock a perpetual disgrace, and his roommate an untrustworthy dipshit to say the least.

Nonetheless, he's late, and he can't believe that his first day, his first day of his new school, is going to be him showing up late to class. It's embarrassing, mortifying even, why has God bestowed so much misfortune upon him? Damn.

He rushes through the packed square, hoping with every fibre in his body that he'll make the nine-thirty train. As if sensing his urgency, the wind picks up, leaves arising in his wake and trees swaying with invisible hands. It's a relatively cold day, rain brimming against the clouds like teardrops, and Jeongguk regrets not grabbing a jacket before he left, well, more like ran, out of his apartment. He shivers when the wind whips at his hair, adding a rather dramatic effect as he sprints underground and into the subway.

It's instantly ten times hotter, but with the heat comes an indescribably unique yet unpleasant subway smell. It's similar to an amusement park, the fuel from the trains sticking onto the air like a second skin, but it's more than that too. Maybe it's the crowds' lingering scent, or maybe the subterranean atmosphere mingling with the hungry mice and old sewer pipes. The heat seems to amplify these varied odours, specifying the sourness in spoiled dairy and the potent sweetness of strong perfumes.

It's a boiling pot of smells, but this time they don't bother Jeongguk. He's too rushed, too anxious to even care about his surroundings except for his golden ticket. The goddamn train.

Its doors are still opened when he reaches it, the sounds of wheels screeching on metal echoing throughout the hollow cavern. He's racing to get there now, shoving past people without time to give a proper apology. He's unaware, or perhaps he just doesn't care, the doors will close any minute now, and he needs to make it.

Too caught up in concentration he barely notices it when a person comes colliding into his frame. He staggers back, eyes frowning in irritation and slight aggression.

"Hey! Watch where you're fucking going!"

He doesn't mean to snap, but he catches sight of the doors closing and is immediately consumed with a feeling of desperation. He glimpses below him, a fragment of a second to at least identify a face to the person that ran into him, but he's only met with a brush of ash blonde hair before the figure mutters a soft sorry and walks away.
He rushes into the train.

He makes it to school with five minutes to spare.

Relief overwhelms him as he sees the familiar campus stroll into his view, the large buildings standing out like cold sores, and he walks with a skip to his step. He's not late, he's NOT going to be the stereotypically tardy transfer-student who doesn't have his shit together. Not today!

The campus is truly beautiful. And it's not in a common modern contemporary way but more in an ethereal one. It's the type of college that steals your breath, leaving you speechless among the rows of perfectly arranged trees, colourful flower patches, beautiful glass and light brick buildings with contrasting highlights against the pale grey sky and the- wow, it's ineffably stunning.

To say Jeongguk's amazed is a vast understatement. He's swimming in glee, joyful that his hard work has finally paid off and most certainly glad that he hasn't given a bad first impression yet. He's prone to those. Sometimes, he's convinced that he's a formidable and undeniably embarrassing magnet, attracting wrong first encounters and bad luck wherever he directs his attention to. It's quite ironic really, how fate always seems to make his life turn up as one big prank. The joker of jokes. Unbelievable.

His first class is a lecture of some sort. After checking his schedule and verifying the location, he makes his way to the language building, an edifice of true pure creativity. Its walls shine although no sun hits them, and the towering glass panels glimmer in the clouds' shields. It's a large building, one that announces luxury and prestige yet also a looming sense of knowledge. It's powerful and admirable.

And it's just a fucking building.

The interior is just as impressive, the ceiling creating a dome near the top where more glass windows scatter the interface. Filtered light floods through these windows, radiating a washed grainy illumination onto the glossed flooring. Doors litter the walls, each one holding a specific number with braille underneath it, most likely indicating what room it is. Near the middle of the building is a staircase and beside that a large elevator that opens to reveal a bunch of loud students. They smile and laugh and joke with such assurance that Jeongguk feels a sweep of homesickness shroud him.

He's new. Out of place. He doesn't know anyone, which means he doesn't share any smiles or
friendships or laughs or relationships and connections. He's the blank slate, the fresh piece of paper in a world of coloured ones. The empty sheet while others hold pages with defined ink, stories and words and images of their developed life. He's alone.

The bell rings, interrupting his brooding thoughts. No, he's happy to be here, he chose to be here. He's not about to let homesickness affect his end goal. His goal to succeed. Although unfamiliar, he's determined to make his own memories here, no matter how hard it may be.

He walks into class, says a polite greeting to the teacher and sits down somewhere in the back. Jimin said that they'd meet up after classes but Jeongguk doubts he'll even be able to find him in such a large campus. He'll figure it out...hopefully.

Putting his hoodie up, he hums a tune he's forgotten the name of and opens his bag. Unlike the other students, he busts out his handy-dandy notepad and pencil onto the table, never really understanding taking notes on the computer in the first place. It's not like he doesn't own one, he does, it's just he prefers to take notes by hand. It rejuvenates your memory, and lets you understand the information better. It's fantastic really.

That and he may or may not have forgotten his own computer back at his apartment...

He may not be tardy, but he sure is always unprepared.

Class goes by quickly yet slowly. The clock's handles fly by but Jeongguk still feels as if he's been in there for hours. Maybe it's the position he's in, which will inevitably cause an ache in his back later, or probably the person beside him who keeps coughing with something that seems contagious.

Whatever it is, he's glad when the bell announces the end of class, and he doesn't hesitate to grab his things and dash out of the room.

He scans his schedule with purpose. His next class is supposedly in the music centre although it says Japanese in bright bold letters. He's rippled with confusion. Why does everything have to be more complicated than it needs to be?

He makes his way outside, following a path he hopes leads him to the right building. The weather is still colourless, maybe even denser than before, and it reflects an insipid tint to his surroundings. He can see the beauty, but at the same time, he notices how much more beautiful it would be under a warm sunshine. He can't help but miss home again.
After asking for directions (several times), he reaches a relatively smaller building that's still enormous but not as big as the other ones surrounding it. It looks quite similar to the language department except there are fewer windows and ivy grows meticulously on the walls.

The building may look small, however, it's a complete immense maze on the inside. It hasn't even been one minute and Jeongguk feels like he's gotten lost at least five times. Damn buildings and their poor sense of direction, would it have killed anyone to make signs? The bell rings and he internally cringes. So much for not being late on his first day.

In luck, a student walks by, obviously in a rush, and Jeongguk takes his chance to ask for help.

"Hey! Wait, you, over there, could you help me please?"

The student seems annoyed yet covers it up with a smile as he approaches the other. "Yeah sure, what's up? I only have a second though, I'm really late,"

"Yeah, sorry, I can tell. Do you know where I can find Mr. Sasaki's Japanese class?"

The other stares at him. "You do realize that this is the music centre, right?"

"Yeah I know, but here, look at my schedule,"

He gives the other student his schedule, awaiting an answer he isn't sure he'll get.

"Ah, I see, rookie mistake, I'm pretty sure you were reading your schedule the wrong way,"

Jeongguk internally facepalms. "How so?"

The student points his finger along the side. "You see, these are the rows, and those are the columns, don't worry I messed up on my first day too. Are you new? Your next class is actually music and jazz studies. I have a friend who takes that, it's down the corridor and along the left side, room 12"
"Oh, thanks, and yeah I'm new, is it that obvious?" he laughs sheepishly. "Again, I'm sorry for holding you up,"

"Ah, don't worry about it. You're doing better than my first day, I missed half my classes because I overslept, damn that roommate." the student grins. "My name's Hoseok by the way, nice to meet you,"

Jeongguk smiles softly. He's made a friend. "I'm Jeongguk,"

And they part ways. It's a relatively quick encounter but Jeongguk feels elated. Maybe making memories here won't be so difficult after all.

He arrives in class the moment the teacher calls out his name during attendance. It's quite humiliating actually. Walking into class late is one thing, but walking into class when your name is being called? That's just cruel. So, he walks in and all eyes are on him, boring into him until he's beet red. They stare with acute eyes and judging glares and pity smiles and looks of 'thank god that isn't me'.

Except for one.

One boy isn't staring at him, rather, he's not staring at anything at all. His face is bent down, hands clenched, and all Jeongguk sees is tousled waves of hair. Ash blonde.

Everything is silent before he clears his throat, muttering a soft 'here' before taking a seat. He sees Jimin, coincidentally, but doesn't make a move to say hello in order to not bring attention to himself.

_You're doing just great Jeongguk_

Why is he always this bad at first encounters?

Class resumes and the teacher begins naming the rest of the students. He can't help but feel everyone still gazing at him, some girls blushing and other people showing looks of disinterest and disapproval. He wants to shrink into his hoodie, let the ground beneath him swallow him whole or the ceiling crumble on top of him so he can just disappear. The stares burn just as bright as his cheeks
and at this very moment, he regrets even coming to class at all.

If only he'd have read his schedule correctly.

Stupid.

"Kim Taehyung,"

The teacher's clear and unusually loud voice breaks his thoughts and he finally feels the attention on him divert somewhere else.

It's silent again, and perhaps the boy isn't there, who knows, Jeongguk doesn't, nor does he really care.

"Kim Taehyung," the teacher repeats.

Despite that, Jeongguk looks up instinctively, for some reason trying to search around for the person who matches the name. His eyes find Jimin, but the other isn't staring back at him like he expected. Instead, his friend's eyes are pointed at the boy next to him. A boy with ash blonde hair.

Jeongguk pales. Something seems familiar but he can't quite pinpoint it. Where has he seen that before? It's like the last missing piece in a scrambled puzzle. So small but significant in a way.

The boy still has his head low, and he sees Jimin shove him gently, seeming to jolt the other out of his cradled position.

"Here,"

His voice is deep and crystal but also hoarse and shaky. It echoes in Jeongguk's head and he can't help but stare. The boy's face looks pained, eyebrows scrunched and lips turned into a tight grimace. His eyes are covered by dark sunglasses and it's both confusing and intriguing to the other.

Jimin frowns with concern, whispering something that Jeongguk can't hear into the other's ear. The
boy just nods his head, biting his lips until they are glimmering red and goes back to his original position.

Odd?

The roll call continues on as usual but Jeongguk can't help but return his attention to the strange boy. He had looked pained, and it wasn't in that 'I'm so annoyed to be here' way it was more an expression of actual hurt. Suffering. Before he can think about it too much, the boy looks up again, and this time he wears a faint smile as he gently shoves Jimin to the side.

Well, attempts to shove, he misses by a few inches.

"Alright students, for your first college assignment of the semester I want you to demonstrate the skills we will be learning throughout the month. It doesn't matter how you present it, as long as it is entertaining and of course, follows the curriculum. You'll be placed in groups of four, and it's up to you to decide who you want to work with,"

A pause.

"Form these groups now, but know that you can change later on. Our first topic is the evolution of jazz, so think about who'll work best with you and not just your friends,"

He glares at a group of students at the back of the class.

“Oh, and before I forget! We have two new students in our class. Please welcome Jeon Jeongguk and Kim Woosung, they are transfer students, therefore unfamiliar with the place, so don’t scare them off,” the teacher gives a bright smile. “May those two students please stand so we can properly introduce you? Perhaps say where you’re from?”

It’s like the world likes seeing him suffer every five seconds. He stands up and so does a boy with white hair near the front of the class. The boy bows so Jeongguk mimics so, not sure the best way to address the teacher and sits back down.

“I'm from LA,” Woosung says before sitting.
Crap. He was supposed to say something.

“I-I’m from Busan,” he cringes at the stutter.

The teacher nods, ignoring how the class seems to burn through his very being and continues on with the lesson. Jeongguk internally thanks him.

"Once you're all settled I'll commence today's first topic!"

At these words, Jeongguk looks up at Jimin who is staring back at him this time. They share a knowing smile and the other gestures him towards where he is, tapping the blonde's shoulder softly and telling him something (probably introducing Jeongguk).

"Jeongguk! You didn't tell me you had music in the morning, what gives?"

Jeongguk grins. His embarrassment easing.

"What, you're not excited to see me?"

"Quite the opposite, I think you lied to me on purpose,"

"Maybe I did,"

Jimin fakes hurt.

"Hyung don't worry, I just read my schedule wrong."

"Of course you did. Sounds exactly like something you'd do,"

"Hey!"
He tries to think of a reasonable excuse as to why he's probably the dumbest person alive but finds none.

"I'm just kidding Kookie! I know you're just slow sometimes but that's okay, I still support you,"

Jeongguk smacks the other's head, their height difference proving to be in his favour. "Say that again, I dare you."

Jimin very much physically gulps. "I mean, typical mistake, totally understandable, schedules are hard, I get it."

Jeongguk gives a pleased smile, directing his stare back onto the boy he's yet to know the name of. Now that there's less distance between them Jeongguk is more aware of how truly beautiful the other is. And also, how oddly familiar he seems.

The other's face is smooth and clear, the colour of honey and sunshine and golden carats. His lips, although bitten profusely, are dark pink and velvety, seeming incredibly soft while spit glistened. Jeongguk feels a strange urge bloom in his stomach, and he swallows it down with effort.

The boy's hair frames his face like a painting, a portrait really. Its strands peculiar yet beautifully long and so different in colour. They cascade like waterfalls, shining streams of grey light, and suddenly everything seems so bright and happy. As if an angel had fallen from the heavens and spread their milky wings for all to see.

Little does Jeongguk know that Taehyung is far too dark to be an angel. Far too beaten, broken, destroyed, and burdened to be a creature so pure. He's a mirage of all things good, a deceitful image of what is supposed to be beautiful. Such an innocent visage, yet, why can't his past reflect so? He's a curse. An illusion. A hollowed façade.

And Jeongguk's staring for too long.

"Hey, Earth to Kookie? Are you getting distracted by TaeTae's beauty? Don't worry, happened to me too, but don't be fooled. He is angst KING,"
Taehyung attempts to hit Jimin again, and this time succeeds, getting the other right in the crease of his arm. "I'm not, y-you just caught me at a bad time,"

He's blushing a bright red, and for some reason, it makes him glow with something even more ethereal than before.

Jimin lets out a snicker. "So, Tae, this is my friend Jeongguk. He's kind of a dumbass at times-"

"Hey!"

"But he's a huge softie under his whole broody act," Jimin pauses to take a drink out of his water bottle. "And this Kookie, is my new friend!"

Jeongguk waves softly but the other doesn't react.

"You're supposed to introduce yourself," Jimin whispers loudly in Tae's ear (which defeats the purpose of whispering anyways) and the other boy clears his throat, seeming to fight an internal battle.

*It's just his name?* Jeongguk can't help but think.

"I'm Tae,"

It's a very short answer and Jeongguk leans his head forward, expecting more to the answer, but nothing. Jimin just gives an awkward smile and prompts Jeongguk to say more.

"Uh, hi Tae! Where are you from?"

Taehyung is silent, hands clenching and face paling. It's as if Jeongguk had suddenly shot him with an arrow, a spear of fear striking the other's shirt and bleeding the white black. Arms of distress grasp onto that wound, digging for truth and secrets and honesty. Truths that Taehyung can't accept. That Taehyung will not accept. Had Jeongguk said something wrong? He feels a sprout of guilt erupt from the base of his stomach.
"Taehyung here is very reserved," Jimin starts, trying to break the fragile mood. It just needs some cracking and soon the light will come seeping back through the fractures. "So, maybe let's not ask any personal questions?"

Jeongguk nods and Jimin sighs in relief when Tae's hands stop clenching and the mood, as predicted, comes back. Both boys are confused by the other's reaction, Jimin equally as perplexed as Jeongguk. It had been a quick change of mood, but why had it come about in the first place?

Thankfully, the voice of the teacher stops any other more awkwardness from arising from this ever so awkward scenario.

"Is everyone in a group of four?"

There are some mutual nods and smiles but a good portion of the class is still lost in a swept wind. The teacher lets out a restless sigh.

"Well then stop talking and get to it!" he lets out more murmurs of disapproval and waves his hands dramatically to start the class moving from their frozen state. It works in his favour as Jimin and Jeongguk look at each other, trying not to break out into laughter.

"You heard the man, no time for fooling around, we must retrieve our other partner!"

Jimin's always known for his theatrics and over exaggeration.

At that, Jeongguk scans the room, looking for people who look like they haven't paired up yet. He's losing hope until he catches sight of the guy with vibrant white hair. Woosung, was it? He looks shy, perhaps lonely or awkward around people, and radiates that exact same 'transfer-student' energy Jeongguk does. Biting onto his thumb (typical), he's looking around nervously until his eyes meet Jeongguk's. Jeongguk tries for a soft smile but the other looks away, shoulders tensing and entire face stiffening. It's made clear that he will have to be the one to say something first.

He walks over, confidence within his grasp and tries to come off as friendly as possible. This is for the sake of the group and all. "Hey! Do you want to be in our group?"
The other stays silent, face morphing into surprise and genuine shock before lighting up with the brightest smile. He laughs gently. "Uh, sure?"

It's more of a question but Jeongguk takes it.

"I'm Jeongguk, as you probably already know, and over there are my friends Tae and Jimin," he points towards them and Jimin smiles back, holding two thumbs up as if to encourage him. Taehyung continues talking to Jimin, seeming not to notice Jeongguk, and tilts his head a little to the side. "We're short one member, so if you don't mind..." he trails off.

"I'm down," the other responds, his eyes still holding an animated smile. "The teacher called me Woosung but I go by Sammy," he pauses. "Or Sam, whichever you prefer."

Jeongguk nods. "Alright, Sam, what do you think about explosives?"

"Jeongguk, for the last fucking time, we aren't adding fireworks to our project! That's dangerous and irresponsible, even for you."

Wow, way to be a mood killer.

"But Jimin, get this-

"It's the dumbest idea I've ever heard."

"The teacher said we just had to entertain the class and follow the curriculum. Fireworks are both fun and entertaining AND nowhere in the curriculum does it say we can't have them."

"He has a point," Taehyung adds in but receives a sharp punch to his shoulder in return.
"Don't encourage him!"

"The curriculum also says we can't bring in an entire circus, but you don't see us or others doing that now do you?" Sammy replies, brushing a soft strand of hair to the side. Damn him and his perfect hair, it's so perfect it's practically unfair.

"You know-"

"Don't even think about it." Jimin snaps.

Jeongguk slumps in defeat. "How else are we supposed to wow the crowd?"

"This isn't about 'wow-ing' anyone it's about passing the class."

"Now, that's no fun. Don't you agree with me Tae?"

Taehyung sighs. "I mean, Jimin's right-"

"Wow, you too! Unbelievable."

"How about we do something else instead that will equally wow the class?"

"What could possibly beat fireworks?"

They all go quiet as they think about a concept. The teacher discussed that the first minor project of the term would be to make a creative presentation to educate others on a chosen music era. Jeongguk, being the adventurous and oh too lively person he is, wanted to add the wow-factor of explosives and blinding sparks. However, the others weren't too keen on that idea and preferred something less...hazardous. So, now they are all trying to sort out what would go best with a topic most definitely on the verge of boring.

"I still really think that fireworks-"
"Quiet! We need silence to think."

Jeongguk huffs in annoyance and turns his eyes onto Taehyung. It's a habit now really. Whatever he's doing, whether it's trying to convince Jimin on his marvellous idea or trying to annoy the group by proposing even worse ideas, somehow, he always goes back to staring at the boy with sunglasses. He's unsurprisingly quiet, hands unclenched yet tense, and brows furrowed in mute concentration. Jeongguk's bored now, he's all out of ideas after being shut down for the billionth time and he needs a distraction.

And a distraction he gets when he gets another great idea, however, this time it's not directed towards their music project.

He gets up from his seat, trying to be as quiet as possible, and shifts closer to Taehyung. He knows that annoying the other may not be the best idea but he's tried to contribute to the team and nobody's listening.

So, sitting down on the table behind Tae, he pokes the other softly on the shoulder. Taehyung jolts, posture shooting right up at the sudden contact, fingers curling against the table in surprise. His reaction can be compared to a wince.

Jeongguk leans his lips close to the other's ear, warm breath tingling. "Hey, Tae?" he whispers.

Taehyung gulps loudly, a shudder almost leaving his body. It's more out of nervousness than anything, but there's something else to it too. Something lingering.

"Why do you wear sunglasses indoors?"

Taehyung freezes. If his hands weren't clenched before, they are now, hands morphed into tight fistfuls.

"Can't a guy try to look cool in peace?"

Jeongguk laughs. "Yeah, but isn't it hard to see?"
Boy, does he have no idea.

Tae bites his lip. "I mean, not really."

Jeongguk's idea swings into motion as he hooks one finger inside the arm of the accessory, gently slipping them off the other's face. Jimin is too busy discussing with Sammy to realise what is going on, but once he does it's well...too late.

"Wait, Jeongguk."

A lot of things happen in the next minute.

Taehyung's heart quite literally stops, breath catching in void protest. His hands attempt to catch the falling frames, but his fingers grab at nothing, his vision failing him yet again. His world feels like crumbling shards, a smashed mirror, a loose seam coming undone, water overflowing into beakers of closure.

twenty seconds go by

Jeongguk doesn't expect what he sees. In fact, he initially didn't think he'd receive a valid explanation to something so minusculely bizarre. Sure, it's weird but he didn't expect such a truth bomb to explode in his face.

Yet, here he is, the honesty plastered on his face in fat chunks. It smears, and all he can do is stare. Stare at the bridge of his nose, the scars that lay there, the pale second skin that is so barely noticeable yet defined at the same time. The reflex of eyebrows raising, but with a contrasting dullness. The way his eyes bore into Jeongguk's skin, bones, soul, yet with no actual purpose.

No motive.

thirty seconds
Taehyung wants to say something. Anything. The words, however, don't make it through his throat. He freezes, unable to voice his reasoning.

_Don't pity me_

He wants to run, hide, escape.

But he can't.

There is no escape in the world of the dark.

_fourty-five seconds_

Jeongguk thinks he's beautiful. The mole on his cheek, his eyelashes, the dust of perfection that scatters his skin. The way his eyes shimmer in the light and beam in milky screens. The unevenness between the two, how one imperfectly yet perfectly balances the other. He admires how the clouds in his eyes shine although dull, and how they blink with earnest.

He is everything white and pure.

_fivey-three seconds_

Taehyung thinks he's ugly. The way his vision mirrors his soul, his eyes scar with something only others can see. The way his eyes fail the one thing they are _supposed_ to do. He feels tainted and spoiled. He is the image of his monsters, and nothing less. He will only be the product of abandonment and betrayal. The product of darkness.

He is everything adulterated and blemished.

_sixty_

Jeongguk smiles.
"You have beautiful eyes,"

And a love they both don't know yet has bloomed.

The bell rings.

Chapter End Notes

andddd scene.

to be honest, I found it hard to write the ending. The actual ending was fine, but the flow and leading UP to it was pretty difficult. I hope you liked it anyways! I really wanted to tweak it a bit more but the flight's leaving and I know if I don't post it now I never will.

So, with that being said, thanks for reading! Don't forget that I have an instagram where I post teasers, summaries, and future works (I'll do that eventually). The username is: @amfics

andddd if you're too lazy to enter it in instagram, here's the link: https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

happy reading!

さようなら。
Chapter Summary

Taehyung finds Jeongguk different.

It's in a way he can't describe or see or experience, but he picks up on it.

The way the other breathes, laughs, smiles, talks. The way he takes the truth in a way that leaves Tae sane and normal. Leaving him whole and okay. Stable.

Taehyung expected that he would never overcome his phobia, well one of them at least.

But here lies a boy who manages to do just that in the span of four words.

Four words that for some reason changed his turmoil of emotions into confused and muddled ones, yet peaceful and calm ones.

Taehyung is confused.

"You have beautiful eyes,"

What is this strange feeling?

Chapter Notes

you guys don't even KNOW the amount of work this took me (oh lord I'm so tired).

so, ironic, I actually started working on this chapter on my flight (it's funny cause the title is airplane okay, and I wrote it on...an airplane) *it's not funny shut up and keep writing*, aND it was going GREAT until a lot of my work decided to yeet and delete itself.

...

it's okay though! we're still thriving :'

besides that though, the chapter was fun to write (sorry it took so long, along with rewriting a lot of stuff came up and oof, but we're back!).

also note that I completely finished writing and editing this story near 5 AM..i've pulled 3 all-nighters in a row please send help.

anyways, here we have the long-awaited fourth chapter:

airplane

:)
Taehyung’s afraid of three things.

For one, he is terrified of airplanes. He’s not quite sure when the fear developed, but it feels like he’s been this way all his life. It’s not really the claustrophobia aspect that scares him (although that is a plus), but more the turmoil of engines, the risk of falling, and frankly heights in general. He’s afraid that the air pressure will pop his ears with such intensity that he’ll go deaf, or that one of the windows will break and he’ll be reduced to nothing. He’s afraid that he’ll suffocate, that the winds will lift him up and throw him to the other side of the Earth if it pleases them. That the walls will shrink inwards and crush his body whole, or the plane will crash into heaps of water and drown along with its passengers. Glass, metal, life, and all.

More importantly, he’s afraid of being dark and vulnerable.

It’s ironic really because as a kid, he’s always had an uneasiness to darkness. Not necessarily a phobia, but something that both made him uncomfortable and apprehensive. He would hide under his covers with a flashlight set on dim and wait until the footsteps disappeared, until the house went silent, until everyone went silent.

Although he dislikes the dark, he appreciates it in a way. It’s true that in twilight he can’t tell where or when his monsters will strike, however, during these quiet hours, the monsters hide. He used to think that monsters are more prominent at night, but that’s not true, they don’t come because it’s night but because it’s black. In shadows they arrive, and although night is consumed in this gloom, the monsters stay away. Maybe they’re tired, or maybe the light of the moon and stars fend them away from their prey. Whatever the case, they never touched Taehyung at night, and for that, he can’t totally despise it.

Nonetheless, after the so-called accident, he can’t like the dark either. It’s too lurking, it swallows you whole and it makes you helpless and weak.

It’s a complicated relationship.

The only thing Taehyung fears more than airplanes and monsters and the complexity of darkness itself is truth.

Truth.
Well, not the concept of truth, but the fact of truths being revealed. His truths. Secrets that he doesn’t want to share being spread for all to see. That, he can call a phobia. The phobia of pure exposure? He’s unsure what to call it, but he hates it, despises it, he would rather live with his monsters than people discover that he has them.

So, when his guards go down, his one last shed of independence taken away without choice, he can’t help but be consumed by fear. Raw, agonising, brutal fear.

“You have beautiful eyes,”

He awaits impact.

And then the fear stops. His spiralling emotions still, the darkness pulsing yet not consuming. It’s so sudden Taehyung almost laughs. He’s shocked, perhaps even concerned that someone was able to rip out the truth and he didn’t freak out. The bell rings, interrupting his thoughts, and he just stares at well, nothing. He can’t move but it’s not in a terrified frozen-state way. He can’t move because he’s astonished. Confused definitely, but also surprisingly at ease. He’s okay.

I’m okay?

“Jeongguk what were you thinking! You can’t just invade people’s privacy like that, it’s rude,” Jimin’s voice resounds loudly yet Taehyung can’t seem to hear him. His ears are blocked, the feeling similar to that described plane air pressure, but this time he’s not afraid that they’ll pop. He’s afraid that this feeling of normality won’t stay. That his ears won’t pop.

“Jimin, it’s okay.”

His voice is monotone because he can’t seem to process anything that’s going on. Speaking is on autopilot, all focus concentrated on his thoughts and questions.

How am I okay?

“Great, you broke him. Honestly Kook, what was going on in your brain?! This isn’t Busan anymore, you can’t jus-”
“Jimin, I said it’s okay!” Taehyung doesn’t want to raise his voice but if he doesn’t he won’t be able to hear himself over the pressure in his ears. It squeezes and strengthens. It starts to hurt. “Really, I’m okay...I’m okay.” He’s stunned he’s able to reply, the response coming as if reflex. Why is he defending Jeongguk? Why isn’t he reacting how he normally would? Is he broken? Numb? No, that can’t be so, because with numbness comes fear, and he’s not afraid.

He must be dreaming. It’s a sick nightmare that’s truly darker than all the rest. It shows you something promising and good and beautiful, and once you awake, it snatches it all away from you, stealing your happiness as easily as you obtained it. The false memories don’t last, and soon you forget about it, but this ache remains in your heart. The ache of what could’ve been.

The room is silent and kids are filing out, the teacher probably preparing for his next lesson. Taehyung doesn’t want to talk anymore, mainly because he doesn’t know what to say, but also because there’s nothing to say. Jeongguk is different, and Taehyung has learnt first-hand that difference means change and that change isn’t always a bad thing.

“Can I have my glasses back please?”

He opens his palm and feels the material the millisecond after he’s asked for it. Maybe he should say something else, he doesn’t want Jeongguk to feel bad considering nothing bad even happened. Well, nothing bad yet at least.

Taehyung thinks that maybe this is good. Him facing this fear with Jeongguk is good.

Instead of saying something (he isn’t always the best with words) he catches the other’s hand before he can retract it. His heart pumps with hesitation.

Why am I doing this?

He traces the skin, it’s smooth and warm and soft like silk. It’s so unlike Yoongi’s yet it gives him that same feeling, that feeling of comfort and kindness. He squeezes the hand, intertwining his fingers with it and gets up gently. Once standing, he brings the hand to his eyes and lets the other trace his face. He knows that Jeongguk isn’t blind, therefore he doesn’t have to do this, however, he wants the other to feel every imperfection that caused him such misfortune. He wants the other to feel his jarring bones and textured scars. The way his cheekbones dip and moles dot his face near his cheeks and lips. He doesn’t normally let people do this, in fact, he’s pretty sure the only other person he has allowed to even touch his face is Yoongi. Despite that, this is right somehow. Taehyung feels
the urge to do this, and so he lets instinct overcome thought and mind.

Why?

There’s a stereotype for the blind. People often think that they go around feeling everyone’s faces to identify them, stranger or not, and that they do so to picture your face. While some of it is accurate, truthfully that’s not usually the case. They don’t just put their hands on anyone’s face because one, that’s invading their personal space, and two, they wouldn’t want someone to feel their face either without permission. They don’t use sight to identify but sound and feeling. If you can’t see it’s hard to picture physicality, and instead, you pinpoint their voice, how they breathe, the way they pronounce words and light up when they’re happy. The way their body hitches when they smile and their heartbeat speeds up when they talk about something they like. They picture with feeling and emotion rather than corporeal being, colours and light. You understand them, find who they are, and that paints the picture of their face.

That, and if the blind really want to know what another person looks like, they can always just ask too. It’s not efficient, but it helps if you’ve been able to see before.

Taehyung has never asked, just analysed, and he’s never really let anyone touch him either, but then again, things are changing. Maybe this will be different. Maybe one day he’ll trace Jeongguk’s face the way Jeongguk is tracing his.

Jeongguk seems to understand what he’s trying to do and moves at his own accord, hands still intertwined. Taehyung likes the way they fit together, he feels a sense of unfamiliar completion and wholeness. His cold hands warmed by the other’s, and his firm ones cradled by soft velvety ones. It’s not like they fit perfectly, quite the contrary, he feels the exact opposite in the other’s touch but somehow that’s just what makes it so comfortable. To put in perspective, it’s similar to a pair of jigsaw pieces from two different puzzles that for some reason fit even though they aren’t supposed to. They don’t match but they do. They feel like they match, therefore they do.

Why?

Jeongguk trails his face, his touch delicate and gentle as he brushes along his nose, the dip between his mouth, his lips. His touch burns with something pleasant, arising goosebumps along the other’s neck as they outline his cheeks and eyebrows. Then, they reach his eyes. Fingers grazing like feathers on golden skin, and Jeongguk feels faint marks and hollowed wounds. Paled scars and patched skin. You can’t see the entirety of the damage, but once you feel it, you can truly understand the torment and history that went through. The torture.
Jeongguk opens his eyes, unaware that they had been closed, and stares at the other with absolute undiluted attention. He wants to do many things but refrains. He knows his limits, and he knows that he doesn’t deserve such a calming reaction when he practically ripped the truth with bare hands. He brushes a strand of Taehung’s hair, the texture softer than he imagined, and smiles softly. He drops his hand from the other’s face.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have done that.”

Jeongguk’s apology coats with sincerity and guilt but Taehung doesn’t know how to reply. He’s unsure whether he’s mad or happy yet. He’s confused. Would he have let the other touch his face is he was mad at all? It happens so suddenly that it takes a while to process.

“Sorry to interrupt this little moment and all,” Jimin starts, clearing his throat to mask a ‘coo’ and a laugh. “But we should head to our next class.”

Both boys blush crimson, Taehyung’s eyes still on display and blinking grey. He can forget when others are in the room, especially when the people around are so quiet, and he suddenly feels shy. It must have looked weird to outsiders, but to Taehyung and Jeongguk, it meant something deeper than words can express.

Still, what the fuck just happened?

Taehyung puts his sunglasses back on, reaching for his white stick to start moving around again. It’s well known by now that Taehyung absolutely hates it (as repeatedly mentioned in the past), but he promised Yoongi that he’d use it during school, and he doesn’t break promises with Yoongi. It’s again that factor of trust, but it’s a good kind. They never lie to each other, and they never break their promises, it’s a bond and a rule. A pact.

He goes back to wondering.

Thinking about it more now, Taehyung isn’t mad. To be fair, Jeongguk would have already discovered Taehyung’s impediment the moment he did bring out his white stick, so does it matter? Obviously, it would’ve been in a less dramatic way, but his secret would have still been displayed for all to see. Maybe that’s why Taehyung didn’t freak out, his subconscious knew all along.

Yeah, that’s the reason, isn’t it? What other explanation is there?
Jeongguk offers to help, the guilt still eating away at him, but Taehyung quickly shuts him down with a smile and a word of reassurance. He knows people are just trying to be considerate, but it still makes him boil with internal annoyance. This time, however, he’s a little less irritated.

There’s definitely something different about Jeongguk.

Taehyung likes difference.

Class turns out to actually be a free period, which is relaxing because Taehyung has had more activity in these past three hours than he had his entire Freshman year (despite the fainting and falling down the stairs of course) and he needs a break. However, he’s also faintly frustrated because then Jimin interrupted that…whatever that situation was, for nothing. But wait. Why does he even care? Inner turmoil is something he’s used to but certainly not in this context. The feeling is different.

He’s unsure why he wants the situation to last, nor does he understand this strange sensation, but difference is a common and recurring theme in his life currently, so he’s learning to just go with the flow.

“Hey Tae, are you sure you’re okay?” Sammy asks. They are sitting on a park bench outside the math department under the shade of a particularly large tree. Jimin, on the other hand, is busy scolding Jeongguk in a corner about having manners and not being so clueless. Poor guy. “You’re quiet, and you look a little…conflicted.”

He doesn’t want to push answers out of Tae, but he can’t help but be worried.

Taehyung smiles, gulping his emotions to deal with later. “Yeah, I’m sure. To be honest, I expected to react differently but I feel …okay. I am okay.”

Sammy grins. “I’m glad to hear. I had a suspicion when I first saw you because you never looked in my direction when I talked, or frankly when anyone did. I didn’t want to make you uncomfortable though by asking because it’s not really something you…ask.”

“Ah, you’re perceptive. Sometimes I try to look at strangers when they’re talking, but I haven’t gotten used to your voices yet. I was afraid that I’d point towards the direction I think the voice is coming from and then address you the wrong way.”
“Don’t worry about that. You seem to know what you’re doing.”

There’s a hidden message behind that statement. A hidden question really. Taehyung knows what he’s doing because he’s used to it, which brings up the thought of how long Taehyung has truly been this way. Sammy doesn’t pry though, and Tae admires that quality as his privacy remains secluded. It reminds him of Yoongi.

“How should I address you?” Tae asks after some time. “I don’t want to be disrespectful, especially if you’re my elder.”

Manners. Respect. Although he’s not there anymore, not under their influence, he can’t help but retain the rules that they set out for him. ‘You must show respect or consequences will surely follow’. Then, a slap.

Taehyung shudders at the distant memory.

“Ah, it’s okay, that won’t be necessary with me. You can just call me by my first name.”

Taehyung nods, licking his lips as a nervous habit.

Jimin and Jeongguk seem to arrive later on in the conversation when he and Sammy are talking about collective courses and dreams. They don’t really share any other lessons besides music and this free period, however, they get along well and enjoy the time spent together. Sammy explains with longing how he used to want to be an American football player of some sort, but after dislocating his shoulder he couldn’t play to his full ability. From there, he found his passion in music and wanted (and still wants) to pursue it if possible. He’s lost hope of the chance of actually being able to do it, but the scar of his injury reminds him that he’s giving up something to do something else. Be someone and something else. Taehyung listens with interest, and he likes the story as he relates, well at least in some way. Injury for one, passion in the other.

He does love music but Taehyung doesn’t know what he really wants to be anymore. He used to think he had his entire life all planned out, but now, he’s not so sure.

What can he possibly do? Who will give him a chance in his state?
He doesn’t voice these opinions though, not wanting to sour Sammy’s good mood as he tells funny stories about his roommate Dojoon, and how said roommate is trying to persuade him to join a band. Sammy thinks it’s ridiculous, but deep down it’s rekindling his hope that he can truly go after his passion for composing.

They end up sharing a lot of similarities, and Taehyung is surprised that he’s been able to make a friendship with someone other than Yoongi (and Jimin) in such a short amount of time. He didn’t think that would ever be a possibility for him. Not only because of his injury but also because he never thought he deserved to have friends. Things really are changing.

When Jimin and Jeongguk do finally interrupt their conversation, Jeongguk is looking at the floor in shame, clearly chastised a decent amount by a still raging Jimin.

“Now, what do we say?” Jimin prompts in a little too overly motherly tone.

“I’m really sorry Tae! I was being silly and childish and I really didn’t expect that at all and I’m sorry if I made you uncomfortable I—”

“Jeongguk, it’s okay. I promise.” Taehyung’s voice is calm and bright, like sunshine hitting diamonds. He gives a small smile and Jeongguk can’t help but blush both in fluster and embarrassment.

Taehyung doesn’t only keep and mean his promises with Yoongi, but with everyone. When he tells Jeongguk that it’s okay, he really means it from the bottom of his soul. He still doesn’t know why or how he’s okay, but he is, and that’s what matters.

Jimin dusts off his hands as if his work is done and replicates Tae’s beaming smile. “Now that that’s over with, who wants to get lunch?”

Jeongguk pales. “How many foods are you allergic to?!”

Sammy laughs, a sound airy and clear. It sounds like white roses and purity and blue skies. Taehyung has grown familiar with it. “It’s not like I’m necessarily allergic, just intolerant.”
“Well, then how many foods are you intolerant to?”

“Hmm, mainly just lactose but to be honest, I’m not really a fan of seafood…or meat…or frankly anything sweet or heavy…or sour.”

“So, what DO you actually like?”

“Rice.”

“Rice?”

“And water.”

“Ugh, you’re so boring.”

Jimin breaks out into a smile, shovelling a mouthful of bibimbap down as he contributes to the conversation. “Jeongguk, you shouldn’t talk, you hate everything bitter or strong. Let the man live his life.”

Taehyung hears a huff and identifies it as Jeongguk’s response. He can spot it because of its uniqueness. It’s a little heavier than others, coated in vivid emotion and feeling. He feels like he can touch it if he so desires, the sound thick with something tangible.

“Rice is boring though; don’t you prefer things with more flavour?” It’s Taehyung’s turn to jump in.

Of course Tae likes flavourful food considering he not only tastes food but experiences it. Spice is a hit, a spark of fire and electricity on its own, while sweetness is a dance of petals and honey. Salt is a little bland for him, more the taste of a stroll down the seaside, and sourness is a whole rollercoaster of puckered lemons. Bitter is complicated because he hates coffee and it’s overwhelming acidic and strong nature, but he loves the bitterness in dark chocolate and pink grapefruits and olives in tonic water.

Then again, rice is good because it has that certain graininess and warmth. It’s hearty. It’s cosy and safe. It’s like the foundation for your spectacular dish. Jin’s cooking always managed to bring a new
life to such a basic food. It reminds Taehyung of home, but the good kind of home. Not the home he
grew up in.

“Ehh, I guess I like bland food. As a kid, I never really ate things with much taste so I guess I just
adapted to it.”

“So, you’ve reduced yourself to eating just rice?!”

“I eat fruits and vegetables. Eggs too, even though I shouldn’t.”

“Okay, but why would you eat it if you shouldn’t?”

“Because it’s good? What even is this conversation!”

“My father always said that what a person eats is what defines them. And you, my friend, are quite a
dull man.”

“Isn’t that just a fancier version of ‘you are what you eat’?”

“No! This is poetic, if you eat a lot of soup and greens then you’re kind, and if you eat fruits and
grains then you’re generous.”

“What if you eat greens and fruits? Or what if you just eat everything? How does that even define
anything?”

“You’re missing the point, I’m trying to get to know you.” Jeongguk pulls at his hair. “He never told
me what it meant when you were allergic to almost everything though.”

“Intolerant.”

“I need to make a new category for you.”
The sound of chopsticks on plates and breathing fills the quietness comfortably. Taehyung has always appreciated how sounds seem to diminish awkwardness, leaving the silence in ease rather than tension.

Another reason why he may have found (and still finds) the dark uncomfortable is because it’s quiet then. Well, not completely quiet, but the sounds aren’t loud or jarring. They’re soft and distinct (and sometimes scary), but even so, they fill the emptiness with tightness and agitation rather than the pleasant silence of the day. Maybe it’s also because his unshed tears always dropped quietly at night, and the sounds of drenched pillows tainted the black with something only the attentive could hear. Quiet normally means no distraction, and no distraction means you are susceptible to the hands of your monsters. This is the night’s silence.

But, during the day, these sounds change. They manifest into something different and gain a new meaning. The clutter of morning and afternoon still drown your thoughts and distract you, arising peace, whilst the sounds at night amplify your worried and brittle thoughts. It’s so strange how something as simple as sounds can change so drastically in a different setting and atmosphere. It’s strange how Tae can feel and percept sound like an emotion.

It’s a side effect of being blind.

People don’t comment on it, nor do they realise that with blindness comes analysation. It’s like a disease. You examine everything, inspecting and scrutinizing until your face feels heavy and your brain’s exhausted. You can’t perceive with effortlessness, so you have to focus on every detail to understand the full picture. The picture you create without light.

Taehyung thinks that’s why he likes music so much. It’s because you don’t create stories with images and hues but with vibrations, beats, and melodies. He can understand music because it’s more a sensation than a visual experience. He loves it, but he doesn’t.

He wants to do it, but he doesn’t think he can.

No, he doesn’t think he deserves it.

The monsters told him he couldn’t, therefore he can’t.

“Yo, Earth to Tae? You good?”
Jimin’s voice knocks at the door that is his mind and he lets him in.

“Oh yeah, sorry, I kind of zoned out for a second.”

Jimin shares a concerned frown with Sammy but Taehyung still senses it. He’s able to feel it by how the air gets ten times more serious. Ten times tighter and tenser. He hates it.

The silence of the night is infiltrating although it shouldn’t. *The sun still shines, so go away.*

“I have a question for you, Tae.” Jeongguk states and Jimin gives him a warning look as if to say ‘don’t say or do anything stupid’.

“Shoot.”

“Well, actually I kind of want to ask it privately..Can we go somewhere else?”

“You want to know why I let you touch my face, it’s that right?”

Jeongguk stumbles over his words. “W-well yeah, but, you know- I’m just curious and confused and I-, uh, it’s not really a question. Can we please talk about it without a crowd?”

Taehyung laughs a little. “Sure.”

Instead of getting up, Sammy and Jimin take it as their cue to leave the boys to their discussion. They mutter something along the lines of ‘kids these days’ (although they are practically the same age) and walk off to get more food.

Taehyung is still confused, and although he appears confident on the outside, he is rattled on the inside.

Shook, if you will.
The silence prevails and the longer it grows, the more awkward it gets.

Why is the night trying to seep into the day?

Jeongguk clears his throat. “So, I actually wanted to thank you.”

Now out of all things, this is a response Tae least expected.

“Thank me? Why?”

“Because, for some reason, what you did made me understand something. I don’t know what, but it was a lot more expressive than words could do justice. I understood you? I can’t explain it…”

“Neither can I actually. I’m not sure why I did what I did, but it felt…right somehow.”

“Right. That’s a good feeling to describe it. It felt right. Complete almost?”

“Yeah,” it comes out as an exhale. An exhale of relief? He’s relieved he isn’t the only one who felt that then.

“I liked the way your face told a story. And your hands, although cold, they jus-“

Taehyung’s blush catches Jeongguk off guard and he interrupts himself with a laugh.

“Sorry, am I making you flustered?”

“N-no, it’s just- you can’t j-just go complimenting everyone like this. They get caught off guard.”
It’s a lie.

He’s totally flustered.

Jeongguk’s laugh finally erupts to its full bloom and Tae absorbs it.

It’s so sweet.

He doesn’t understand how a laugh can sound so sweet. Beautiful? Yes. But sweet? Normally a voice can’t taste like anything. It’s not the sweetness of candy and sprinkles and fairy tale shit. It's like glitter and crystals, and butterflies of the colour violet. Gems of happiness, pools of watery gold. Seeing the stars on a clear night and your heart racing when you see that one shooting star.

It breathes life. Joy.

He thinks he could live off of this laugh forever.

“You’re really different you know that?”

Jeongguk’s voice imitates the sweetness in his laugh. Taehyung smiles at the comment.

That’s what he’s been thinking about the other the whole time.

“How so?”

“You smile yet you suffer. You laugh yet I see you clench and shudder with invisible tears. Why?”

Taehyung goes silent.

“Sorry, I overstepped my boundaries again, didn’t I?”
He doesn’t answer.

“You’re different too, Jeongguk.”

“How so?”

“I don’t know. You just are.”

“That’s a pretty vague explanation for it, now isn’t it?”

“You’re like a story. I don’t understand you, but I want to.”

“That’s poetic.”

“Shut up, I’m being serious.”

Jeongguk pokes the other’s cheek with his finger. Taehyung flinches, and it’s not a flinch of hurt but of surprise.

“If you want to understand me, just ask. I’m an open book.”

Taehyung swallows loudly. “I’m not good with words.”

Tae’s feelings are muddled. Normally, he’s good with this type of stuff, but it’s different this time.

It’s too soon to tell.

Jeongguk is a friend. Maybe, someone he can trust. At least, someone he wants to trust. He’s unsure, but he can’t figure it out yet. He doesn’t want to figure it out yet. People with monsters don’t deserve
that luxury.

He leans a little bit back. “I don’t know what to ask.”

Jeongguk nods with understanding. “I’ll start then. I was born and raised in Busan. I have an older brother who works in the city. I like anything with flour in it, oh, and my favourite number is one. I like the colour black and although it’s girly, I like shoes and makeup. I play handball and I’m pretty good at it not going to lie. I also love music.”

“I didn’t ask for your whole life story.”

“No, but you want to understand me and know what makes me different, and you have to get to know me before we get to that.”

He winks.

“Did you just wink?”

“How could you tell?”

*Your breath skipped, your heart bounced, and it felt like a wink.*

“I don’t know, I just could.”

*You’re different, but why?*

“I also like drawing and dancing. I can get pretty obnoxious at times but that’s because I’ve been spoiled by my family a lot,” he grins. “Now, what about you?”

“What about me?”
“I want to know why you’re so different.”

“It’s not important.”

“It is to me.” A smile.

Taehyung feels that smile.

“Why?”

Why do you care?

“It’s the same reason why you want to understand me.”

It’s not the same.

Jeongguk realises he’s making the other slightly uncomfortable. “You don’t have to tell me everything, maybe just the basics, your birthday, favourite colour, favourite food. So we can learn to understand.”

Another smile.

“I like Japchae…and the colour grey.”

Why am I telling him? Why do I want to tell him?

Jeongguk listens with acute interest.

“I like things that are unique, and the number 10 because it reminds me of perfection and creation. I hate airplanes and the dark, but it’s also complicated because I don’t mind the night.”
He stumbles over his words.

“I like acting and music, and dyed hair. I have a habit of licking my lips and sticking out my tongue,” he pauses. I don’t want to talk anymore. “I-I, that’s it.”

Why does this feel like a…date?

He just met him. He can’t let strangers mess with his emotions. He won’t.

But Jeongguk’s not a stranger anymore.

Jeongguk isn’t disappointed but he still swallows a golf ball of dismay. There’s more, but he knows that he isn’t in the place or position to ask.

He settles with a sound of approval, and luckily Jimin and Sammy come back just in time before it gets awkward.

(they were spying on the two)

“Did you talk some things out?”

Taehyung feels even more confused.

I need to be alone.

“Yeah, uh, we did,” Taehyung gives an apologetic look. “I’m going to head out, I just realised I have to catch up on something and I don’t have any more frees during the day. It was really nice hanging out with you though, I’ll see you tomorrow?”

Jeongguk internally sulks. Heart deflating like a spiralling balloon.
I find you interesting.

He gets up, using the bench as support, and begins walking away. He doesn’t know where in particular he’s going, but he knows he needs to be alone for a bit to clear his mind. His ears are still blocked.

Why are you so confusing?

A pain twinges near his forehead. It indicates what’s about to come.

I can never escape, can I?

Maybe that’s the main reason Taehyung hates airplanes. He can’t escape in them.

Just like the warps of his mind, the walls imprison him. Smothering. The structure captivates him mid-air, soaring through strong winds, and all he can do is pray and put his trust in something else. In something he doesn’t understand or know. He can’t bring himself to like that, he can’t depend on something he doesn’t recognise. He can’t contemplate the sole idea of living in unfamiliarity. He’s scared of it, because how is he supposed to escape if he doesn’t know? How is he supposed to escape if he doesn’t know who or why or how?

Taehyung is afraid of four things actually.

He's afraid of airplanes, monsters, and vulnerability

and,

he is afraid of the unknown.

His ears pop and he's relieved.
I will be okay.

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Chapter End Notes

yo that was a tad...depressing.

and shitty (but let's not dwell on that)

I feel bad that I had to make you guys wait so long, and I'm still not happy with the chapter, but I hope you can forgive me.

I will do better next time!

remember i have an instagram (@amfics) where I post updates, themes++concepts, pending works, and my overall writing life/experience. (I'd appreciate if you checked it out uwu)

the link is: https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

happy reading!

さようなら。
beautiful

Chapter Summary

Beauty is loss.

Or was it, beauty is pain?

Taehyung's unsure, but what he is sure about is that hospitals are both these things.

They breathe loss, they breathe pain, however, they surely aren't beautiful.

Chapter Notes

first i'd like to say that im so so sorry for making you guys wait so long,, i was so busy and had barely any time (and i've been staying up late to complete this long ass chapter).

i also want to say that it kind of went into an opposite direction, so the title doesn't make as much sense as i want it too (ugh, now it has to happen NEXT chapter cause i underestimated how long it would take to explain everything). butttt, that means you're in for a massive treat next update ;) (hopefully)

oh! and this was going to be Jeongguk centric but I couldn't find something interesting to write about where we left off....so here's another Tae centric (I promise it'll be Jeongguk next update)

anyways, i hope you enjoy chapter five!

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Hospitals suck.

Like, they really fucking suck.

They’re disgusting, contaminated and just absolutely awful. A basin of disease to be honest, but also something else. They breathe loss.

They capture illness and try to harness what they can’t control. Try to manipulate this omnipotent factor so it works in their favour.
But the truth is, you can’t control life or death because you aren’t God.

You don’t get to decide who lives, or dies, or allow a patient to send their kid off to an orphanage because they can’t bear the sight of them.

They aren’t allowed to choose and pick and pluck at your life like you’re some type of lesser being. That you will and only be a product of them and follow as they say.

They also don’t get to label you and break you and have you lose your vision.

Taehyung knows it’s not the hospital’s fault, he truly does. However, at the same time, it was the very same hospital who let his mother abandon him, who failed to fix him, who ruined everything before it even began.

He shouldn’t despise it or blame it, but he can’t help but have a little part of him that does.

He hates the way they tear families and friends apart, ruining lives unintentionally. They destroy and it’s not always in the way you expect, sometimes it’s worse, because hospitals breathe loss in two ways.

One way is death, your life slipping between cold fingers, gloved hands, and metal tools. Where you cease to exist in the shell of your body, either lying on an observing table or in your bed connected to wires and machines.

The other way is much worse than that. It’s when you lose a part of yourself. When something is taken away, and you no longer remain who you once were. You exist yet not in the same shell. You exist in a crippled one.

A crumpled prison of a free soul.

It’s when it captures you in a body that can’t function how you want it to. You live in a cage.
And that cage, for some people, is black.

“So, Taehyung! How was your first day as a sophomore in college?” Jin starts with a brightness to his voice. “Any drama? Romance?” He wiggles his eyebrows. “I want to know what you’re up to these days!”

Taehyung isn’t in the mood to recount everything that happened today but to please Jin and amuse him only a little, he gives in and speaks.

“Nothing much. I made a friend who was in my science lecture and I made two more friends in my music class. They’re...interesting, but I get along well with them. The rest of the day was kind of boring because I only had therapy, which took longer than necessary.”

Jin nods, happy with the extensive answer in comparison to his usual one-word remarks. “That’s great, I’m really glad you found people who understand you. But..is there anything troubling you? You seemed a little quiet when I picked you up.”

“Eh, not really, just the usual.”

Tae doesn’t want to tell the other about the little mishap because he knows he’ll get angry.

Although polite, kind and responsible, the guy can get very pissed over people messing with him, or doing something invasive at least.

“I’m always here if you need to talk! I know Yoongi lets you off a lot but with me, even if you’re feeling bored you have to tell me what’s on your mind. I want to help.”

Taehyung knows Jin feels partially at fault for what happened to him which is why he pries a lot, but at the same time, Tae can’t help but get tired of it. He doesn’t like talking about his feelings because he was never taught how to express them.

Emotions are for the weak

It’s a mantra the monsters sang and it rings with clarity in his brain even if he’s not aware of it.
Jin also has nothing to feel at fault for. He hadn’t even met Taehyung when he first became blind, but I guess he’s disappointed that he couldn’t pay for the rehabilitation of his left eye.

It’s a long and complicated story, but essentially, Jin’s family was already mad at the idea of him spending money on a ‘peasant’ so they cut off any ways of him being able to do more than the initial surgery bills and staying costs. Taehyung’s unsure how he was even able to do that alone in the first place, so he assumes that it must’ve taken a lot of effort, and definitely a scolding later. Why would a stranger help another stranger so much, especially if it’s going to cause trouble for them anyways?

Taehyung had been and still is grateful for the immense help he was able to do, but he can tell that Jin still feels guilty about it. It being what he wasn’t able to do.

“I know hyung, but don’t worry or wonder about it too much. You know, being concerned constantly is bad for your health.”

“Really?” Jin laughs. “I must be very unhealthy then.”

Taehyung chuckles a little. At least Jin is there to ease his nerves.

They haven’t been waiting long but he already wants to leave.

Hospitals suck but in another way too. They quite literally but also figuratively suck the life out of you. Time seems to slow down in them, the air tinged with tension and fear. It’s like the thickness drags the seconds away, slowing down everything to the last minute.

Taehyung can wait for twenty minutes here and it will feel, with no exaggeration, like two hours.

Nonetheless, this is a common wait and occurrence for him. Not only were his summers filled with these visits, but so was the majority of his life. He can’t remember a time when he wasn’t in them, and if he can, he doesn’t want to remember it.

His life before hospitals was much worse after all.
He’s lucky. Although his struggles, Taehyung believes that he truly is the luckiest person in the world because he met such amazing people that were able to help him out of his nightmare. What would his life have been like if Yoongi hadn’t found him? If he hadn’t met Jin or Hoseok? He’s riddled with the possibilities of ‘what if’s’ because he thinks that, without a doubt, he would be dead if it weren’t for them. He can complain, he should complain, but he won’t. Life sucked more than hospitals once, and now he’s grateful enough that he does have to deal with them, no matter how many bad memories they bring.

It can definitely be worse.

“See, you’re doing that thing again where you stare off into the distance and I can’t tell if you’re listening to me,” Jin says. He had been talking for a while now.

“Huh?”

“I knew it! You weren’t listening. C’mon, we’re going to be waiting for a bit so to pass time you should at least try to converse.”

Taehyung smiles, suddenly feeling guilty. “Sorry, you know it’s been a long day. I hate being here.”

“I know.” Jin sighs. “I hate the fact that you hate being here because seeing you upset makes me upset. Which is why you should talk, it’ll distract yourself.”

_Distraction._

That is what he likes best.

“Okay…how was your day?”

“I’m glad you asked! I met the clumsiest but undoubtedly smartest person today. I’m surprised the two attributes even go together, how can one be so clumsy yet such a genius at the same time?”

“What else is he like?”
“Well, his voice is really deep and he’s quite tall, taller than you. I didn’t get to talk to him that much but I feel like you’d like him. He’s the kind of guy that reminds you of something delicate yet strong.”

Taehyung nods.

“Oh! That reminds me, I invited a couple of friends, including him, to my apartment tonight for a sort of get-together dinner. I think it’d be a great way for you to make new friends…I mean you don’t have to come if you don’t want to of course but if you’d lik-”

“I’d like that.”

Jin is taken aback. It’s the first time the younger has agreed to come over, let alone go somewhere else that isn’t his apartment or the hospital. “T-that’s great! You’ll finally get to meet my roommate too, remember, the one who moved in a year ago? You’d like him as well, I think he goes to your college now.”

Taehyung nods again, unsure what to say. He himself is surprised that he doesn’t dislike the idea of being around a large group of people.

“I think the dinner will really bring people closer together. And it’s a great way for you to get to know everyone better…I invited Yoongi and Hoseok and I told them they could invite their friends too. Do you want to invite some of yours?”

“Uh, I don’t know, I don’t think we’re that close yet..”

“That’s the point of the dinner! To make you *closer* to them, but I get it if you don’t want to invite them yet.”

Taehyung thinks about Jimin.

He really is a good friend so maybe he should invite him, but then again, he’s unsure if the other would even say yes. Jimin *is* bubbly and bright, he’d probably make everyone laugh and smile until their mouths and stomachs hurt. He’s also the kindest person there is, and Jin would appreciate the
extra dish help. He’s the perfect friend.

Then again, he’s unsure.

*He probably doesn’t want to put up with me.*

He then thinks about Sammy.

Sammy is the type of person who probably wouldn’t like being surrounded by Jin’s food anyways since he has the palate of a grandpa and all. He’s surely passionate but he’s also shy, and Taehyung knows from experience that Jin can be a *little* overwhelming at times. Sammy is really talkative though once you do get to know him, and Taehyung knows that he’d fit right in.

*I’d only bother him.*

He thinks about Jeongguk last but also the longest.

He would love it. Taehyung doesn’t know why he thinks he would, but he knows. Jeongguk’s cheery and funny yet sarcastic and witty, he would get along really well with Jin and his type of friends. He should invite him, but he’s afraid. Afraid that he’ll do something stupid, or make him uncomfortable or weirded out or upset. He’s scared that he’ll ruin everything perfect and good and *pure,* and Jeongguk is just that, therefore he can’t interfere.

He’s truly a curse, he destroys everything beautiful and whole, it’s one of the traits he gets from his monsters. Hospitals suck, but I guess he does too, because as they destroy so does he.

*I’m afraid.*

“Maybe one day.”

Jin keeps the silence away by talking about random things, Taehyung adding comments every once in a while so the other doesn’t think he’s not paying attention again. He appreciates it because in hospitals the silence of the night is always prominent.
Finally, after forty-five minutes, he hears his name be called.

“Kim Taehyung?”

It’s the voice of a nurse who seems quite young. Her voice is clear and doesn’t hold much emotion, but Taehyung still senses the softness of it. She’s probably kind.

He and Jin make their way through the hallways of the hospital, Jin holding onto Taehyung’s shoulder more to stabilise himself rather than the other. One thing that’s useful about constant check-ups is that Taehyung is able to memorise where he’s going. He can feel the indent in the flooring, the length of each passageway, and sometimes he can even guess which door they are going to stop at, but Jin usually tells him prior.

Once they reach their destination, the nurse says a quiet goodbye, bowing respectfully whilst Jin leads him into a room with bedding, medical equipment, and a bright overhead light.

Not like Taehyung can necessarily see it, but the slight dot of white in his left eye indicates a bright fluorescence.

They wait again, perhaps it’s five minutes but it does feel like fifty at this point. Jin helps pass the time by playing with the other’s hair, twirling it gently between his fingers then braiding and unbraiding some longer strands. Taehyung hasn’t cut his hair in a bit, and while it’s not too long yet, it’s easy to play with.

It’s odd, because although he hates people touching him he doesn’t hate this. It’s not something he adores or loves obviously, but he finds himself liking it sometimes, or at the very least not completely disliking it. Maybe it’s just Jin. He can’t compare though because nobody else really plays with his hair.

It’s possible he doesn’t mind it because it’s something a mother would do. Well, isn’t that something a mother would do? He doesn’t really know, but back when he could see, he would read stories and watch movies about kids with loving parents and wonder if he would ever experience the same. All the fictional mothers he read about would comfort their children, rub their backs and caress their faces. They’d kiss their foreheads at night before they slept, and brush their hair when they weren’t feeling well. It’s a fantasy he relishes yet it also saddens him since he knows he will never be able to receive the same affection from the person he wants. Kisses were replaced with slaps, hugs replaced with punches, lullabies replaced with swears and insults, and comfort replaced with the sting of glass.
It’s not a reality he likes to accept…liked to accept.

Although it is motherly, Jin reminds Tae more of an older brother, always there to support but also never seeming to keep his distance. He’s caring and honest, and undoubtedly good at taking care of others, but it’s in a way that can be compared to a sibling.

Taehyung feels lucky because he finally does have a group of people he can call family. Three older brothers who constantly shower him with something he never had before. Love.

The doctor walks in at the six-minute mark, excusing her tardiness and addressing both boys energetically.

“Ahh, Taehyung! How are you doing?”

The doctor talks with familiarity because it’s what, the billionth time he’s been here? Despite his hate for hospitals, Taehyung doesn’t mind some of the people here. Sure, some of them effectively ruined his life, but it’s more the place he dislikes than the people who work in it.

It’s confusing, because why does he blame a hospital for his misfortunes instead of the doctors that work in it? He blames a place but not a person?

He blames himself.

“I’m the same as always, just here for my usual check-up. I’m surprised you aren’t sick of me.”

He can already tell who it is by their voice. It’s the same one he woke up to that one fateful day, and it holds the same sweetness and sharpness that for some reason arises tranquillity. Although it has aged a bit since his time here, he can’t mistake it for anyone else’s.

“I could never. Hmm, the check-ups do get pretty boring, don’t they? Don’t worry, I’ll be quick.”

Jin smiles reassuringly and Taehyung can feel it. It calms him a little even though he won’t admit it, and he proceeds to nod to let Dr. Sung start her work.
“So, I’m going to have you lie down on the bed in front of you,” she starts softly, guiding Taehyung’s hand across various furniture until he feels cotton. “You probably already know the procedure by now, but I’ll repeat it anyway. I’m going to add pressure to parts of your face and I want you to tell me if it hurts, okay?”

Taehyung nods, already sitting on the bed, and lies down. He feels the heat of a lamp on his face and thinks there may be a spotlight above the structure, most likely highlighting the faint and faded scars on his face.

Then, he feels gloved hands on his cheeks. They’re cold and rough and give off a rubbery smell, and it’s incredibly familiar. They aren’t gross but they’re not really pleasant either, but he doesn’t voice his complaints as he knows this is just how it is.

After a couple seconds of feeling around his features, Dr. Sung applies pressure near his temple. He winces a little but not because it hurt, more because it’s uncomfortable.

“Did that hurt?”

“No, just caught me off guard, sorry.”

She continues to move around, applying pressure for a couple seconds on his forehead and then letting go to see his reaction. Taehyung feels slight tremors of pain, but it’s not strong enough for him to say anything yet.

That changes, however, when she gently presses down near the corners of his eyes and the bridge of his nose. It’s like an electric current has passed through him, singing bone and burning tissue until he feels ashes. He lets out a small yelp, hissing through clenched teeth at the unbearable ache that soon replaces the spark. It’s like a headache but solely focused on that portion of his face, skin pulsing in phantom touch and muscle clenching in hopes to make the pain stop. His face is on fire, but it’s a bruised fire, the sort of fire that not only burns but tears and rips.

“Taehyung, are you okay?”

It’s Jin’s voice that makes it into his head and it brings him back to reality.
“Ow,” there’s nothing else he can say except for a pretty dull and monotone expression. Both the doctor and Jin laugh at the reaction, trying to relieve some tension.

“How much did that hurt? Scale of one to ten?”

“Nine.”

*It felt more like an eleven.*

The doctor wears a concerned look and it mimics Jin’s worried one.

“Okay, we’re going to do an X-ray and perhaps a CT scan to make sure everything is okay. I may also request an MRI, just to rule out any possibilities. Sometimes patients feel pain but it’s not necessarily an underlining problem either, so don’t worry too much. I’m sure it’s nothing.”

Jin hopes so. Taehyung wishes so. The situation doesn’t look too promising.

The doctor continues other small tests to ensure there aren’t any other injuries and proceeds to ask him a string of questions.

“Have you been feeling pain recently?”

“I had a pain episode earlier today during my science lecture. I was feeling weird this morning.”

“Taehyung! Why didn’t you tell me?”

*I didn’t want to worry you, hyung.*

“I didn’t think it was important to mention at the time.”

Dr. Sung shares another look with Jin and it’s an expression Taehyung can’t decipher.
“Where did the pain feel the worst?”

“I think it was my eyes...specifically the corners...and the place in between my eyebrows.”

“So, the caruncles of your eyes and your glabella?”

“I think so?”

Is that even English?

She scribbles something down.

“Was the pain consistent or on and off?”

Taehyung reflects on it, the pain still prominent and searing. “Kind of both? I think it was more on and off than anything, but I forgot when it stopped and when it began.”

He hears her scribble another thing down.

“Okay, before I get you tested out I’m going to check on your vision, alright?”

Taheyung nods because that’s all he can do and sits back up. Dr. Sung takes out a flashlight, positioning it in front of his eyes like she did many years ago, and clicks it on.

The sound echoes in Taehyung’s head, and the harsh light of the beam shines into one of his pupils. Like the many times she’s done this, Taehyung sees nothing. He can feel the heat, he knows the light is there, but his eyes won’t pick up on it. Even the small glimmer of light he used to see in his left eye is fading, the darkness consuming as each day passes by.

“No change. We can still work on your left eye, but time is not in our favour. The longer you wait, the worse it’ll get and the harder it’ll be to fix. Are you sure you don’t want to reconsider?”
She asks it every time, but Taehyung always says no. He *has* to say no. There is no way he can afford the surgery and staying costs even with his medical insurance. Not even Jin can help him, and it’s not only because of his parents restricting him but also because it’s an experimental surgery. There’s the possibility he could die, a *high* possibility, and Jin, after discovering that, can’t take the risk.

“Okay, well, let’s get you hooked up so we can run some tests.”

The scans take longer than he expected.

To be honest, he thinks he fell asleep during one of them, but he’s unsure. All he remembers is various beeping, the sounds of hushed voices, and then Jin taking him back into the car.

The car ride is quick, talkative as usual, and Jin pretends that nothing happened. It’s a good thing about him, because although he pries, he knows when things are freshly sensitive, and he refrains from bringing up the topic until some time has passed.

“Are you still feeling up to the dinner?”

Taehyung feels guilty that the other has to ask.

“Yeah, I’ll be there, what time?”

“Seven, but don’t push yourself too hard, okay?”

Taehyung hums a reply.

Jin drops him off at his apartment thirty minutes later, asking him a bunch of times if he’s okay but it’s more for his own reassurance than Taehyung’s. After swatting him off, he pulls out his white stick, walking carefully into the building and yelling a goodbye to the other.
The apartment is quiet, presumably empty, when he walks in, so he kicks off his shoes neatly by the door and makes his way to the kitchen.

He’s still unfamiliar with the place, but the smooth texture of marble indicates that he’s reached the counters. Feeling his way towards the cabinets, he uses the differences of touch to decipher where he is. He’s hungry, undoubtedly after a long day, and tries to find where they keep the cereal.

He would cook something, but despite Yoongi entrusting him with the kitchen appliances, it’s dangerous and always a risk to cook without someone there. If something goes wrong, nobody would be there to help him out, so he avoids that option. He reaches for the top shelf, trying to find a wooden knob and is soon met with polished lumber.

Yoongi’s considerate because he only gets one type of cereal, ultimately Taehung’s favourite, so he doesn’t have to worry about picking up a mystery flavour. He’ll know what to expect, and he’ll like it, because Yoongi knows him better than he knows himself.

After eating and running over his recordings and notes from class, he’s gotten bored. Yoongi still isn’t back, and even though Tae assumes he’s working late, he can’t help but miss him already.

Yoongi has been a part of Taehyung’s life for a little over six years now. He’s so similar to family that he’s now considered so, blood not distinguishing their differences. He’s raised him in a way. He taught him how to read braille, tell time without sight, cook and clean, walk with touch and handle his nightmares (at least to some extent). He took the effort to initially find a proper home-schooling service, and find a music teacher, a good college, a home with food and comfort and warmth. He’s re-taught him how to be human, and it has changed his life in ways he can’t repay. He’s as normal as a blind boy with trauma can be, but that’s good enough for Taehyung. He’s grateful, and sometimes he cries at the fact that he will only burden the other’s life.

If only I’d have rotten in that house, then he wouldn’t have to put up with me.

When five o’clock arrives, he hears the front door open. He can tell by the way the person drags their feet, huffs tiredly, and slumps their bag to the floor, that they are indeed the person he has been waiting for.

“I’m home!”

“How was work?”
Yoongi makes his way into the living room, where Taehyung is sprawled against the couch listening to a podcast with one earbud plugged in. He left the other one free so he could hear when the other would return.

“Ah, I wasn’t at work.”

Right, it’s Wednesday today. Yoongi only works on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays usually.

“Where were you?”

“I was helping a friend back at school with a music assignment, nothing big.”

Taehyung’s interest peaks. “Hmm, is this the so-called friend you admire a little too muchh?” He quirks his eyebrows suggestively. “Wow, helping out the guy with homework, how much flirting was involved?”

“Oh would you shut up, helping Hoseok wasn’t me flirting it was me being a good person.”

“I didn’t mention anything about Hoseok.” Taehyung beams mischievously. “What a coincidence you immediately thought of him first.”

He smiles victoriously.

“You were implying him, don’t lie. It’s not flirting if you don’t like him.”

“Right, you don’t like him because you love h-”

Taehyung feels something soft hit his face mid-sentence.

“Did you just throw a pillow at me?!”
“I will throw harder things at you if you don’t shut your mouth.”

Taehyung laughs. “Alright, alright, you have to admit though, you like him a little come on.”

“Do not test me.”

Yoongi goes to the kitchen to get a beer out of the fridge and then plops on the same couch Taehyung is on, shoving his legs a little over.

“How did your check-up go?”

He cracks the bottle open and takes a swig.

Taehyung frowns a little. “It went fine.”

“Just fine?”

“I’ll be okay.”

“I need you to be honest with me.”

Taehyung sighs. “I had a little complication but they ran a bunch of tests and said that it’s probably nothing. We’ll get them in the mail sometime next week, but they told me not to worry just yet.”

“Why’d they run them in the first place?”

“It was nothing, just a minor complication.”
“Taehyung.”

“Fine, I’m feeling pain again but it’s not that bad! It only happened today and it’s probably because my nightmare wired me up and all, please don’t worry.”

Yoongi lets out a frustrated sigh. “I told you to contact me if something like that happened! Why do you insist on suffering alone?”

*It’s the only way I know how.*

*Emotions are for the weak.*

“I could’ve dropped you home so you could rest, remember what the hospital said about pushing yourself?”

*I don’t want to burden you but I’m just an overwhelming weight, aren’t I?*

“I’m sorry hyung, but you were in class and I didn’t want to-”

“How am I supposed to trust you being responsible if you’re not going to let me in? You need to open up to me about this so we can prevent these things from happening.”

*But I do open up to you.*

“I do open up to you! I told you about my *fucking* past, what more do you want?”

Yoongi’s breath halts a little. He doesn’t want to fight with him. “Look, I know that you’re trying, but you need to tell me when you’re hurting. *Please*, it hurts me when you don’t.”

Taehyung feels guilty again. He shouldn’t blow up at the other, especially since his intentions are pure. If only he weren’t such a nuisance.
“I’m sorry, I don’t want you to hurt. I’ll let you know when I’m not feeling well from now on.”

Yoongi smiles and Taehyung feels it. He’s happy he made the other happy.

“Thank you, I know that it’s hard for you but remember what we said? Baby steps. You don’t have to tell me all at once, but I’d appreciate it if you let me in a little bit. I only want to help you.”

Taehyung knows this. He *hates* that he knows it because he hates the fact that Yoongi is just too fucking kind for him. He’s patient and caring, how can he put up with such a broken mess? He doesn’t deserve him. He needs to learn how to let others help him, but to do so, he has to learn how to help himself, and he isn’t quite good at that yet.

“Did you hear about the dinner Jin’s throwing?”

It’s an attempt to direct the conversation somewhere else. Taehyung knows that Yoongi has heard about it because Jin told him so, but anything is better than discussing feelings at this point.

“Yeah, are you going to go?”

Taehyung nods. “I think I’d like to. Are you inviting any friends?”

“Uh, maybe? I don’t think any juniors are going to want to join me but perhaps I’ll invite a friend from work.”

“You know, Hoseok hyung is going to be there.”

“Yes, I’m aware.”

“You should dress nicely.”

Yoongi rolls his eyes, hitting the other gently on his knee. “You always talk about me and my potential love interests, but I never hear about yours?”
“It’s because I don’t have any.”

“Oh really, is that so? I beg to differ, a friend of mine says he’s become good friends with you, and he noticed you be very unusually close with this other guy in your class.”

Taehyung blushes crimson. “W-what did he say?”

“Ah, nothing, just that he saw you LET another guy touch your face? Since when do you let others do that, let alone even go near you? I’m impressed, this guy must be very special.”

“It’s nothing, I’m not even a hundred percent sure if I’m gay yet, I mean sure, I like the idea of dating guys, but have I dated one? No. And plus, he’s just a stranger, a friend, I don’t know, it’s too soon to tell.”

Yoongi chuckles at the other’s flustered reaction. “Sounds to me that you’ve got a crush.”

“I don’t! Who even is this friend?”

“His name is Jimin.”

_Damn you Jimin and your big ass mouth._

“Well, he doesn’t know shit. It was a weird reaction, I don’t plan on doing it again.”

“There’s nothing wrong with liking someone.”

_You are and will always be incapable of love._

_That’s what the monsters said, therefore it must be true._
“I know that, but I don’t like anyone.”

_I don’t know how to love someone. I can’t love someone._

“Ahh, fresh sweet denial.”

_I don’t deserve love._

“Says you!”

“I won’t pry, but I do want to meet him. Apparently, he tried to take your sunglasses off?”

“He did take them off, but I didn’t freak out how I thought I would. It was weird.”

“Hmm, yes, sounds like love.”

“Hyung!”

“See, now you know how it _feels_ like?”

“No, this is different.”

“What do you mean? It’s the same thing.”

“No, you’re head over heels in denial. I’m a confused potential homosexual.”

“Potential? Taehyung, speaking seriously, there’s nothing wrong with liking guys. For one, I support you.”
I know but loving someone…it’s weird.

“I know that, but at the same time, I’ve never dated anyone either. I don’t know who I like, let alone if I’ll ever be able like anyone regardless of gender.”

“You deserve to be happy.”

No, I don’t.

“Maybe. But, I can’t see myself able to love someone else. It just doesn’t come naturally, you know? It took me forever to be so close to you, and even then, it was a struggle sometimes.” He pauses. “I think I need time to sort out things.”

“And you have all the time in the world. Don’t rush it. Trust me, relationships aren’t everything. Your own health, work, and success come first!”

Taehyung hums. “Indeed, wise old Yoongi.”

He feels a shove. “Don’t call me old, you brat.”

Taehyung laughs.

“Seriously, dress nicely for the dinner.”

“Yeah, yeah. Once you start accepting your feelings.”

He takes another swig of beer.

They arrive at the dinner forty-five minutes late.
It’s not really Taehyung’s fault, more Yoongi’s than anything, yet the other still blames him for ‘being so indecisive’.

To Taehyung, the texture of outfits does matters. It’s all about perfection.

When they do knock at the front door, Jin opens up almost immediately. With the door open, Taehyung can hear the loud commotion that’s going inside, and there seems to be a lot of people, to say the least. Too many people.

Yoongi guides him in, making sure he doesn’t bump into the coat hanger, and explains to him a little bit of the surroundings.

Taehyung’s been to Jin’s place only twice. Once was when he and Yoongi were moving apartments, and the other was when he just got discharged out of the hospital after being held there for a little over a year. He was met with Jin’s warm arms and a nice home-cooked meal, and it made the newly adapted darkness lighten just a little bit, even if the encounter was short. He still remembers the dish vividly. The flavours, the mouth-watering scent, the vibrancy he could sense even without sight, it was all perfect. It reminded him of warmth and something indescribably nice. He couldn’t pinpoint it at the time, but now he’s come to realise that it reminded him of family. Not his old family, nor the monsters, but a new one. The new one he’s now found on his own.

The dish was Japchae, and it has remained his favourite food ever since.

Blindness had been a lot of getting used to, and he was truly grateful to be met with such kindness and hospitality, especially by someone he didn’t even really know yet at the time. However, since that was a good five years ago, he doesn’t quite remember everything as well as he remembers that dish, and he still needs Yoongi to describe what is what and where is where.

He makes his way in what he assumes is the kitchen and retracts his white stick, again, not wanting to draw attention to his injury. Yoongi whispers that he’s going to quickly go say hi to a few people and come right back, so now he’s alone for the most part.

It’s ironic, because with so many people around him he’d expect not to be alone, but that’s exactly how it is. Well, he’s not completely alone, but to his mind he is.

That changes though when a gentle bump to his shoulder announces someone else’s presence.
“Ah, I’m so sorry about tha-” the guy’s voice halts. “Wow, how ironic, I bump into you not only once but twice.”

Taehyung’s heard that voice before, only briefly, but it still holds some memory in his brain.

“Have we met before?”

“Right, sorry. I’m Namjoon, remember? The clumsy guy that bumped into you earlier today?”

It rings a bell.

“Oh, you’re the one that couldn’t find the science department.”

The other blushes with embarrassment. “Yeah, that too. I didn’t know you knew Jin hyung, then again I don’t really know many of his friends since we just met, but wow, what a small world.”

He’s rambling, clearly nervous, but one thing sticks out to Taehyung.

*If they’ve only met today, how is he already speaking about the other with such familiarity? Closeness?*

“Yeah…”

He’s unsure what to say but Namjoon is great at keeping a conversation. He’s undoubtedly knowledgeable, seeming to know just about anything and everything, and it makes it impossible for Tae to get bored or uninterested.

“How did you meet him by the way?”

And then the pin drops. Taehyung knows that it was going to happen inevitably, but a small part of him wishes that Namjoon hadn’t said that at all.
“You mean Jin hyung?”

“Yeah.”

Taehyung thinks. Maybe he can lie? It’s not easy talking about his past but not because it’s hard for him, but because it’s hard for others. It’s a gateway to pity showers and condolence sighs, and surely it puts the other in a difficult situation.

“I met him at…a summer camp.”

*Stupid, who’s going to believe that lie?*

If Namjoon can tell he’s not telling the truth, he doesn’t show or comment on it.

“Oh, nice. Which summer camp?”

“Oh, just one about..music and the arts and such..” It’s such an uncertain answer but he pulls it off by giving a small smile, laughing a little. “He’s a real talented singer.”

To that, Namjoon nods. “I know! He’s incredible.”

Taehyung doesn’t know what to say again, but it doesn’t matter, because at that very moment Yoongi comes back, signalling his arrival with a usual brush on the back.

“Namjoon?”

Yoongi’s voice is filled with surprise but also laces with something else. It’s subtle but is that… anger?

*Wow, it really is a small world, isn’t it?*
“Yoongi? You’re here too…Wow, I didn’t realise we had so many mutual friends.”

“Yeah…How do you know Jin hyung?”

“I just met him today actually, same with…” he trails off because he hasn’t even learnt the other’s name yet.

“I’m Tae, sorry, I didn’t introduce myself earlier.”

Yoongi nods understandingly, though he raises his eyebrows at the new nickname. “Ah, it’s a small world, isn’t it?”

He voices the other two’s thoughts.

It’s silent for a bit, an unknown tension in the air until Jin waves over at Namjoon to go help with something. He smiles before dismissing himself and once he’s out of earshot, Taehyung speaks.

“How do you know Namjoon-ssi?”

Yoongi’s silent for a bit. “We used to live together.”

It’s a quick answer but it’s filled with a sort of hostility.

“As in, you dated?”

“Oh god no.” Yoongi takes more time to formulate his answer. “We were working on a project together but we never really finished it. I haven’t seen him in over six years.”

Six years.
“Oh.”

“Ah, don’t think about it too much! It was this silly thing we were trying to launch, but hey, not all ideas get to be published. It’s just life.”

Yet, it was more than that.

It wasn’t just a silly idea.

It wasn’t just the cruelty of life.

But, Taehyung doesn’t know that.

Why does he seem so…upset? Angry?

“Tae?”

His questions come to a standstill when something sweet fills his ears.

It’s his voice, the voice he subconsciously memorises and absorbs and loves. A voice so unique to the sole person that has become such an exception in his life. An exception that has come about in such a short amount of time.

Why are you here?

“Jeongguk?”

What a small world it is indeed.
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https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

Chapter End Notes

soooo Jeongguk's here??
why?? also what's up with namjoon and yoongi?
leave theories down below haha.

dthis chapter is a little longer than all the other ones, so i hope that makes up for how long
it took me to post it. again, im so sorry.

as always, i have an instagram (@amfics) where i post updates, teasers, a little bit about
me, AND this week I published my piano cover of the voltron opening on behalf of
season 7 coming out.

the link is: https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

happy reading!

さようなら。
Jeongguk has always known how social Jin is.

He's friends with everyone, and that is no exaggeration.

However, what he hadn't known (or expected), was that Jin is also friends with the one person he would have guessed last.

And, what happens when said person and he have an interesting encounter?

—

A chapter where Yoongi is a mischievous bitch and Jeongguk is bad at feelings.

Chapter Notes

wowowow look at that! an update (woohoo)
it's quicker than the last one that's for sure, but then again, that is no accomplishment.

anyways,
i hope you enjoy reading this chapter cause MAN that was fun to write..maybe I'll put more of these scenes in the book cause they are so entertaining to create...but the plot ahh

on another note!
thank you all so much for 100+ kudos and 1320+ reads (damn, I'm so flattered). i'm so suprised so many of you even decided to click on this (let alone like, comment, and bookmark it) so i'm very appreciative uwu.

i'll keep this note short and abrupt cause you all want to get along with the story.

so,

happy reading!

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jeongguk’s tired.

Not only did he end up being late for one of his classes, not to mention RIGHT when his name was being called, but he also fucked up in the most major way possible.
He accidentally pissed off a blind guy.

Well, was Taehyung actually upset? Jeongguk is still contemplating the initial action and then their conversation after, and he can’t decipher the other’s true emotions. Was he angry? Sad? Confused?

Jeongguk has no idea, all he knows is that he is absolutely exhausted after his first chaotic day of college, and he just wants to sleep.

So, when he figures out that his roommate is throwing a dinner tonight and inviting a bunch of people, he’s not exactly thrilled by the idea.

It’s firstly annoying because he has to help the other organise. It’s the rule of the household. Because he’s younger, he has to help in any way possible because if not, it’s deemed ‘disrespectful’. It’s also annoying because he’s not in the mood to meet a bunch of strangers, have to talk to said strangers, and then have to eat with them for at least an hour. Normally he’s more social, but today, all he wants is to rest and curl up into a ball under his covers replaying his embarrassments. Is that so hard to ask?

Nonetheless, here he is, helping Jin set the table and assisting every so often in cooking the food. Now, Jeongguk is a terrible cook, that is common knowledge to anyone who knows him, however, it doesn’t take a genius to know how to chop and peel vegetables. Or at least, that’s what Jin thought.

“No, no, no, Jeongguk! What are you doing? Why are you peeling half the vegetable? Do you know how much this cost?! Surely enough that you shouldn’t waste perfectly good parts. And don’t chop them so unevenly! We’re serving dinner not holding a Tetris competition.”

Jeongguk lets out a frustrated sigh. “I’m not a cook, hyung! Why are you making me do something I’m not good at?”

“Because, you need to learn how to make food the right way. It’s a vital skill in life, and it shows you can be independent. I swear you kids get lazier and lazier the younger you are. Now stop complaining and fix your mess.”

Jeongguk bites his protests down because he knows it’s never wise to talk back to Jin, especially if he’s talking back about something he’s superior in, which is cooking.
So, he settles for repairing his mistakes and then going back to the simpler tasks, like putting the cutlery out.

“What time are they coming over again?”

“Seven,” Jin answers, not looking up from where he’s working. “But we need to be done at the latest, six fifteen.

Jeongguk groans, looking at the wall clock which portrays the time in bold numbers.

Five.

*Why are we doing this again?*

“Don’t just stand there! I have some of my closest friends coming over here today, I need you to look presentable.”

Jeongguk looks down at what he’s wearing and realises that sweats and a T-shirt won’t necessarily do the part. He groans again, making his way upstairs to change into something more decent.

*What to wear?*

He assumes most of the guests will be Jin’s age so he doesn’t want to look immature, especially considering his younger age. So, maybe something classy? A suit is way too over the top, so then, a button down? Make it short sleeves since it’s hot, summer still seeming to hang on to the branches of early autumn.

Jeongguk searches through his closet, hunting for something that resembles the idea in his mind, and pulls out a black button-down with matching black trousers. Now, he *can* and probably *should* wear shoes that match, but he’s not in the mood to be ordinary. That, and he practically only loves one pair of shoes.

His beloved Timberlands.
He rushes downstairs to finish prepping the table when he hears Jin walk into the living room, immediately stopping the other in his tracks.

“Noope, you aren’t wearing those, they ruin the whole outfit.”

“Hyung! What do you mean? What’s wrong with them?”

“Nothing, except they do not match this at all, can’t you just wear dress shoes, or at least something normal? Crocs would be better than this.”

“You take that back. Timberlands are gifts handcrafted by God.”

“You must be blind,” he stops at the word, seeming to apologise or debate internally, before resuming his original thought. “Go change, and while you’re at it, maybe ask some of your friends to come over. Didn’t you make a few today?”

Jeongguk thinks about it.

Would Taehyung really want to go considering he did technically expose him? I mean, of course, Jeongguk hadn’t meant to, but he still feels guilty that he had made the other feel uncomfortable.

*Let’s not push my luck. I’ll see him tomorrow anyway.*

He already knows Jimin is going to go because Jin invited him. After all, Jin was the one to introduce him to the other in the first place.

However, he’s still unsure about Sammy. He didn’t really get to know him yet, but he wants to.

*Ehh, he’s probably at his house eating a bowl of rice or something. I shouldn’t bother him.*

“Nah, they’re probably busy.”
Jin nods, eyeing the younger up and down again in a judging way as if to say ‘change your fucking shoes’. Jeongguk rolls his eyes, going back upstairs to change into something classier (at least to the taste of Jin), and then making his way back down…again. He swears he’s been up and down those stairs five times in the space of one minute.

“What are you making anyway?”

“Ah, many things, but the star of the meal is going to be my infamous and undeniably delicious home-cooked Japchae!”

Taehyung pops into his mind again. His smile paints Jeongguk’s vision and he imagines how brighter it would be if he came over and tried it.

Taehyung loves Japchae…maybe I should invite him.

“Oh, I have a friend who likes that a lot.”

“Do you want to invite them?” Jin asks in response.

He’s probably mad at me, he did run off after our talk…He probably wants nothing to do with me.

“No, I’m pretty sure he’s working on something.”

It’s a lie but Jeongguk (on top of feeling guilty) really doesn’t want to get scolded by Jin for invading the privacy of the visually impaired. He already heard a mouthful from Jimin, and that was not pleasant, imagine Jin.

Jeongguk shudders at the thought.

Nothing is scarier than an infuriated Jin, that’s for sure.

More than that though, Jeongguk can’t help but keep on contemplating on his conversation with Tae. He’s confused more than anything, but for some reason, he finds his hands beginning to sweat every
time the scenario appears in his mind. It’s frustrating because he reacts in a way he can’t explain or frankly, even realises yet. His heart races, a lump in his throat makes it hard to swallow, and butterflies flutter throughout his chest. He doesn’t understand why, or how, or when this started happening, but one thing he does understand is that this is indeed a foreign and strange feeling. He hasn’t decided if it’s a good or bad feeling yet, but so far, it’s leaning towards the good side.

When seven does finally stroll around, the first person to walk in is somebody oddly familiar, yet seemingly a stranger to Jeongguk.

“Jin! Good to see you, how’s everything?”

Jeongguk frowns in uplifted confusion. Why is the boy talking with such familiarity?

_Are they dating?!_

“Ahh, Hoseok! Long time no see, I’m doing great, still trying to get my dream out there though. How are you? I heard you run your own dance classes now. And you have a studio?”

_So…they aren’t dating?_

_Where have I heard that name before?_

Hoseok laughs. “Yeah, yeah, it’s nothing too impressive. My program launched a couple months ago and I’m surprised how many students want to learn. I do have a studio, but to be honest, I feel like I spend more time dancing outside of it than inside. It’s great though!”

“That’s fantastic to hear. Oh! Sorry, before I forget, this is my roommate Jeongguk, he moved in with me around a year ago.”

Hoseok turns to face him and Jeongguk gives a sheepish smile.

“Ah, I think I’ve met you before! You’re the one that read their schedule wrong, right? I’m happy I could help you out.”
Jeongguk flushes as Jin proceeds to laugh.

“Seems exactly like something you’d do, I’m glad you helped him out Hobi, the kid gets lost easily.”

“Hey!”

Jin laughs again.

To say Jeongguk’s surprised to see Hoseok isn’t really the word to put it. He knows Jin, therefore he knows that he’s practically friends with everyone and anyone, so it’s not too alarming to encounter people he’s already met. It’s still really coincidental though, what are the odds that the person who helped him find his class today would be one of Jin’s supposed closest companions? He sometimes wishes he were as social.

After moving away from home a little over two years ago, Jeongguk has been constantly feeling like the odd one out. The sore spot in an otherwise perfect neighbourhood. He doesn’t know anyone, nor has he adapted fully to the culture yet, and he’s always relied on Jin to make friends. It’s still difficult, hell, he still struggles understanding people’s dialects here, and that says a lot coming from a place that holds a more diluted one, however, even now, it’s better than how he was a year ago. He only started rooming with Jin a year after he moved out of his parents’ house, and he had lived in a pretty old and cheap flat before he had the luxury of meeting the other. Ah, the days where he survived off of discount ramen and store-bought sushi, it was truly a rough time. He doesn’t completely remember what inclined him to move away from home. His parents hadn’t wanted him to, neither did his brother, and he knew almost everybody in his small community, so, why had he? I guess, career-wise, it was a good choice, since there aren’t as many opportunities back in Busan compared to the bustling city of Seoul. It’s like the place screams possibility.

Then again, he can’t help but miss his family, especially when it used to be just him and his cheap grocery meals.

And then thankfully, he met Jin.

How he did end up meeting him is quite a funny story. It was during Spring and Jeongguk was out looking for higher paying jobs, his part-time occupation being a waiter not really sufficient with his rental bills (despite his flat being the equivalent to crap). He had been looking outside a bunch of random stores until he sort of well…got lost. Yeah, he got lost in the middle of Seoul (now to think of it, he’s pretty good at doing that in general). It was traumatising at the time but now the two of
them laugh about it. Essentially what happened is he went around asking a lot of people where to go to get back to his district, but apparently the city is also filled with a bunch of assholes... That is until he found Jin. The other was eating inside a café with two other people, suddenly noticing his frantic and distressed look, and went outside to see if he needed any assistance.

Not only did he take him back to his district, but he also helped him find where his apartment was located. And, when upon looking at it, he dropped the ‘do you need a place to stay?’ card. Turns out, Jin was looking for a roommate for his new flat, and well, things worked out perfectly. Thinking about it more now, the whole situation could have gone really badly since they were both extremely naïve, however, Jeongguk was in desperate need for a better home, as well as a better neighbourhood for that matter, and so he took his chances. It did end up operating in both of their favours (even if their luck paid out), so that’s what matters. Ever since then, the two have grown a lot closer. Jin has become family to him, and although he’s not familiar with all of his friends yet, he’s sure he’ll be able to soon.

Well, little does he know that he shares (and is close to) many more mutual friends than he initially thought.

It’s almost eight now and Jeongguk finds himself enjoying the dinner more than he anticipated. Sure, he’s tired as hell, but Jin’s friends are surprisingly pretty interesting, and on top of that, know how to keep a conversation going. He’s now just about introduced himself to all the guests, so he makes his way to the kitchen to fetch a glass of water cause damn, talking makes you really fucking parched.

Not really paying attention to his surroundings, he quickly fills up a cup of ice and pours water from the dispensary in the fridge, looking up quickly as he takes a sip. Needless to say, that was a bad idea. He chokes upon looking, the water almost spitting out of his lips as his gaze meets the one person he had definitely not expected to be here. Yeah, Jin knows a lot of people, but seriously, this is way too coincidental.

“Tae?”

His voice laces in surprise, the remnants of water still lodged at the back of his throat which causes him to cough.

Taehyung looks up from where he’s staring, eyes searching for the source of the noise with deep concentration. His eyebrows portray his shocked emotion, and although his eyes are covered by shades, Jeongguk can still make out their widened stature.
“Jeongguk?”

Taehyung’s voice is low yet incredibly soft, ringing throughout the room and quite frankly, throughout Jeongguk’s entire mind.

*Why does it sound so nice when my name comes out of his mouth?*

A stone forms in his stomach and all it seems to do is bloom thousands of violent butterflies.

“What are you doing here?”

*Stupid question, he was probably invited, you dumbass.*

“Jin hyung invited me…how do you know him?”

“I-uh, live with him.”

An awkward silence fills the room and Jeongguk suddenly remembers that they aren’t exactly…alone. His stare fixates to the others in the room, his vision meeting a shorter guy with light mint green hair who is staring *back* with a *not so friendly* look. Jeongguk attempts to smile to show that he indeed is not hostile, but it seems to make the situation worse as the stranger averts his gaze, frowning as he grips onto Taehyung more tightly.

*Oh shit, don’t tell me they’re dating.*

But why does that even matter? Jeongguk doesn’t care, hell, *why* should he? It’s not like he likes the other…well, does he? He shakes his head in hopes that his thoughts will escape with the motion.

Jeongguk feels nervous, clearly having upset this random person without having even talked to him yet. What could he have possibly done to make the other so pissed off?
“Uh, hi. Nice to meet you? I’m Jeongguk.”

He sticks out his hand, awaiting a handshake from the mint-haired stranger but receives none. After a solid twenty seconds, he retracts his hand awkwardly, trying to pull off this ever so terrible encounter with a shy smile.

“I remember you.”

The voice isn’t filled with kindness but it isn’t really filled with hatred either. Kind of in between?

“Remember me?” Jeongguk repeats questioningly, laughing a little to ease his nerves. “Um, how? I’ve never met you before.”

“You told Taehyung, if I recall correctly, to ‘watch where he’s fucking going’.”

The statement is so stale and direct that Jeongguk is unsure how to respond.

*Wait what?*

“When?”

The other rolls his eyes. “Tch, you can’t even remember your own rude actions, can’t you? At least have the decency to remember who you curse out to. Especially when they’re blind.”

Jeongguk physically pales, his memory coming back to him in fragments.

“Hey, hyung, it’s okay. Jeongguk’s a friend, what are you on about?”

“The guy in the subway, the one that bumped into you, it was him.”

And then the memory comes back to him as a full picture.
Shit shit shit.

Ash grey.

I’m really really bad at first encounters, aren’t I?

“Oh God, that was you? Geez, I’m so sorry I had no idea, I wouldn’t have said so if I knew. I was just in a rush and, you know, I can’t be late to my first class, especially on the first day, and-”

“So, if he weren’t blind you still would have said it?”

“Wait, no, that came out wrong. I’m sorry! Sometimes I don’t think before I speak. I never meant to hurt or offend you, I-”

“Yoongi, stop making him feel bad,” Taehyung interrupts, stifling a laugh of amusement as he hits the other square in the chest.

Why does he find this funny? His friend, or supposed boyfriend, is about to kill me!

Yoongi laughs too, intimidating expression gone and replaced with one of pure humour.

Did I just get punked?

“Oh god, I should have seen the look of your face. How priceless was it?”

Taehyung is beaming, glowing even, cheerfulness plastered on his mouth. Jeongguk can’t help but smile too at the sight. It’s like an angel has arrived again.

“Look, it’s rare I get to mess with the punks that insult you, I had to shoot my shot.” Yoongi replies, now looking at the other with a more approachable expression. “Sorry about that, I’m sure you’re great, but next time, watch who you’re getting mad at. I’m Yoongi by the way, Taehyung’s friend,
I’m also close to Jin.”

So…they aren’t dating.

Why does that make him relieved?

Jeongguk nods, grateful and unbelievably thankful that everything ended up taking a different and far better turn. “I’m Jeongguk, which you probably already know by now. I met Tae today actually, and I’ve been rooming with Jin for a little over a year now.”

Yoongi gestures in acknowledgement, looking back at Taehyung who seems to be…blushing?

Why does he look so cute when he’s flustered?

Ah! Weird thoughts are infiltrating again. Jeongguk shakes his head but this time, the feelings don’t quite go away with the motion. One thing Jeongguk knows is that he most definitely is not in what way whatsoever a homosexual.

Definitely.

Yet, why does this thought stick into the part of his brain that holds memory? Why does he think such things? And why does he feel such things towards a guy? He has to refrain from directly looking at him or else he’ll end up blushing too.

Why? He’s unsure.

Yoongi observes the situation silently, calculating the demeanours of both boys before smiling gently. “I’m going to go see if anyone needs help, I’ll be back, okay?”

He’s talking to Taehyung but his eye contact remains pointed towards Jeongguk.

“Okay, is there anything I can do as well?”
“No, you’re fine Tae, I’ll come get you when it’s time to eat.”

Tae nods and Yoongi keeps staring up at Jeongguk, giving him a quick wink before exiting the room.

He knows.

Knows what?

Something that Jeongguk doesn’t even know yet, and certainly something that Taehyung is oblivious to.

It’s silent for a few minutes, Jeongguk still avoiding eye contact because he knows Taehyung, and he knows that the other will most definitely pick up on his blush even without sight. He is an open book after all. That, and Taehyung is great at reading people.

The first person to initiate any sort of sound is Taehyung (after a good two minutes of nothing being said), and it’s with him sighing softly before tilting his head up. “Do you have a balcony here?”

Jeongguk raises his eyebrows at the odd question. “We do, would you like to go there?”

Taehyung nods, and only then does Jeongguk realise the other’s sickly appearance. He’s whiter than usual, still tan but unusually pale, and his breathing seems to come out quicker than what’s deemed normal.

Jeongguk’s concerned but doesn’t bring it up.

They walk towards the balcony that lies on the second floor in comfortable silence, Jeongguk assisting him up the stairs by holding onto his arm and lower back in hopes to make the journey a little easier (even if only slightly).

Normally, Taehyung would swat away another person’s help, but he’s feeling a little dizzy and
doesn’t want to cause a scene by falling down the stairs…which he has done before. He also, for some reason, likes Jeongguk’s touch. Well, not like, more so that he doesn’t dislike it.

It’s light but heavy, warm but not too warm, secure and strong and gentle. It makes him feel calm, but then again, physical contact is not always his thing, so why?

Once upstairs, Jeongguk lets the other walk freely, only telling him where to turn so he can find the doors that lead to the small open terrace. Finally, they reach outside, the door creaking quietly behind them.

Jeongguk guides him again, telling him where to walk because he doesn’t want Tae to steer close to the ledge, which is only a couple feet away.

Taehyung’s face immediately relaxes, the breeze clearing his mind, and it seems as if some colour has returned.

“Careful, it’s slippery.”

Jeongguk’s grip returns onto Taehyung’s body, tightening so that he doesn’t trip on the wet floors (rain is a bitch), the action a little more intimate than what he imagined in his mind. It takes a bit until he realises, with stark embarrassment, that he’s holding Taehyung’s waist securely so that it sticks to his own. It’s a little less straight than two guys walking up to a balcony, but then again, each encounter they have had has been pretty non-straight.

It’s not completely gay though…right?

Taehyung doesn’t seem to be bothered, however, and so it reassures Jeongguk that as long as the other’s okay, he will keep doing what he’s doing.

That brings up the thought he’s been wondering all day.

“Hey, are you mad at me for what I did today?”

Taehyung turns to face him, head pointed slightly more to the right of Jeongguk’s frame. His arm is
Jeongguk wants to sigh in relief but the answer is too short. He needs the other to be honest with him.

“Seriously, if I did, I really am sorry. You don’t have to say it’s fine if it’s not because I know what I did was stupid. I never meant for you to feel uncomfortable...”

Taehyung leans in closer, whether intentional or not, and shifts his arm so that it finds the other’s hands. He intertwines them with his own again but quickly lets them go as if the contact had shocked him. He stiffens, suddenly trying to distance himself, but Jeongguk catches his hands back before he can move.

Taehyung stills.

“Jeongguk, I promise, I’m not mad. It’s okay. You would have found out anyways since I have to use my white stick at school.”

“White stick?”

“Oh, the cane I travel around with. It’s called a white stick because it’s painted that colour...I mean, at least I think it is, I can’t really...confirm that,” he laughs. “It’s so that people know you’re blind.”

Jeongguk nods, not letting go of the other’s hands. “I-uh, can I see it?”

Taehyung nods, hesitantly trailing his arm away so he can retrieve it from his pocket.

*His hands are shaking.*

He always keeps it in the left for emergencies. After feeling the familiar material, he pulls it out, extending it so that Jeongguk can see it more clearly.

“Well, it is white.” Jeongguk states and Taehyung bursts into short laughter. “How come you aren’t
using it now?"

“I don’t really like using it, to be honest. I don’t want everyone to know I’m blind sometimes, and upon seeing that, they’ll automatically know. I can still do things without it, however, I keep it with me just in case.”

Jeongguk takes it from the other’s hand, twirling the object a bit before returning it.

“It’s pretty badass.”

Taehyung turns away, something pink on his cheeks. “I mean, it’s just a cane really..”

“No, I mean the purpose behind it. I’ve never encountered a blind person before, so I’m sorry if I seem a little uneducated. It’s because I am,” he laughs a little at the end of his sentence. “Were you born blind?”

It’s a more personal question, and Jeongguk knows that, but the words slip out before he can process what he is about to say.

Taehyung goes back to facing him, a sullen look on his features, and Jeongguk suddenly regrets his poor skill of filtering what he thinks.

Nonetheless, he answers.

“I wasn’t born blind. So, I still remember, even if faintly, what colours look like, what the world looks like, or I guess what is used to look like,” his voice shakes a little. “I thought it was a prank at first, that someone had put a blindfold on me and decided to play a little joke. A sick joke at that. But, as you can see, that wasn’t the case.”

Jeongguk feels his heart break at the words, his own sadness brewing for the boy.

_He must miss it…_
“I’m sorry that happened to you.”

“Don’t be, I’ve gotten used to it. Life is life, you know?”

*It shouldn’t be so cruel.*

“If you don’t mind me asking, when did you become blind?”

He expects Taehyung not to respond, but to his surprise, he does.

“I was thirteen when I lost it.”

*Thirteen?*

“So, six years ago? Wow, that’s awful.”

Taehyung chuckles humourlessly. “It was at first, but as I said, I got used to it. It becomes the norm. Of course, I *miss* seeing shit, but then again, I feel like black is a lot more familiar than seeing colour itself. If I saw things now, I think it would freak me out.”

Taehyung tucks his white stick back in his pocket, leaning closer to the edge in instinct. Jeongguk notices they have moved quite a bit from their original position, and his heart almost leaps out of his body at the thought of the other falling off.

“Be careful. There’s a ledge that breaks off in that direction. Don’t lean too much or you’re going to fall.”

He takes the other’s hand, pulling him in closer to restrict him from going too far off the balcony. Taehyung seems to freeze but then relax at the touch, ultimately letting himself be dragged. Not really paying attention to where his hands are, he spins Tae around so that he’s facing the exit (limiting the risk of him walking off the edge), and huffs out an exhale of relief.

Taehyung laughs. “I wasn’t going to just *fall*, isn’t there a railing?”
“I mean, there used to be one but it got rusty so it had to be thrown away,” Jeongguk’s curiosity arises. “How did you know there was a railing in the first place?”

“There usually is one on balconies, right?”

Right.

But, have you been here before?

Again, too caught up in his thoughts, it takes Jeongguk a bit to realise their current position, and when he finally does, he has to refrain from pushing Taehyung completely off of him. More for Tae’s sake than his own.

“Uh, I think your hand is on my ass.”

Shit.

I guess Tae finally realised too.

Jeongguk quickly unlatches contact, distancing himself so that he doesn’t make Taehyung feel uncomfortable again, but in doing so, he accidentally trips the other.

Fuck.

Taehyung stumbles a little, trying to find his balance, but inevitably slips on the wet flooring.

You see, if it had rained any other day, this probably wouldn’t have happened.

But fate likes messing with Jeongguk.
It really really does.

Thanks to quick reflexes, he grabs onto the other’s hand (like he’s done at least three times already), trying to catch him before he falls. He succeeds; however, much to his dumb luck, he ends up slipping in the process.

Moral of the story: never put two idiots together.

Taehyung falls with a thud, Jeongguk soon following after, his body crushing the other’s considerably smaller frame. The impact of his fall is cushioned, but it still takes the wind out of him. It takes him a couple of seconds to regain his bearings.

Once he does, however, the guilt and stupidity of his actions come forward in massive waves.

He glances down at the other, trying to see if he hurt him but doesn’t see any damage (well, fresh damage that is). Despite the small wince on his face, he seems alright, which to Jeongguk, is a huge relief.

His sunglasses had flown off upon collision, discarded somewhere to his left, and it allows Jeongguk to see his eyes for the second time today.

As always, his heartbeat quickens, something about Taehyung’s stare so undeniably beautiful yet intense. It’s like they sink into his very soul, analysing all that words can’t say and colours can’t depict. It’s breath-taking in a way, which doesn’t make sense because Jeongguk never thought that blindness could contain such beauty.

Now up close, Jeongguk can see the grey that outlines and consumes the other’s pupils. They look similar to how a cloudy sky would. You know there is a clear shining light behind, but it’s covered by these billowed overcasts, a unique grey contrasting the white. A little around the clouds are the faintest indications of a darker shade, the colour seeming to contour the inner grey. It is unlike anything Jeongguk has ever seen, and for the first time since meeting him, he is at a loss for words. It finally hits him.

Jeongguk has never interacted with a blind person before, but he knows, with absolute conviction, that he’s willing to learn, change, and educate himself if it’s for Tae.
Why?

Because Jeongguk may be straight, but he’s certainly gay for Kim Taehyung.

They stay like this for who knows how long. Maybe it’s seconds or maybe it’s hours, time doesn’t seem to move properly when Jeongguk is captivated in the other’s stare.

Finally, a twinkle in his gaze is what breaks the silence.

Taehyung laughs. “I can’t believe you just fell on me, I’m crying—”

He’s shaking because he’s laughing so hard, the movement in his chest rumbling and vibrating against Jeongguk’s torso that lies above. The reaction makes him laugh as well, and soon, both boys are dying of laughter, sniggering and cackling until their sides hurt with stitches. It’s hard to breathe at the situation, everything so ridiculously hilarious even though it had been a complete accident.

After Taehyung recoups his composure, he is left with the most brilliant smile, and Jeongguk is somewhat glad that they did end up falling, because he can drink in that expression forever.

“How did you manage to do that? I slipped and you caught me but then you slipped, I swear, this is prime reality TV content. Our life needs to be filmed.”

Jeongguk grins. “I can’t believe I made you slip, I’m such a klutz geez,” he hesitates. “Did I hurt you?”

“If you hurt me, I wouldn’t have been laughing so hard. If anything, you hurt my lungs because I couldn’t breathe I was cracking up so much.”

He giggles, and it’s the first time Jeongguk has heard such an innocent sound.

Yeah, I’m definitely having non-straight thoughts right now.

Jeongguk moves to get up so he doesn’t continue crushing the other, but Taehyung kicks at his legs,
making him lose his balance and tumble back down.

Taehyung laughs again. “That was payback, however.”

“You cheeky motherfucker.”

“What can I say? I enjoyed that just a little.”

Unknown to Jeongguk’s knowledge, this is the first time Taehyung has fully out-blown laughed in over fifteen years. A laugh that’s not just of amusement, but of pure giddy, dying on the floor, aching lungs, and sore stomach madness. Sure, he has chuckled or snorted or laughed under his breath, but this is the first actual time he hasn’t been able to control such an outburst of happiness. He smiles up at Jeongguk, clouds sparkling.

It’s again another moment where Jeongguk feels like he’s lost in his stare. His stare that takes you, focuses on you, fixates you in black imagery, until all you can do is stare back, admiring and absorbing and memorising each feature. The way his pupils dilate at the yellow landscape lighting, and his eyes shimmer under an intense moonlit sky. How even though they don’t percept anything they portray a lake of clear yet hazy mist. A light but dense fog.

He can’t pinpoint it.

His eyes trail down to Tae’s lips, soaking in each detail until it’s the only thing on his mind. He feels himself gulp, and maybe subconsciously or not, lean in closer. He can feel Taehyung’s breath on his nose, seemingly oblivious if it weren’t for his racing heartbeat. It’s so prominent against Jeongguk’s chest, that he can’t help the butterflies that erupt in his gut.

He feels it too?

Jeongguk’s own heart quickens at Taehyung’s reaction, attention more focused on his mouth that seems to attract with this sort of magnetic pull. It’s when Taehyung licks his lips when Jeongguk’s heart jumps into his throat. His eyes trace each detail, how his tongue swipes the dryness away until it gleams, and how he does so in a way that’s so slow yet so instinctive. The butterflies flare with such intensity his hands begin to sweat.

I want him.
“Taehyung, where are you? Dinner’s ready!”

Yoongi’s voice resounds on the second floor, interrupting whatever this is…well was. It’s getting louder as the seconds go by, and it breaks the two boys out of their trance almost immediately. Before Jeongguk can get up (to not get yelled at), he hears the gate of the terrace door rattle, a sign that it has been opened, or at least is trying to be.

He scrambles up, lifting up Tae in the process so he’s sitting up too, before looking towards the door. He sees, without a doubt, a pretty smug and mischievous looking mint-haired guy.

Yoongi.

“Of course you two lovebirds are getting at it. Come on, stop flirting and come down here, everyone’s waiting for you.”

He winks in Jeongguk’s direction and a blush creeps up on his cheeks, burning the deepest red imaginable. He turns to Taehyung, and he’s glad to see that his face is also burning, both of them radiating a crimson of fluster.

“I-I can’t see but I’m pretty sure that looked a little…” He trails off, unsure how to finish.

“Yeah…um..” Jeongguk clears his throat, suddenly thirsty. “Do you need help getting up?”

Taehyung shakes his head, their moment pretty much gone and dwindling down to ashes. Jeongguk’s convinced that the situation prior had been glowing amber, embers of…something that resembled intimacy, but now, whatever that something was, seems to have blackened in a wet remainder of cold charcoal.

They hurry to the table, Jeongguk still helping him walk down the staircase but otherwise leaving him to his own means. He doesn’t want to overwhelm him with contact or guidance, especially after he noticed how much touch he was exposed to after their falling incident. It seems to Jeongguk that Taehyung doesn’t really react well with that concept, however, if so, why had that moment been different?
If only it hadn’t been extinguished.

Jeongguk can’t help think about what would have happened if Yoongi hadn’t come up.

Would we have kissed?

He shakes his head at the idea.

He couldn’t have kissed him. It hasn’t even been one fucking day since they’ve met each other, and Jeongguk isn’t the one to believe in love at first sight. Clearly, he feels something, however, he can’t accept or believe that he would have done something so intimate (with a GUY for that matter) in such a short amount of time.

I need time, he needs time…Let’s take this, whatever this is, slowly..

They reach the dining room, Taehyung’s blush still dusting his cheeks as everyone’s eyes stare into his.

He forgot his shades.

Jeongguk spots Jimin; who’s smirking, Hoseok; who’s smiling, Yoongi; who’s stifling a laugh, and finally Jin, who looks like his face is about to split open from grinning so hard.

“There you two are!”

Jeongguk can tell from his voice that he’s going to have a lot of explaining to do.

A lot.

But, for now, the dinner commences.
They both sit down, swallowing their confused feelings, and try to pretend like nothing ever happened.

However, if only it were that easy to do.

Touch, after all, is not easily forgotten.

*follow my instagram: @amfics*

https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

Chapter End Notes

ooooooo
sorry it's just so damn exciting for me cause I know what's going to happen (muhahah)
*is this what actual authors are like? or is it just me?*

damn, i used to be the reader but now i actually understand what it's like (and it's fun yet stressful let me tell you)

i'm going to try and fit as many chapters as i can before summer ends because i start school again in september and my schedule does not look too promising (whew, it'll be a struggle, but i will try my best to update frequently)

and if you know me by now you know that I have an INSTAGRAM (yeyeye)
the username is: @amfics
and for all the lazy people out there, here's the link:
https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

just a lil addition in here: it is currently 06:40 in the morning so excuse me if i don't respond, i will be passed out uwu

happy reading!

さようなら。
Chapter Summary

Dinner is awkward.

Not only is it difficult for Taehyung to follow conversation, but an unbearing pain has announced its presence onto his body, and he can't seem to shake it off. It shreds and consumes like the minions of Satan, and it proves to be more than he thought he could handle.

So, he fakes happiness. He smiles, laughs, jokes, yet the display is untrue. He thinks he has everyone fooled, that everyone believes he's perfectly okay as he puts out to be.

But one person seems to be able to see through his façade, through his carefully constructed lies, and it happens to arise an interesting encounter.

basically: a chapter full of laughs, angst and fluff ;)

Chapter Notes

HHHHHHH OKAY
omfg
before you kill me I HAVE AN EXCUSE
my computer broke on me without a reason and I couldn't get it fixed for around two weeks so I'M SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG I PROMISE I WASN'T LAZY-nah seriously tho, apple fucked up and had given me a bad part so they fixed it for free :') which is always nice, cause I didn't want to get scolded by my dad.
anyways here we have the seventh sense, filled with humour, angst, and fluff
hope u enjoy ;)

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

This is, by far, the most awkward, mentally exhausting, blush-inducing, embarrassingly vexatious dinner Taehyung has ever experienced in his nineteen years of living.

Sure, this is probably the only dining gathering he has had, but still, he’s certain that if he had experienced some in the past, they wouldn’t be this uncomfortable.

It’s ten past eight. He’s eating his food and trying to pretend that he’s deaf too so he doesn’t have to
interact with everyone around him. It’s not like he doesn’t want to, he does…if only slightly, but it’s that he can’t follow along to what anyone’s saying. They talk but don’t address who they’re speaking to. They ask to pass plates around but in the air void of direction. Taehyung has no idea who is saying what, who is interacting with who, and especially who is trying to talk to him.

It’s all one large commotion of sound, blurred at the edges so that all voices sound the same. They drown under each other, compressing into blocks of pitch as they echo brainlessly in his head. It’s beyond confusing.

However, despite this, Taehyung feels as if everything couldn’t be any quieter.

The sound of forks on plates and knives cutting through food become indistinct, voices (although loud) whispers of what they are supposed to be. Maybe his wish to be deaf is coming true, because suddenly, everything starts becoming dimmer. Lighter. Inaudible.

How can noises sound so specific yet so silent at the same time?

The room feels ten times hotter again, a sensation he’s been experiencing frequently ever since his hospital visit. Maybe it’s nerves, he hasn’t been around this many people in years after all, but at the same time, it feels more than that.

It’s the type of heat that doesn’t make you sweat but burns you from the inside out. Scorching you dry, slowly and gradually with a heat that’s just bearable. It almost resembles a fever, with the feeling of turmoil and sparked shivers, but even then, it’s not the same, because fevers have a purpose, meaning, fight. This type of heat brings no meaning or purpose except corruption.

What it does truly feel like, however, is fire.

Hot, relentless, ignited fire.

He’s felt this way once before. Five years ago, when he had just moved in with Yoongi, and it isn’t something he likes to remember (or wants to experience again).

In hopes to ease the sun that has now bestowed itself upon his skin, he searches around for a glass of water, thinking that the coldness of the glass will contrast the burn.
With the heat, submerged voices, and now the aching in his head, though, Taehyung finds it difficult to determine his surroundings. He feels cloth, and the smooth texture of clay plates, however, he’s unsure which direction he’s going.

Right? Left? Forward?

_Maybe I should have stayed home after all._

“Taehyung?”

It’s Yoongi that’s able to break his seemingly endless trance.

“How,” Taehyung hums back, words not quite able to form in his throat.

“What are you searching for?”

Taehyung thanks every higher being and spirit he can think of.

_Thank you, Yoongi._

“Uh, my glass of water.”

He feels, moments later, the icy temperature of crystal followed by brushed skin, yet it doesn’t do much to help. In fact, Taehyung thinks it makes it _worse_, the cold a frostbite to his charred fingers and only developing the warmth further. It’s freezing to the point of flames.

The feeling can be described to when you turn the water so hot it feels cold, or when you turn the water so cold it feels hot.

In this case, it’s the latter.
Temperature is both confusing and undeniably odd in absolute darkness.

He tries with all the remaining strength in his body to submit these feelings beneath him. Covering it up under layers of smiles and polite gestures, humourless laughs and airy jokes. It’s what he’s best at.

Faking it.

But even then, after all your persuaded prophecies and lies, faking it catches up to you.

“Taehyung, aren’t you majoring in Computer Science too?”

He chokes on nothing, feeling caught by Jin’s voice even though he hasn’t done anything.

“Yeah...” He clears his throat. “Although, I don’t start until next week. Something about the ‘class not being settled’ whatever that means.”

“See! I told you that was the case, I can’t believe you didn’t trust me. I’m not that irresponsible, geez!”

Even though the voice doesn’t identify themselves, Taehyung has heard it too many times to forget it. His comical sound effects, his slight huffs of fake hurt and even his sarcastic jocularity all add up to make his speech incredibly distinct.

Hoseok is a pretty memorable guy after all.

“Oh, I didn’t know you were taking comp sci too.”

It’s a very short comment but as soon as Taehyung says it, the room goes silent as if waiting for him to say something else.

There is nothing else to say though, so why does it feel like he’s the centre of attention?
Oh, right…my sunglasses.

They fell.

On instinct, his head tilts downwards, hair cascading with the movement so it conceals his eyes in an almost natural way. He can’t help but think how his disability will always ruin people’s easy and casual mood.

Jin’s eyes scream, noticing his discomfort, so the clutter of eating resumes even if forced.

See, with Yoongi it’s never like this. With Jin, it most certainly isn’t ever like this. And even with Hoseok, although they’ve spent little time together recently, conversations always come easily and smoothly, blindness not really a prime factor but an afterthought. A careless reminder that always gets lost through discussion.

So why is it, that with these same people (with the exception of a few others), talking is now more difficult than anything. A heavy weight that’s supposed to be as light and bouncy as feathers or burst mattresses. That’s *supposed* to be easy-going and breezy, swift like wind and waves and drills through rock.

Why isn’t it like this then?

*Why?*

Oh, right…

Now people can actually *see* his impediment with more clarity.

It can’t be forgotten or drowned in conversation because it’s staring right at you. It’s too contrasting of an image, grey boring through brown, that your voice becomes stoic and careful, filled with this sort of unnecessary hesitation.
I’m not a damn bomb.

However, just when things are getting to that point of unbearable awkwardness, unbearable heat and singeing pain and just unbearable suffering, a sweetness so sharp cuts through.

“Wow, computer science is so cool! I couldn’t imagine myself even being remotely good at that, how do you do it?”

Jeongguk’s striking up conversation, and it’s working.

To be honest, Jeongguk isn’t that bad at computer science nor technology itself. He’s not good, but again, not bad, however, he did once crash his computer by leaving a while loop on open (nobody had told him that he had to write something after it to stop the function), and Jin has never let him down on that. The black computer screen and quite loud swishing of internal fans (along with the heat the laptop emanated that could have probably warmed an entire neighbourhood for the winter) pops up in Jeongguk’s mind as he says it, and a small smile of nostalgia creeps up on him.

Jin mimics so.

“I mean, it’s kind of like learning a language. The computer reads out my code through earbuds, and I use that knowledge to base my next movement. Kind of similar to how you normally write. You read over what you do and then see what needs adjustment. What has errors. What makes sense and what doesn’t.”

Jeongguk nods, attention unavering.

“And then, once you get the basics down, you start to become more intricate in detail. Adding different and more complex functions not only to make your work more interesting but also to simplify it. Make it easier to read. You could compare that to adding adjectives before nouns, and then verbs, adverbs, alliteration, imagery, and so on. Making the concept more elaborate, but at the same time, not doing it in a way that’s confusing. It’s about…balance. Harmony.”

Taehyung hasn’t realised how extensive he’s been talking about it until he stops, and he feels slightly embarrassed. He doesn’t like speaking too much about it because he knows he can get super nerdy over such an underrated topic.
Yoongi, however, is smiling, obviously content that the other’s talking with such passion over something, and goes to squeeze his hand.

Upon touch, Jeongguk catches the motion with an astute stare, and although he’s been convinced otherwise, he can’t help the flutter of jealousy that sprouts underneath his skin.

Taehyung can’t notice the change in emotion because there are too many people around him, but Yoongi, on the other hand, is aware, and is quick to remove contact, his suspicions confirming even further as Jeongguk stiffens at the sight.

He’s been caught.

As if Yoongi hadn’t known already based on the scenario he caught up on the balcony. Now that had been self-explanatory in itself, but now, he knows for sure.

Yoongi doesn’t know how Taehyung feels about it yet though, and he wonders if the other will finally let go of the chains of his past. They restrict him with such unbelievable tightness that it’ll take a lot to free him of them forever, but maybe this is what he needs to break free. The just right push to help him move on.

It’s unlikely, but something about Jeongguk seems to bring out the best in Tae.

Now, despite this now pleasant and less awkward conversation, sweetness doesn’t combat fire.

Fire cannot lose because the more you pay attention to it, the more it grows. The more you try to put it out, the more it fights back, roaring and burning through splinters of light and freedom. It’s persistent.

And so, the pain doesn’t go down just yet.

Nevertheless, now that things are livelier, the initial uneasy atmosphere has changed to one of more familiar and carefree natures. Taehyung finds himself actually enjoying the ‘gathering’, and although the pain remains, he does his best to ignore it.
“You did what?! Yoongi exclaims loudly, pretty much startling everyone as he tries to refrain from laughing too hard. He fails miserably.

“Bowling alleys are not for the weak-hearted.”

“That is undoubtedly the dumbest thing you have ever done, and that says a lot considering you’ve done almost every stupid thing in existence.”

Yoongi’s practically dying of laughter now, though he stops talking every so often to act as Taehyung’s eyes and tell him what’s on the table. He’s quite observant, and although it’s presented in small gestures, it makes it significantly easier for Tae to follow what’s going on.

When Yoongi explained what Jin had made, Taehyung’s face had indeed lit up upon hearing ‘Japchae’ and Jeongguk had been lucky enough to catch the expression.

It had been as beautiful as what he had imagined in his head.

“Look, how else was I supposed to let the barista give me free things? My wallet was stolen, and I didn’t think bowling could be that hard.” Hoseok pauses, smiling widely. “I was sorely mistaken.”

“So, you resorted to almost destroying the entire place? Damn, I mean, that is one way to flirt.”

“It’s not flirting, it’s a planned choice of words and actions to get what I wan-“

“So, manipulation?”

“Now you’re making me seem bad! I’m not evil, I just wanted snacks…and a drink. Especially after my ball went straight through the damn roof! I think I broke the bar…and scared off every person within a one-mile radius.”

“The place went AWOL for three days.”

“Yeah...that too.”
“Remind me to never take you bowling. Ever.”

“Noted, but honestly, you guys should have seen Namjoon’s face. I’d do it again just to see such a priceless reaction.”

“If you do that again, I’m going to sock you and use your head as my next strike against the bowling pins.”

Hoseok sniggers, placing a piece of food in his mouth whilst humming as he chews.

See, the trio of Yoongi, Namjoon, and Hoseok, first met in high school. They were inseparable, both with their dreams and passions, but also with their personalities. As well as being close in age, they couldn’t have been a more perfect set of people. Music driving them like adrenaline, and friendship blooming with each milestone they hit. They were family. However, things change, conflicts arise, fire burns, and so, people lose touch.

Good things don’t last forever after all.

Although Hoseok and Namjoon seem to have somewhat made amends, Yoongi still goes silent upon hearing him speak. It’s been awhile since they’ve talked, hell, awhile since they’ve even seen each other, so it’s no surprise that there is tension.

Especially after how things left off.

Taehyung can sense the friction.

“I mean, I’ve never been bowling, I think that would be fun,” Jin says, eyeing Yoongi’s reaction curiously without commenting on it.

“Trust me, if you go with Hobi don’t expect to have all your limbs intact. He almost killed a barista.”

“Okay, that’s a bit far, I merely.”
“Well, it’s been some time since we’ve all hung out, and you can never go wrong with bowling…I mean unless you’re Hoseok, but we’ll keep him on a tight leash,” Jin smiles, giving a small wink before pointing a chopstick in Tae’s direction. “Plus, Taehyung loves bowling.”

“Huh?”

Well, he doesn’t like bowling per say (since he can’t see and all), he likes the idea of it more.

“Yoongi told me so and-”

“Hey, don’t bring me into this.”

“Oh, come on, it’ll do you both some good to stop working all the time. Andddd, I’ll make a picnic.”

Taehyung’s ears perk up at that. “Will you bring mochi?”

“If you say yes to the idea.”

“It’s a done deal.”

Yoongi groans, however, he’s not entirely opposed at the thought. At the same time, Taehyung smiles too, the pain a little worse than before, but nothing he can’t handle.

“I’ll come as well then,” Hoseok says, and his eyes turn a little so they’re facing Yoongi’s. It’s a split second of a reaction, but still noticeable. “And I’ll try not to destroy the place, or scare civilians…or burn the building down.”

“You almost burned the place down too?”

“Well, what bowling alley puts candles near alcohol? That’s bound to cause issues, even to someone who isn’t clumsy! Plus, it wasn’t only me, it was just as much Namjoon’s fault as mine.”
“You pushed the damn thing and I tried to catch it!”

“Yeah, yeah, sure.”

Jeongguk adds on with laughter. “I mean, bowling seems like a great idea. I went with Jimin during the summer back in Busan, and damn I couldn’t stop laughing.”

“I don’t suck that badly!”

“At least you’ll share something in common with Hoseok.”

“Hey!”

It’s Namjoon who has last to answer and the rest of the table awaits eagerly for his response. Taehyung can feel the excitement in the room, bubbling with energy, and he’d be lying too if he said he didn’t want to go.

Namjoon remains silent.

“Come on!” Jin starts. “It’ll be super amusing, I promise.”

“I’m not fond of dying.”

“All we have to do is stay clear from the two idiots and then we’ll be fine. Plus, we’re going to graduate soon. If we don’t have fun now, who knows when we’ll next be able to?”

He does make a valid point.

“You seriously want me to go that badly?”
Jin looks at him with pleading eyes, and man, who can say no to that?

Namjoon looks up at Yoongi quickly, an unreadable expression on his face, until finally, he sighs gently.

“Alright fine, but I swear if any of you do something stupid I wil-”

“Perfect! It’s settled then, bowling at nine, Saturday night. Is everyone free?”

There are some mutual nods and murmurs of approval and everybody wears a smile on their face.

Yet, even with vibrant conversation, radiant plans, pleasant company and golden moments, something strong churns violently in Taehyung’s head. He feels lightheaded but heavy, brain floating whilst his bones are filled with lead. He’s metallic, limbs now weighing twice as much, but at the same time, he’s floating in something that resembles liquid. He’s sinking and flying, burning and freezing, all things opposite and allied and positive and negative.

He’s blistering, baking in the hellish vortex of his mind, and it won’t stop.

Fire always wins.

“Uh Hyung, can you tell me where the bathroom is?”

He’s addressing to anyone really, but he hopes his voice reaches Yoongi.

“Sure.” It’s Jin who answers. “I can walk you to it if that’s okay?”

Taehyung debates internally. There’s no braille or a form or way he can properly determine if he’s entered the bathroom if he goes alone, but does he really want to be accompanied to the toilet? I mean, it’s better than ending up in the wrong place…

Swallowing his pride and dignity, he softly nods his head before proceeding to get up.
A poor mistake.

A dizziness so prominent fills his vision, and it’s odd because the feeling itself seems to bring colours into his head. He knows they aren’t there, truly only a figment of his imagination or some sort of delusional image, but it seems so real. It’s real although it’s more the memory of colour rather than the actual form. It’s real even though it isn’t. And even so, even after he knows this dire fact, the vision still springs up like dots of wildflowers. Like comets in a starless sky.

For him, dizziness comes up as the colour orange. Not the pretty orange of sunlight in water, or fruits hanging on large trees, or dried up nectar of fallen sap that hardens to make amber. It’s actually the dust of dawn and the painted fixtures of spinning teacups. It’s Satan laughing at your doorstep while still perched on his darkened throne. It means evil, it means fire, it means purposeless fevers and destruction. Dizziness is the worst weapon, your worst symptom, because it’s balance, and when things are out of balance, nothing can go right.

It’s sickly and dismal and dour yet, it’s also promising, because darkness gets lonely when it’s everlasting. Even if that short period of relief, that burst of light and normality, comes from the devil.

Orange spinning, Taehyung holds onto the table to stabilise himself. It’s a subtle reaction, thus not bringing attention, but Jeongguk is no idiot.

He sees right through a façade.

Once things seem to stop moving, Taehyung lets go, using the table to push himself a little bit farther in hopes that it’ll minimise his walking time. Jin grabs at his arm to help, but he shuns away from the touch, pulling out his white stick to show that yes, he’s responsible, and yes, he doesn’t need someone to help him walk around.

That he doesn’t need to burden yet another person in his life.

He takes small steps, trying to keep steady strides to not arise suspicion, and follows Jin’s movements by following the sounds of his feet. Believe it or not, people can be differentiated quite well by how they walk, the sounds of their shoes hitting the ground is distinct despite being small. Jin’s footing is what you would call (or what he likes to call) ‘the thief’ in which it’s pretty self-explanatory. It’s quiet but the vibrations are unique against the floorboards, and it imitates the sound of someone trying not to make a sound. Like when you tiptoe to avoid waking up your parents, or when you brush socks against concrete. Except, Jin of course, doesn’t do this on purpose, it’s just what Tae’s
picked up on. It’s so gentle that it’s distinguishable, and he knows exactly who it is not by how loud their footing is, but by how quiet it is.

He thinks he’s reached the bathroom when he feels the vibrations stop, movement and sound halting, so Taehyung smiles politely.

“Thank you, Hyung.”

“Anytime, and in the future, I’ll try to put braille on the doorways so you can walk around without my assistance. I figured it must get annoying sometimes.”

Taehyung appreciates the thought, perceiving Jin’s sheepish and almost guilty expression.

With that, Jin opens the door to let Tae in and leaves to give him his privacy. It is awkward to wait for someone to finish their business.

But, when Taehyung does finally walk in, going to the bathroom is the last thing on his mind.

He collapses, the door closing behind him, and leans against the wall for support. Using little strength, he slides downwards against the wall so he can get in a sitting position, the tiles of the room biting with raw chill. He shivers, although boiling, leaning his head downwards to rest his neck as the pain finally hits him at full force.

He yelps, a mute whimper escaping his lips as he curls his palms within themselves. Nails dig into skin, his familiar tactic to divert pain somewhere else, and it helps. He keeps pressing, not paying attention to what he’s doing as he believes that the more force he exerts the more it’ll help the roaring gunfire in his brain.

The sting distracts him for a couple seconds, the action a little more aggressive than he intended and he soon feels the pain expand far more than what he planned. He runs his fingers over the indents and senses liquid.

The smell of iron reaches his nose and he cringes.
He went too far.

He struggles to get up from his position, attempting to get some paper towels to clean up his mess but can’t seem to stand upright again. Any remaining strength has seeped out of his body, taken away by the fire and swallowed by their flames. He curses at himself for being weak. For being worthless and crippled and sick.

He’s tired of feeling this way. Feeling vulnerable and perceptible to hurt.

He wants it to stop, he needs it to stop, so, why won’t it?

I must deserve it.

A pit of nausea forms in his stomach but it’s not necessarily the feeling of wanting to throw up. It’s the feeling of blockage, something unwanted in his system that’s eating away at his tissue, his bones, his blood. It’s the fire, and it burns with hunger.

He really needs to get up now. If he doesn’t, he’s going to fall into the darkness and perhaps this time he won’t awake. Willing himself up, he grasps onto the wall for support, blood tainting plaster with the remnants of fight and failure, and he limps with a ghosted injury to the sink. He finds the handle with shaky hands, running the water so he can rinse the wound but instead, the water seems to poison the fire in his veins.

Nothing is helping. Not even the cold and prick of pooled defences is battling the inferno in his body, and he’s scared.

He’s scared that he’s going to burn and crumble into a set of blind eyes. He doesn’t want to go to Hell, he doesn’t want Satan to grab him by the heart and drag him under. He doesn’t want his essence ripped out of him like how his monsters did, leaving behind a hollowed frame of something broken and void of feeling. He’s empty, but now, even the devil wants his shell.

The running water overflows over trembling fingers, his breathing increasing with his heart rate, and he goes to splash the liquid on his face. It sizzles and cools the spot of pain, sparking him with a break and feeling of nothing, before everything comes rushing back. He loses his balance with the waves of agony, one leg giving up strength as if it went numb.
And soon, his entire body is numb except for the heat in his eyes. Well, not numb, everything pulses with such discomfort that he can longer focus on each and every point. It’s like he feels too much that he feels nothing. The orange dwindles, perhaps fading away completely, and he’s left with the emptiness his monsters gifted him with.

The image of his father reaches his mind, but it’s not his father. It’s his demeaning corpse, eyes red and fiery and it smiles with a row of sharpened teeth. ‘It’ is what he calls it because what human could do such a thing? What human would do something to a child? To a boy who hadn’t even learnt the concept of love and kindness? How would that boy ever learn such emotions when he was only presented with the opposite? Hate, hurt, abandonment.

Pain.

His childhood was a painting of torture, and now, he is paying the consequences of a smashed spirit.

As if escaping would do anything.

His chest heaves, breathing cut short as he feels the blockage in his stomach rise. It’s bile, but he spits it out anyways, wanting to rid himself of the malice in his skeleton. He finds it able to close the nozzle of the sink (he’s practically dying but he’s not an asshole. Saving water is important) before finally giving up his body to the hands of the floor.

He feels like yelling, screaming, crying, but nothing except sounds of pain spill out of him. He’s like a doll, frozen in fear and panic, only able to groan out every time the pain increases too much. Time goes by slowly like this, the ground holding him in a tight grip as he feels himself spiral downwards.

\textit{down}
\textit{down}
\textit{down}

until he’s consumed by the flames of himself.

Where nobody can reach him.
He wakes up two minutes after his consciousness decided to abandon him. He’s wary and aching, body sore and brain burnt to mush. He wonders what’s going on with him, why he feels so shitty and gross and *warm*. Sure, this happened once in his life, *once*, but it definitely hadn’t been this bad.

When he does finally wake up properly, he’s unsure at first if he’s really up, however, the sharpness in his head proves that he is indeed (unfortunately) back to reality.

He sits up, some energy returned, and attempts for the billionth time to stand but fails like previously.

“Dammit legs, you have one fucking job.”

He uses the counter to stabilise his whirling surroundings, trying to think of an explanation if someone decided to check up on him.

*Hmm..I could say I blacked out, but I feel like that’ll come off worse…*

He thinks a bit more.

*Fuck’s sake, why does this always happen at the worst of times?*

His thoughts only travel down the bottomless pit from there, ways to stop the pain becoming increasingly drastic and he tries to stop when things get too dark.

But they keep falling.

If someone gave him the chance to die right now, he would take it without hesitation, and that’s not even him being depressed. He would do anything to make it stop, he’d sell his soul, give up his right hand, fuck, he’d even give the gods his damn ears too, make it all his senses! Just to make it all *stop*. He’d rather not live at all than have to live with this sort of discomfort.

“Well, take it all. My eyes, my ears, my tongue, my nose, my hands, my life. Just take it all.”
He’s desperate, frustration bubbling in a cage throughout the deepest part of his body. He can’t help but chant meaningless things because then maybe someone will answer his prayers. His prayers for things to return back to normal.

He knows the pain has become too much when he starts thinking that he would rather be stuck with his monsters again than experience this. The monsters that belittled him, beat him, *defiled* him, destroyed his very soul and heart and individuality. He would spend days in their hands if it would just make the pain stop. Weeks, months, years, a lifetime.

All in trade for this agony to die.

It’s then when he hears the sound of the bathroom door open. He’s unsure who it is, but at this point, he doesn’t really care. He’s too caught up in trying not to pass out again, but at the same time, that would be better, wouldn’t it?

“Taehyung?” Jeongguk asks, voice echoing throughout the room. It hisses in the other’s brain and he tries to cover up his wince. “Oh my fucking shit- are you okay?!?”

Taehyung smiles at what he thinks is the right direction, the voice giving him strength to control some part of his body, and he swallows pain to seem okay. He can tell it’s Jeongguk by the sweetness of his speech.

“I’m fine, what’s up?”

He hears the other shuffle, brushing against wall and floor until he sits firmly at his side.

“Fine? You’re on the floor, your hands are full of *blood* and you look like you’ve seen a fucking ghost!”

“Don’t worry about it, I think I ate something before I came over and it’s giving me an upset stomach. I’ll be out in a bit.”

He’s terrible at lying.
Even if he was good at it, Jeongguk is even better at noticing when someone isn’t telling the truth.

“This isn’t the time to be lying to me.” His palm touches the other’s forehead. “You’re freezing cold! This sure as hell isn’t some small indigestion, dude your hands are red, what’s wrong?”

“I told you, I’m fine, it’ll go away in a couple of seconds if you would just let me-”

“Stop pretending to be okay when you’re not, you think I wouldn’t notice? You’re paler than snow, and shit, you are literally ice cold, what did you do?”

“Funny, I feel like I’m in a sauna.”

He feels delirious.

Jeongguk sighs, hand trailing the other’s cheek to check for injury.

“What are you doing?”

“You smile,” he begins as his answer, voice light. “Yet you suffer.”

Taehyung’s gaze drops and it mimics his heart.

He tries smiling again, trying his hardest to be more convincing, yet the action confirms Jeongguk’s suspicions.

“Really, I’m okay. I promi-”

He stops. He can’t promise because that would be lying. And if your promise is a lie, you have broken it.

“You should go back to dinner.”
Is what he suffices with, willing his smile to remain despite the burn in his eyes.

*Dammit Jeongguk, leave me alone. I'm only going to cause you pain.*

“You’re clearly hurt. What happened? Is it your eyes? Tell me where it hurts so I can help.”

“You’ve just met me, why do you even care?”

“Why wouldn’t I? Of course I care, how could I not?”

It comes out a lot more possessive than Jeongguk had meant to but Taehyung doesn’t pick up the neediness in his voice.

“I should get your friend, uh, Yoongi? Or Jin Hyung, or somebody, anybody really.”

He goes to get up but Taehyung uses his arm to stop his movement. His hand grasps the other’s shirt, dragging him back with force and he latches on to his shoulder.

“No, you can’t. It’ll only bother them.” Taehyung chokes, finally dropping the smile. “You can’t go..Please..Don’t leave me.”

He doesn’t want to get them but he can’t be alone.

Jeongguk stills and looks down at the boy on the floor. His face etches with suffering and the more he stares the more the fractures in his heart break.

He can’t leave him like this.

“Okay, okay, I won’t leave, but please, you need to tell me what’s wrong.”
“I already told you, nothing’s-”

“Don’t lie to me.” Jeongguk’s voice is soft and pleading, and something about it tears away at Taehyung’s being.

Stop it.

“I’m not.”

Stop trying to help me.

“Yes, you are.”

I’m beyond help.

“You deserve better, Jeongguk.”

I cause pain and destruction.

I am my monsters.

“No, you deserve better, I don’t know how this happened but you don’t deserve this pain. This-this suffering.”

“Don’t you see? I do, it’s God punishing me.”

Why do I want the pain to stop if I deserve it?

“Punishing you for what?”
“For submitting, for allowing and letting myself be ruined. For being afraid and accepting my fate. For giving up, for everything,” he sighs. “For being born.”

The room goes silent, Taehyung’s breathing the only thing filling the uneasy peace, and then there are arms around him.

“What the hell are you doing?”

He snaps because he’s surprised.

“Stop hurting yourself, stop hating yourself, how do you smile and pretend when you don’t need to!”

Taehyung tries to escape the hold but fails miserably in his weakened state. He huffs. “Why are you lecturing me? You don’t even know me.”

“I know enough.”

“Oh really? Name one thing.”

“I know you like the colour grey, and that you love Japchae, and the number ten because it reminds you of perfection and creation! And that you hate airplanes and the dark but it’s strange because you don’t mind the night.” Jeongguk stumbles over his words. “You like acting and music and dyed hair and you have these weird fucking habits of sticking out your tongue and licking your lips. And when you get flustered you blush and you’re good at analysing people. You wince when someone raises their voice and you clench your hands when you’re in pain. You don’t like being touched and you’ll kill anyone for trying to help you out.” He chuckles slightly. “You’re stubborn and smart and kind. Funny and strong and so damn inspiring. Your smile lights up a room even if it’s not quite believable, your voice goes higher when you laugh and when you take off your sunglasses it is the most beautiful thing in the world-”

“Stop.”

“I’m not finished.”
“Stop it!”

Taehyung removes his body from the other’s, creating distance before glaring head-on in his direction. His milky eyes flare with the fire that’s overtaking him.

“Stop pretending like you have me all figured out!”

“I can’t help it, I’d at least like to think of you as my friend, it’s because I care.”

“Friends?” Taehyung laughs with a menacing tone. “I just met you for crying out loud!”

Jeongguk is taken aback, hurt plastered on his face with such precision Taehyung can feel the emotion slice through him. Cutting through skin and bone as if he were made of butter. As if the fire had melted his skeleton and muscle and made it supple.

“I.”

“You don’t get to know anything about me so back off!”

“You’re hurt, you don’t mean that.”

It’s true, Taehyung doesn’t mean that, in fact, he’s unsure why he’s even yelling. This sort of rage fills up the entirety of his lungs, and it intoxicates him and others around him. He breathes anger, frustration, sadness, pain. He doesn’t want to scream at Jeongguk, which is exactly why the other should stay away from him.

He’s protecting him from his own wrath.

“You should go.”

“I’m not leaving until you’re okay.”
His attempts to push the other away are futile.

“You push people away when you’re scared,” Jeongguk states and his hands reach his shoulders.

*It’s been one goddamn day.*

Taehyung shakes his head. “What could I possibly be scared of in this situation?”

He’s scared of many things right now.

“How do you know? It’s not possible, you’ve only met me onc-”

Jeongguk’s voice interrupts him.

“I know because I had a friend who went through something a lot like you. Well, we used to be friends at least, he committed suicide five years ago.”

“Oh.” Taehyung feels sorry. “I’m sorr-”

“Don’t apologise, that isn’t the point of the story,” Jeongguk sighs. “He suffered a lot like you, he kept silent, smiled through pain and faked being okay. I believed him, I really did, when he reassured me that he was happy he seemed so *authentic* that how could I not believe?” Jeongguk pauses a bit to recollect his thoughts. “He died because nobody was there to see through his façade, this fake image of him being alright. I learnt from that mistake, and told myself that I would never let that happen again.”

“And what makes you think I’m the same? I told you I’m fine!”
“Look, I know a faker when I see one. And of course, you don’t have to tell me what hurts you so much, that’s personal and up to you, but I want you to know that I’m here and I always will be. I won’t let something like that happen again.”

Taehyung’s at a loss for words.

*I don’t want to be cared for.*

“I’m sorry.”

“I told you not to apologi-”

“No not for that, for being the way I am. I wish I was as readable as you put me out to be, but the truth is, I don’t need someone’s help. I’m not crying out for somebody to grab my hand, I don’t need it, I don’t need anyone!”

*He does.*

Jeongguk smiles sadly at him, gaze sympathetic. “Shut up.”

“Excuse me?”

“Don’t talk and just let.”

The arms wrap around him completely and the pain stops.

It stops?

It *stops.*
Relief consumes him and he lets himself be taken, the strength exerted taking a toll on his body.

It finally stopped.

He’s on clouds, soul drifting past the weight of exhaustion and he feels like he’s escaped death.

He’s cheated Satan.

“I don’t understand.”

Jeongguk shushes him. “Shh, you don’t have to. Just let yourself be helped.”

*I don’t need help.*

*But…*

“Thank you.”

“I won’t let anything bad happen to you.”

That’s what Yoongi had promised, those exact same words, six years ago.

“I-”

“No talking,” Jeongguk whispers, holding the boy tightly against his own. He strokes Taehyung’s hair gently, in a soothing Jin-natured way, and Tae feels at ease.

To be honest, it’s quite another strange scenario. With both boys curled up against each other on a bathroom floor surrounded by a wet sink, puddled counters, and blood-stained walls. It’s strange, but then again, when have any of their encounters been normal? Jeongguk hums a tune to help calm Taehyung’s still racing heartbeat, the anxiety of the entire situation still held tight.
Fire has lost for now.

I guess sweetness really can combat flames.

They stay like that for some time, forgetting there had been a dinner altogether, and just soak in each other’s presence. Jeongguk’s heartbeat guides Tae’s to a reasonable pace, breathing a guideline for him to follow, and soon his hands go limp.

He’s fallen asleep.

Jeongguk smiles whilst still twirling Tae’s hair in slumber, glad that the suffering on his face has been replaced with relief and peace. His heart aches, however, and the question he’s still dying to get an answer to intensifies.

He wants to understand.

He wants to help.


If only he knew.

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Chapter End Notes

I AM E M O
I say it all the time but this chapter seriously fucked me up and I'M THE AUTHOR
I'm peculiar I know ;)


for all you hoes that didn't read my first note, the reason for my long absence was because my computer decided to break (thanks for the betrayal) and I couldn't get it fixed for around two weeks. Thankfully, it was a defect from apple and they fixed it for free :”) so that was neat.
I'M GLAD Y'ALL DIDN'T DITCH OR YELL AT ME, honestly u probably should have cause it was unfair to leave u hanging for deadass ages.
but here it is and I hope u enjoyed it
idk if it flows that well, but hey, each chapter I hope to improve my writing if only in the slightest!
anyways, i'm typing a lot, so farewell u beautiful damn fangirls and fanboys
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pEACE

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さようなら。
walk on memories

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of the burn is complex.

Jeongguk cares for unknown reasons, and Yoongi is overtly hostile towards him for that.

Putting differences aside is difficult, yet they have to if they want to co-exist with Taehyung in peace.

And so, they do.

Or at least, they try to.

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pretty much a filler chapter with a lil fluff and a conflicted Yoongi

Chapter Notes

hi there!
i'm not dead, although it sEEMS LIKE IT. School has just been taking up all my time, y'all don't care but they just decided to swarm us with work the MOMENT school started. (I've had an english essay, a history paper, two chem labs, and a calc teST all in the space of one week).

bUT guess what, I finally did write the chapter and I even wrote the next chapter, so ur in for a treat today uwu

it's my way of apologising for making you LITERALLY WAIT 3 weeks... :)

I hope you enjoy this chapter and the next!

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jeongguk stares at Taehyung for a long time.

He doesn’t know what he’s searching for exactly, nor what answers he’ll find on the other’s face, but he feels that if he keeps on studying the features and scars and tiny moles scattered through honey, something will become clear.

So far, however, no answers have come forward.
Minutes have gone by, the hardness of the ground proving to be quite an uncomfortable chair, so he shuffles a little to get comfortable. His butt is not happy with the current situation but Jeongguk’s feelings say otherwise, heart palpitating with new emotions and mind warped to confusion. He can’t make himself let go of the shorter boy, but it’s for a reason he doesn’t completely understand. He feels that if he lets go of him, he’ll disappear, his touch grounding him to this reality, and his heartbeat reminding him of peace.

He sighs heavily, moving slowly to reposition his body but also to hold Tae more securely. He has this feeling of overwhelming protectiveness, that he needs to shield and preserve the other from all the misfortunes in his life. All the hurt and struggle and pain.

More importantly, Jeongguk has the undying urge to save and protect Taehyung from himself.

He is his worst demon, and Jeongguk has seen people lose to themselves too many times to let it happen again.

Taehyung stirs a little, muttering something inaudible in unconsciousness before grabbing onto Jeongguk’s shirt tightly. It surprises him, the action far out of Tae’s usual depth, and his mind blanks at how to react. The grasp creates rumple, Jeongguk’s shirt crumpling under the other’s grip, and although asleep, his palms tremble ever so slightly. Jeongguk (his own hands shaking out of nervousness) gently cover over the other’s in instinct, the warmth of his fingertips heating Taehyung’s icy ones until they feel somewhat melted and thawed from evil. The trembling stops, hands relaxing in Jeongguk’s touch, and an exhale leaves his slightly parted lips.

Jeongguk’s exhale of relief imitates so.

He’s still humming a tune, voice soft and low, and the vibrations from his chest comfort Taehyung’s body. Jeongguk’s unsure what song he’s even thinking of at this point, but all he knows is that it reminds him of sunshine and comfort. It’s his mother’s home cooked meals, his siblings’ laughter at the dinner table, weekends where the afternoon light would pool through his window and pale bed sheets in moonlit glares. Most recently, this tune has also reminded Jeongguk of Taehyung’s smile.

His soft, bright, beautiful but fake smile.

He looks down endearingly, for unknown objectives, staring again in hopes to receive some sort of answer. Some sort of reason to why this is happening.
Why are you hurting so much?

Taehyung’s hair looks beautiful even in the bathroom light. In fact, he’s sure every feature on his face is ineffably stunning, a true phenomenon amongst the world because how can someone look this unintentionally beautiful? Is it possible? Although Jin frets over Jeongguk’s beauty himself, he can’t help but feel shocked.

I wonder if he knows what he looks like...

Ash grey gleaming, Jeongguk goes to brush a strand of hair that had fallen in front of the other’s face. Yet another urge he is unable to resist, and yet another reason he has no answer or explanation to.

He’s a confusing mess.

He swipes at the strands, texture smooth and soft underneath his hold, and he tucks it behind his hair as if to frame the art that is his face. He’s about to let go when he stops, chest frozen as something glistening catches his sight. His own bones grow cold, hesitating in fractures of seconds until he recognises the substance. Red smears at the crease of his left eye, a perfect sphere of crimson that shines in the dim lighting. It screams something vulgar in Jeongguk’s face. Something chilling and freezing yet also blazing and brutal. He brings his hands to wipe it, the inexplicable itch to free his face of imperfection overtaking him, and his fingertips catch the liquid in one swift movement.

It stains his skin scarlet and lingers before dripping onto the bathroom floor.

Blood.

It seeps into the lines and cracks of the tiled ground, following a path and collecting in junctures.

But why had there been blood? His eyes, although closed, seem to be unfazed and undamaged, so how is it possible that scarlet paints his face?

Perhaps it came from his hands. Jeongguk would like to believe that that is the case.
He glances down at them upon thought, their fists still intertwined, and inflamed marks glare right back at him in what seems like deep boroughs. Gaping screams for help. They aren’t bleeding anymore, but they still glow with a sort of hellish luminescence, and Jeongguk can’t say it doesn’t unnerve him.

_You were in a lot more pain than you put out to be, huh?_

He tightens his grip on Taehyung’s hand and gently rubs the sores as if to erase them entirely. They don’t feel too deep, but they aren’t really shallow either, and the more his skin brushes over them, the more his heart bleeds with the same crimson.

_Why Tae? I just want to help you, so why can’t you accept that?_

_I don’t want to lose you too._

Taehyung’s sleeping face winces, a small noise making it out of his throat and Jeongguk stops. He sucks his breath, holding it in because he’s afraid the rise of his lungs will disrupt the other’s finally relaxed state.

“Please, don’t hurt me.”

He’s still unconscious but Jeongguk feels instantly bad. It had sounded so pleading, so soft and innocent and _gentle_, like a child awaiting confrontation. Jeongguk hadn’t meant to inflict pain onto Taehyung, and although he’s probably dreaming, his touch had most likely warped his nightmare into something more realistic.

“I’d never.”

He releases his hold on the marked palms and moves them somewhere else, holding onto his body to prevent it from fading away. From deteriorating into the ashes and volcanic corruption. His grip isn’t tight but it’s not loose either, because if he slips his grasp for merely a second, he’s certain he’ll lose Taehyung to the darkness that’s already captured him.

He changes his position so his arms wrap around Taehyung more firmly. He’s careful not to wake
the other of course, and using his legs, shuffles around so that he’s now sitting in Jeongguk’s lap. He embraces him tightly, hand reaching his head as he guides the other into the crease of his neck. Taehyung’s breath remains even, tickling Jeongguk’s neck and warming the goosebumps that appear with the action. A soft smile appears in his asleep state but it goes unnoticed. Jeongguk goes to look back at his face, questions still not answered, when another glimmer of red catches his vision.

It’s longer this time, a string of liquid coming from the corner of his same eye, and it protrudes so harshly against his perfect skin that it seems to swear. It trickles down slowly, streaking a path of faded maroon and Jeongguk wipes it away quickly.

A tear of blood.

Is it possible to physically bleed sorrow?

He’s concerned.

No, concerned is an understatement.

He is all things worried, anxious, unsettled, lost, frightened, alarmed, and scared.

He’s scared because there’s nothing to help him understand what’s going on. What can he do? What should he do? The most obvious answer would be to get Yoongi or Jin or someone but Taehyung had told him not to, and does Jeongguk want to break that promise? Then again, Taehyung’s not really in the position to make drastic decisions.

He leans down, lips inches away from the other’s face and he pauses.

“It’s been one day but why does it feel like I’ve known you for years?”

The question is voiced into vacant thin air, Taehyung’s breathing the only sound omitted to quench his burning query. Jeongguk sighs again, bringing his lips down so it connects with the smaller’s forehead and he leaves it there for a while. The contact warms the other’s colder skin, a feeling of sympathy enveloping in Jeongguk’s own chest. He doesn’t quite get what this feeling is, nor does he know if Taehyung reciprocates it, but all he does know is that he wants to help.
He needs to help now, because if he waits, it may be too late.

He had waited five years ago, no, he had been oblivious five years ago, but now, he won’t make the same mistake twice.

Although it’s been so long, Jeongguk’s heart still churns every time the memory appears in his head. Lifeless eyes, hanging neck, body limp and floating. He’s tried several ways to erase the image, but you can’t particularly erase something so prominent and stark. It’s a stain, always there and not completely washed away, spreading yet fading as time goes by. He doesn’t want to think of it that way, but the scenario had truly stained a part of his childhood black. Tar and trembling, a shadow overcasting him without warning. He should’ve gone earlier, he should’ve rushed past the crowd and the traffic. He should’ve bustled through metal gates and wooden fences and pushed past people with mindless errands. He should’ve been there.

He had been two minutes too late. Two minutes. How does one cease to exist in such a short amount of time? Even worse, how does one miss the chance to save a life by such a short amount of time?

Two fucking minutes.

Jeongguk could never be a doctor.

His hands unintentionally loosen, hands trailing the length of Taehyung’s arms before dropping completely. His heart beats slowly, a sort of tribute to his friend, and he swallows down the lump in his throat. He lifts his head up, ultimately removing his lips from Tae’s forehead, and goes to get someone.

“I know you don’t want me to,” Jeongguk starts. “But I don’t know what to do, and I’m sure your Hyungs will. They know you best after all.”

He gently moves the other’s head so that it’s leaning against the bathroom counter, shuffling out of their entanglement to stand.

“Please don’t leave me.”

He’s still asleep, but the words make Jeongguk stop in his tracks.
The same pleading voice. That same tone of youth and purity and softness and vulnerability. It breathes childhood.

Frozen by one sentence, he turns to sit back down, sighing whilst holding the other’s hands.

*Why must you make this so hard for me?*

It’s hard for him to speak, the blankness in his mind returning, yet four words seem to come to mind after some thought. Although the other is still asleep, mind not present for what he’s about to say, he responds anyway.

“I’m not going anywhere.”

And it’s not a lie. Jeongguk truly won’t go anywhere, even if Taehyung screams and yells at him to back off. Even when he stubbornly lies and pretends to smile or swears and punches. Even when spitting curses and harsh words and subtle pleads for help, cries of hidden *desperation* and sadness, Jeongguk won’t leave. He *can’t* leave. That sentence had confirmed it, and even if Tae hadn’t said it, he’s sure he wouldn’t. He’d never.

How could he?

Although the other is the epitome of obstinacy, blocks his emotions, conceals his true feelings, bites at compassion and digs his sentiment underneath nails and smooth skin, Jeongguk won’t leave. He won’t leave because he’s very much established that he is indeed fucking gay for Kim Taehyung.

If that makes any sense.

It *has* been one day, but even so, it feels more than that.

*Does love at first sight truly exist?*

He shakes his head.
The sound of the bathroom door opening startles him, his privacy with Taehyung seeming to stop entirely as he looks up to identify who entered.

It’s Yoongi.

Jeongguk clears his throat. “I-”

“You don’t have to explain.”

His voice is heavy, some sort of guilt coating the words, a dialect of culpability, and he stands motionless for a while.

“I figured he..” Yoongi trails off, speechless for the most part but also consumed with a feeling of worry. He can’t form the right words. “He’s getting worse.”

Jeongguk’s eyes flicker downwards again, Taehyung’s calm demeanour calming the two boys more than imaginable, before returning his gaze back up to Yoongi.

“What’s going on?”

The other exhales. “I don’t know. I honestly have no idea and I should, but he isn’t telling me anything,” he trails the length of the room before sitting down across from Jeongguk. His eyes bore into his own as if to unleash the answers he’s been so desperate to get.

“What happened?”

It’s Jeongguk’s turn to sigh, unsure whether to discuss the other’s physical or mental state. Perhaps both.
“I hadn’t been there at first, so I don’t know what led up to it, but I was here before he fell asleep. All I know was that he said something about feeling hot? He looked like he was in a lot of pain.”

Yoongi nods, confused himself, and picks at the ground because that’s all he’s able to do right now. His brain is on autopilot on what to do, think, comprehend, he’s lost. He’s partially guilty too. Guilty that he hadn’t been there and Jeongguk had. Guilty that Taehyung had suffered without his acknowledgement and without his words to guide him. He’s guilty that he hadn’t been good enough, both boys are, and it’s frustrating when you want to help someone but don’t know how, isn’t it?

A silence fills the air and Jeongguk’s questions burn with more intensity.

He clears his throat.

“This is probably an inappropriate time to ask you, but how do you know Taehyung? Or like, when did you meet him?”

“What makes you so interested in knowing?”

“I don’t know to be honest, but somehow I feel like it’ll help me understand more about him. He doesn’t say much about how he became blind in the first place,” Jeongguk pauses. “But that’s completely normal I guess, he’s pretty reserved when it comes to that, or anything really.”

“How do you know all that from just these few couple encounters?”

“I’m just observant, there’s not much to it.”

It’s sort of a lie.

“Well, it’s not my place to talk about what he’s not ready to say yet, but me meeting him isn’t that much of a secret. Or at least, I’m sure he doesn’t consider it so.”

“When did you meet him?”
“I feel like I use that term too loosely, I actually found him.”

“Found him?”

Yoongi scratches his neck. “It’s a long story, but basically, he was in this sort of alleyway, all bruised and beat up. He never told me the full story but I kind of connected the dots and figured it out for myself.”

He had told Yoongi the full story, but that however, is a secret.

Jeongguk’s heart drops with each word, gaze unfaltering as he tries to absorb each detail Yoongi tells him.

“I helped him to the hospital, I also called Jin hyung, which is how Taehyung knows him in the first place. I think that’s the day he became blind. Officially blind. It was six years ago.”

The answers are vague but helpful, clearly things being held back but Jeongguk doesn’t push it. He wants to hear it from Tae himself when he’s ready, and right now isn’t that time.

“I know me apologising won’t do anything, but I’m sorry that happened to him.”

“You’re right, apologising doesn’t do shit, and he most definitely wouldn’t appreciate the pity. But, for some reason, you’re different.”

“Different?”

Boy, has he heard that word a lot today.

“Taehyung’s not the type of person to just lean and seek comfort. It just isn’t in his nature, especially to strangers, no offence.”

“None taken.”
“But, as I said, for some godforsaken reason, he just doesn’t mind you.”

“I don’t get it.”

“Neither do I, but I’m learning to adapt to it. It’s strange, one minute he’s closed the next he’s open. It’s a good thing, but I hope it means he’s changing for the better rather than for the worse. I feel like he’s on the verge of breaking, all this built-up emotion seeping out of him before he just collapses within himself. I want to help him, I need to help him, but even after all this time, it’s like-”

“Like nothing has changed?”

“Like nothing has moved. It’s a life of stand-still and reiteration, not repeating itself but rhyming over and over again.”

Jeongguk ponders in silence, subconsciously twirling a piece of ash grey hair between his forefingers, and looks up at the ceiling. “What should we do now?”

“The others are cleaning up for the night, nobody really having the appetite for dessert. They should be in the kitchen washing up, but I know Namjoon had to leave early for some assignment due tomorrow.”

“Namjoon?”

“You don’t know him?”

Jeongguk shakes his head.

“I think he met Jin today, they seem to get along well..”

“Oh right, Jin had told me he was bringing some of his friends over. He must have been referring to him. He seems cool so far, although I haven’t had a conversation with him yet.”
“Yeah, he really was great. He’s super intelligent, and that is no understatement, the guy probably knows about everything and everyone. A genius in a giant’s body, despite being clumsy. I think he has the biggest heart in the world too, well, second to Tae that is, and he’s always been there for me..”

“Wow, you seem to know him well. He was great, though?”

“He is, sorry, I just haven’t seen him in a while.”

His voice sounds sad, as if their connection and original relationship had faded away.

Jeongguk doesn’t question it though, and so the topic isn’t brought up again.

Another silence commences slowly, not an awkward one, but a respectable one. It’s the silence of grievance and solidarity, the quiet that fills the air when soldiers have folded into letters of will, and relatives have passed beneath the dirt. It is a silence of daylight but also a silence of night.

It is both.

But it doesn’t last too long.

“I can’t say I like you,” Yoongi starts with direct eye contact, snapping the branches of noiselessness with one smooth sentence.

“Wow, gee, thanks.”

“But I do know that you seem to help him in ways that I can’t. It’s rare, actually no, it’s impossible, or at least I thought it was until now. He doesn’t just do these sorts of things. So why is it that you seem to have him all figured out? All analysed and pictured like some sort of puzzle?”

His tone is low-key critical and accusing, as if he suspects Jeongguk to be someone despicable, or someone he isn’t put out to be.
“I don’t even *know* why! I wish you could tell me, it isn’t like I have a handbook on how to connect with people.”

“I didn’t mean it in that way, I just meant-”

“What is it that you really want to ask me?”

Yoongi’s face goes slack, a slate of masked irritation bubbling at the corners of his mouth.

“It’s nothing.”

“Clearly it’s important if you’ve been trying to *interrogate* me for the minute.”

He huffs, lips twitching and cauldron overflowing.

“I just find it strange that you happen to ‘bump’ into him in the subway, and happen to be in his music class, and room with the very person who’s hosting this dinner.”

“Strange? It’s completely plausible and coincidental! What? You think I’m some sort of stalker?”

“No, not a stalker..”

“What else is there? Just accuse me of what you’re thinking so I can prove you wrong.”

“I’m not accusing you of anything. I just had some stupid suspicions, Taehyung is important to me, I can’t help but get protective sometimes.”

“So, you’re jealous?”

Yoongi scoffs. “I’m not *jealous* of you, brat.”
“You’re totally jealous.”

“I will hit you.”

“Why would you even be?”

“There’s nothing to be jealous of, you are the one who speculated that factor.”

“Do you think I’m stealing him away from you?”

“I think your conjectures are bullshit.”

Jeongguk laughs, but it isn’t one of amusement. “I don’t understand why you dislike me this much, you don’t even know me.”

“Exactly, I don’t. And neither does Taehyung.”

“So that’s what this is about?”

Yoongi stays silent, him being mute a response in itself.

“Look,” Jeongguk starts softly, anger dissipating. “I’m just as confused as you are. I know it’s only been one day and I know I’ve just met him, but he reminds me of a friend. They share a lot in common, and that’s not really a good thing. I’m just trying to help.”

Yoongi breathes out heavily. “You think I don’t know that? You think I haven’t tried? I understand where you’re coming from but your actions are suspicious.”

Jeongguk quirks an eyebrow. “How so?”
“What do you want from him? What are you looking for?”

“I’m not looking for anything, I just want him to be happy.”

“You’ve known him for one goddamn day!”

Taehyung stirs gently at the noise and both boys quiet down, afraid that they’ve awakened him. He groans softly, adjusting himself in Jeongguk’s grip, and his hand unconsciously wraps around the other’s index finger. Yoongi stares at the action acutely, yet his gaze softens a little when he sees the relaxed expression on his face.

“I understand,” Yoongi starts, uncertain but reassured. “And I’m sorry for blowing up at you, I guess the stress of things comes out sometimes. I think I was just concerned, you never really know the true intentions of people after all.”

“What made you think this way?”

Yoongi looks up, his stare unknowingly reverted down to the floor. “He’s been through a lot, I’ve been through a lot, we all have our own stories.”

Jeongguk doesn’t push the topic further, and so, it isn’t brought up again.

So, Jeongguk nods, not wanting to ruin their final mutual comprehension with a set of dumb, poorly structured words. He’s the master at misinterpretation and making things worse than they actually are.

He suffices with a simple question.

“What do we do when he wakes up?”

Yoongi hadn’t thought of that, and now that he has, he’s unsure where to start.

“I live with him so I can drive him home. We don’t have to wake him up, and I’m sure he’ll
appreciate the extra sleep in the morning.”

Jeongguk nods again, altering his position slightly as Taehyung moves in sleep. His original relaxed expression seems to change a little, and a frown replaces his desolate features.

“Yoongi?”

It comes out as a weak croak, a sound that breathes exhaustion despite only just waking up. He’s not completely aware, and the fog from sleep still washes over him as he tries to collect his bearings.

“Hey, you feeling better?” Yoongi replies, voice soft and benign. He tries to swallow some of his fear so it doesn’t appear in his voice, but it’s difficult to conceal such a prominent emotion.

Taehyung is vocally unresponsive, but the slight squeeze to Jeongguk’s finger indicates that he had heard the question.

Jeongguk and Yoongi share a look.

Taehyung attempts to sit up, using his free hand to lift up his body, but buckles abruptly underneath the force. Jeongguk is there to catch him before he falls completely, and gently pushes him forward by wrapping his arms around his torso and sitting up himself. Once up, Taehyung shakily shrugs out of the other’s grasp, feeling around for something on the ground.

He squints, fingers quivering.

“Where are my sunglasses?”

Jeongguk is reminded about their previous encounter on the balcony, ultimately resulting in him to blush, and he vaguely remembers where the shades had dropped. He looks back to Yoongi who is smirking but with a hint of disdain, and goes to get up to fetch them.

However, before he can move, Taehyung stops him with a pull to the sleeve.
He halts.

“No, don’t go.”

It surprises all three of them, considerably Taehyung the most.

Why doesn’t he want him to leave? It’s just for a moment, but for some reason, Jeongguk’s the only thing that’s able to ground him from his racing mind. From the fiery state he was in prior. He’s afraid just thinking about it, the pain a constant memory, and he winces slightly at the idea of it occurring again.

He hopes it won’t, but he knows it will.

It’s inevitable.

“I’ll get them,” Yoongi says, a warm smile in his eyes as he stares at Taehyung. It’s a stare of pure unconditional love, a stare the screams support and brotherhood. It’s the stare of family, and Taehyung can read that expression almost immediately.

Yoongi departs the room quietly, scared that any sudden loud noises will disrupt Tae despite him already being awake, and closes the door gently behind.

That leaves him and Jeongguk, and the events that happened before he closed his eyes.

However, Taehyung seems unfazed. He doesn’t seem to have any recollection of what had happened, and it both confuses Jeongguk as well as makes him feel disappointed.

Does he not remember my words of encouragement?

He pouts softly to himself.

“Why are you sad?”
Jeongguk is startled by the words. “What do you mean?”

“Your heart slowed down, and your chest got heavier. It normally happens when someone gets upset.”

“Oh,” Jeongguk had forgotten how perceptive the other is. “Don’t worry, I’m not sad.”

It’s his way of caring, and it warms Jeongguk’s heart in a weird, illogical way.

“Did Yoongi’s words hurt you?”

“You were awake?”

“Not really, only for bits and pieces,” he admits, eyes blinking earnestly. “Don’t take what he said too seriously, he just has a hard time trusting people, especially when it comes to me.”

“Why?”

“Does one need to explain their reasons for having trust issues?”

“Fair enough.”

Taehyung smiles softly, blowing a strand of his hair that had begun tickling the bridge of his nose and it is undoubtedly the most adorable thing Jeongguk has ever seen.

It makes his heart flutter and skip and beat incredibly faster, and Jeongguk knows that Tae can sense it because what can’t the other sense? In fact, Jeongguk wants Taehyung to sense the emotions he’s feeling because words aren’t able to do them justice.

He knows it’s only been one day, one single fucking day, but if this is the effect he feels in just these few moments, he’s sure that there’s at least something there.
And that something could very much resemble, if only slightly, love.

Bright, burning, indubitable love.

Taehyung accomplishes to get the strand out of the way, and Jeongguk realises that one strand seems to be oddly curlier than the other. It had been the strand he twirled subconsciously whilst the other was asleep, and the small detail makes him smile all over again.

He wants this moment, although quiet, to last forever, yet he knows that it’ll be split sooner or later.

And he’s right.

Yoongi arrives a couple minutes later, holding onto a pair of black sunglasses with a pale grip. His motions are stiff, as if the sight of seeing Jeongguk physically unnerves him, and he tenses. He thought he’d have gone by now.

He makes his way to where Taehyung is sitting and crouches, opening the palm of the other’s hand to place the sunglasses there. Tae responds by grasping the object tightly, hands still trembling and skin abnormally cold, before sending a small smile to show his gratification.

“Hey, do you think you’re okay to walk from here to the car?”

Taehyung nods, although uncertain, and attempts to stand a little too quickly. Jeongguk (quite almost having a heart attack) holds on to him before he can tumble over, trying to stabilise his wobbly footing, and succeeds once the other seems to lean onto the wall for remaining support.

Despite Yoongi’s questionable hostility towards him, he and Jeongguk have to find common grounds if they want to help. And so, putting their differences aside, they help Taehyung from the wall and into a solid walking position.

“If you run me into a wall, or anything for that matter, I swear I will murder you,” Taehyung states, glaring harshly in what he thinks is Yoongi’s direction.
Yoongi laughs. “If you tease me I just might, so try to refrain from doing so.”

They walk together slowly, Jeongguk providing support at the back by holding on Tae’s elbows, and follows the leisure pace.

He wants to make small talk, but at the same time, knows it’ll only result in an awkward situation, so he fills the silence by humming quietly. The tune he’s singing is again unknown, but for some reason, it seems to sound so familiar to Taehyung.

Where has he heard that tune before?

Before he can answer the question, they make it to the kitchen, the only people left being Jin and Hoseok who are absorbed in astute conversation. They quiet down once they see the three boys walk in, and Jin is the first one to come rushing over, checking for injury in a worried expression.

“God, are you okay? What happened? When you didn’t come back I couldn’t help but think the worst but Jeongguk offered to go check up on you before I did. I’m so sorry I made you come out tonight, I should’ve seen that you looked tired after the hospital visit and I should’ve recommended you stayed home, but I was stupid and delusional and wanted you to have a good time and I—”

“Hyung, it’s okay. I’m fine, your dinner was lovely and I’m still really glad I came. Thank you.”

Jin’s guilt eases a little but still remains despite Taehyung’s reassuring words.

“Please, don’t worry about it, I promise I really did like it.”

And Jin knows when Taehyung promises something he means it. Always. It’s easier now to believe him, and he responds with one of his signature comforting smiles. A smile that Taehyung can sense.

“I think I’m going to take him home now,” Yoongi says, holding on to Taehyung’s hand protectively. “But thank you again for inviting us Hyung, it was a delicious dinner.”

Jin smiles softly again, nodding his head in acknowledgement before handing Yoongi a glass container with a red top. It’s filled with food, the heat from it making the glass steamy with
precipitation, and it already smells wonderful.

“I packed some of the remaining Japchae for you to eat at home. I know it’s Taehyung’s favourite.”

The gesture is extremely sweet and Jeongguk is able to catch that same light and glimmer in Tae’s face as he processes the words. It’s as if someone had turned on a lightbulb, features delicate and illuminated, and even though his eyes bore grey through dark sunglasses, Jeongguk can still make out the brightness through them.

“Thank you!”

“Anytime. And make sure to forward me the results of your tests, okay? I want to make sure you’re alright.”

Taehyung nods his head. “Of course.”

Now, Jeongguk is confused. For one, he’s lost as to what tests they’re referring to, and secondly, he didn’t know the other had been at the hospital. He’s consumed with concern.

“Tests?”

He voices his question aloud before he can refrain.

_Dammit Jeongguk, you need to filter your speech more._

But at the same time, Jeongguk hates not being in the know. It’s like everyone knows this part of Taehyung and they are all holding back on him. He understands that he’s only just met him, but the encounters they’ve shared have been deeper than that. He wants to know so he can help, and he’s determined to do just that.

“It’s just weekly check-ups I need to have because of my impediment. It isn’t too serious.”

Yet, for some reason, Jeongguk knows it _is_ serious. Not only because of his state earlier, but also
because of the way the other says it. He’s unsure, guilty even, perhaps scared as well. His tone laces with a sort of fake reassurance, like he’s trying to convince himself more than Jeongguk.

However, Jeongguk doesn’t question it, and so, it isn’t brought up again.

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Chapter End Notes

ooooo I didn't know how to end it so let's leave it on a cliff hanger. That comment may or may not be important later on.
anyways! don't go anywhere yet because i'm posting a second chapter today too. I'll edit the tags so you guys can be prepared, but just know that a form of smut will be there. So PLEASE, if you are uncomfortable with that sort of thing, don't read it.

I'll put a summary of the chapter or the chapter itself minus the smut on my instagram so that people can get the plot (there is significant character development) without actually reading those bits. I know not everyone is into that, so feel free to stop by later to see that.

my instagram is: @amfics
and the links is: https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

thanks for reading!

さようなら。
Taehyung tries to recollect what had happen in the bathroom but fails miserably. He's not really aware of his actions, nor why Yoongi acts weirdly with him for a moment, but he slowly is becoming aware of other things.

Like his desire.

His desire to be touched and filled and loved. It's things he never thought he'd feel again, and certainly things he's unsure how to even deal with. But it's there, and him realising it is a step in itself.

---

a chapter full of angst and smut, but mainly smut ;)

Chapter Notes

SooOOOO :)
there's nothing much to say expect for: enjoy uwu

notes at the end of the chapter are important!!

さようなら。

The journey back home is one filled with silence.

Yoongi drives smoothly, not a bump or swerve in the wrong direction, and it almost feels as if the car is gliding on butter.

Without sight, driving, or rather, being in a car that’s being driven, is weirder than you’d think. If you’ve ever closed your eyes on a road trip, you can sort of understand the feeling, and it’s vaguely similar to not feeling anything at all. Taehyung can feel the concrete that rolls beneath him, he can hear the engine and smell the air freshener. He can feel the breeze that swings by, and sometimes, even hear the surrounding cars and commotion of traffic. The only thing he can’t do, however, is see where he’s going (obviously). Yet, that sole thing he can’t do, that one factor he doesn’t possess,
makes car rides not only terrifying but also somewhat uncomfortable.

You see, Taehyung gets car sick. Well, it’s not exactly car sick, more like he gets really dizzy in vehicles and forms of transportation. He thinks it has to do with the fact that he doesn’t know where he’s going, or sometimes, all the sounds become too much like vibrations and it messes with his head. He’s gotten used to it by now, but journeys are always slightly painful because of this and either result in a pounding headache or throbbing nausea.

Despite that though, the drive home is pleasant (as pleasant as can be) and Taehyung is able to drift in and out of sleep to the rhythm of the motors and the sound of Yoongi tapping on the steering wheel. He can tell that the other is deep in thought, and he wants to reassure him to let him know that he’s okay, but can’t find the right words.

*Am I even okay?*

He doesn’t know. After his literal hellish experience, he’s unsure if he can make that excuse again. He’s unsure if he can claim that he is as okay as he puts out to be.

Now that he thinks about it, has he ever been okay? Has there ever been a day where he wasn’t hurting or wasn’t suffering? Before blindness was pain, and even now, he’s still hurting from the aftermath. When will it stop? When will God finally give him a rest and let him live his life the way he wants to?

He’s now deep in thought too, replicating Yoongi’s tapping by patting his leg subconsciously.

*Do I want to be okay?*

He’s lived his entire life *not* being okay, so what if he’s just not meant to be? What if he deserves this life? What if he’s deserved it all?

He shakes his head to remove the depressing thoughts, catching Yoongi’s attention in the process. He doesn’t want to think of them, and he sure as hell doesn’t want to wallow in self-pity. Although he believes these things it’s still a burden to focus on, and he wants to at least for the moment, stop thinking about such saddening ideas.

Instead, he tries to think back on what had happened in the bathroom. He doesn’t really remember
much, just the pain and the burning all over his body. He vaguely recalls Jeongguk embracing him, and then the hollow tune of a familiar song, yet besides that, most of his memory has been scorched along with his agony. He’s partially glad, he doesn’t want to remember what had happened because it hurt…a lot, but at the same time, he wants to know what went down. He was desperate, he’d have done anything for that pain to stop, and so the adverse effects of that is becoming clear in his lack of evocation.

They pull up a couple seconds later, the sound of the car door opening surprising him out of his thoughts. Yoongi must definitely be deep in thought if he didn’t mention to Taehyung that they had arrived, or at least that he’d be opening the door. It’s something Tae deeply appreciates, which is the other’s attention to detail. Yoongi always explains and describes in such convenient ways that it’s like he can almost see. Whether it be where things are placed, what he’s about to do, or what other people are doing, it’s all helpful when you can’t just see for yourself.

But right now, he isn’t doing that, rather, he’s not aware that he isn’t doing that.

Or maybe is aware. Maybe he’s mad. Angry at Taehyung for what?

*He’s probably mad because I’m burdening him.*

He can’t help the thought from popping in his mind, and he wants it to vanish as quickly as it came. He knows Yoongi cares about him, he knows that he’s loved and taken care of by him, so why is it that he’s thinking this?

*It’s because he’s starting to hate you.*

No. He doesn’t want to think that, and so, he refuses to believe it.

“So you need help walking in?”

Taehyung shakes his head, feeling for the lever of the car door and gets surprised when he feels Yoongi open it instead.

Yeah, the other is definitely not paying attention.
He doesn’t want to remark on it but he is confused as to why Yoongi isn’t being as observant as he usually is. Not like he wants to trouble the other, but it’s a little out of his typical nature.

“I’m sorry,” Taehyung suffices with after a while, the jumble of keys slicing through silence. He doesn’t know why he’s apologising, but maybe he did something to annoy Yoongi and his apology will be appreciated.

“Why are you sorry?”

Taehyung blanks. He hadn’t thought that far ahead. “Um, well, I-”

“Don’t apologise if you don’t know what you’re apologising for.”

So, he is mad?

“You’re upset with me?”

Yoongi sighs. “No, I’m not upset with you I just-” he pauses. “I’m just worried. You scared me and I didn’t know how to react.”

“What do you mean?”

“Taehyung, you collapsed in a bathroom! You could have gotten seriously injured and I wasn’t even there! I wasn’t there for you.”

His voice cracks at the end of his sentence and Taehyung is taken aback. He feels guilty that he had made the other worry.

“How could you have known?”

“I should have understood something was wrong when you didn’t come back for a bit, but I was so consumed in my conversation and so in the moment that I-” he curses at himself. “That I put myself first before you, and that isn’t excusable.”
“You’re allowed to put yourself first, Hyung. You *should* put yourself first. I don’t want to burden you any more than I already have.”

Yoongi knows Tae was going to say that. He knows yet he still gets angry by the words.

Angry at himself.

“No, I shouldn’t. You deserve better than that. After years of *torture* you deserve to be happy!”

Taehyung’s eyes widen, shock made present on his face and he feels around to find Yoongi’s hand. It’s shaking, the rings on his fingers shuddering and cold, so Taehyung takes them in his own and squeezes.

“I am happy.”

It’s a lie.

Yoongi knows it’s a lie too. “I can’t stand seeing you suffer.”

Taehyung nods. “I know, I know.”

He repeats himself because he’s unsure of what to say. He is suffering, he knows he’s suffering, yet he also knows that that’s just how things are. It’s a part of his life that’s so rooted in his soul that he’s just accepted it.

He’s learned to co-exist with it.

But Yoongi doesn’t want the other to accept it. He doesn’t want the other to just make that feeling the norm. He wants to *help*. He wants to help so badly that it hurts. It physically *hurts* every bone he owns with a pain that isn’t curable.
All because he can’t help this blind boy with ash grey hair.

He opens the door with his other shaking hand, still unnerved but slightly better with the contact of Taehyung’s fingers on his. It’s crazy how the two save yet destroy each other. How they are both each other’s rocks but also each other’s downfall.

However, despite all this, despite breaking and reconstructing, they both know with absolute conviction that they wouldn’t be able to survive without one another.

Entering the room, the flat is cold on Taehyung’s skin. He shivers slightly when he takes off his shoes, and he’s met with the same cold floorboards of this morning. The bite still stabilises him, but some part of him wishes they were warmer against his socked feet.

The night in full bloom, the moon seems to make both boys sluggish and tired. It had been a long day, with first encounters, hospital visits, old friends and finally fiery pain. He’s drained from the core to say the least, all remaining energy seeping out through his toes and into the gelid floors.

With heavy eyelids, they both get ready for bed in peace. Yoongi still seems to hang with distraught, but he feels slightly better after showering and putting on a nightgown. Taehyung, on the other hand, struggled to find the nozzle for a solid three minutes (in his fatigued state), but after some feeble attempts, he managed to turn off the shower and put on his own pyjamas as well.

Hopping into fresh sheets, Taehyung closes his eyes and thinks of Jeongguk. He thinks of his voice, his scent, his embrace. It’s calming and soothes the remnants of pain from earlier. He’s trying to replace the thoughts of fire with ones of Jeongguk, and fortunately enough, it’s starting to work.

He dozes off, warmth encasing him both physically and mentally. He feels at ease, floating in painless voids, and gradually his breathing slows down into the one of slumber.

Calm and tranquil he lies.

He falls asleep.
He feels warm hands across his torso.

The touch is gentle and blazing as it traces his skin, trailing up his chest and then downwards again in repetitive slow motions. Taehyung has never felt this before. It’s a feeling of pent-up electricity, a burning yet pleasant singe, and a blend of shivers that scream pleasure. He’s unsure how to react but his body seems to involuntarily respond in ways he doesn’t quite understand. All he does know, however, is that he doesn’t want it to stop.

A sound leaves his mouth. It’s low and long and somehow familiar. It releases some of that repressed electricity into the air. He feels heat near his groin, a growing desire bubbling in his abdomen and he can’t help but clutch at invisible sheets. He throws his head back as he’s met with yearning warmth, something wet creating friction exactly where he wants it. An incredible feeling washes over him as more sounds leave his mouth, pleasure amplifying and skin pulsing with want. What is this?

“Jeongguk..”

The name slips out of his lips before he can process what is happening, and soon everything seems to become clearer. His touch, his feeling, his scent, it’s all cascading down Taehyung into what he assumes is sexual desire. He wants Jeongguk? Why? What is causing this vision of ecstasy?

He smells cologne but faintly, an aroma that’s intoxicating with the smell of rose and virile. It’s the smell he associates with Jeongguk because it seems to describe him perfectly. Strong yet soft, warm yet not too warm, gentle and rough. Opposites that should contradict but don’t, and instead, harmonise together.

The pressure swells and he feels the sweat roll off his body as the friction increases. He wants to release, he needs to, but everything seems to pass with such excruciating slowness. He moans again, the scenario bringing vibrant colours into his mind, and creating visual emotions. He sees red, yellow, pink and violet, pale blue and highlights of white. A sunset of euphoria as touches of lust guide and overtake him.

He’s confused, but a cloud of desire blocks his muddled emotions until he can only feel bliss. He wants, he needs, he craves and yearns and longs.

He begs.
“Jeonggukkk...ah..more..”

All he can do is let the image grasp him with immense sensation, its hold relentless but also delicate. He feels tingles and sparked nerves, and then a warm mouth meeting his own.

A kiss.

Jolting, Taehyung wakes up with heavy limbs and a racing heart. He feels the heat radiate off of him, skin sensitive although nothing had really touched it. His mouth is thick with silent restricted moans, and he struggles to remember how to swallow and breathe and think.

“Taehyung? Are you okay?”

Yoongi’s voice permeates his confused mind, a sharp wind through his hazy thoughts.

He struggles to find his voice.

What just happened?

He never thought he’d feel this way again..

“Tae? Hey, hey, you’re okay,” Yoongi sits on the bed, reaching out a hand to rub Taehyung’s back but the other falls back down again. “Same dream?”

How am I supposed to explain this?

No lying. No secrets. A promise is a promise.

“No…”

Yoongi’s surprised but doesn’t show it. He folds his legs in a sitting position before turning to
Taehyung with quizzical eyes, using his hands to brush the sweat out of the other’s hair. Taehyung shivers, both out of the drastic coolness between Yoongi’s fingers and his burning scalp, but also because it springs the images of Jeongguk back into his mind. They sear through real life, and he’s unsure if they’ll ever completely leave his memory.

“I need you to tell me what’s wrong so I can help.”

Yoongi’s voice holds worry and Taehyung feels guilty, his initial thoughts of Yoongi hating him vanishing completely. He can’t seem to choke out whatever it is that’s holding him back, and no matter how hard he tries, sounds won’t escape from this imaginary grip on his throat.

That was different. It wasn’t the monsters or the aches of pain and tremors that came after they forced me to do things I didn’t want. When they forced me to take and struggle and fill with things I wouldn’t allow, not listening to my screams or my bleeding protests. This was something different. Sensual. Caring. It’s like the touch cared about me rather than themselves.

“I-” he chokes.

“Hey, slow breaths, okay?”

Taehyung wills himself to breathe in slowly, his lungs now releasing the lodge in his throat. Too many emotions are spiralling through him.


Most of all, it brings back unwanted memories. Memories of things that he can’t speak of because if he does, he’s afraid that the words will stick to his mouth and he’ll memorise them forever.

I didn’t want it then, but somehow, with Jeongguk, I do.

“I’m okay, sorry for freaking out.”

“It’s alright, I’m just concerned. You’re really warm, are you sick?”
Taehyung shakes his head. “No, I’m not.”

“I’m going to get you a washcloth, and when I come back I want you to try talk it out with me, okay? If you’re too tired, then sleep, get all the rest you can.”

“Okay.”

He feels the sheets rustle and then Yoongi is out of the room, the space silent and empty except for Taehyung’s breathing. He wants to cry but can’t because he’s not completely sad. He wants to scream but can’t because he’s not completely afraid. He wants to do many things but can’t find the entire means to do so.

There is one thing though that he wants, and that he can’t ignore as easily as the other feelings. He wants to release.

The hard-on he’s sprouting only comes to his attention when he untangles his legs from the mess of blankets and sheets he’s created. It strains a little in his boxers, and the more it pulses, the more it hurts with the absence of friction.

He hasn’t had a wet dream in…forever. Well, it seems like forever at least. He never thought he could have one again, not after what they did to him. Yet, here he is, feeling ashamed for thinking such obscene things about someone else. He feels dirty, disgusted with himself, and sick even.

*I’m just like my monsters. How can I think these things when somebody thought these things about me? Jeongguk doesn’t want this. How could I? I hadn’t wanted them. I’m just like them.*

*Disgusting.*

The hard-on refuses to go away and he curses a little under his breath.

*Why?*
He doesn’t dare adjust it, afraid that if he so much as focuses on it, he’ll be overcome with the need to let go. He won’t let himself get off to an image like that. He can’t. It’s impure, and he can’t corrupt Jeongguk more than he already has.

Yoongi comes in a minute later, holding a wet rag and a glass of water. He still wears that concerned look, and it shows in the way he walks. He steps hesitantly, stiff from worry, and Taehyung manages to smile to help ease the other’s nerves and fried footing.

“Are you feeling better?”

“Yeah.”

It’s silent for a bit, Yoongi wiping the sweat off of Taehyung’s face with the damp cloth he brought and gently tilting the water so he can take small sips in between. His heartbeat is calm now, his breathing normal, yet that damn boner just won’t go away.

“How bad was it?”

Taehyung groans out in frustration. “It wasn’t even bad, I just- so many thoughts just overwhelmed me and I couldn’t breathe and- I’m ashamed.”

Yoongi is even more confused. “It’s not your fault for feeling that way, don’t be ashamed. What was the dream?”

Taehyung stumbles on his thoughts, a faint blush dusting his cheeks no matter how much he wills it to stay put. Yoongi’s eyebrows quirk.

“Did you have a wet dream?”

“Wha- how did you know?!”

“I didn’t, until you just told me,” Yoongi chuckles a little, retracting his hands from the others face to comb fingers through his hair again. It always calms Taehyung down when he does so. “Why are you so upset over it though?” His face goes slack. “Oh no, Tae, was it-”
He can’t finish his sentence.

Fear is made prominent on his face and Taehyung can sense it.

“No, although it did remind me a little bit after. I- well,” he pauses. “It was about the boy that I’m friends with…”

“Jeongguk-ssi?”

Taehyung nods in shame, lowering his head as he feels tears threaten to fall.

“There’s nothing to be ashamed about, Taehyung.” Yoongi lifts up the other’s chin gently, smiling softly to try reassure the other with emotion rather than words. Although he dislikes Jeongguk, he knows this is a struggle for Taehyung, so he puts his feelings aside to try and help with the situation appropriately. “It’s completely normal to feel attracted to someone, especially after what I saw today. It’s nothing to be embarrassed over.”

And, the award for best human being goes to: Min Yoongi.

However, Taehyung still feels sick to his stomach. “I know but, after what they did, I couldn’t imagine feeling this way again, let alone to another person. It’s disgusting, what if they don’t want this? I’m just like them, I’m taking, I’m selfish, I’m not thinking, why-“

“Slow down, slow down. Are you really comparing yourself to them? You are in no way even remotely similar to him. He’s a monster-”

“I’m a monster.”

“No, you’re not!” Yoongi sighs, his heart bleeding for the other. “What he did is nothing close to what you just experienced.”

“But, the craziest thing is that I liked it. I wanted more, I enjoyed it, and that’s so sick don’t you
think? That I want to feel this way again even after what happened. I’m so utterly revolting, I-

“Stop.” Yoongi’s voice is stern. “You are allowed to feel this way for another person. You can’t compare everyone to them because they don’t define every person. Clearly, Jeongguk-ssi is different, but you can’t restrict yourself because of what happened. From what I saw today, it looks like he does feel something towards you, so you shouldn’t label it as what they did because this is not the same whatsoever,” he intakes a breath. “You are supposed to like these things because it’s a fantasy from your brain. Just because you associate those sorts of touches with what happened in the past, doesn’t mean you can’t change that. You deserve to feel loved and wanted and desired, but in the right way.”

Taehyung is crying but with dry tears. His body shakes in a sob but nothing leaves his eyes, liquid not streaking his cheeks like how everyone else weeps. He’s unsure when it started happening, but one day, he lost the ability to shed tears. Maybe it’s part of his injury. Or maybe, he tried so hard to swallow his emotions that they can no longer resurface. Whatever it is, no matter how miserable he is, teardrops won’t fall.

He feels Yoongi’s embrace as he whimpers softly between clenched lips. He doesn’t want to cry, because although no tears fall, he was always taught that sadness means weakness. Crying always resulted in a beating, and some beatings were more invasive than others. He can’t help it though. So many emotions are coursing through him, and now, they mostly revolve around self-loathing and despair. He feels tainted and destroyed, the hands that corrupted him still burning even though years have passed. He doesn’t want to be like them, he doesn’t want to feel this sort of sexual need, but with Jeongguk, that’s exactly what happens. He can’t escape this want for the other, and the more it grows, the more hate he feels towards himself.

“I love you, Taehyung. Please don’t cry.”

The words only make him grip tighter onto Yoongi’s nightgown, sobs erupting from his chest with more intensity.

I don’t want to feel this way.

“You’re okay, I got you.”

I can’t feel this way.
Yoongi hugs him firmly and securely, his own tears falling at the other’s distressed state. He hates seeing Taehyung like this because there is nothing he can do to help relieve the other’s pain. He can only provide comfort, and even then, it’s not enough.

But, I am feeling this way.

Taehyung’s night is restless.

And even then, restlessness is a vast understatement.

After convincing Yoongi that he’s okay to be left alone to try and sleep, Yoongi had returned to his own room. However, he did manage to stress the factor that if Taehyung were to need anything, he’d be there.

So he’s lying down, and lying in bed takes concentration, believe it or not, because it’s when most of your thoughts are at their prime. Swirling and fighting against the walls of sleep, awaiting their chance to finally be put to use.

However, these thoughts, the ones in Taehyung’s head, aren’t ones he’d like to think of.

Well, they are thoughts he wants to think of but at the same doesn’t. He doesn’t want to feel this way, he doesn’t want to think these things, but at the same time, the short outbursts of fantasy and invention that appear in his mind, mostly feelings but sometimes colour, create this pleasant feeling in his body.

Knots of unravelled paradise, and no matter how tightly he ties them, tries to tie them, each thought seems to loosen the strands until they spiral out of control. It’s difficult with two conflicting ideas in his head: lust and disgust, each concept trying to win over the other. It’s a battle in between what he thinks is wrong but feels is right.

Jeongguk is everything right, but isn’t that partially why Taehyung can’t want him? Can’t have him, smile at him, hug him, kiss him, have sex with him. He can’t because Taehyung himself, in his mind, is everything wrong.
Right and wrong can’t go together. They don’t go together.

Taehyung groans, turning over so that his head is buried beneath his pillows. Maybe the bedsheets can suffocate him to sleep, or perhaps the heat of the cloth will mask the own heat brewing inside his gut. He just hopes this would all go away. He can’t hold himself back for long, and sooner or later, Jeongguk will be his undoing.

Sleep miles away from his grasp, he sits up and accepts his failed attempts at sinking his thoughts. They linger too much, and it’s as if the more he tries to stop them, the more they come back.

So, he stops fighting.

He lets the thoughts come, and hopefully, in doing so, they will vanish with the newly found compliance.

Restriction slacking, the colour purple immediately fills his vision, but it isn’t bright or overwhelming. It’s rather a nice contrast to the dark, the memory of its demeanour making him naturally at ease despite not physically staring at it. Then, it’s as if the feelings of purple come with the sight, a warmth with tingles enveloping his body through nerves and sensitivity.

He wants to touch and move and pant and unwind. He wants to resolve and release, because maybe then, this continuous feeling of need will disappear. He hopes it’ll disappear.

However, a small part of him hopes it doesn’t as well. A small, deep, untouched part of him wants to want Jeongguk, wants to have his hands on him, wants to be touched and grazed by him, wants to need and cry out for him. Begging and pleading for the other’s fingers, to have them on places he never thought would be touched again.

It’s that small part of him that lights up when Jeongguk’s sweet voice makes its way into his ears, or when he hums and cradles his shoulders. When he tells Taehyung that it’s all going to be okay, and that he cares and that he wants to help and he will help. It’s that small part of him that not only wants Jeongguk’s body, but his love. He wants to be loved by him.

And that is something Taehyung never thought would be possible.

Him? Loving? It’s such a foreign idea he would laugh when he thought of it, yet now, it seems to
make a lot more sense. Love is such a promising fantasy, larger than the ones of lust, and better than the ones of solitude. Taehyung feels as if maybe, just maybe, he is capable of love.

He laughs at himself. “Stupid.”

But it isn’t, and even though he’s still internalising this new ideology, he can’t help but be pulled back by the arms of his monsters. He’s scared and nervous. Their touch lingers, the bruises and invasive natures embroidered in his memory like tapestries of affliction, everlasting although faded. Love is able to peel away the fine string that created this fabrication, yet it does so slowly, so he needs to be patient.

The realisation hits him and purple spreads through his mind again, and with it, an unbearable pressure in his pants.

Oh…right.

How should I deal with this?

The most logical answer would be to take care of it, however, Taehyung’s never been the type of person to do something along the lines of that. To be fair, after his hell of a childhood, he never found the need to do such actions, and so, never did it. It was like the hormonal aspect in his brain was switched off, all feelings for desire and sex long gone with the disappearance from his abusive household. But now, things seem to have changed...clearly. The switch has been turned back on, and it is indeed relentless.

His groin stirs with an intolerable tautness, heat pooling the more the purple floods through his mind, and he feels warm. It isn’t the heat from earlier though, more of a lustrous shine that encompasses diamonds in the sun, and it glows with longing ardour.

He craves friction.

He craves release.

Fuck it.
Taehyung knows for a fact that Yoongi is long gone at this point. Normally if he were near the other would tell him (so he knows) and even then, Taehyung would be able to hear his breath, feel his body temperature, and smell his cologne. He’s not too far away, so he’ll have to be as quiet as possible (obviously) but he’ll be secluded in privacy for the most part, and that’s enough.

Lifting his head from his pillow, he shifts his body so he’s leaning on his back. He raises his legs a little, trying to get comfortable but hesitates in the process, nerves bubbling and a sort of race in his heartbeat. The heartbeat of anticipation.

Does he even know how to do this? I mean, he’s aware of sex and lust because when he first discovered his sexuality, Yoongi had explained it to him. A slightly altered version of the birds and the bees, however, he never really went in depth on what you’re supposed to do, or feel, or think.

Shaking away his slight apprehension to the whole situation, he trails a hand across the length of his torso, going slow as if to reconsider what he’s doing.

_This is so that I don’t think of him anymore. It’s okay._

The touch of his fingertips tickle his abdomen at the leisure pace, and he finds himself enjoying it more than he thought he would. It’s strange, undoubtedly, but also everything he’s been yearning for and more.

He repeats the motion several times, tracing up his chest and then gradually dragging his fingers along his stomach, his waist, the band of his shorts. He goes excruciatingly slowly, like in his dream, relishing each touch as if savouring the moment of indulgence, and stops when he brushes underneath the line of his pelvis.

A shudder escapes his body, a faint tremble of both the current sensation and what’s about to come and he swallows hard.

Imagining the touches are Jeongguk’s, Taehyung moves his hands back up to his chest, snaking beneath his shirt to touch the skin directly. Electricity shoots up upon contact, and he suppresses a moan by biting his lips harshly. The feeling is incredible, the dark amplifying his sensitivity and giving him the final satisfaction of much needed friction.

Electricity coursing, he trails his hands back down again, this time playing with the band of his briefs rather than avoiding more contact, before gently pulling down the material. His hard-on sprouts
outwards, the restrictions of the cloth finally free and he almost moans again when it makes contact with the open air. It pulses, twitching in phantom grip, and he curls one of his hands into the covers to ease some of the pleasure that overtakes him. His nails dig at flat sheets, the overwhelming need to unbind reaching him, but his mind still stops him with feelings of shame.

This is so I stop corrupting him in my mind. It’ll disappear, and my emotions will with it.

And so, he lets instinct take over. Using his left hand, he carefully wraps his palm across the base of his dick, pausing when the electricity sparks and crackles with fervent intensity. He’s taken by bliss, the friction finally satiating his wanton desire, and he almost cries out in relief. He pumps once, slow and long, and has to bite his lips again to hide the noises of ecstasy that bubble in his throat. It brightens with each movement, a pleasure so saturated he feels like he’s standing on pounds of summery coals. Not burning, but hot enough to melt restraints and make nerves supple and relaxed again.

He pumps the length of his dick at a continuously gentle and moderate pace. It increases his feelings of desire yet quenches them, the more he does the actions the more the tapestry loosens and the threads fall away.

He strokes faster, a string of silent moans leaving parted lips, and he jolts a little when his fingers touch the head. Sensitive and hot, he returns back to the base, dragging his fingers upwards to palm the centre of his cock again in a repeated pattern. It builds tension.

“Ah, ah, Jeongguk..”

The name slips in reality and he isn’t as shocked or ashamed. He wants this to be the other, he wants this hunger and thirst to be sated by the same sweet voice that captivated him, that changed his world with simple encounters and lulling words. He needs him, and it’s almost scary to think about.

“More...”

He doesn’t know what ‘more’ he’s referring to, but the quickening in his pace displays his desirable thoughts. He groans a little too loudly, voice echoing throughout the room and hopefully remaining only in his room. The pleasure is just so immense, possibly because he hasn’t touched himself in years (or quite frankly ever), but maybe also because the thought of Jeongguk is too hard to resist. His grip is strong, his touch the perfect balance of soft and calloused and cold and warm. He’s the epitome of comfort, and it does wonders to Taehyung’s imagination as he continues to give in to his insatiable needs.
“I want you.”

It’s odd to say aloud but caught in the moment, the words don’t register in his brain. All he knows is that the tension is increasing in his abdomen, and the warmth in his groin burns ever so satisfyingly. He pulls deeper, throwing his head back with the motion as he strokes long and hard. He repeats the action several times, edging himself closer to the cliff he wants to fall off of because waiting beneath that rock is a sea of bliss. A sea of quenched desire and sated lust.

Taehyung’s breathing grows rapid and ragged, resembling more pants and heaves as sweat collects on his forehead. He feels consumed, eaten and devoured by the idea of Jeongguk and his lingering presence. He wishes he were here, helping him, touching him, kissing him, in him. His knows his own touch isn’t as powerful as the other’s.

He wants more, he needs more, but for now, his hand will suffice.

Lifting his legs up a little, Taehyung uses his right hand to feel around his ass, groping at available skin that had pooled out of his hastily lowered boxers. He massages what he can find, his sight impediment proving to make the task a little difficult, but he manages. Using the indentures of his body, he guides his hand towards his entrance, unsure whether to insert a finger or not. He plays around, fingers dancing across nerves as he continues to pump at a much quicker pace. He’s close, but at the same time, release has never appeared farther away.

He choking back a moan as another wave of pleasure washes over him and he increases his pace, trying to chase this seemingly endless high that only builds up and up and up. He lets out a sound of desperation, a mix between a whimper and a strained groan that vibrates through his chest. He needs this, he needs this release so badly.

“Mmm..Jeongguk, fuck-”

He throws his head back again, lost in the world of euphoria and lets himself be taken. Be fucked.

“Fuck, right there!”

He’s so utterly close, just a little bit more.
“I need you so fucking much, just-”

His words get caught in his distress to release and he strokes at full speed, knees buckling and hips thrusting in attempts to achieve climax. Sweat rolls off his shoulders, heartbeat wild, and the tightness only grows and grows.

“Ngnh, I’m so close!”

He’s shouting in whispers, trying to keep his voice as quiet as possible because he does share a flat after all.

“Jeongguk!”

All he can do is chant the other’s name as he chases his cloud of bliss. It helps, the arousal throughout his body heightening each time he says the other’s name, and fuck- he’s almost there.

“Ah, ah, faster.”

He speeds up, grip tight and dick leaking precum.

“Mmmhmm, aah, aah-”

With one single last drawn out stroke, he feels himself cum violently into his cupped hand, ecstasy rolling off in final ripples of pure pleasure.

He’s still panting, Jeongguk’s name slipping every so often as he comes down from his extreme high, liquid coming out of him as he pumps the rest of his orgasm.

He strokes some more to edge out the last of his bliss, oversensitivity sparking him with both pain and enjoyment. Even the ending of this long foregoing battle feels amazing, and so he prolongs the actions until the discomfort becomes too much to handle.

Finally satisfied, his movements still, breath heavy and quick from the aftermath and hand sticky with
unseen white. His desires are gone, lust dissipated with ejaculation and thoughts finally at ease. He feels emptied of hunger, and so unbelievably good that he can’t seem to wrap his head around it.

It takes him a couple of seconds to realise what he had just done.

*I just masturbated to Jeongguk.*

He doesn’t believe it, so he repeats it in his mind again.

*I just fucking masturbated to Jeongguk.*

He’s unsure whether to feel embarrassed or disgusted, but for the time being, he’s too tired to care.

The energy of fighting desire and then finally succumbing to that desire are taking its toll on his body, and so, he makes his way to the bathroom to clean up the mess he made (which is a little difficult to do when you’re blind and all). It takes a while, but he’s able to find the washcloths and douse them with water (hopefully without waking Yoongi) before returning to his room. He cleans his dick, still smeared with the remainder of his actions, and then proceeds to do his best to clean out the stains in the sheets for the time being. Thankfully, most of it was caught in his hand, however, he can’t really confirm that as the texture of things are pretty much the same.

He’s going to do the laundry tomorrow *for sure.*

Sighing, he collapses back down into the sheets, the smell of sex still in the air and wafting in isolation. Although emptied, a stone forms in his chest, and it weighs him down as sleep catches up to him.

*Why?*

Why does he feel this emotion? This strange emotion that persists in darkness. It’s heavy, thick, induced with some sort of underlining affection.

And most of all, it is the colour violet. Orchids of blooming light that are the only thing he’s able to imaginably see in his world of nothing. They circle like fireflies, illuminating his starless sky like
Northern Lights in the peak of arctic fields. They glow, saturating and fading, and they lull him to sleep with their calming nature.

This strange emotion laced in purple.

What is it?

He yields into unconsciousness and sleeps with the question still unanswered in his mind.

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Chapter End Notes

HELLO and welcome back
two updates in one day damn. I hope u liked that treat cause it may never happen again
shsjhsj
i'm considering putting a non-smut version of this chapter on my Instagram for those who REALLY don't want to read that sort of stuff but still want to see the plot/character development.
(the amount of shamless plugs here, istg-)

my Instagram is: @amfics
https://www.instagram.com/amfics/
and I'm trying to post the concept but my wifi shuts off iN 8 DAMN MINUTES
(boarding school amiright? oof) SO i cAN'T post them right now.
I may also re-write the beginning of this chapter as it was rushed whilst the other bits I already wrote previously today.

ANYWAYS
happy reading!

さようなら。
Chapter Summary

Three weeks later and have things changed? I mean some things have, but the confusion and turmoil inside Taehyung’s body sure hasn't.

He's conflicted but he's not conflicted, and that's a conflict in itself.

He wants answers, and maybe, this purple will help him get them.

--

a pretty boring chapter with some fluff and other details ;)

Chapter Notes

and we're backkkk yay

school is a fucking nightmare, and that is NOT AN exaggeration.

I think both my math and english teachers are trying to kill me from stress....who sets a 6-paragraph essay with only 4 days to accomplish it (she set it on monday due friday of the same week) WITH a test the day before AND additional homework. AND who puts a math test the day after you JUST had a math test, based on the shit you learned in class AFTER the test???????

if this doesn't justify my absence I don't know what can.

ANYWAYS, i'm going to mention some pretty exciting news in the end notes so you can read them (or not), but yeah just thought I should let you know.

This chapter is a little boring but NEXT CHAPTER OOOHH BOI, if things go as planned some major tea and drama and AHHHHSKJND is going to be served.

So yes, stay tuned ;)

as always, have a great day/night, and happy reading!

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Three weeks have passed and it feels like nothing yet everything has changed.

For one, Taehyung’s feelings are still muddled, wandering in murky waters with unclear motives and deniable thoughts, but on the other hand, his knowledge on this strange purple has sharpened in his mind.

He is convinced that Jeongguk, in his form and mind and from what his memory allows, is the colour violet. No, rather that he is violet. If violet could transform into flesh and bones, beat with
transfigured blood and inhale oxygen, it would be Jeongguk and all his glory.

Why? He’s unsure. Why associate a colour to a human being? Why imagine such vivid hues and relate it to someone’s voice and touch and breath? He doesn’t know how, nor does he understand why, but it just is. Not all questions require answers, and not all answers require questions, but despite these underlining statements, Taehyung’s mind screams for comprehension.

At least a grasp or grip or glimmer in what may even remotely be the right direction.

He’s realised that this violet, this feeling and associated shade, is the first colour he’s been able to properly visualise (with the exemption of dreams) other than that scarlet demonic red. It contrasts his original limited spectrum to an entire collage of spring, and it seems to illuminate darkness so it appears grey. It’s now the flower in a field of blood and wintery corruption, blooming against all odds for again, unknown reasons.

Everything yet nothing has changed because even though he’s accepted and realised these new ideals, he still struggles to connect them. To discern and evaluate them. His acceptance is something but also not a single thing because he doesn’t know why these feelings and visions have occurred.

And what could possibly be more frustrating than a lack of understanding to something as basic yet complex as emotions?

Well that’s not all, yes there is more (much to his dismay), as the college grind has started to take root in his mind and the workload is nothing short of intense. It’s a lot, papers and assignments flying by through windows of spare time, tests sprouting from thin air and midterm exams right around the corner. He had almost forgotten what it was like to actually have work that now jumping into everything seems expansively difficult. It’s a struggle, and if college was hard already, not being able to see proves to make it harder to get by.

The new software he installed for coding doesn’t enable voice-text, so he has to ask the teacher what he can do about the predicament. On top of that, he’s pretty sure he misplaced his recorder, and he’s had to rely on Jimin’s notes or the hastily typed ones on his note taker to get by.

However, he knew this would be the case, and last year’s experiences had aided him as well. He’s determined to do his best, impediment or not, and excel in whatever it is he’s trying to succeed in (despite the obvious struggles).
That is until it comes to feelings.

He knows why he has such a hard time understanding them, and he knows why he bottles them up so much, but despite that, he can’t help but scold himself for being so broken that he can’t get his head around such innate concepts. It’s human nature, so why do past experiences define him instead of withering away? Why are those experiences so prominent even though time has passed? Isn’t it true that time heals wounds?

So why, after six years, are the things that happened to him so shrewd that it feels like they happened only yesterday?

It not only confuses him but pisses him off. He’s trying to get better, in some ways, he is better, but in some ways, he also isn’t.

Some days, in some ways, he just feels completely and utterly hollow.

A body with no soul or emotion. A shell of what he once was. Some days, in some ways, he feels like someone could knock on his arms and they’d hear the echo of emptiness, or they’d touch his skin only to feel the inhumane coat of cold porcelain.

But then on some days, in some ways, he could feel every emotion there is. Sadness billowing like smoke in his lungs, pain dancing on his nerves in a frenzied waltz, anger bubbling in his throat and happiness hanging onto his lashes like lifelines. Some days he can feel everything and anything, and at the same time, not even the breath of laughter.

He’s broken, and there is no denying that.

But, funny enough, this burning purple seems to hold him in place. It stops him from breaking, keeping shattered shards in an invisible grip that yanks them until they can fix together on their own. He feels like this colour, this person who he’s only known for three weeks, is the only thing that’s attaching him to this world.

He feels like it’s what prevents him from ending it all.

And he feels guilty for feeling that way. He knows he has support, Yoongi, Jin, and Hoseok all putting time and effort into making sure he’s okay, but for some reason, that only makes him feel
worse. He feels like he’s burdening everyone, and death looks appealing when he knows they’d be so much happier without having to think about him.

This is why he sometimes feels bad for having been found. Then, he could have died and nobody would have cared, but now, people do.

Why do they?

Why had Yoongi even stopped to make sure he was okay? Why had he gone through the effort of hospitals and home-school and living with a handicapped child?

Why did Jin pay for his hospital bills? Why did he show hospitality, cook him food, and make him feel like he had a family? And why had Hoseok taken the time to teach him how to sing, and dance, and smile? Making him experience what it was like to have a brother, a friend, and a funnel of support?

He can’t help but feel this luring essence of death over him because isn’t he already dead? He hurts, he suffers, he sees black without stars and shadows without light. But maybe death is better than that because at least then he wouldn’t hurt, right? He doesn’t know what’s in the afterlife, nor does he even know if the pain will stop, and although he hates and fears the unknown, death is an exception.

Because if you’re dead, you don’t weigh on other people’s lives.

And no pain is greater than the one you inflict upon others.

The bell rings suddenly and it halts his thoughts into the tone of the noise. It’s not as frightening as before, his ears adjusting to the blaring sound, and so he packs up his things for his next class.

He hears a familiar voice.

Jimin’s been tailing him all week. After Jin’s dinner it seemed like the others had told him what had gone down, and no matter how much he tries to hide his concern, Taehyung can still sense it in his voice. His speech gives away all his emotions, his breathing seemingly hitching every time he asks Taehyung a question.
He doesn’t blame him. Taehyung himself would be pretty concerned if his friend had collapsed in a bathroom and then gone on to pretend like nothing happened. He’d be worried, he’d want to know if they’re okay, but simultaneously, he wouldn’t want to bother them with needless comments.

He doesn’t feel reassured by concern but rather ashamed. He’s guilt-ridden, conscience-stricken, he feels as though he causes more discomfort than happiness.

He sighs with the sag in his heart and turns towards Jimin’s voice. He is in the middle of telling this supposedly hilarious story of his Thai restaurant experience, in which he almost killed all the lobsters in the vicinity

Taehyung would think it’s funny if he were actually paying attention. He doesn’t mean to not listen to his friend, who seems to be beaming by the brightness in his pitch, but his thoughts are too rambled that he can’t concentrate on anything else.

Being imprisoned in his own mind has become a recurring theme in his life, and he can’t say he’s happy about it. He’s fed up.

“And so, I asked the guy: can I hold it? And he didn’t think I’d go for the claws so he nodded his head and passed it over to me. Next thing I know, I’m screaming. I dropped the lobster and accidentally pushed the glass door with all the other lobsters in it, and shit dude, water was everywhere. There was a literal waterfall of cascading lobsters, and they just stared at me with these beady black eyes like they didn’t want to be eaten. Truly has scarred me. And then, they started flopping their tails all wildly like they were having a seizure, and the guy just looked at me like I’m both the dumbest and worst person to have ever lived. He got fired…whoops. But honestly, who lets a guest hold the responsibility of fresh lobster in his hands? Don’t trust people is where I’m getting at.”

Taehyung nods his head. “Hmm, seems like a wild story.”

“Were you even listening to me?!”

“T’m sorry, Hyung, I’ve just been really distracted lately.”

Lately meaning a while, and a while meaning three weeks.
Jimin shrugs it off like he always does, clinging onto whatever normality he can get from the other. It’s not unusual that Taehyung isn’t listening, but Jimin thought that he’d be better by now.

He still seems…depressed.

Yeah, that’s the word to put it.

Ever since the dinner, it’s as if the fire in his body had stolen his energy and replaced it with lead. As if the burning had stopped only to be restored with absolutely nothing.

But that’s not entirely true. It wasn’t right after the dinner, it was more the week after it, and despite what happened then, it’s hard to believe that the actions of that night had truly hurt him this much.

Or maybe it had.

It kills Jimin to know that he isn’t being as bright or smiley as usual. The first day they met, Tae had been gleaming, sarcastic yet earnest, he seemed to draw people in not by his impediment but by the way his cheeks flushed or teeth sparkled. He had looked happy, but now, it doesn’t seem that way.

Jimin’s wonders that maybe he never was happy. Maybe he only appeared to be for the sake of his friends. Maybe, Jimin didn’t realise because he didn’t look hard enough.

The guilt is enough to feed lions and now he feels bad.

“Hey!” Jimin starts, trying to start another subject. Anything’s better than the other’s silent state. “We never ended up going bowling even though we said we were going to. I guess with all the chaos we kind of forgot about it, huh?”

Taehyung nods his head.

“We should talk to Jin hyung about it. It seemed like he really wanted to go.”

Taehyung nods his head again.
Jimin sighs. “Do you still feel up to it?”

Taehyung thinks for a bit, biting his lip in concentration. He looks pale even in the sunlight, and it unnerves Jimin more than he’d like to admit. He sees fractures in the other’s face. Splits and cracks of mirrored perfection, on the verge of breaking but not really. It’s like the more the sunlight hits his ghosted cheeks, and the glow of day infiltrates these crevices, the more the fissures seem to splinter through his films of icy skin.

And as he hesitates, the cracks only deepen.

“I’m not sure…”

“Think about it, okay? I’m sure everyone would love to hang out all together again, and it wouldn’t be the same without you.”

“I understand, it’s just-”

“Tae! Jimin! Over here!”

A voice interrupts him and it sounds familiar and angelic, like the shimmer of wind chimes in a gentle breeze.

“Sammy?”

“Geez, I ran across like two buildings to catch up to you guys,” he pants dramatically, holding onto his knees to catch his breath. “What’s up?”

Jimin laughs. “You ran this far? But yeah, nothing much, I was just talking about going bowling. Want to come?”

“Bowling? Hell yeah! That sounds like a ton of fun. What day and time? Are you going too, Tae?”
He flusters by being put on the spot. It at least adds some colour to his pale face. “Well, um, I don’t know, you see I have a lot of-”

“Bullshit!” Sammy interrupts again, a smile plastered on his face. “You’re coming with us, come onnnn, it’ll be so much fun!”

“You’re awfully energetic,” Jimin states, rolling his eyes. “But yes, I haven’t talked to it with my other friends yet, but probably sometime this weekend? I’ll text you a time”

“Perfect! But you can’t just not make Taehyung come. Help me persuade him!”

“Don’t just act like I’m not standing right in front of you.”

Jimin smiles at Tae’s sarcastic comment.

Maybe he is getting better.

“If you go, I’ll promise to eat something other than rice.”

“You’re kidding? That’s you’re persuasive gesture?”

“It’s the only card I have.”

“I know!” Jimin quirks, nudging Taehyung gently in the shoulder. “If you go, I promise I’ll watch an episode of anime with you.”

“Any anime I want?”

“Any anime you want.”

Taehyung ponders, his mood lifting if only slightly at the conversation topic. “I’ll think about it.”
“Think about it?! I’m giving you a prime opportunity to bond with me! With anime!”

“Yes, but do I really want to go to a bowling alley when Hoseok hyung might blow up the entire place?”

“We’ll keep an eye on him.”

“We’ll keep **eyes** on him, shit.”

“I want to meet this so-called blowing up bowling alley dude too!” Sammy pipes in, looking at Jimin for confirmation. “Unlike you guys, I don’t share mutual friends.”

“Yet, that is. I’m sure the Hyungs will love you.”

“You sure?”

Jimin nods his head enthusiastically. “I wouldn’t say they would if they wouldn’t.”

“Plus,” Taehyung adds, his face now mostly full of colour. “It’s pretty hard to make them dislike you…Well until it comes to Yoongi, but he’s just protective. If you’re friends with us, they’re friends with you too.”

The comment reassures Sammy and so he grins. “I hope so.”

It’s silent for a bit until Jimin breaks the brewing quiet with a common icebreaker.

“What class do you guys have next?”

“I’ve got computer science,” Taehyung replies.
“I’m pretty sure I have graphic design, although, I could also have math.”

“Tch, you gotta get your shit together man.”

Sammy laughs. “How about you?”

“I have an English lecture, ugh,” Jimin groans. “It’s not that I dislike the language, it’s just that I suck at it.”

“That’s not true, you’re pretty good for someone who isn’t a native speaker.”

“Yeah, yeah, don’t gas me up Mr. LA guy. It’s unfair, you know both Korean and English? Must be nice.”

“Being bilingual isn’t too uncommon.”

“You kidding me? It’s still extremely difficult.”

“Ehh, not really.”

“Shut up, you’re making me feel insecure.”

Taehyung rolls his eyes. “I mean, you are pretty decent at Japanese.”

“Decent?”

“You’re above average.”

“Wow, am I like the only person that isn’t bilingual here? Where’s Jeongguk when I need him?”
“I did grow up with a Japanese mother, you’re learning it all by yourself which makes it harder.”

Well, he labels her ‘mother’ but she doesn’t deserve that title. His birth mother doesn’t really deserve that title either.

It would be best to just consider himself as motherless, because at least then he won’t fantasise in false expectations or ‘what ifs’. Last time he checked, mothers aren’t supposed to throw glass at their child or stand on the sidelines as their father beats them for being home late or making friends. Last time he checked, mothers aren’t supposed to let their own child be used and assaulted just for existing in this world. They aren’t supposed to abandon babies in hospitals to be devoured by monsters, or blame them for the hits inflicted upon them to make them believe that the pain is their own fault. What they are supposed to do is love and care and smile, but all she, no it, all it did was cause pain towards him. Pain that he so much wants to let go but can’t because if he was raised this way, doesn’t that make him this way too?

Most of all, mothers aren’t supposed to touch their children’s eyes. It’s specific, but the eyes are things that should be left untouched and spared. They hold perspective, emotion, light and abundance. They hold character and individuality, and yet, that is exactly why they had taken them away. His eyes were him, his sight was the only thing he owned in the prisoned bars of his household. When they had stolen his voice, freedom, and ability to touch and be touched, he still had his vision to guide him somewhere else. To free him. It had been the only thing that he could confidently carry in his own skin because no demon would ever touch his eyes, right?

Wrong.

Because now, even that has been taken from him. Snatched by shadowed hands and bitter fingers, purloined with a phrase he’s sure he’ll never forget. The last thing he could claim as himself, the last thing he could differentiate from his concrete childhood of static bellicosity, all disappearing with those harsh actions and those brash words.

You burden us. You don’t deserve this life. I’ll make sure that from now on, all you will see is black on black.

“True, true, but still, it’s impressive.”

The memory leaves Taehyung blank, and he doesn’t register Jimin’s words.
“I think it’s easier for us because we were raised that way. You’ll get the hang of it, I’m sure!”

Sammy’s voice doesn’t inscribe in his head either.

He wants to say something but he’s afraid that he’ll scream if he opens his mouth so he stays silent.

Why had he called that monster something as intimate as mother? Why had that slipped from his tongue, even after all the things she did? How could his subconscious still possibly call her that, no matter if he was paying attention to his words or not? Maybe he should redefine the entire word in his brain.

Mother: (noun.) a figurine that displays neglect; monster; someone who is incapable of loving
(adjective.) heedless, hateful; black and evil; iniquitous

Now that fits the description.

But even then, those words don’t live up to her true flagitious character. His step-mother’s wrath cannot be limited with just simple or complex vocabulary. Rather she can also be associated with a colour. A feeling. She is the colour green, but it isn’t bright or beautiful or nurturing. It isn’t the green of day, where plants flourish in sunlight, or the green of night, where nature stirs in blissful moonlight. It is the green of timeless inferno. An eerie green, like the fire of toxicity or the bubbling of poison. Fireworks of viridescent flames that only scream and blare in his pounding skull. Jealousy and greed. She isn’t human.

“Yo, I say this all the damn time but Earth to Tae?”

“Hmm?”

“I asked you if your mother was from Japan, I have relatives who live there.”

Sammy’s voice suddenly feels sharp, as if the sentence had sliced his ears and corrupted the vibrations around him.
The word makes him want to vomit.

“Sorry, what?”

“Is your mother from Japan?”

“I-” he swallows. “I don’t know actually.”

“You don’t know? But she speaks Japanese?”

“We don’t really have a close relationship, she just spoke to me in Japanese often.”

*She often cursed at me in Japanese too.*

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

He doesn’t want to go through the struggle of explaining that he’s an orphan. And he especially doesn’t want to talk about his step-mother because that’s a completely different story in itself.

He hates both, but honestly, his step-mother is the only thing he can consider a monster because he doesn’t know his birth mother. Hell, he doesn’t even know her name, or what she looks like, not even where she’s from or her birthday. All he knows is that she abandoned him.

His step-mother hadn’t allowed him to know about her either. She had made sure to wipe his origins away and start a clean slate with this new family. Ironically, that clean slate was far from pristine, and only truly resulted in dirt and filth. It was more like an anchor than anything, and he hates yet likes her for it.

Does he want to know his real mother? Is he glad that his step-mother had vanished the other’s existence from his brain?

Who’s worse, the person who left you or the person who broke you? One of them is a monster but the other is non-existent. It just doesn’t make any fucking sense.
He doesn’t understand why family has to be such a foreign concept to him, nor why this so-called family is so fucked up.

He has a new one now. A new one from his two old ones, and he’s happy enough to say that he wouldn’t trade them for the world, but at the same time, they aren’t parents. They’re his brothers, his friends, his family, but they aren’t *parents*.

And he didn’t think that fact would hurt him this much until he finally realised it.

*If I had a mother, I’d want her to sing to me.*

*If I had a father, I’d want him to teach me how to play the violin.*

“What was that?”

“Pardon?”

“You muttered something out loud.”

“Oh, it’s nothing.”

*If I had parents, I’d want them to love me.*

“Tae! You’ve been ignoring me for the past ten minutes, what’s up?”

Jeongguk’s voice, although sweet, has become a constant nuisance to him since he sat down in class. The other’s bored, undoubtedly, but unfortunately for Taehyung, that means he’s the one that’s going to be pestered.
“I haven’t been ignoring you, I’m just focusing.”

“Focusing on what?”

“Our project, dummy.”

“Right…that. Can I see what you’re doing?”

Taehyung stops typing. “You’ll see it when I’m done.”

Jeongguk drags his chair closer to Tae’s work. “But I want to see the progress! What is it that you’re doing anyway?”

“I’m constructing and editing sheet music.”

“Wow!” Jeongguk leans his head over Taehyung’s shoulder, resting his hands beside the other’s arms. His face is a little too close.

“It’s nothing that special, I’m sure it sounds like shit too,” he laughs. “But I think it’ll work well with our presentation.”

“Wait, you’re composing for our project?”

“Yeah, it’s just something I’ll make for fun. We don’t have to end up using it if you don’t want to though.”

“Are you kidding? That’s like an automatic A! Damn, who knew you were such the musical genius. Maybe you should specialise in that instead.”

“I already told you, I’m becoming a programmer.”
“But why?”

“…Because I like programming?”

“It seems like you really like composing too though!”

“If I wanted to become a musician, I should’ve started doing this three years ago. Plus, I should be going to a music school. I like computer science, I don’t regret majoring in it.”

*She told me my dream was stupid and futile, so why should I pursue something I’m terrible at?*

“Oh true.. but still! I’m sure you could be a kickass composer or something. Do you sing?”

“I’ve tried but I’m not really confident enough. I feel like people would only pay attention to me because I’m blind and not because of my voice.”

*She told me that if I used my voice to sing and express, she’d permanently take away that too.*

“Do you play an instrument?”

“Just piano and the saxophone.”

“Okay, you seriously need to start performing. I bet you’re amazing!”

“Seriously, Jeongguk, I’m nothing special,” he lowers his gaze. “Do you sing?”

“Yeah! I’ve wanted to be a singer since I’ve been little but I know it’s not entirely realistic. I’m majoring in engineering instead.”

“If singing is what you want to do then you should go for it.”
“I guess, but my family comes first. I don’t think I’d be able to support them financially if I chose that path, nor would I be able to help out around the house.”

“I’m sure you’d become the biggest pop star in all of Korea.”

“You haven’t even heard me sing yet.”

“I can tell you’re good just by your voice. It’s sweet, really clear, melodious in a way.”

“Wow, I’m flattered.”

“I’m being honest, I’m perceptive about those types of things.”

“I believe you, I believe you. I should sing for you one day.”

“Maybe,” he widens his eyes. “If you want that is, I mean you don’t have to, I’m sure you’re great anyways I don’t doubt your ability, and if you don’t want to that’s also fine you’re probably busy with a ton of shit and-”

“Tae, relax. I want to,” he smiles. “You’re cute when you ramble.”

Taehyung blushes, halting in mid-sentence whilst his face turns a shade he cannot see. “Um, t-thank you? I-”

His voice hitches a little because he’s both embarrassed and a little self-conscious.

Jeongguk laughs. “You’re also cute when you’re flustered.”
Taehyung stutters, opening his mouth to say something but can’t think of anything at the moment. How does one respond to that?

Jeongguk just smirks, as if he knows the inner turmoil he’s just created, and looks fondly at the other as he continues to stumble on what to say.

“Oh for the love of God, would you two stop flirting! We have work to do!” Jimin’s voice permeates the air and Taehyung’s secretly glad yet disappointed.

Glad because his face is burning and he can’t think of anything intelligent or comprehensible to say but also disappointed because he liked talking and smiling with Jeongguk.

Even if the other causes him indubitable butterflies.

“You’re just mad that you don’t get to flirt with him,” Jeongguk winks. “Besides, we’re still working on the project. See, Tae’s fixing up a composition for us.”

“Don’t just tell everyone!”

He closes his laptop firmly, cheeks burning even more as he feels everyone’s stare on him.

“Oooo, is that a composition I hear?” Sammy inquires, rolling his seat so it bumps into Taehyung’s own chair. “I love hearing originals, let me listen!”

“No!” He covers his face with his hands, tilting up to glare at whatever or whomever. “It’s not finished, and it certainly isn’t worth listening to. Just get along with your work and let me be.”

“I bet it’s amazing.”

“It’s not.”

“Incredible.”
“It isn’t.”

“Just let me hear a tiny little bi-”

“Sammy, I will shove hot sauce down your throat if you even think about opening my computer.”

“You wouldn’t dare.”

“Bottle and all.”

His hands go up in surrender as a retreat, chair rolling back, but his interest is still culminated.

“I think it’s cool that you’re doing something for us,” Jimin pipes in, smiling so earnestly that Taehyung can feel it from where he’s sitting. “But don’t pester him too much, if he doesn’t want to share yet than don’t force it out of him.”

Thank you, Jimin.

Sammy and Jeongguk pout but listen to the other, still stealing glances at what Tae’s working on but then stopping once they see Jimin’s astute stare fixated on them. His eyes yell “if you even think about opening that laptop, I will cut you” and it’s very plausible that the gaze itself will slice you to pieces.

So, they continue working in silence, Jimin typing up the script and Sammy designing the rest of the presentation. Jeongguk, being the way he is, is still huffing out of boredom, playing aimlessly with strands of Taehyung’s hair which proves to be immensely unproductive.

After some time, with the air filled with distant chatter and clamorous students, Jeongguk starts humming that familiar tune again. The one Taehyung slightly remembers from some forgotten memory at the back of his head and subconsciously understands. He doesn’t know why it’s so recognisable, but maybe it has to do with how the other hums it.
Taehyung can also tell Jeongguk has an amazing voice because when he hums, it’s like angels have fallen from the sky.

And that is no exaggeration, his harmonies are even, voice clear despite being muffled by his lips, and his pitch is just so unbelievably sweet. He makes the hum a musical piece in itself, and something about the twinkle in his voice makes Tae jot something down in his notes.

*Add clarity to third bar, make it pianissimo but forceful.*

The sound of what he’s written resonates into his earbuds, the computer restating what he typed.

*Ask Jeongguk to sing the piece.*

He pauses, fingers stopping for a second.

After some thought, he deletes the additional note.

*Stupid.*

“You have deleted a sentence; would you like to undo it?”

The robotic voice resonates in his ears again, and he quietly whispers the word ‘cancel’ into his headphones. He’s oddly tense, waiting for something to drop although he doesn’t really know why that is.

Jeongguk’s humming stops as he feels Taehyung stiff.

“You okay?”

Taehyung nods his head, resuming his typing to avoid suspicion. He relies on memory to operate, but the computer is always there to repeat what he’s typing in case for typos and such. It’s handy, but that still doesn’t ease Taehyung’s nerves at what’s about to come.
Finally, it clicks.

They still haven’t talked about that night.

To be honest, Taehyung doesn’t even remember what went down (besides the burning and awkward drive home), but he knows something else did or this unspoken tension wouldn’t be wafting through the air. It’s small, almost indistinct, but it still presents itself in detrimental breezes. He wants to ask but he feels that it would be rude to do so. What if he had forgotten something important? He hopes nothing too terrible or significant happened, because honestly, he doesn’t know if he’d be able to handle the embarrassment.

“You know, if you aren’t okay, you can tell me.”

“I’m fine.”

Jeongguk sighs. “I told you, I can tell when you’re lying.”

So, apparently important shit had happened.

Not being able to remember, curtesy of him being delirious at the time, is becoming increasingly inconvenient by the second.

Taehyung thinks hard to formulate his next reply. “You did?”

_You fucking idiot._

Jeongguk doesn’t respond, and instead, continues to play with Tae’s hair in silence.

_Great, you messed up._

He begins his humming again, this time a little softer and quieter than before. The more he sings the
more Taehyung can fully appreciate his beautiful voice, and he wonders why the other hadn’t just taken the chance to make it his career. He’s talented, he’s amazing, he’s perfection but he’s also everything more. Taehyung hears crystal beaming through light, diamonds twinkling against stars, and water underneath a calm, blazing sun. He hears rain on a summer day, where water pelts through white clouds and a bright blue sky. Most especially, Taehyung notices that Jeongguk’s voice sounds like the purple at the end of the rainbow. The light pastel or deep violet which streaks that weeping clear sky and turns it from a beauty to a masterpiece. His voice is graceful, addicting, irresistible even, and it distracts Taehyung from his work.

“You stopped typing.”

Taehyung hadn’t realised. “Sorry, I lost focus. It’s been a rough day.”

More like a rough week, but Jeongguk’s humming is making it slightly better.

“You’re also tense.”

“Well, aren’t you captain obvious today? Stop being so observant, that’s my thing.”

“Can’t help it, you’re rubbing off on me.”

Taehyung makes a gesture with his hands. It’s his way of rolling his eyes.

There’s a pause.

“I can give you a massage if you want.”

He almost chokes on his spit. “You can what?”

“I can give you a massage,” Jeongguk repeats, smiling widely. “Not to brag or anything, but I’m known for being the best masseur there is. Looks like you could need my expertise.”

“Being tense is normal. I am a college student after all.”
“Yeahh but that doesn’t make it healthy. When’s the last time you relaxed and just took time for yourself?”

“What a nice concept.”

“I’m being serious.”

“But-”

“Wow, you’re just about the only person I know that doesn’t want to get a massage from someone.”

“It’s not that, it’s just…” he trails off.

“It’s just what?”

*It’s stupid…*

“Nothing.”

“C’mon, now I’m curious.”

Taehyung sighs. “I get..ticklish..”

Jeongguk bursts out into laughter.

“It’s not funny!”

“I’m sorry, I just can’t imagine that you of all people would be ticklish.”
“What’s that supposed to mean?!”

“You just seem reserved, that’s all.”

“So, reserved people can’t be ticklish?”

“Well if you put it like that it sounds bad. I just wouldn’t have thought that coming from you,” he grins. “Don’t worry, I’ll be gentle.”

*Why does he insist so much?*

“You really want to give me a massage that badly?”

“Consider it an act of generosity.”

Taehyung sighs, finally giving into the idea. “Alright.”

The smile Jeongguk emanates beams with a hundred light bulbs, and Taehyung can almost feel the heat. “Lean back.”

If he was close to Tae before, now he’s practically denied the use of personal space. His face appears inches away from Taehyung’s neck, breathing steadily and cooling the other’s flushed skin. It affects him more than Jeongguk can imagine.

With Jimin and Sammy lost in their bubble of concentration, Jeongguk places his hands onto the other’s neck, palms barely touching complexion. He’s hesitant, afraid that his touch will unnerve the other, but is pleasantly surprised when he feels Tae lean into his fingertips.

Maybe he is getting better.

Taehyung feels warmth off the other’s skin. It’s a nice feeling against the twisted knots in his neck,
and he sighs before anything really has been done.

Why am I letting him touch me?

Even if not sexual, the act is still extremely intimate. He’s unsure why he’s letting this happen, but maybe it relates to the purple he saw in his dreams. He wants answers.

Jeongguk trails his hands up and down, not applying pressure but just warming up the other’s skin in a comforting way. It arises goosebumps, tingles eased nerves, and Jeongguk can tell that his decision had been a good one.

After some delicate manoeuvres, he begins kneading his hands into Taehyung’s skin. He feels tensed muscle, unrelaxed joints, and a sort of blockage on his nape. Definitely a contribution from the stress but maybe something else too. He works slowly, knuckles digging past fissures, and tries to spread the heat from his hands to the entirety of the other’s throat. He sees Taehyung’s shoulders slump, form unwinding, and head falling downward. His hair cascades in front of his face and the new position allows Jeongguk more access.

Jeongguk hadn’t been lying when he said he was the best masseur there is. Taehyung can tell, and the sigh of content he makes only reconfirms this. The other is able to massage in a way that creates bright shivers all over, dancing up your sides, legs, arms, and the top of your head. When his fingers travel higher, they don’t tickle in a way that’s unpleasant, but in a way that prickles your senses and melts your stress clean. He envelops Taehyung with a sort of remedy, distracting him from thoughts, pain, and past. He is able to make each movement burn with serenity, and sure, Taehyung had needed this.

He had needed a break from his inner turmoil. A break from his monsters, and a break from the confusion that warped his mind. He’s glad that he agreed but he’s also afraid that it’ll lead to something he doesn’t want.

Like more confusing thoughts.

He sees purple and it makes his heart skip a beat. He doesn’t dislike the feeling, but now he can’t help but remember his dream and the…scenario that followed. He still feels guilty, ashamed even, how can he just sit here and pretend like he hadn’t thought of such obscene things only three weeks ago? How can he smile and laugh with the other when he had done things that a friend wouldn’t just do? He had thought that what he did was essential so that he wouldn’t keep thinking of Jeongguk like that. He had told himself that if he sinned once he wouldn’t again. But now, with the same hands that caressed him in his dreams massaging his neck, he can’t help but think back to what had
happened in his mind. It doesn’t disgust him but it does make him feel dirty. He feels like he committed a crime, and maybe he did, because weren’t the things that his monsters did to him crimes too? Despite Yoongi reassuring him that it’s not the same, it isn’t completely different either. Things that don’t replicate at least share some similarities and the shame inside of him eats at his lungs until he’s lost in self iniquity.

He involuntarily tenses, trying to hide the discomfort with a laugh so it seems like he’s just been tickled. Jeongguk apologises with a smile, probably beaming over such a cute factor when Tae’s true intentions had differed. His own laugh had created a bitter taste in his mouth, and it reminds him even more of the lustrous purple which had consumed him that one night. The feeling that’s brewing in his neck, burning from the other’s contact, doesn’t help either, and he wants Jeongguk to stop before he feels even more abashed.

There’s something different about the way Jeongguk touches. It isn’t hard and uncomfortable or light and fluttering. It isn’t common or customary, and it sure doesn’t fall into the framed categories Tae has imagined in his head.

Taehyung used to think they were only two types of touches.

Pain and comfort.

However, when feeling Jeongguk massage his skin, unravelling rigidity and assuaging strain, he feels a new type of feeling.

A different type of touch.

Because this touch is new, and Taehyung is pretty sure that it is the touch of compassion.

Or in other words, the touch of love.

It’s cheesy but how is he supposed to know? It’s not like he’s experienced that touch before.

He sees purple flood his vision again. It saturates in his head and no matter how hard he wills it to stay put it retaliates. It’s bad because it’s too good. Taehyung is convinced that he will only destroy the other, and he really doesn’t want to do that. He has already ruined the lives of Yoongi, Jin, and Hoseok, he’s tainted the lives of his former monsters, and he’s corrupted his birth mother by just
being born. He had been a mistake, and he doesn’t understand why he couldn’t have just been aborted.

At least then, she wouldn’t have given up on him.

He doesn’t want to hurt anyone anymore. He doesn’t want to hurt people by hurting, because it’s something that just doesn’t stop. If he pursues this feeling he has towards Jeongguk, he’s sure it won’t end well. It can’t end well, because Jeongguk is too good for him.

He sings beautifully, voice sonorous and calming. He radiates intelligence and creativity, everything bright and summery. He glimmers without sun, and he shines without light. He’s his own spotlight. He paints with purple and white, whilst Taehyung paints with black. How can Taehyung even compare? Jeongguk lights up a room just by his presence, but it seems as if Tae so much as whispers, he’ll darken anything.

He gulps.

“Are you relaxed yet?”

Taehyung hums as a response.

The other continues what he’s doing.

I want you but do I deserve you?

His monsters had told him that from now on he’d only see black on black, but now, he sees purple.

And Taehyung would do anything to break the curse they had inflicted upon him.

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https://www.instagram.com/amfics/
how did you like the chapter?
I mean it's kind of boring ngl but I tried to make a bit of a time skip. You always need filler chapters to calm down from drama u know what I mean?
anyways! the exciting news I was talking about. I am (very fortunately) going to the BTS concert NEXT WEEKEND!!!! I'm so unbelievably grateful you have no idea. I never thought, in my fifteen years of living, that I'd be able to go to a concert (let alone a kpop concert...they don't show in my country) but since I'm in America for school, I AM ABLE TO SEE IT!
getting tickets was actual hell, the website crashed around five times and I didn't even get to buy them then...thanks to my lovely friends, they were able to get a ticket for me, and I am forever and eternally thankful.
if i can, on my instagram, I'll post some stuff I see at the concert, and hopefully I'll be able to share some footage to all the armies around the world that can't see them. Don't worry, I've felt your pain before...

andddd that's around all! School is a bitch, and life is stressful, but this fanfic is never a bore or nuisance to write. I am also very grateful to all of you who have clicked, liked, bookmarked, and especially commented so far (it seriously makes my day)

I hope you all have a great day/night!

happy reading!
さようなら。
Eight years before the present

Two hours ago

“Yoongi, I fucked up real bad, like real, real, bad, and I need to tell you this even though I know it’s too late”

Yoongi pales, getting up from his seat in muted apprehension as he circles his brother’s figure. “What did you do?”

Tears sprinkle Jun Ki’s eyes, a habit of shame that appears on his face every time he’s done something bad. Yoongi should be used to it, and in a way, he is, but this, this seems worse just by the
guilt embedded in the other’s eyes.

“You see, I didn’t know about anything until now, I swear to god I didn’t, I swear-” He wears a crazed expression, eyes rimmed with a red that contrasts his ghostly face. “But then I got a call, the guy who actually did it, and oh god she has a kid.”

“Woah, woah, woah, Jun Ki-ah, slow down,” Yoongi tries to use his voice to ease his brother’s frazzled state. “I need you to tell me what’s wrong so we can figure this out, okay? Who has a kid? Who called you?”

Jun Ki rubs his face, panic flaring in his pupils. “The woman at the library, you know, the really beautiful one? He told me he’d pay me and you know rent’s been tough and I didn’t think much of it-”

“What did you do?”

His voice is stern, tone rigid and firm in a way that bounces dangerously low. Yoongi doesn’t like where this is heading.

“Oh god she was raped, Yoongi! I helped pin her down and I didn’t know that was the plan but then it started and I wasn’t allowed to go away and I just didn’t do anything to help! I just stood there, and I tried to erase it from my memory but I just got a call that she has a child and that he’s eleven years old now.”

Yoongi’s wordless. Speechless, expressionless, a mirage of absolute numbness because what the fuck?

What the fuck?

What the absolute fuck?

“I need you to take a deep breath, and tell me exactly what happened.”

Jun Ki shudders, a breathy sob escaping his chest and he looks down in shame. “I knew it was bad,
it was wrong man it really was, but I didn’t think it could have gotten worse. Hell, I should have told you before I’m sorry, I’m sorry, but you were just a kid and I couldn’t tell you those things!”

“You can’t just do things like that!” Yoongi finally finds the feeling of rage stuck deep in his gut. He’s burning, angry, enraged with a sort of strong animosity. He wants to hit him. “That isn’t fucking okay, you- why, why? That’s someone’s daughter, someone’s sister, and now someone’s mother. Oh god, why the fuck would you do such a thing?!”

“It was for the money!” His brother cries out, shame plastered on his face. “He promised me more than five grand! I don’t even know why he’d pay that much for something so specific or horrible but I wasn’t one to question. I didn’t know exactly what he wanted but I couldn’t back out once it started!”

“What do you mean you couldn’t have backed out? That’s exactly what you could’ve done!”

“He wouldn’t let me! It’s five grand! I have to help you and mom too somehow!”

“There are other ways to help us, dammit! You can’t just do criminal acts for money, but who am I kidding, it’s what you’ve been doing your whole damn life! It’s not okay! And who the fuck is he?”

Jun Ki averts his eyes, an illustration of conflict on his face. “I-I can’t say.”

Yoongi laughs without amusement. “You can’t say. You’re meaning to tell me that after ALL of this, you can’t even fucking tell me who it was? Why shouldn’t I just go to the cops right now? Get you arrested, have you pay for ruining a woman’s life!”

“But it wasn’t me it was him. And I know that doesn’t justify shit but still, I-”

“You’re right, that doesn’t justify anything. And if you can’t tell me who that “he” was, then I’m afraid nor I or any police officer is going to believe you. Shit, you can still be put behind bars, especially if they find all the other illegal crap you’ve done!”

His brother fights an internal battle, the truth wanting to spill out between his trembling lips. “I’m sorry that I’ve put you through all of this, I thought that you were of age now to know cause you’re older and all, but I shouldn’t have.”
“Who was he, Jun Ki. You have to tell me.”

“You’re only 17. I knew our age difference was too big, you won’t understand what I’ve had to go through since I’m the eldest. You aren’t even an adult yet.”

He’s avoiding the question.

“What you’ve had to go through? I’m sorry, but I don’t remember you taking an actual job, working properly and not illegally in the dumps with your crackhead friends. I don’t remember you being there when dad left us or comforting mom when she had to work several jobs! I don’t remember you helping out flipping burgers or at least trying to do the right thing. Jesus! Why’d I even let all of your previous mistakes slide? One is fine, two is debatable, but this has gone on and on and on! When will it stop?”

“It won’t! I’m messed up, okay? When it comes to you and mom, I have to do things even if I don’t want to! Even if it’s fucked up, and illegal, and cruel, and awful. I didn’t mean to, I didn’t mean to.”

“Yes you did mean to! Or else you wouldn’t have done it!”

Yoongi pulls at his hair, fear and resentment finally settling in on his features.

Jun Ki sniffs. “That’s not all though…”

“There’s more?!”

Yoongi lets out an exasperated sigh, his own hands shaking at the thought of things possibly being worse.

“Well, we knew she had a kid…who’s eleven years old now…but I also found out that he had been adopted…”

Yoongi can feel his heart drop beneath his lungs and into his liver. “Adopted? You mean to tell me
that he was abandoned?"

Jun Ki nods his head, tears slipping past his eyes. “But there’s more. I didn’t mean to, I didn’t mean to, I didn’t—” he whimpers slightly, trying to recompose himself to tell Yoongi the rest of the story. “H-his new family is…abusive.”

The word hits Yoongi with tremendous impact, knocking the wind out of his lungs and the morality out of his heart. He feels guilty; upset that he hadn’t picked up on things sooner. How did his brother even find that out? Had he met the kid? Yoongi is pestered with a million questions but one still seems to stick out more prominently.

“Who is the he you are talking about?”

Jun Ki hesitates before crumbling underneath the pressure, dignity gone and the truth unravelled. “It was Kim Chin-haw. Mr. Kim, he did it.”

Yoongi curses, his hope fading as quickly as it came.

“Kim Chin-haw? Are you kidding me? He’s a rapist?”

“And more, I don’t know all, but shit Yoongs, he’s not a good person. He needs to be put behind bars.”

“That’s rich coming from you, but nonetheless, I agree.” He paces around a little, fear coursing through his blood. “How did you find out the adoptive family is abusive? Are you one-hundred percent sure?”

Jun Ki nods. “Mr. Kim told me actually, he seems to know everything about the kid despite never reaching out to him. It’s like he wants to cover up their relationship of father and son, and I wouldn’t be surprised if he actually did. It was a slip-up, he hadn’t meant to tell me, but I caught on quickly.”

“What did he specifically say?”

“Something along the lines of: He’s not in good hands now, but then again, that isn’t our problem.
He also mentioned something about hiding the issue, and covering up his ties or whatever.”

“And you’re sure he was referring to abuse? Maybe you misinterpreted.”

“Oh, I’m sure. I wouldn’t surmise something so stark without proper conviction.”

Yoongi sighs, thoughts scattered and emotions racing. “I…I need to call Namjoon.”

He presses his lips together and clamps his hands.

“No! You can’t tell anyone, not yet, we need to-”

“Namjoon isn’t just “anyone” he’s family, better family than you’ve ever been to me. I’m telling him.”

It’s harsh but he had to say it.

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m not the one you should be apologising to.”

“I know…”

“You need to leave. Go someplace far away and don’t fucking come back. I should’ve turned you in sooner…but I guess I cared about you too much to give you up,” he hesitates, gathering up the courage to say his next words. “But you crossed a line. Not only did you do this eleven fucking years ago, but now an entire family’s life is fucked up by you. It’s sick, and the fact that you’re still trying to save your own skin instead of own up to your wrongdoings boggles my mind. Just leave, I don’t ever want to see you again, not here, not at mom’s house, not in this entire city. If I so much as see your hair or an inkling of your whereabouts anywhere near me, I will not stop for a second to call the cops on you and get you arrested. Is that clear?”

“Yoongi, wait-”
“I said is that fucking clear!”

Jun Ki nods, a solemn expression warping his cheeks.

“Now get out.”

“Please, let me-”

“Get out!”

His brother runs out of the room and Yoongi proceeds to call Namjoon for further discussion.

__________________

Two hours later

“You can’t interfere.”

The words are like barbwire in his head, biting relentlessly in a voice that was once comforting, but now less so. The voice of his friend, the calm-natured one that soothed his nerves and eased his pain now speaks the three words he feared to hear. They slice with blatant honesty, each syllable protruding the saddening reality of the situation, and it all builds up until he feels like he could explode.

Yoongi feels many things at the moment. Anger, fear, frustration, irritation, and certainly anxiety. He feels wound up and toyed with, disgusted and revolted at the news he had just received; at the notions he was just bombed with. The words burn down his throat as he tries to swallow sounds and make out truths between clenched teeth. He wants to spit out information but subdue to it. He wants to understand but he also wants to pretend like he hadn’t heard anything at all. This makes him an invisible culprit, even if indirectly, and guilt slowly crawls up the list of his many brooding emotions.

His feelings result into pacing now, heart racing marathons per second, and he thinks he may just about go into hyperventilation.
Or have a heart attack.

Or perhaps both.

He feels sweat building in his hands, lacing shaking fingers with a thoughtful perspiration, and he has to refrain from freaking out more than he already is.

“‘You know I can’t just leave him there!’”

Namjoon sighs, his own concern uplifting until it reaches his nerves. He’s beyond agitated, knee moving up and down automatically, and his legs appear full of highly strung electricity. He replicates Yoongi’s own tousled emotions, with his thoughts confused and morals twisted. The energy courses through veins, tendons, bones; and he soon becomes too nervous to sit still and in place. Giving up from his futile position, with stiff limbs, he gets up from his chair and joins Yoongi’s continuous pacing.

“‘But you can’t get involved. It’s too risky.’”

“Could you stop trying to be reasonable for once?” Yoongi exhales tiredly, both heart and mind conflicted. “Joon, I trust you, I really do, but for once this isn’t about me or you or the team. Can’t you see he’s suffering? Why won’t you let me help?”

“Because this is about me and you and the team. If you get involved, it’ll become a part of our lives, and I don’t want to risk your life or anyone else’s.”

“What about his life?”

“Don’t guilt trip me, it hurts me just as much to say no but you know we have to. It’s for his sake as well as ours.”

“But we can, we just need to be careful.”

“Yoongi, you’re being irrational. Let’s think about this for a bit. We found out only a couple hours ago, we can’t just send a search party or the police banging at their door.”
“Why not? We could call the FBI, social services, maybe even the fucking CIA, at least somebody.”

“We can’t form an appropriate plan in such little time! Think. What if they find out and we don’t even have the chance to help him? What if they find out and they kill him before we can get there, huh? What then?”

“Dammit, I don’t know!”

“Exactly, I want to help him but this isn’t something we can just organise in minutes. We need time.”

“We don’t have time! It’s been seven fucking years since he’s been there, he might not have any more time left!”

“How do you know that for sure? Yes, your brother said so, but he’s not the most reliable person we should be listening to right now.”

“You think my brother would lie about this? He’s done many things, many, many, shitty, stupid things, but he wouldn’t stoop this low.”

“He’s done worse stuff, let’s be real. He’s the one that caused this problem in the first place.”

“You think I don’t know that? That’s why I’m trying so hard to fix things!”

Namjoon buries his head in his hands, exhaustion consuming him in waves. He doesn’t know what to do, what’s moral or immoral. He doesn’t know how to help but he most certainly has distinguished that they can’t do anything yet.

They shouldn’t rush things, especially in such a drastic scenario, and he doesn’t want to make the situation worse than it already is.

“We could call his birth mother…” Yoongi says after a while. His voice is soft, almost a whisper, and the statement comes out with hesitance and uncertainty.
“You’re crazy, absolutely fucking crazy. You know you can’t just bring her back into his life like it’s some sort of easy or reasonable task. She can’t deal with this sort of situation!”

“But look, she’s probably better than the people with him now.”

“But you don’t know that for sure.”

“He wouldn’t lie!”

“For someone this intelligent, I’m disappointed, but you know what, I’m mainly surprised that you’d listen to him after all the shit he’s caused you!”

“Oh don’t throw that bullshit at me, Namjoon! This isn’t about him! You can’t just stand there and do nothing. Where are your sense of morals? How dare you think of anything else in this situation?”

“I’m trying to help! But jumping into the chaos doesn’t do anything except feed the flames. Please, think over it some more. Please.”

Yoongi thinks for a bit, hands still trembling and face still distraught. He’s contorted from head to toe, what’s right and wrong breezing by the wrinkles in his skin until he’s consumed with illogicality. What should he do? What can he do? This isn’t a situation he ever thought he’d have to deal with, let alone fix or solve.

“Okay, okay, I won’t call her.”

Namjoon throws up his hands in relief. “Thank you!”

I have to do it by myself.

“I’ll do it. I’ll go find him.”
“Excuse me?”

“I said I’ll find him.”

“Yoongi, no,” his voice is stern. “Do you even hear yourself? That is possibly the worst idea I’ve ever heard in my entire damn life.”

“I’m being serious, if you won’t help me, I’ll do it myself.”

“So, you’re just going to raise the kid yourself too? You’re 17, you know you can’t do that!”

“Well, you’re just going to let him rot?”

“Of course I don’t want that.”

“Then what’s the fucking problem!!”

“You had no say, nothing to do with it. It shouldn’t be your responsibility.”

“Are you actually saying that to me right now? He’s practically family!”

Namjoon stops pacing. “Yoongi, don’t you understand? He got unlucky, and if you mess with them…who he’s with in such a rushed manner…I don’t know what’s going to happen to you.”

“I won’t mess with them. I-I’ll just find him at school one day, and just-”

“Just what? Kidnap him? How are you going to make the kid trust you? Scratch that, taking a minor, anyone for that matter, is illegal.”

“I’m saving his life, I’m sure the police won’t care! I’ll find a way!”
“Yoongi,” Namjoon starts, voice dangerously low. “If you do this, you aren’t just putting yourself in danger. You put everyone, including Hoseok, in a state of life or death, do you get that?! Do you fucking understand the severity of this situation?!”

Yoongi’s whole face tenses, a bubbling surge of enrage ment billowing in his blood like venom and frustrating the very bones in his body. Why can’t Namjoon understand? Why is he so oblivious to this all? Why can’t he see how much this pains him?

He slams his hands across the counter, voice laced with a form of enmity and hostility.

“I do, that’s why I’m fighting so hard!”

Yoongi takes a second to ease his breath and calm down. His face has blown into a fury of rage, red dusting his cheeks and fire dancing in his irises. He’s consumed with so much anger and frustration he could and most definitely would smash a window open if it weren’t for the fact he was in someone else’s house.

“You’re too upset to be rational, don’t let emotions cloud your judgement.”

“Could you spare me the cheesy words of advice? Sometimes you need emotion to make the right judgment.”

“I can’t support you on rushing this! I won’t.”

“Then you don’t have to.”

“Yoongi, I’m being serious. It’s not safe, and I don’t want to give up on you, so please-”

“Then leave! Give up! I don’t care, this is my decision!”

But he does care. He really, really, fucking does care. They’ve been best friends since they were born; since the second he could walk and smile. Before even learning how to speak, they were neck
and neck, partners in crime, allies for eternity. They’ve been through everything, struggles and successes, growth and betrayal. When the world had gone against Yoongi, Namjoon had been there to fight off enemies and encourage him; to teach him how to love and accept himself. And when the world had gone against Namjoon, Yoongi had been there to reassure him that he’d never go anywhere, fighting the other’s battles like they were his own.

And now, his anger is disregarding these factors. He’s drowning in emotion and he can’t stop to breathe and think about the situation because he thinks they don’t have the time to do so. This is bigger than their friendship, and it’s bigger than their overall brotherhood and team effort.

This is someone’s life.

Someone who, by the cost of his own blood, had their life completely and entirely fucked up.

It’s just not fair. It’s not fair that Yoongi gets to live in peace whilst a stranger endures pain after pain based on actions his brother had created.

What if it is too late?

“Your brother messed up,” Namjoon says after some time. His face is slack and vacant, a pale sheet void of expression. Yoongi feels bad, but he feels worse about the current predicament. “You shouldn’t have to take the blame for it.”

“Who else will? Who else will take responsibility? God, this is all my damn fault if only had I-”

“Don’t blame yourself! How could you have known? How could you have plotted and put the points together?”

“I knew her! I knew her and I didn’t do shit! I saw her every day at the damn old library and I wondered why he was there of all places that particular day and I-” his breath hitches. “Joon! I didn’t do shit!”

“How could you have? You didn’t see or hear or witness those actions. You knew her but that doesn’t mean you could’ve known that! It’s not your fault.”
“I should’ve realised sooner, why did it take me eleven fucking years to figure it out?”

“You don’t know he’s been-”

“The details are loud and clear! Even if my brother was lying, the hospital records tell you enough to know what’s going on! He’s eleven now you know, eleven, and he’s been living in that household for seven fucking years, Joon! Seven years! And he’s just a child, a kid, he’s going to be fucked up for the rest of his life and it’s all my-”

“Don’t you dare say it’s your fault again. It isn’t, and you know it isn’t. You’re just beating yourself up over the sins of somebody else.”

“Not just somebody else, my brother!”

“Exactly! Your brother who isn’t you.”

“Does that justify the situation? Does that justify a child’s life being ruined?”

“I didn’t say it did, but it certainly isn’t on you.”

Yoongi sighs, his pacing resuming as he tries to tame his wild thoughts. “We can call the birth mother’s relatives? Contact maybe his other family? His mother must have parents, right?

“We’ve already talked about this!” Namjoon sits back down, nerves still agitated but less so. He doesn’t want to fight with Yoongi, and he sure doesn’t want to yell or push him away either. The other needs him right now, and Namjoon intends to do whatever it takes to make Yoongi feel better again, even if that means being harsher than usual. “Her family doesn’t live here, and even if they did, they don’t know the boy exists. She’s too young, her parents only know the facts, not the responsibilities that came along with it. What makes you think they’re going to help her son?”

Yoongi sighs again, still standing. “We can contact the father?”

“Him? Out of all people, him? You really think he’s going to care?”
“He may have a heart?”

It comes out as a question.

A question of desperation.

“Don’t sugarcoat things you know aren’t as optimistic as they really are. He’s the richest man in Seoul, or at least, one of the richest. Definitely high up there in the top five. Not only will he not want to get his reputation ruined, but I doubt he’ll even give a shit. Yoongi, I expected you of all people to know.”

Yoongi frowns. “That was a low blow.”

“I didn’t mean for it to upset you, but you need to look at the straight up facts of the situation.”

“Bringing up my father, really?”

“It’s the only way you’ll understand!”

“Rich people aren’t all the same, okay? Maybe his father does love him. Maybe his father doesn’t even know he exists, but once he does, he’ll help! Maybe he’s not like my father, because not everyone’s like him! Maybe you shouldn’t assume shit you don’t know! But what I still don’t understand is why I can’t just help, c’mon-”

“We’ve been over this!”

He’s repeating himself.

“Convince me not to go! I can’t find a single argument you’re making that makes sense to me, alright?”
His hands are shaking more violently, lips pursed in a restrained, bottled expression. Namjoon can
tell he’s breaking underneath the information, the pressure of the truth just all too much that he can’t
handle it. He wants to help the other, console and hug him, but Namjoon knows Yoongi, and he
knows him well enough to know that he doesn’t find comfort in those types of gestures. Instead, he
stands back up from his sitting position, following the frantic movements of his friend, and walks
towards him softly. Grabbing the other’s shoulders, he shakes them a little, lowering down so that he
meets Yoongi’s shorter gaze.

Brown meets brown, desperation meets pain, and hope meets despair.

“Listen, I promise you, he’s going to be okay,” Namjoon reassures, squeezing his grip on Yoongi’s
shoulder and holding it there.

Tears threaten to fall from his eyes and his voice cracks. “How do you know that?”

He sees blurred colours and rounded corners, sadness blocking both reality and Namjoon’s
concerned face.

“Because he’s strong, I can sense it. He’ll survive, and we’ll find a way to help him. I won’t give up
on you or him.”

Yoongi looks away, blinking back his frustration. “Don’t comfort me like a child. We’re not five
anymore.”

Namjoon laughs. “We all need some solace in our lives, and I can tell you’re not able to rationally
think about the whole situation.”

Yoongi’s tears don’t fall down yet. “How are you so calm?”

“I’m not, but I know that displaying what I feel right now will only make the situation worse. I can’t
bear to see you upset.”

Yoongi’s silent for a bit, pondering in bewitched silence. His emotions are stirring, reaching his eyes
and nipping his nose. He feels his own feelings shifting through veins like thickened blood, tingling
his skin with an unknown grief. He doesn’t even know the boy, but he’s still consumed with guilt.
His brother’s words echo in his head:

_Yoongi, I fucked up real bad, like real, real, bad, and I need to tell you this even though I know it’s too late_

He shivers, not from cold but from disbelief. He can’t believe that his brother had done such a thing; that he had condoned and let such a gruesome act occur. What was he thinking? Stealing is one thing, selling drugs is another, but deliberately helping someone rape an innocent woman?

_How? Why?_

_Why did you help him? Was it just for the money? Or was it also because you felt that you needed revenge towards the world?_

They hadn’t grown up easily, but any adult can distinguish between right and wrong no matter how dire your circumstances are.

Which brings to question: had he done it because he actually wanted to see another suffer? Would he have, even if he wasn’t offered money, voluntarily aided in something so awful? Yoongi doesn’t think so, not with his brother’s earlier fallen and exasperated expression, but still. Does he even know his brother at this point?

_What were you thinking?_

_Why did it take you eleven damn years to tell me?_

Even if he hadn’t known about the boy’s new family until now, the events that occurred prior should have been stated much much earlier.

_“Yoongi? Are you okay?”_

He averts his eyes.
“I’ll be fine.”

“Good.”

“Once the boy is safe.”

Namjoon accepts that answer.

“Which is why this is where we have to say goodbye.”

“Wait, what?”

Namjoon’s stomach sinks, hope gone with the downbeat of his heart. He feels his own tears threatening to fall.

“You can’t be serious, Yoongi, wait-”

“I know you won’t support my decision, and I know that I’m asking a lot of you to go along with my plan-”

“Yoongi I’ll help you, I’ll be there for you every step of the way! We can figure this out but not so quickly. What will leaving do? I’ll help if you give it time. Remember what we said? We’ll be with each other, fighting our battles together, for life.”

_For life_

Yoongi wishes that those promises they made years ago would stick to the present.

But ‘for life’ seems very propitious when you’re young. The words gleam in gold and shine with hope for the future, but all in the vision of a child; the eyes of a kid and nothing more. When you reach the world of adulthood, those dreams fade, the shine simmers down and the gleam dulls. It’s
hard to believe in something so pure when you’ve seen and heard all the impurities of the world.

“For life,” Yoongi repeats, gently and earnestly. “We’ll be with each other for life, but for now, I think it’s best if we part ways. I need to help in any way that I can, and I don’t want to burden you.”

“How is this the only way?”

“Perhaps it’s not, but it’s the only way I know how. I’m going crazy, Joon! This information is killing me, and every minute I wait and sit back it destroys me a little more. Bit by bit, I can’t handle it! It’s crushing down on me and I can’t translate this conflict into our day to day lives. The last thing I want to do is hurt you guys with issues my family has created.”

“You aren’t going to hurt us! What about Hoseok? We’ll hurt more if you leave!”

“You’re strong, I know you can handle him without me.”

“He’ll wonder where you’ve gone. We’ve been friends for seventeen years, him a little less, but we’ve shared our birthdays together and we’ve taken care of him when his parents couldn’t. You can’t just leave us.”

“You think I want to? Of course I don’t, but I can’t do nothing when I know I should do something.”

“What about when his parents leave for China again? He’ll be lonely without you.”

“Hoseok’s growing up now, I’m sure he’ll be okay. Plus, you’ll be there to guide him and stop him from doing anything stupid.”

“Like destroying the supermarket?”

Yoongi laughs. “Yeah, try not to let him go out to public venues. God, imagine what he’d do to a bowling alley? I’m afraid for the future.”

“We’ll keep him away from those.”
“You’ll keep him away from those.”

A tear slips from Namjoon’s face, creating a wet path of his solemn virtue. The change in mood had happened too quickly, and now he fears that Yoongi will leave him forever.

“You’re really leaving?”

Yoongi nods his head, the tears only now falling down. It’s strange because the corners of his eyes rim with red, as if he’s been crying for all of eternity, but in reality, this is the first time he’s allowed tears to shed upon hearing the terrible news. He seems physically and emotionally drained, face pale and lips bright with teeth marks. His eyes sparkle with melancholy and fresh sadness, and his nose burns a scarlet from where his tears had resided.

Namjoon wraps his arms around Yoongi’s smaller frame. He needs to hold onto him or he feels like their friendship will fade, and he can’t think of that. He can’t even comprehend why or how that could be. His life without Yoongi? Is that a life he’s willing to live?

This is their goodbye, and he can’t help but get emotional just by thinking about it.

“Where will you go?”

“Somewhere to clear my head? Maybe I’ll head back to Daegu, or maybe I’ll stay here. I know the boy’s hometown, so maybe Daegu is best. I think it’s better if I distance myself, give myself time to understand and figure out how to help. I won’t do anything stupid, I promise, I have been listening to you believe it or not.”

Namjoon smiles through opaque vision.

“But I will consider planning to get him. He’s my responsibility now, and I’ll do my absolute hardest to save him from that household.”

“I understand,” he hesitates and swallows. “I’ll support you…I don’t want to see you leave, but it hurts me more to see you so worried and distressed. I wish I could agree with you, or give you the advice you’re looking for but I can’t…You’re like my brother, and I have to tell you what’s right.”
“I understand that Joonie, which is why I’m not mad at you, rather, I’m just shocked. I get what you’re saying but we don’t have time to wait.”

Namjoon nods his head, their discussion and his persuasion finally dying down. “When do you think we’ll see each other again?”

The question makes Yoongi’s tears fall faster, and it takes a while for him to respond.

“Hopefully when I help him, and if not…if it’s too late at that point…” he sniffs, not able to look at Namjoon in the face. “I’ll try to come back in a year’s time.”

The words strike both hearts with poisoned arrows.

“A year?!”

“I know it seems like a lot, but you’re right. I can’t keep burdening the team with my emotions and personal matters. This is for the highest good of us all.”

Namjoon feels a sob erupt from his chest.

“Please don’t leave us, please don’t leave me. I’ll miss you too much, who’s going to stop me from breaking the studio, huh? Who’s going to persuade me not to take comments personally, or get affected by other people’s words? I don’t know what I’d do without you!”

Yoongi pauses, heart crying too and emotions collapsing.

“I’ll miss you too.”

He can’t say more, because if he does, he’s sure he won’t be able to stop weeping. His chest is already heavy with devastation, and his mouth feels thick with a sort of saliva that tastes like shattered glass. He inhales his own depression.
“Can I hug you one more time?”

Yoongi nods his head, more tears streaking his cheeks, and Namjoon hugs the other like this is the last time he’ll ever do so because it just might be. He squeezes tightly, a little too much at one point, and he buries his head in the crease of the other’s neck. The sadness he’s feeling pools down Yoongi’s shoulders and collects in his shirt, drenching dry with sorrows. Namjoon’s considerably taller, despite being younger in age, but he still clings onto the other’s shirt as if to plead one more time not to leave. He doesn’t understand the entire purpose behind Yoongi’s departure, nor what will happen to him, but if it’s what’s going to make him feel better, he’ll learn to accept it.

He doesn’t want to.

He doesn’t want to let go of his best friend, his brother, and his family. The only family that ever gave a damn towards him, and the missing piece in his life he never thought he’d live without. He doesn’t want to feel like he’s giving up on the other, or accept the fact that he can’t go with him. He doesn’t want to be separated, nor does he want to stay behind.

But he has to.

For life is what they had said, what they had promised, and he’s not going to give up on Yoongi anytime soon. But for life also meant supporting each other’s decisions, and being there for each other no matter what choices might spark or disagreements might occur. For life meant more than being physically near each other, but emotionally here for each other. Willing to do whatever it takes so that they can finally feel better or complete. For life meant persistent and continuous support through anything and anyone.

And even now, whilst both their lives fall apart as they say their tearful goodbyes, Namjoon understands this. He finally understands, and that means he needs to let go even if every fibre in his being tells him not to.

They will meet again, they have to, because they both know one thing; and that thing, that concept and mantra, echoes with purpose in their heads. It’ll last forever because that’s what they promised; that’s what they now breathe. It’ll never die because promises aren’t meant to be broken but kept, glowing chains around locked phrases of what they had sworn. Infinite and promising, everlastingly brittle, he hears the words that appear crystal in his mind.

I will stand by you for life.
Seven years before the present

The smell of breakfast permeates the air. It’s the scent of eggs and sizzling meat, savoury broth, rice steaming in rich butter, and fresh cut vegetables. It pigments noses with toast and strawberries, fluffy omelettes and pickled kimchi, all harmonising in salty, sweet, sour, and spicy flavours. It’s mouthwatering, awaking the house with a warm, tasteful greeting, and it’s just enough for Jeongguk and his siblings to come rushing down the stairs.

It’s September 1st, the first day of school but also Jeongguk’s birthday. He’s turning twelve today, a whopping pre-teen who still beams with both the energy of a child and the maturity of a teenager, and he is reminded further of this special day when he smells the promise of a hearty meal made with love.

He closes his eyes, taking a whiff of the delicious aromas that spread through the kitchen, into the living room, and finally upstairs past blanketed floorboards. He can feel its thickness, taste its succulence, and breathe its smile, and he is suddenly filled with a feeling of pure content. He opens his eyes back up again, eyes shining, and he looks across the hallway where he sees his other two siblings still hazy with sleep. Their eyes half closed, they lean quizzically at the smell, trying to identify what had awoken them whilst still captured in a drowsy fog. Their eyes widen at the realisation of what this scent means, and it takes them five seconds to jolt out of their daze and rush down the stairs. And with that, Jeongguk glitters across the floor, running with speed into the open living room. The carpet rubs underneath his feet, burning his soles with electrified friction, but the amusement bubbling in his chest overcomes that as he turns a sharp corner. Tackling his siblings down, he collapses onto them, body sliding onto the varnished wood and bumping the coffee table nearby. He’s merciless, erupting into fits of giggles, and soon laughter blooms from the ground where they all lie. They’ve made an absolute mess, the newspapers on the table now heaps on the floor, and glasses of water now pooling around the carpet. They knocked down some vases too, perhaps a picture frame as well, but no breaks or cracks are present, so they resume laughing. His older brother smiles, mouth wide with humour, and his little sister glimmers with sparkling irises. They both pout in reluctant expressions, stifling their bright laughter, but their eyes seem to convey their emotions anyway. He can hear his mother groan from the kitchen, already fed up with her children’s wild and irrational behaviour, but she doesn’t say anything.

Jeongguk’s sister beams with a toothless grin and hugs both her brothers who are still slumped on the ground. “Happy birthday, Kookie!”

She giggles loudly, dark hair swinging in loose braids, and ruffles her older brother’s hair in an attempt to straighten it from sleep. “Did you sleep well?”
Jeongguk nods his head, smiling back at her endearingly. “Never slept better in my life!”

His older brother, Jung-hyun, also tackles him down and dishevels his hair, singing a (very off-tune, might I add) version of happy birthday. Each note he sings is ridiculously exaggerated, and the occasional high notes are screeched in a not so pleasant way, however, Jeongguk couldn’t ask for a better older brother.

They’re lying completely on the floor now, two siblings on one, tickling and playing around with the birthday boy as he thrashes with mirth and hilarity.

“Guys! Stop tickling me, I’m not six anymore!” He wines, but his face shows no complaints or bitterness. In fact, he’s practically a lightbulb, blinking with such brightness it could blind the blind with a mere fraction of his stare. He can’t stop smiling with this widened grin, too much happiness consuming his chest that he feels lightheaded off of gratification.

At that moment, siblings tickling unsparingly with innocent features, Mrs. Jeon walks into the living room, wearing an apron marked with stains and a look of amusement on her face. “What are you three on about? I can hear you from the kitchen.”

They stop, frozen by her words, and smile sheepishly at the mess they’ve created. “Sorry Eomma!”

Mrs. Jeon shakes her head, a small smile dusting her lips, and she looks down to Jeongguk who is still lying on the floor with two figures crushing his chest. “Happy birthday, Jeongguk-ah!”

Jeongguk blushes, hiding himself between the arms that encase him before muffling his head into the crook of his shoulder.

Mrs. Jeon laughs. “Don’t be embarrassed, today’s your big day! Come on, let’s go to the kitchen, I’ve made breakfast.”

All three siblings smile, heart beating with anticipation for the meal they are about to receive.

One thing to note is that Jeongguk hadn’t grown up rich, and even now, his family struggles financially. He knows that behind the side-lines and sunlit smiles of his parents, they work two jobs
each, fighting and working hard to help sustain their three children. It’s tough, knowing that he can’t help out his family even though he’d like to, and it’s also difficult because even on days like these, he can’t fully be happy because he knows this just means more work for his parents. Lush breakfasts aren’t easy, and they are rare because it’s not a luxury they can afford. Jeongguk’s glad that he gets to eat a traditional breakfast, but he also feels conflicted because he doesn’t want his mother and father spending too much money on him.

“Kookie, why do you look so sad?”

His little sister pokes his cheek with a small finger, indenting his soft skin with a makeshift dimple.

He hadn’t realized that his thoughts had translated into his facial expressions, and he puts back a radiating smile to avoid suspicion. He is happy, but at the same time, he really doesn’t want to cause more trouble or work or headaches.

“I’m not, just a little overwhelmed that’s all. I don’t want everyone spending too much time or money on me. I guess I just feel sort of guilty.”

Mrs. Jeon looks at him with an expression laced in love and gratitude. She takes his smaller hands into her own and gives him a soft kiss on the cheek. “Aww, that’s sweet, Kookie, but don’t worry about it,” she smiles. “It’s your birthday and the first day of school, I have to make it special!”

“I hope you didn’t have to work extra to be able to afford all of this though…All I want for my birthday is for you to have a rest…”

“Not at all, even if it did, I’d be happy to. Making sure we’re all happy is my top priority as a mother, and I assure you that you cause me nothing but joy.”

Jeongguk looks down, hair flooding through his vision.

“Now, let’s eat up!” She states after some silence, trying to lift up the mood. All siblings light up as intended. “We don’t want the food getting cold, now do we?” She folds her arms over her apron, hands freshly washed and dotted with suds from the soap she used. She laughs softly, blowing some hair that had fallen in front of her face.

Jeongguk’s smile is back on, earnest and sincere this time, and he looks up at his mother who is still
looking at him in an almost precious way. Mrs. Jeon chuckles sweetly, a gentle sound that fills the air with peace and repose. Every movement she makes is delicate, perpetually graceful, and as she ties her hair up to remove the strands that had escaped, she seems to transmit tranquility.

With her words, they race into the kitchen, the smell of breakfast even more prominent as they see all that is laid on the table. Bowls of rice, platters of cooked vegetables, saucers of coloured soup and plates of eggs all connect into joyful jigsaw pieces. He sees opened jam containers, layers of toast, dishes encased with brown meat and more bowls of kimchi and pickled radishes.

The blend of scents is to die for, and the rumble in Jeongguk’s stomach soon replaces his initial guilty thoughts until he’s illuminated with glee.

The table is set beautifully in addition to the homemade feast. He can tell that their ‘fancier’ dishes and cutlery out not only by how the light shines on them but also because of their patterns. These utensils are rarely used, only for special occasions really, but today is a special occasion after all. The plates are hard, made of special bleached clay, and the utensils they own are artefacts from past generation. They’re laced in silver, carved with intricate designs, and certainly exhibit prestige. It’s one of the only expensive things they own, and it holds special value, but Jeongguk likes them primarily because his mother does.

He’s not sure why, but they must hold some sentimental aspect for her to adore them so much. That or it’s just expensive, but Jeongguk highly doubts the latter.

They sit down at the table, saying their grace with clasped hands, and add in a little extra note for his birthday. They aren’t extremely religious, meaning they don’t go to church every Sunday, but they do like giving thanks to whoever is watching over them, and praying for good health and good fortune.

Once settled, the feast commences, Jung-hyun serving their little sister first with some rice and pork, and their father serving their mother a generous amount of fluffed eggs. It’s a nice day, sunlight streaming through the windows and almost gossamer curtains, and it seems to make the meal and table glow with iridescent completion.

Jeongguk sighs, the beginning of a beautiful morning ahead of him, and he slowly eats his food to savour each moment. All flavours are harmonious as expected, bursting with tasteful piquancy and blending through his mouth with each bite. His mother really does know how to cook, and when given more organic ingredients, is able to create a masterpiece of a meal.

He smiles behind closed eyelids, relishing his time around family, love, and food, and does his own
little prayer in his head to thank God one more time for his fortunes.

However, his little moment does not last quite as long as he’d hope, and is interrupted when the phone decides to announce its presence right then and there. It’s blaring against the clutter of forks and small chatter, and it pervades the air with such bright intensity that it disrupts the previous serene atmosphere. Mrs. Jeon gently excuse herself, rubbing her hands against a paper towel to remove any excess grease, and gets up from the table. She walks carefully out of the kitchen, reaching the living room where their landline hooks onto one of their beige coloured walls, and mutters quietly to herself. It seems to ring louder in the shortened distance, echoing across the room in previously piercing silence, and she sighs before wiping her hands once more for good measure.

She reaches for it, hands curling over plastic, and slowly begins to lift the phone to her ear. “Hello, this is Mrs. Jeon speaking, may I ask who’s calling?”

She speaks softly but with clarity.

Jeongguk, having left the kitchen, makes his way to the doorway that connects to the living room too. He doesn’t mean to eavesdrop, but curiosity itches away at him until he can no longer restrain the urge to scratch. Scratch meaning listening in on her conversation. He tiptoes quietly to hear better, quietly pressing his ears against the thinly plastered walls.

“Mrs. Jeon?”

The voice on the other line repeats her statement.

“Yes, this is she.”

“Do you have what I asked?”

Jeongguk raises his eyebrows in confusion, a trifle of worry entering his chest.

Mrs. Jeon’s voice gets drastically quieter, and so Jeongguk has to lean in closer to get a better hearing.
“I’m sorry, but I’d like to know who’s speaking.”

“This is Mr. Kim.”

She pales at the words, trying to cover up her nervousness with a press of the lips. She quiets down to almost a whisper, voice hushed with secrecy. “I do.

Mr. Kim is one of her boss’, or in other words, the person who decides how much she gets paid monthly. It’s important not to disrespect or annoy or such a powerful man, so she responds passively.

“And you’re not lying to me, are you?”

Mrs. Jeon hesitates, shaking her head to herself. The action only confuses and worries Jeongguk more.

“No, I’m not sir.”

“Good, because you know what will happen if you are,” the mysterious voice pauses, allowing Jeongguk to bubble with an unknown rage. “We wouldn’t want your precious family getting hurt, now would we?”

Mrs. Jeon grits her teeth together, biting down the urge to lose her composure. “Of course not.”

“Bring the files to me at work today, and make sure you have the correct ones.”

“Yes, sir.”

Her face holds a guilty expression and she gnaws at her bottom lip.

“Also make sure you have everything I asked,” Mr. Kim coughs on the other side, a sharp sound against her ear. It startles Jeongguk himself, but it’s too muffled from the wall to be too searing. “And I mean everything.”
She gulps. “I understand.”

“Good.” There’s a pause, some static fills the line and Jeongguk no longer hears anything. He’s concerned, mostly perplexed but also afraid, and he’s unsure if the caller has hung up or not. Why is his mother’s boss demanding for files? Why is he threatening her? Better yet, why does it seem like she already has those files?

“Is that all?”

Another pause, and this time it’s prolonged.

“Keep these files in your sight and your sight only. If I find out that someone else has seen it, and I will find out, the consequences from before will still take place. It’s not up for discussion, and you better do a hell of a good job keeping it safe. This stays between us.”

It’s best not to ask questions, but Mrs. Jeon can’t help but feel bewildered. She doesn’t voice her burning suspicions. “I won’t.”

Jeongguk wonders why his mother is agreeing so wholeheartedly. He knows she doesn’t want to get fired from her job, nor encounter the threats he’s established, but isn’t it a little strange to be asked such a thing? Isn’t it strange to agree to such a thing without proper context, despite the effects that might happen?

“It would be best to give it to me by eight, but I understand if you have other commitments.”

Mrs. Jeon checks her watch, and Jeongguk checks the clock.

It’s seven-thirty in the morning.

“Okay, um, I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thank you. Have a nice day.”
The line hangs up, a monotone knell replacing Mr. Kim’s voice, and it’s the only indication that there had been a mysterious call in the first place.

Jeongguk is littered with questions; littered with thoughts, and confusion, and hidden frustration.

*Why was this man threatening my mom?*

He’s angry. Nobody gets to put her in a complicated situation, especially involving the rest of his family, and he tries to hide his emotions by biting down on his teeth.

It was strange. Strange? Well, strange doesn’t even cut it.

It was too abrupt, robotic even, a recording of a man Jeongguk knows is real. The other line seemed too direct, and despite being muffled, seemed to hold malicious and almost *taunting* undertones. What’s worse is that his mother looked familiar or used to the call, as if she were expecting it, and it unnerves Jeongguk even more to know that she hadn’t completely liked the idea.

Mrs. Jeon shakes her head a little, putting the phone back into place and sighing softly. She clenches and unclenches her hand for a bit, conflict furrowed deep in her eyebrows, and she glances upstairs as if debating to go up there or not.

One battle wins, and she heads up the stairs with benign footsteps, Jeongguk quietly following suit.

*What do these files even contain?*

He’s riddled again with another stream of questions. He wants to know why and when and how and where and *who*. He wants to know what and be answered with because; he’s just frankly confused. Muddled by uncontrollable thoughts and sceptical conclusions because he doesn’t understand why his mother is handling something so shady.

He doesn’t understand. Maybe he is just a kid after all.
He sees Mrs. Jeon enter her room, shuffling for something in her dresser that’s piled with neatly folded clothes. It smells inviting in her room, the scent of lavender and warmth mixed with candlelit aromas, and Jeongguk can’t seem to associate her comforting smell with the conversation she just had over the phone.

Finally, after minutes of rummaging and remarks of frustration, she appears to have found what she was looking for. In her hands, and with the limited vision Jeongguk is presented with from the crack in his parent’s door, he sees a collection of pale files. They tinge with yellow, slightly discoloured, and seem glossy in the light that escapes the blinds. Perhaps they’re laminated.

Mrs. Jeon begins walking back out the door, and so Jeongguk moves quickly. He attempts to run down the stairs and back in his seat before she makes it out, but luck is quite frankly not on his side.

Well, has it ever?

He tumbles down the first step, halting on the carpeted flooring with the friction of its material. Mrs. Jeon’s eyes widen, shock made prevalent on her face, and she sighs loudly once she identifies Jeongguk and his tousled hair.

“Jeongguk-ah, what did I tell you about eavesdropping on other people’s business?”

Jeongguk’s face goes scarlet, both at being caught and at the realisation of confrontation. Her tone is also what off-sets him, and she only uses it when he’s done something fairly bad.

“I’m sorry, I was just worried that’s all,” he hesitates, questions overflowing. “What are those files? Are you leaving now?”

Her gaze moves down, an expression of shame reaching her eyes. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Eomma, what did that man say to you?”

She can’t tell him. Even if she wanted to she can’t because that would result in his endangerment as well as her own.
“Ah, I tell you it was nothing. I’m an accountant, files are practically my life. I’m sure Mr. Kim is just urgent for them as he has a meeting early in the morning today, you see?”

Jeongguk can tell she’s lying. “Why didn’t he just send you an email then?”

She chews her lip again, a nervous habit that also indicates that she’s lying. “He knows I can be forgetful at times, and I don’t check my email after certain hours. He just wants to be prompt, that’s all.”

“I see…” Jeongguk drops that topic and arises a new one. “What’s in the files?”

Mrs. Jeon immediately turns stern, nervousness gone and a profoundly different approach reaching her behaviour. “Nothing of your concern, Jeongguk,” she sighs again. “Let’s just go back to the table, alright? I cooked you your favourite dish.”

Jeongguk nods, finally dropping the subject entirely. He doesn’t want to upset his mother, and clearly, she’s unable to answer his questions. The best thing to do would be to ignore the encounter, right?

Wrong.

Jeongguk makes his way down the stairs, returning to his seat with confusion as his mother waits upstairs.

She reaches for the folders in her hand, touching each one delicately to make sure she isn’t missing anything, and proceeds to open them with extreme care. A particular piece of paper, one at the back of the bunch, strikes her attention, and she examines it first.

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

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NAME OF CHILD: KIM TAE-HYUNG

PLACE OF BIRTH (COUNTRY): SOUTH KOREA

PLACE OF BIRTH (CITY, TOWN OR DISTRICT): SEOUL
RACE: KOREAN; SEX: MALE; DATE OF BIRTH: DECEMBER 30TH, 1995

BORN ALIVE OR DEAD: ALIVE

-----

FATHER OF CHILD

FULL NAME: KIM CHIN-HAW; RACE: KOREAN; DATE OF BIRTH: FEBRUARY 20TH, 1955

PLACE OF BIRTH (COUNTRY): SOUTH KOREA

PLACE OF BIRTH (CITY, TOWN OR DISTRICT): SEOUL

OCCUPATION: BUSINESSMAN ;;

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MOTHER OF CHILD

FULL MAIDEN NAME: LEE BORA; RACE: KOREAN; DATE OF BIRTH: AUGUST 2ND, 1973

PLACE OF BIRTH (COUNTRY): SOUTH KOREA

PLACE OF BIRTH (CITY, TOWN OR DISTRICT): DAEGU

OCCUPATION: STUDENT ;;

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This is to certify, that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of statements appearing on the record of birth of the above named child, as filed in this office.

Her face goes white.

“Mr. Kim has a son?”

She knew what particular selection of files she was receiving, but she hadn’t bothered to really go in depth of what she had taken; what she had grasped from the nurse’s hands and into her purse. Mr. Kim had instructed her not to look through them too much, and she isn’t one for disobeying strict orders, nor take threats lightly, but she supposes that this file was put at the back for a reason.

So she wouldn’t have found it as easily.
However, now she regrets not being thorough, paling whilst reading the definite words. She trails trembling fingers over the ink that spells out the child’s name, a pretty meaning behind typed letters, and reality hits her sharp in the face. Her eyes water the more she reads, a truth so stark ripping away at her heart.

She bleeds out seams of thread.

“You poor, poor boy,” she sniffs, trying to stop the running stream now apparent on her face with the rim of her shirt. “So this is why you wanted me to give them to you,” she talks to the wall, anger consuming her very lungs. “Huh, you didn’t want to be held accountable for having a son?”

The more she reads each file, the more she’s consumed with underlining frustration. She had been stupid to listen to such a superficial and sinister man, and now she is paying the price for being both oblivious and self-centred.

The words that pop out the most, seemingly vibrant with despondency, are: “adopted,” “orphanage,” “underweight,” and “abandoned.”

This child, this young, cold, malnourished child, had been abandoned by his very own parents.

She hits the wall, hand turning red with the impact, and she’s relieved when it doesn’t puncture the plaster. “You threaten my family, because what? You didn’t want to be exposed to the reporters? To the news? You lying bastard, I thought this was just some bloodwork or secret illness you were facing! Why? Why had I believed you?”

She can’t seem to remove her eyes from the text, each letter leading to the next until the truth finally unravels.

Mr. Kim had left his son.

Ms. Lee had given up her son for adoption.

It doesn’t take an idiot to connect the dots.
“He would be twelve by now…twelve years…”

Before she has time to dwell too much in sorrow, newly found knowledge and self-pity, she hears the running of footsteps towards the staircase. It gets louder the more she waits, and guilt spreads through the bones in her body like calcium.

He doesn’t deserve this.

She arranges the files back into their folders hastily and carefully, making sure each is in perfect condition and not folded at the corners. She doesn’t want to make it look like she had gone through them, or stalked his personal information for that matter. She knows that it wouldn’t have mattered too much, but she assumes Mr. Kim wouldn’t have liked it if she went back on her promise to not look thoroughly.

Even if it is supposed to stay between them.

Wiping away any remaining tears or smudged mascara, Mrs. Jeon returns to her natural composed self, tucking the folder tightly in the crease of her arm. She isn’t allowed to look suspicious or distraught because her family will most certainly catch on, and that would mean questions which would lead to leaked information, and that just can’t happen.

She cannot let anyone know.

Jung-Hyun comes rushing up the stairs, slightly out of breath and with crumbs stuck to the corners of his lips. He smiles upon seeing his mother, giving a motion with his hands as if to indicate coming down. “Why are you taking so long? It’s almost time for school!”

Mrs. Jeon smiles kindly, warming up the aura with just the twinkle in her eyes and raise of her mouth, and she kneels down to reach her son’s height. “Of course, I’m sorry for holding you guys up, let’s go down, shall we?”

He grins in response, clasping onto her free arm and dragging her down the steep staircase. He glances ever so discreetly at what she’s holding in between her armpit, the black of the folder contrasting deeply with her white blouse, but he doesn’t question it.

Sometimes, it’s best not ask questions, because the answers you’ll receive are occasionally not the
ones you hoped for or expected.

*He has a son…*

What had happened to the mother is Mrs. Jeon’s question. Was she too young or financially unstable to raise the child herself? Had she passed away during birth?

Had she been raped?

The word itself is enough for her to want to vomit. It’s just too impure; too vile and inhuman and disgusting. She doesn’t want that to be the answer, she wants to forget about the thought as quickly as it came, but it’s still a possibility.

And that’s the problem.

There are too many possibilities, and with that, too many foregoing explanations that appear to be direr and direr as they go, and especially along the trauma spectrum. She had never thought of Mr. Kim as a nice person per say, sure he’s many things; a gentleman for one, and a great businessman which reflects in the large amount of success he’s achieved, but *kind* is not one of his…laudable qualities. She’s seen how he treats his employees and fellow co-workers, and she’s also heard terrible stories and exaggerated tales, but then again, they could just be rumours. Despite that, despite his commendable but also questionable deeds, Mrs. Jeon would have never thought that he would’ve *abandoned* his own child.

She can’t understand, and she’s glad that she can’t, because she also does not want to tolerate such an awful act.

Negligence is possibly the worst thing you can inflict upon your baby, and it is a crime as well as an immoral decision and act.

“Eomma, are you alright? You seem a little quiet.”

Mrs. Jeon snaps out of her trance, turning back to Jung-Hyun who’s looking at her with quizzical and mature eyes.
He’s no idiot either…

Which is why he mustn’t know; why no one should know. It’s too dangerous, and regardless of the hate and anger and disgust she holds towards Mr. Kim, she’s not in the position to go against his orders.

For whatever reason he might need these, she must abide at the instructions he gave her because she doesn’t want to face the consequences of disobeying such a powerful man. He could not only ruin her life and career, but also her family’s life and career, and that is something she is just not willing to risk.

I’m sorry, Taehyung-ssi. I hope you can forgive me.

She does a silent prayer under her breath, hidden behind the walls of her mouth, and she asks every God she can think of to help this deserted boy.

It’s unfortunate what had happened, and she truly is sorry, but the damage is already done, and there isn’t much she can do to fix it without critical punishment.

So she continues on, and the guilt eats away at her as she walks down the hall and displays a fake smile, tucking the file into her bag and zipping it shut. Self-reproach attacks her muscles and infiltrates her lungs because the more she denies the voice in her head that says “don’t” the more she realises what a terrible thing had occurred.

And as she kisses all three of her children on the cheek, and finally her husband on the lips, each individual beaming with pure saturated happiness, she can’t bear to see what Mr. Kim would do to erase those smiles permanently. She can’t bear to see what he’d do to the lives she cherishes most.

I’m sorry.

She walks out the door, huddling Jeongguk and his siblings into the car to drive to the bus stop, and breathes out the summery air. It’s warm out, the sunlight blooming with uncovered glares, and she tries to grasp its warmth and have it spread to her stone-cold chest.

With one last heartfelt prayer, she starts the car, engine reverberating to her beating heart, and they commence with the day.
I’m so so sorry.

find me on instagram: @amfics

https://www.instagram.com/amfics/

Chapter End Notes

HOLYSHITBALLSSJSJSKJ
organising my thoughts and making a cohesive plot is hard as fuck but hey, I signed up for the challenge.

Y’ALL IM SO SORRY FOR MAKING U WAIT DEADASS A MONTH, i felt bad the whole time when I wasn’t writing but my sleep schedule has been whack and my homework loads has increased x200000000 nonetheless! here we are uwu

hope u enjoyed it as usual, and i’m sorry if iT'S SHITTY you know,, i’m trying my hardest

i’ve got 6 mins till the wifi shuts off shitshshsksskh

happy reading!

さようなら。
for life pt. 2

Chapter Summary

WARNING!! this is an extremely heavy chapter. Graphic descriptions of abuse, dark thoughts, and pain are included, so please if this sort of thing triggers you I'm warning you in advance.

a trip to the past
--part two--
the day Taehyung became blind...

Chapter Notes

soooo it's beeen a little over a month now? whew i'm sorry but you all know that i always post late and then apologise it in the notes later sksjksjs. I've been so so busy, HOWEVER, the reason this took so long to actually write is because I couldn't find a good way to convey such a vital plot point in the story. It pained me a lot to write this, and I know you guys will probably feel some EXTREME emotions so I'm sorry you had to wait.

This chapter is by far my longest. I think it was a solid 36 pages? I'm not too sure, but I hope that makes up for the long wait anyways. I'm finding it hard to write, and me being a critical ass bitch on myself is my own problem, but I still had to re-write this chapter so many damn times. i wanted to make sure that everything I wrote previously is addressed or at least makes sense since this chapter comes directly before the prologue..

anyways, I shouldn't write so much in the notes hahaha.

happy reading!

さようなら。

Six years before the present

Pain erupts from his back, the remnants of glass bouncing off the walls and onto the concrete flooring. But what really is pain at this point. Is it a slap? A punch to the gut or the slit of his skin against shards? Is it his head thrown back at crooked angles and slammed against the ground, or perhaps just the kick of a heavy-footed boot? Is it as tangible as we make it out to be, or is it just as vicious as the words spewing out of reckless mouths?
Maybe it’s the anticipation of pain that also defines it, his step father’s yelling truly caking the room with a feeling of hatred and anger. It resonates the surroundings, screaming into collapsed bodies and beaten minds. It’s toxic and so it intoxicates.

Taehyung closes his eyes, willing for the affliction to go away with each breath, the air a crisp reminder of his current predicament. It smells like liquor and sweat, a combination of old carpets and ashy cigarettes. It lingers with the scent of decaying wood, an aroma of suffering and dread encasing each crack in the ground and splinter in the wall. He bites his tongue in concentration, drawing the taste of iron into his mouth, and attempts to sit back up despite the burn that tells him not to.

“You’re late.”

Why did you adopt me?

Taehyung can’t find the words to reply

Why did you decide to take me in if you didn’t even want me?

“Useless bitch, can’t even find a coherent reply.”

It was only by half an hour.

Taehyung shifts his body that lies flat on the floor, trying to twist his head down so he can block out the piercing sound of his step-father’s voice. Insults don’t affect him too much anymore, the action a recurring string of events, but it still adds onto his now blaring headache.

“At least listen to someone when they’re talking to you!”

He hears glass and then a frustrated growl. The pain is delayed but soon spreads with intensity.

Why bother adopting a child if you can’t even love one?
“Get up.”

Taehyung tries to lift himself off the ground, the fear of being hit again sparking the gears in his legs so they no longer feel numb. However, the coolness of the floor, the softness of the concrete in comparison to broken glass, and the aftermath of a beating mess too much with his head, and he finds it difficult to move.

*What if I just lie here? What if I pretend to be dead?*

“Don’t play dumb with me, I said *get up.*”

The voice overpowers the cloud in his head, a vitriolic sound that spreads panic through his nerves and trepidation through his veins. He curls bruised fingers into the ground, digging to find some sort of support so he won’t be punished again.

*Who am I kidding, this is all my fault.*

If only he hadn’t stayed at school longer than intended. If only he *hadn’t* talked to that girl, a seemingly friendly and kind person who had asked him to wait. He regrets it just as much as now as he did then, and he’s slowly beginning to feel the upcoming consequences of his polite gestures.

It was her nervous smile that made him stay. He couldn’t just say no to such an earnest expression that held so many high hopes for *him*. A look of actual admiration directed towards his very eyes. It’s not something he’s used to given his...family situation.

She was biting her lip, twirling blonde hair with pale fingers, tension wired deep in her shoulders. Her head was slightly tilted towards the floor, shyness displaced against her every feature, and she smiled with closed, shaking lips. Taehyung felt guilty, the build-up in her eyes and twinkle in her longing gaze an indication of what was about to come.

*Please don’t say it.*

Taehyung-ssi, I like you.
He had willed himself not to cringe or scowl or run out of fear and oblivious surprise. He tried his best not to feel like he was being suffocated, lungs captured in a deadly grip from the girl’s sudden confession. He sufficed with widened eyes, a feature that replicated his tousled emotions, and a pitiful smile. He could see the way her face dropped, the way her mouth strained with an effort to stay upright, and the brimming of tears in her blue-eyed vision. She deserved better, not this lousy broken boy who lost the ability to love and be loved. Not this bereft version of himself, the one that even made the night seem bright as day.

She deserved more than him.

He couldn’t leave. He was frozen.

He was too nice not to leave, and so he stood there for a moment, muscles chilled with a sort of unwavering apprehension.

He had cleared his throat.

You think you do, but you don’t. You’re talented and beautiful, you deserve someone who matches your league.

He hoped his reply would satisfy her and convey his rejection with as much kindness as possible. It seemed as if, for a split second, it had worked. Her eyes had brightened, a sudden shift in her legs mimicking her beaming smile, but then as quickly as it came it disappeared. The ending of his words spoke the truth, and although Taehyung had tried his best to be deferential, she was no idiot.

You’re rejecting me.

She spoke with such sadness and dejection, hurt and anger but also disappointment. He hated hearing that upset and tainted voice, the one that he had made so tearful. He tried to shake his head but it stayed in place. He is rejecting her, and perhaps it’s not for the reasons she thinks.

I’m sorry.

He doesn’t know what else he could’ve said or what else he could’ve done to sugar-coat things and make her feel better in that situation. Truth is, despite his monsters who had told him he was
incapable of loving or being loved, that was not entirely the reason why he declined. He doesn’t feel anything towards this girl, nothing romantic and certainly not anything sexual. He’s uninterested, and maybe dating in general seems to leave of bitter taste in his mouth, but he’s confused as to why he wouldn’t have felt anything towards her confession (not even a sense of flattery). She really is beautiful, talented undoubtedly, and captain of the swim team. He’s just as confused from his lack of feelings as he is towards fact that she had even liked him in the first place.

It didn’t end well for Tae after that. Her embarrassment seemed to have been replaced with a brewing shameful hostility, the outburst of being turned down, and she had frowned.

He had checked his watch and cursed when his eyes saw the time. It pounded in his forehead, the phantom grip of what will be done to him later when he comes home pulsing with each tick. He had been stupid to have stayed late.

He missed the bus.

But thing is, he couldn’t just leave her there. No. Her terrifyingly upset and almost enraged expression also captured him, her once earnest smile turning into a scowl of defeat.

I’m sorry, am I just an inconvenience to you?

Her voice had been thick with hatred, clearly the action of him checking his watch sparking an annoyance within her.

No, you’re not. I just had somewhere to be but it’s okay.

It won’t be okay.

He could see the way her brain absorbed the information, eyes twitching and eyebrows lifting in disbelief.

So, you reject me, you obviously indicate that I’m wasting your time, and now you’re making up lies and excuses? Geez, my friends were right when they said you were a weirdo.
Weirdo? Now that’s just cruel.

He attempts to say something back but closes his mouth. The more he stays here, the greater the beating will be when he arrives, so he stays silent.

You really are a weirdo, huh? Not even a reply after I call you out, man, I shouldn’t have ever said anything. All you do is stay silent! Hell, you’re the person that doesn’t talk to anyone and thinks he’s all badass with his scars and bruises. You can go fuck yourself!

And that had escalated much more than he thought it would. He can tell that the girl is just lashing out, evidently embarrassed by having been rejected, and so he doesn’t hold it against her. The tears in her eyes are obvious enough to show how much this actually affected her, but her words also seem to slice through him. Since when is anyone proud of their bruises and scars?

If only she knew.

She ran away crying, or at least that’s what he thinks she did. His mind was so preoccupied with the fear of arriving home late that he couldn’t really decipher what was going on after checking the time. Does he feel bad about it? Absolutely. But he had also felt a lot worse knowing that he’d probably be walking with a limp and a bruised eye the next day.

So here he is, scattered on the floor with split skin and deafening noise. He’s being yelled to get up, loudly, forcefully, and the screaming begins to hurt. He’s able to find a grip, the slightest grasp to hang onto, and he clings onto it for dear life. Pressing his palm into the floor and using the cold texture as his anchor, he pushes up his chest from where he had fallen. He grits his teeth to prevent a whimper; a sound of weakness he can’t let escape, and continues to lift his chest off the ground with trembling arms. If he so much as breathes too loudly it’s likely he’ll receive another punch to the throat, and that isn’t something he finds too pleasant at the moment.

Or at any moment for that matter.

His step-father takes a swig of beer, the smell of alcohol already heavy on his breath. “I ask one thing of you, one thing, and you can’t even do that? Did we save a dumbass too?”

He uses the term ‘save’ as if he’s entitled to Taehyung’s life. He uses that word so that Tae feels guilty for not doing what he wants. It manipulates him into thinking ‘this is a good thing’ and that the pain he’s exposed to is his own fault.
I deserve this.

He adopted him therefore he saved him, so can Taehyung really be angry?

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t talk back to me!”

He’s back onto the floor, clutching his side as he feels something blistering he has no recollection of. How did he end up on the ground again? His fingertips drench with something thick.

When did I start bleeding?

He suppresses a groan, trying to refrain from moving in hopes that his step-father will get bored.

Go away.

He hears the shatter of glass but this time it isn’t on him. The wall echoes with a scream, the victim of an eruption, and Taehyung is both relieved and scared. He can feel the shards ricochet onto his back, leaving scars undoubtedly, but at least the weight of the bottle isn’t flat on his skull.

He wants to scream but he doesn’t allow himself to.

“I’m not surprised your mother left you.”

Ouch.

The comment would’ve hurt if Taehyung could even think at the moment. His head is ringing, a familiar sound by now but still blaringly distorted, and the chaos makes him want to throw up.
Again, he stops himself from doing so. If he wants the pain to stop he has to submit, or at least, that’s the rule.

It’s what’s grown to work over the years.

“What did we say? We said to listen. Listen and you won’t have to be taught a lesson!” His step-father curses, a string of incoherent mumbles. “Nobody is going to ever love you. How could they? You can’t even follow or understand simple instruction. I said get up!”

Another smash. The shards trickle down his cheek, crying blood, and Taehyung swallows.

*Take it.*

He needs to submit.

His step-father laughs in a way that sickens him. He’s always hated that drunken, snarled laugh, if you can even consider that noise as such. “Your parents never wanted you, just like we don’t want you. Nobody wants you, nobody will ever want you!”

He feels strain on his throat, a pressure squeezing his windpipe and ability to swallow.

He spits blood.

“Bastard.”

He’s back on the floor, perhaps the entire scenario just an illusion if it weren’t for the impact of being thrown back down. He coughs, iron on his taste buds, and he hears another string of curses.

*Submit.*

He stills his body, hoping that the stars in his vision will indicate final peace.
“Just take it.

“Tch, you never were tough, were you? Can’t handle a simple lesson of discipline. When I say get here on time I mean it.”

More screams, a hit, rest.

Quiet.

The silence unnerves him more than the beatings, and he cracks his eyes open a little to see what’s going on. His step-father still looms over him, a crazed expression in his eyes, and the bottle he’s holding seems to get looser and looser in his grip. Soon enough, he hears it fall, the shards bouncing to the ceiling and then residing on the floor. With the bottle’s crash comes muddled commotion and frustrated yells, the texture of a boot now straight on Taehyung’s back. He can feel the pressure of the other’s foot squeeze his bones, compressing his frame into the floor and grinding his cheek into solid concrete. The more the boot pushes down the more Taehyung begins to feel lightheaded, the air his lungs are trying to grasp becoming restricted against the weight above him. He cries out, a kick catching him off guard and he coughs violently.

I’m sorry.

He’s sorry for everything, but he’s mostly sorry for disobeying orders.

I shouldn’t have been late.

In a feeble attempt to stop the pain and abuse, Taehyung lays still, willing his subconscious to overtake him. It doesn’t work, but soon enough, after a steady jab to the ribs, the footsteps fade away with his emptied tactic. A feeling of relief reaches his mind but not to the rest of his body.

Taehyung lays there for a while, soaking in the wintry crisp of the ground and letting it ice his swollen limbs. His face hurts, his mouth stings with where he had bitten it, and his side especially aches with post agony.

“Ow..”
He mutters to himself, allowing some of the pain he feels to seep out through that one syllable. A part of him tenses, afraid that the sound he made will attract that monster back into the room, but is relieved when he hears nothing. His voice sounds considerably hoarse, the effect of being choked taking a toll on his nerves, and he rubs his throat in reflex to see if there had been any damage.

Nothing too bad.

He opens his eyes, vision blurry through bruised cheekbones, and he scans his surroundings. As suspected, bottles of alcohol litter the floor, most in shards, and if not, vacant caskets of future weapons. Taehyung contemplates throwing them out before they can be used against him.

*He’ll find something worse. Maybe these bottles are a blessing.*

They stare at him with brittle maroon, the glossy knife that cuts into his skin and pounds the back of his head. He wants to avert his gaze but can’t, the bottles chant at him, they scream at him to do something.

They want him to end his life.

Taehyung shakes his head at the idea, looking down at his purple hands and torn shirt.

*I don’t want to die.*

He chews on his lip, eyes back onto the glittering splinters of glass. They smile at him, whispering for blood, *his* blood, and the more he stares the more appealing they seem.

*But aren’t I already dead?*

Isn’t pain worse than death? Isn’t this hell itself?

Nothing could possibly be worse than this.

He allows some energy to return to his form, body nearly a skeleton of his demons.
I need to get up.

He’s sure now that he doesn’t want to die. Not here and not like this.

He puts weight onto his hands, a pain so sharp spreading to his chest.

It hurts.

He winces, a silent cry making its way through his lips and he closes his eyes.

Breathe.

He opens his eyes back up, looking around to see if there’s anything he can use for support but finds none.

You got this, okay? But you need to get up.

With limited strength, he pushes his body from the ground, every bone and muscle in his being screaming at him. They’re on fire, blazing, burning, crying, screaming, bleeding, it hurts.

It hurts so much.

It hurts too much.

His position falters, balance wavering, but he wills his body to stay put with a clench of his teeth.

You need to do this.

He uses one knee to get back up, feeling the ache before pressure has even been applied. He bites his
teeth down harder, dragging his other leg from behind to use it as additional support. He feels so many versions of agony; a burn, a sting, a punch and squeezing sensation. He feels an ache but also a sharp, shooting myriad of bolts down his arms. He feels like ice and butchered skin, all that’s known and unknown to him.

Taking a quite literal leap of faith, he gets up on two shaky feet, the pain so prominent he can see black dots replacing the stars in his sight.

_No, not here. You need to leave._

He’s going to die. He feels like he’s going to collapse and _die_ and he’s afraid. He doesn’t want to die like this; alone and forgotten, loveless and cold.

_This isn’t how I go._

The beatings have become progressively worse. He’s not sure why, but something had definitely changed. It’s three times a day now, sometimes more, on a good week he isn’t touched for at least the morning, but he hasn’t gotten any of those recently. It’s brought more questions, more stares, more looks of worry and _judgment_. He can feel the other students look at him like he’s some sort of freak or broken vase that needs to be fixed. He can feel the teachers’ looks of concern when they ask him if he’s okay. He’s fine, he’s always “fine” because he _has_ to be. Imagine people knowing? Imagine the shit his step-parents could and would inflict upon him once others find out? Nothing can save him, nothing will, because once others know, his monsters _will_ find out.

People would never believe him anyways.

He glances down and catches the appearance of his body. It’s covered in contusions, faded injuries painted with black and fresh ones a dark purple and green. The bruises from yesterday line with yellow, marks of constant and continuous torture, and the colour only seems to grow until they pigment his form completely.

He traces the blood on his hands, trickling down a path that started from his shoulders. It stains his already marked skin with red, and it disgusts him because it’s more hideous than he thought. He looks down his shirt, something dark pooling near his kidneys and the sight is enough for him to want to pass out. He looks away, bile crawling the indents of his oesophagus and he swallows with conviction.
I shouldn’t look.

He tries to walk but stumbles over the burn.

“I can’t do this.”

His voice is a quiet whimper.

Tears brim at his eyelashes, the pain too intense and too amplified. It’s consuming him, eating him alive, but if he doesn’t move, he doesn’t think he will ever again. He wants to fall but holds onto the balance he does obtain, willing his muscles to stay upright so that he can continue walking.

He’s going to come back so I need to go now before he does.

Go where? Dare he leave? And if he does will he come back? If he does come back, will they do something worse? Taehyung doesn’t want to think about it. They’ve already done so much, so what more can they do?

He’s walking, unsteadily, but still, he’s walking, and that’s a miracle in itself. He limps carefully towards the front door, stepping past glass and shattered frames. He shuffles past the empty takeout boxes and heaps of used cigarettes that still glow a sullen amber.

What did he do to end up in this household? What happened to the loving step-parents he had envisioned and wished for back at the orphanage? Was it all worth it? Were they always like this, or had they turned into monsters once they had adopted him?

He’s in the kitchen, a surprising realisation when he looks at his blackened legs, and he leans against the doorway for support. A large window blocked by wooden boards reflects the dire reality that he’s living in, mocking him as it prevents the sun from seeping in. The room is empty except for a fridge gaping with a broken lightbulb, two forgotten chairs seaming at the straws, cabinets hollow like frozen chests and walls faded with chipped paint.

He’s alone, finally, but why is that worse somehow?
I need to get out.

He says his goodbye to the covered window, to the hungry fridge and to the chairs that he’s never sat on. He says farewell to the cabinets that haven’t fed him in years, and to the walls that were always so so ugly.

He laughs but it hurts so he has to cradle his lungs. A kick to the ribs is no painless blow.

He limps to the front door, clutching onto the rusted knob with shaking hands.

They’ll find me, they’ll hurt me, but I can’t stay here right now. I just need some time to clear my head... fresh air.

He twists the door open and is met with the sunshine that the window had prevented. It’s bright, like bright as fuck, but it seems to revitalise him despite its harsh demeanour.

Along with the sun comes an inviting breeze. It cools his skin, calming his old and fresh injuries, and heals more his soul than his body. He squints his eyes and sinks in the short relief.

Over the weekend they don’t let him out. Of course he’s sent out to buy necessities, do random errands, or get food for the week, but it’s not usually for him but for them. If he’s caught eating it in the house he’s beat, mostly towards the stomach area, and the food isn’t worth the pain after all. Often, he’ll find himself stealing things, like loaves of bread or discarded apples, at least something for himself. He normally eats them outside, at the usual old bench by the lake, and he makes sure he has enough time to get back home within curfew. He knows it’s not ethical, nor is it his personality, but he needs to survive somehow.

They let him go to a private high school, weirdly enough, and it’s alright. Taehyung had always been naturally bright, and it shows sometimes in his feedback from his teachers, but he’s afraid of that. Intelligence gives you another beating, and another beating means pain which leads to questions and stares, and oh god, he hates it. Ironically enough, it’s intelligent to be dumb in this case, and although Tae utterly despises it, he has to become so.

On his way out, he doesn’t bother to close the door. He knows they’ll figure out he’s left anyways, and he knows he’ll be brought back with indubitably another beating. He doesn’t care though. For now, at least, he’ll relish the taste of freedom. It’s sweet, tangy, a literal breath of fresh air, and he wants to savour it before it goes away.
He walks forward, not looking behind, and keeps dragging his body farther and farther away from that house but it’s still not far enough. The wind gives him energy, and he ignores the pain in his legs as he begins to walk faster, limping rapidly away from whatever it is that’s held him prisoner. He walks by shops, markets with little signs and discounts. He walks through streets and fields, jogging now in a wild attempt to get away from that place for at least a couple minutes.

He’s running. It hurts, but he doesn’t care because freedom never felt so good at this exact moment. It’s not forever, and it certainly isn’t retainable, but it’s here, now in the present, and he loves it. His lungs ache, bones weeping calcium, but his heart beats with life. He wants to live because someday, he knows that he’ll be able to have this freedom. And not just limited freedom, but endless, infinite, breath-taking freedom. The one that shines with gold and echoes with purpose, the one that tastes so much sweeter and better than the one he is exposed to now.

He knows he’ll reach it, he has to, and so, he will keep on living. He’ll keep on living in hopes for this boundless freedom.

He suddenly stops running, breath burning and legs on fire. It had been a bad idea to exert so much force into something so stupid, but he feels giddy nonetheless. He collapses, energy gone, body dropping like a sack of weights, and he slumps against an illuminated shop sign. Beside it is a bench, not his usual bench but still identical in semblance, and he shifts his weight so that he’s lying down on the floor next to it. He coughs, trying to get up but fails to do so. The world is spinning, a world of colours and fading daylight, and he’s starting to lose the feeling in his fingertips.

He has the sudden urge to scream.

“Woah there, are you okay?”

Taehyung turns his head, eyes meeting a figure of silver hair. He opens his mouth to speak but suddenly has an awful feeling in his stomach. It twists, turning with discomfort, and he has five seconds to tilt his head away before he throws up everything he’s had for the day.

“Jesus, that’s fucking gross.” The figure doesn’t look too disgusted though, and instead wears a concerned expression. “Here, let me help you.”

Taehyung curses, inching away from the emptied contents of his gut and glares at the person in front of him weakly.
“Don’t touch me.”

The figure puts his arms out in surrender, refraining from approaching him. “Okay, okay, I won’t.” Their eyes travel the length of Taehyung’s body and immediately their face goes white. He blanks, mouth wide open as if he’d seen a ghost, and he stumbles over his words.

Taehyung shifts away from his gaze.

“Don’t move, I’m going to get something to clean that up, okay?”

Taehyung doesn’t say anything, eyes dropping in a tired glance. Even if he wanted to move he wouldn’t be able to, and the more the figure talks the more distant Taehyung feels towards reality.

A couple seconds go by and he watches the sky unfold around him. The blue a light hue that resonates against the sun, the clouds beaming light in different intricate shapes.

*Clouds really are pretty, aren’t they?*

He lifts his hands up (with much effort), and frames the clouds that pass his vision.

*So fluffy…*

The figure returns with a rag and bucket in his hands. Where he found them, Taehyung has no clue of, but maybe he had asked a nearby storekeeper if he could borrow them. The figure crouches down next to him, going to touch his forehead but stops himself as he remembers the warning Taehyung had given him before.

“Right, no touching…”

Taehyung nods sleepily, a sadness filling his chest as he tries to breathe.
For the next couple of seconds, the stranger beside him cleans up the mess Tae had made in hasty silence. It’s absolutely disgusting, and Tae’s unsure himself why someone would actually attempt to clean up someone else’s puke, but he can’t say he doesn’t appreciate the gesture.

“What’s your name?”

Taehyung chokes, trying not to barf again even though he knows he can’t. He hasn’t eaten enough for him to be sick again. “My name?”

The stranger nods, silver hair shuffling in front of his eyes. It’s endearingly familiar but also not familiar at all. “Yeah, like your name. If it makes you feel better or more comfortable, I’ll give you mine first. It’s Baekhyun, nice to meet you.”

Taehyung still feels uncertain, not because he’s scared to give out his name but because he’s not used to it. His parents never use it, students only use it out of politeness, and since nobody bothers to ask him things, he never bothers to reply. It’s foreign even though it’s just his name after all.

He rolls over to his side but immediately regrets the decision as he’s met with a searing pain. He curses under his breath, lifting his head up to meet the other guy. “My name is Taehyung.”

Baekhyun tests the name in his own mouth, rolling it around a little in a whisper to familiarize himself with it. “Taehyung…cool name!”

He continues wiping up the mess, dumping the now dirtied rag into the bucket and shifting it to his side. He stares up and down Taehyung’s body again, analysing each mark so intensely to the point that Tae can feel his body sink into the floor. Baekhyun notices his distress.

“Oh sorry, I didn’t mean to stare. That was rude of me.”

“No, no, it’s okay. It is a pretty weird situation, isn’t it? I’d stare too.”

Baekhyun sighs, slumping down right next to Taehyung, front facing him, and blows a strand of silver from his own face. “If you don’t mind me asking..How did this happen?”
Taehyung knew this question would come but his heart still plummets to the bottom of his gut upon hearing the words. He sighs heavily, making eye contact with the other boy.

“Daegu’s full of assholes. I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

He’s lying. He hates lying but he hates confrontation more. He wishes for the questions to stop, for the stares to disappear because he doesn’t want to be asked or to be stared at.

And although he says his answer convincingly, it’s hard for Baekhyun to believe him.

“Ah, I feel you. It sucks, incredibly unfortunate, but I guess we get unlucky sometimes.”

Taehyung nods his head, trying to figure out if the other knows what he’s really talking about or has fallen for his lie. He can’t tell, and the slight blurriness in his vision also makes it difficult for him to decipher Baekhyun’s true emotions, but he can hear a small sort of twist to his words. Maybe he does understand.

“Why’d you stop and help me?” Taehyung asks after a couple minutes of silence.

Baekhyun laughs. “What, I was just going to ignore a stranger who had thrown up and collapsed on the ground right in my line of vision?”

Taehyung nods his head vigorously, a bad decision as it arises pain throughout his neck. “That’s what any sane person would’ve done.”

“I guess I’m a weirdo then. No, I couldn’t just leave you. If it had been me, I would’ve wanted someone to help.”

He speaks as if it could’ve very much been him.

Taehyung shrugs his shoulder, which ultimately proves to be another bad decision as pain shoots up his elbows and back into his neck. He winces.
“You okay there? I can always bring you to a hospital, or ask a shop for a first aid kit or something.”

“You kidding? The hospital is an hour’s drive away, and as I said, I don’t want to be touched.”

*I’m not allowed to go to the hospital.*

“Right, the whole touching aspect, almost forgot,” he pauses, looking over Taehyung’s body again in a sympathetic way. “You know, if you’re going to lie you should at least come up with something more convincing. For future reference.”

“Excuse me?”

“Sorry, it’s not my place, forget I said anything.”

Taehyung looks away, self-consciously wrapping his arms around his wounds which emits a whimper of pain from his lips. Baekhyun looks at him with the same pitiful expression.

Eventually Taehyung sighs, turning back to the other after a moment’s thought. “What gave it away?”

“Everything?” Baekhyun chuckles. “Mainly the whole touching thing. It’s pretty understandable in your…situation. But also I noticed your bruises are old, and your scars look pretty old too. If you had been mugged or something all of your wounds would've seemed more fresh.”

So, he does know.

For some reason, that doesn’t terrify Taehyung. It doesn’t reassure him either, but something about Baekhyun makes Taehyung feel at ease. He doesn’t mind confiding in the other, nor does he mind the fact that the other knows about his situation.

“It’s not something I’m proud of, or something I want people knowing.”

Baekhyun smiles softly. “Yeah, I get that. It’s not the first thing you want to be known for, especially
Taehyung nods his head gently, trying to be careful with his bruises. “You seem like you know from experience.”

“I wouldn’t say that exactly.”

The answer is short, and maybe Taehyung misheard his tone but it almost seemed…lonely.

He’s alone now.

“You should at least try and disinfect your cuts though. So they don’t create an infection.”

Taehyung huffs at the other’s logic but doesn’t deny the request either. He knows he probably should, but all he wants to do right now is lie down, sleep, and never wake up. Honestly, he almost wants to give up. Isn’t dying here a lot better than dying in that household? At least then he’ll be remembered by this one random stranger.

“I’ll ask around,” Baekhyun looks around his surroundings with wide eyes, trying to locate a spot. “Don’t move, okay?”

“I wouldn’t even if I could.”

He smiles with a bitter-sweet complexion and Baekhyun responds to the comment with a sheepish smile of his own.

“I’ll be quick.”

And then he’s gone.

With the absence of the other, Taehyung is able to reflect the recent events. He sure doesn’t like being beat, but some sort of different sadness is also accumulating in the pit of his lungs and it won’t seem to go away. It’s chewing at his bones, breaking his ribcage and replacing it with this endless
cycle of depression. It’s corrupting his heart and replacing the pumps of blood with intolerable heartache, all for this unknown reason.

*I don’t want to die in that house.*

The disgusting factor isn’t so much the beatings, well that is a large part of it, but Taehyung hates something worse than the threats they’ve told. He can’t stand the fake smiles they give to strangers, smiling with such sincerity that it seems *convincing.* It’s as if they have hearts; living, breathing, beautiful hearts that know how to laugh and smile and reflect kindness. Taehyung hates it when they lie to others, explaining how their son can get reckless, or that he’s always been the troublesome type. How can they smile, how can they lie and chuckle and *act* like normal human beings? That makes them even more inhuman, because if you can act decently but you choose not to? That’s the greatest sin of all. If they have the ability to care, why won’t they do so with Taehyung? It’s not fair, and it hurts Taehyung a lot more than he thought it would.

But it’s not the beatings or fake smiles that hurt him the most, it’s the abandonment. It’s something he hates more than the aftermath of screams and punches, or the falsity they plaster on their faces, because at least that pain fades eventually. He’s always been abandoned, even from birth, and now every time his step-father leaves it arises a feeling of loneliness in his soul. The weird thing is that he doesn’t want to escape. He doesn’t want to leave because he’s desperate for a family. For parents and a roof to live under and for the comfort of childhood and a place to call home. Despite the endless beatings, he’s lonely, and he hates the fact that he *needs* his monsters’ validation in order to stay alive.

He’s just lonely. He’s so utterly lonely, and maybe he can relate to Baekhyun’s isolated and tired expression. He doesn’t want to escape because then he’ll be all alone, which means he won’t have any place to call home.

He lived without a home for too long, and although he can’t even call this new home his real, loving *home,* he’d still take it over the streets and the orphanage.

“I’m pathetic. I can’t even leave them.”

After all, he hates being an orphan more than he hates being abused.

By the time Baekhyun comes back, Taehyung is fading in and out of sleep. His bruises burn, his head pulses, and his fingertips have now officially lost their feeling. He can tell he probably looks like shit too.
“Geez, you look like you’ve gotten worse.”

Taehyung sits up slightly but cries out when the action does nothing more than agitate the wounds that scatter his body. “Well, I feel like shit too,” he replies between gritted teeth.

“I wasn’t able to find much, just these bandages, some disinfectant and ointment. I got it from a dance studio and they’re only really familiar with sprained ankles and scraped knees, not these types of injuries. It’s not a lot but I hope it’ll help at least a little bit.”

He’s panting slightly, arms filled with various provisions, and Taehyung can tell he probably ran all over the place looking for something to help him.

“Thank you, Baekhyun-ssi.”

“Ah, you can just call me Baek, it feels weird when people use honorifics or my full name for that matter.”

“I appreciate all your help, I really do.”

Baekhyun smiles. “I’m glad.”

He sits back down next to Tae, who’s currently struggling to stay upright and keep his eyes open. He’s fighting sleep, and the pain provides a brutal lullaby to whisk him into the depths of slumber.

“Okay, I’m not a professional doctor or anything so we’re not going to do anything too serious,” Baekhyun says, silver hair sliding in front of his face. His hands are shaking, which is extremely surprising in comparison to his calm, stoic face.

Tae nods his head, the pain that’s shooting up his body duller than before. That or maybe he’s just gotten used to it, but whatever the case is, he’s thankful.

Baekhyun arranges the peroxide solution and pours some on a cotton pad. “I know you don’t want
to be touched so you can do it yourself if you’d like.’’

Taehyung really wants to refrain from being touched, but he’s sure that he’ll pass out soon, and he’s certain that he wants to disinfect the cuts now. “It’s fine, just…don’t be too invasive, okay?”

Baekhyun nods, his face written with understanding. He gently squeezes the drenched pad and it emanates the smell of harsh alcohol.

_Well shit, that’s going to hurt._

“It’s going to hurt but you should do it still.”

Taehyung swallows, eventually shifting his body with a sort of heavy reluctance.

Baekhyun breathes sympathy. “Again, I know you don’t to be touched, but maybe if you squeeze my hand it’ll be easier?”

He’s trying to be nice, obviously distressed by the whole scenario, but Taehyung just shakes his head. “It’ll be okay.”

Taehyung moves his shirt up slowly, the friction of cloth against his skin already burning a thousand times more than he thought it would. The blood isn’t as bad now, all of it absorbed in the light shirt he’s been wearing, and he’s immensely relieved at the results.

Baekhyun on the other hand looks like he’s about to throw up.

Taehyung catches onto the other’s sudden change in behaviour. “If blood isn’t your thing you can always leave. I won’t mind.”

He shakes his head, holding a hand over his mouth and averting his eyes. “It’s fine, I’ll just do what I gotta do.”

It’s worse than he initially assumed.
Baekhyun inches the cotton pad closer to Taehyung’s stomach, fingers shaking. Droplets of the peroxide flutter with his trembling grip and some of them fall onto smaller wounds that litter the other’s skin. Taehyung hisses when they sizzle, bubbles forming and mixing with his protruding scratches.

*I can do this.*

Not wasting any more time, Baekhyun places the pad quickly onto the wound that laces his side. It’s large, larger than he expected, and although the blood isn’t as prominent anymore, the cut still runs deep.

“Fuck that *hurts!*”

The burn that rises from the alcohol is intense, hot flames licking the wound away in the most unpleasant and excruciating way possible. The burn doesn’t seem to die either, growing and growing until his skin is almost numb with fire.

“I know, you’re doing great though, I have to keep applying pressure for just a little more but it’ll be quick.”

Taehyung shuts his eyes tightly, hands shaking even more as the pain only worsens with the solution.

*It burns.*

He feels a tear slip from one of the corners of his eyes, streaking past more cuts and stinging them with its salt. He feels weak.

“Hey, it’s going to be alright. The pain will fade and you’ll be glad that we did this later when your..wound isn’t infected.”

Taehyung wants to nod but he can’t register the words properly, all his focus diverted to the demon that seems to be birthing itself from his ignited intestines.
Disgusting image, but it’s accurate to what he’s feeling.

It’s around one in the afternoon now, the only indication of that being the sun’s height and the sunlight seeping through nearby windows. Surprisingly the streets are empty with the exception of a few stray cats and unbothered bystanders. It seems as if anyone would see him, they wouldn’t care enough to help.

Taehyung can feel himself drifting back into sleep, the pain numbing his torso to the point that he can no longer feel anything. He’s glad, because at least then he won’t be hurting anymore, but he’s also scared because he doesn’t want to entrust his body in the hands of some stranger.

*It hurts, it hurts, it hurts.*

“Ah, almost done, okay? Don’t close your eyes, look at me.”

Taehyung opens his eyes back up again, dots in his vision with the pressure of blocking out reality. “I didn’t think it’d be this bad,” he stutters, lips shaking a bit as another surge of fire erupts from his kidneys. So much for being numb.

“I know, I know, but it’s almost over. You’re really strong, you know that?”

Taehyung leans his head to the side, sweat accumulating on his forehead as the burn spreads from his stomach and into his chest. Each wound, each scratch and mark seems to belch an electric current of molten lava, and the pain that was once concentrated in one, seemingly numb spot, extends to the rest of his body.

Suddenly the pad is off, but unfortunately the burn doesn’t die down quite yet. He can see the bubbles that are foaming deep in his skin, turning pink with his blood and dripping down to seep into more cuts and scratches. He winces at the sight and turns back up to Baekhyun in seek for distraction. He smells ethanol and it singes his nose.

“Will this fix it?”

“I mean, I wouldn’t say fix it, but it’ll definitely stop it from getting worse…I hope.”
Taehyung sighs. “It better be worth it, that was horrible.”

“Have you ever disinfected your cuts before?”

Taehyung shakes his head. “I don’t really have any supplies back at home. Sometimes I use beer or whiskey left around though.”

Baekhyun cringes. “Here, you can keep the bottle.”

“Didn’t you borrow it?”

“Let’s just call it extending borrowing time, plus, what the store doesn’t know won’t hurt them.”

Taehyung laughs, ignoring the ache that comes with it. “So stealing, or should I say, permanently borrowing?”

“You know, I do like the sound of that.” Baekhyun turns around to get another pad, expression immediately turning grim. “We still need to disinfect the others.”

Taehyung pales. “Right now?”

“Sooner would be better.”

Tae’s hands are still shaking. The burn is a little duller than before but his mind is still preoccupied with the gnawing pain that’s growing throughout his body.

“Okay, I’m ready.”

And so, the process repeats itself.
The next time the pad makes contact with his skin the pain is less grating. Perhaps he’s accustomed to it, or maybe his injuries are actually getting better, but needless to say he’s grateful.

Baekhyun is careful, keeping his distance whilst applying a decent amount of pressure and attention to the wounds. Taehyung holds a lot of gratitude for this person, a pretty much complete stranger who had seen him suffer on the side of the road. It shows him that people do care in this world, even though it’s something he’s not exposed to a lot. It reminds him that others are capable of compassion and sympathy, unlike his monsters.

More dabbing action takes place, mainly just some light pats to properly clean the major abrasions, and then direct contact is lifted and the burn simmers away.

Taehyung heaves out of relief, exhaustion consuming him as he turns to thank Baekhyun for the help. However, before he has the chance to do so, lassitude indeed gets the better of him, and he slowly sees his vision begin to fade out. The world is now a beacon of stars, and Baekhyun’s face now appears as a distorted blurry silhouette with accented silver.

“And done! See, it’s not so bad now. You did great Taeh-” his voice stops when he catches sight of Taehyung’s increasingly dropping figure. “Wait, wait, don’t pass out, no, no, that’s a bad idea, I don’t have anywhere to take you, hey-”

Taehyung falls limp, energy trickling out his body and into the floor. His face has gone pale, arms still, and his breathing becomes steady.

“Well fuck,” Baekhyun curses, pouting gently at the outcome and throwing the cotton pads in the bucket with the dirty rag. He sighs. “This is going to be a long day.”

Three hours later

Taehyung wakes up in the dark. It’s not completely pitch black, but it’s still dark enough that he can’t see his hands in front of him or his current surroundings. He blinks a little, breathing in deeply to regain his composure after a restless sleep, and attempts to sit up. His side burns a little, a jabbing pain coursing up and down his abdomen, and the rest of his body stings with an intense ache and isolated tenderness. He feels something else there plastered on his skin, the rough texture of cloth and tightness of a bandage. He runs his hands over his torso and feels gauze crawling all the way up to his shoulders. He also feels various plasters scattered across his body, most likely covering smaller
wounds that didn’t need so much material to patch up.

He winces, the slight movement he made sending currents down his spine and so he stops trying to get up. His eyes seem to have adjusted to the darkness now, and he’s able to squint and make out the details of large mirrors and a grand ceiling. Beneath him, he feels a soft and bouncy flooring, not quite hard enough to be concrete but not soft enough either to be something deemed comfortable. He gazes towards his left, the faint indications of speakers lining his vision and suddenly things seem to become clearer.

He’s in a dance studio. Yet, for some reason, he has no idea how he got into said dance studio in the first place.

He panics, nerves dancing as he struggles to remember where he is or what happened. His head hurts, throbbing almost, and it creates a hindrance as he tries to recollect his whereabouts.

Suddenly, he hears the sound of a startled sniffle, echoing across the room loud enough to show that the noise is close by. Taehyung freezes, fear consuming his body, and he quiets his breathing to not draw attention to himself.

“Taehyung?”

He jolts. “How do you know my name? Who are you?”

Confusion reeks in the air.

“What are you talking about? It’s me, Baek.”

Memories come flooding back in waves, the actions he took and the events that occurred returning to his mind in a frenzied and spasmodic splatter rather than a gradual trajectory. He winces again.

“Oh right, sorry,” he hesitates, his fingers trembling slightly. “I forgot for a second where I was.”

He hears movement from across the room, a sudden collapse of something heavy falling down (perhaps a stereo or pile of CDs) and then there’s light surging into the studio.
Taehyung squints his eyes, blinking rapidly so his vision can adjust to the abrupt change in brightness, and hugs his stomach.

“I tried to patch you up as best as I could, but you are a lot heavier than you look. Or I’m probably just not strong enough, whatever the case, I’m sorry I couldn’t do a better job.”

Taehyung stares down at his waist again to see the work Baekhyun had done, and he’s surprised by how well it was executed. The bandages are wrapped neatly, tightened in a way that’s not too uncomfortable but still secure enough to stay in place. They smell like cheap medical supplies, but that’s understandable considering the other did technically loot them from some random store.

Sorry, looted them with permission from some random store. Permanently borrowed, that is.

“No, you did a great job,” Taehyung says after a while, breathing in slowly to try and calm his still racing heartbeat. “Thank you. I really can’t express to you how much you’ve helped me in the span of….how many hours has it been?”

“Um, well it’s around four now so I think three hours? I’m not sure since I don’t remember what time it was when I found you but I’m vaguely certain it was around one o’clock since I had just bought a lottery ticket and-” he pauses, then clears his throat. “Sorry, I shouldn’t ramble you probably don’t care. I’d say three hours.”

Taehyung had stopped listening to the other after he had said the word ‘four’ because all he had been thinking following that was the enormous punishment that awaited him once he gets home.

Or, what he likes to call home but isn’t his home. His temporary dysfunctional home? It’s confusing, and he’s unsure himself, but it’s not the orphanage and that’s already a large step in itself.

I only planned to stay out for a few minutes...

“It’s four now? As in four in the afternoon?”

Baekhyun nods his head, pointing at the clock that hangs on the wall for clarification. “Yup, the big four. Sixteen o’clock…fat four zero zero.”
“Fuck,” Taehyung’s eyes widen. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.”

“Judging by your tone of voice and the use of language, I’m guessing that’s a bad thing?”

“Shit.”

“Yeah, I’m definitely getting bad vibes here.”

Taehyung rushes into a sitting position, clutching his side when the movement creates tendrils of pain to crawl up his back and into his throat. He chokes on its invisible grasp, trying desperately to stand up only to fail miserably.

“Woah, woah, I just cleaned like fourteen wounds off your body, not to mention the various bruises that painted your skin as if it were paper. Relax, is there somewhere you need to be?”

Taehyung doesn’t respond, too busy on trying to stand with the crushing weight of impending doom still resting on his shoulders. “Shit.”

“And you’re cursing still…” Baekhyun hesitates, trying to come up with some way to help. His eyes brighten suddenly, but as quickly as they do, then darken in an unexplainable way. “Oh, I see.”

Taehyung runs his hands through his hair, heart now definitely beating in a much quicker and irregular pattern. He’s terrified, absolutely dissolved in fear and panic and distress that he’s worried he may die of fright.

Scratch that, if he doesn’t die of fright he will most certainly die when he goes back home, and so maybe dying now isn’t so much of a bad thing.

*No, I don’t want to die.*

*I don’t want to be alone…*
“Okay, let’s stay calm. Breath, dude, breathe,” Baekhyun shuffles over to the other, face filled with worry and lips shaking a little. His eyes are slightly red, lined with the aftermath of sadness, and Taehyung wonders if Baekhyun had been crying before he had woken up.

“I’m calm, I’m calm,” Taehyung breaths out, holding onto his quivering hands in hopes to make them stop shaking. “I just need a car, or a motorcycle, or a painless way to die.”

Baekhyun shakes his head. “I hope you’re joking, but in any case, you shouldn’t just be waltzing up and running back home. You’re still hurt, and judging from the look on your face, you could get hurt again…Are you sure you don’t want to just stay here?”

Taehyung thinks about it. He doesn’t want to be yelled at or be beat or get wounded anymore. He doesn’t want to feel like an interloper in his own house, and be punished for minuscule mistakes.

However, he also doesn’t want to be alone. It’s his family, his fucked up family, but his family nonetheless. He doesn’t want to be abandoned and he certainly doesn’t want to detach himself from the only thing keeping him company in this world. He can’t stand being isolated, even if the alternative is pain and endless abuse.

“No, I need to go back.”

“Why?” Baekhyun asks in an exasperated way. “You can finally escape, you can be free, why go back?”

Taehyung doesn’t answer him and simply stares at the wall of mirrors that cradles the room. He looks sick, and more than sick, he looks fragile and broken. His skin is pale, the majority of his body marked with blues and purples and the rest wrapped in pink bandages. He looks exactly how he feels, and that scares him. He’s skinny, damaged, blemished, hurt and exhausted. He shouldn’t want to go back, but he can’t stand not to.

He can’t be alone anymore.

“I don’t want to be abandoned, Baek.”

His voice cracks and it comes out quieter than he intended. He hadn’t meant for his voice to sound so weak, and he hadn’t meant to reply either, but his voice betrayed his mind and spoke anyways.
Baekhyun’s eyebrows rise in surprise, another look of pity falling onto his face, and he averts his eyes to the mirrors as well. “You can always start a new family, find new friends and a new place to call home. So you won’t be abandoned.”

Taehyung shakes his head. “You don’t understand. They saved me, I have a home now because of them, I can’t just leave. I don’t want to be alone and I don’t want to abandon them either. How could I? They’re my saviours…I probably deserve it.”

“No, you don’t. Nobody does. You think you owe them your life but you don’t. You can leave, you deserve to..you’ll find someone else, and they’ll take you in and help you find your way.”

“Again, I feel like you’re talking from experience.”

Baekhyun doesn’t try to hide it anymore. “I am…sort of along the lines of that…slightly different situation but I can tell you it was the best decision of my life. Please, you can even stay with me and my partner until you’re able to get back on your feet. I don’t want to see anyone hurt anymore..”

“I appreciate your concern, and I appreciate your help as well, but don’t dictate my life. I know what I’m doing, and I don’t need someone to tell me how to live,” Taehyung looks back at the clock and sighs. “I’m not you. I’m not as strong as you either, and I don’t have it in me to leave…It’s better this way..”

“It’s an addiction. You think everything’s fine underneath because you lie to yourself and associate the pain with your own self-worth but it’s wrong. You don’t have to blame yourself.”

“I’m not blaming myself! Just-” he buries his head in his hands. “They’re all I have!”

Baekhyun is again shocked. Stunned because he hadn’t expected such a desperate response, and also unsettled by the shattered tone beneath it all.

“Thank you again for helping me, you didn’t have to and I’d probably be a mess if you hadn’t found me.” Taehyung lifts his head and gets up from the ground, the pain intense but his stance still steady enough to remain. “I don’t know how I can pay you back for your help, but I think I have some money on me and-”
“You don’t have to pay me,” Baekhyun interrupts, also getting up to meet Taehyung’s eye level. “I’m glad I could’ve helped. I’m just sad I couldn’t convince you not to go back.”

Taehyung sends a sad smile in the other’s direction. “It’s okay, I’m glad you were able to find your own peace, it takes a lotta guts. Whoever saved you is a good guy.”

“Yeah, he really is,” Baekhyun looks off to the ground, smiling dreamily to himself. “I hope to see you again one day, and by that point, I hope you’re doing well.”

“Me too.”

*I’ll probably be dead by then.*

“Goodbye, Taehyung.”

Taehyung walks slowly to the door, peroxide solution in his left hand whilst the other one wraps around his stomach. The pain is subdued to an extent, and he thinks he’ll be able to walk home without too much trouble.

He exits the building and soon things seem to become a lot more familiar. For one, the bench he was leaning against is only a couple meters away from him, still old and boring as ever, and the bucket Baekhyun had cleaned up his puke in still sits idly by it. The shops all look vaguely the same, and Taehyung assumes that the other had dragged him into the nearest open place he could find after he had passed out.

Come to think of it, trailing around in the afternoon is actually pretty peaceful. The sun is gently lowering, the streetlights providing scintillating light that streaks across the road, and with the descending daylight comes a comfortable silence to ease his headache. He thinks carefully to himself, about the events that had occurred and the stranger who had saved him.

*I was rude in the end, but it’s because I panicked.*

Baekhyun was right, and he’s the first person to actually know of Taehyung’s situation and give decent advice. Tae knows he should’ve stayed, and a deep part of him wishes that he did, but the majority of his soul screams at him to go back home.
I liked him. He was nice.

Now that he’s up and moving, his bruises feel worse than before. When he sleeps on wounds it always adds on an undeniable soreness that’s hard to shake off. Sleep always makes the injuries worse, but he can’t focus on that right now, and so he tries his best to swallow it down and keep moving forward. He limps as quickly as his body will allow him past the fields and shops he had run by, and past the streets and discounts he had crossed hours ago. He hopes with every fibre in his being that his step-parents are asleep, unaware of his disappearance and are perfectly content with whatever they’re doing.

He also wishes for a switch to be flipped, his life transforming so he can be welcomed back home with a hug and a comforting smile.

Now I’m just fantasizing the impossible.

He knows it’s practically impossible, but it’s a nice illusion to imagine anyways.

He makes it home at around quarter to five, breathless and tired as well as extremely sore all over. He sighs as he sees the door of his cottage home, all brown and tall but more importantly closed. It means that his step-parents hadn’t been sleeping and that he will definitely be receiving his punishment sometime soon or perhaps as soon as he walks into the vicinity.

He walks quicker, scared at being anymore late than he already is, and turns the same rusty doorknob he had twisted hours ago to escape. His heart sinks when he walks inside, the wafting smell of beer and decay still present and suffocating, and cringes when he hears the familiar voice of his step-father.

He closes the door as quietly as he can, trying to make it back to his room as silently and swiftly as possible to minimise his consequences.

And you know what, he almost makes it without being seen. Between some uncertain chaos in the living room and indecent language coming from the dining room, it seems as if his step-parents are discussing something intensely and are preoccupied. Taehyung slowly makes his way out of the kitchen and stares at the staircase that separates himself from his death sentence and temporary freedom. Maybe he can lie and say he was in his room the entire time. He highly doubts it’ll work, but maybe it’ll do something to help him in any way possible. The only problem currently however, is that between the kitchen and the staircase is the living room, and the living room is occupied by a
rather angry and roaring voice at the moment.

“Well he couldn’t have gone far!”

*Well, there goes my plan for being all discrete.*

Taehyung knew he would receive consequences eventually, and he also knew that he would be punished for leaving, but that still doesn’t dwindle the rising panic that’s sparkling in his chest. Out of desperation, he makes the first step, applying as little pressure as possible to quiet his footsteps. His sole touches the concrete, the base of his shoe doing no more than brushing the ground, and then he uses his other foot to make the next step. He can see his step-father out of the corner of his eye, only a couple feet away from him but still hidden by various objects. If he’s careful and quick, Tae won’t have to interact with him.

He’s doing pretty well, and soon a quarter of the way becomes half of the way, and half of the way becomes three quarters of the way. He’s almost reached his beloved stairs, and he makes the foolish decision of having hope.

However, just as he thought safety was within his grasp, fate definitely had other plans.

Upon setting his foot on the ground, his step-father tilts his head, an inch to the right and almost [*directly*](http://example.com) meeting Tae’s alarmed and frightened eyes. It’s almost in slow-motion, where his father meets his figure, peering with vengeance and breathing actual fury.

*And there’s my death sentence.*

Tae can see the anger, rage and *hatred* seeping out of the other’s stare, scrutinizing him on the spot in both surprise and wrath. He can feel the heaves of his step-father’s chest, burning with so much pent-up vexation and sinister movement, quite frankly awaiting the chance to pounce.

Taehyung freezes, terror soon overtaking his body, and he has two seconds to formulate what is going on before his step-father no longer appears so far away.

Then his back is against the wall. He feels the impact of the shove well after he’s been smashed into the wood, the collision reopening and worsening every bruise and lesion on his body. He cries out, tears brimming at the corner of his eyes, and he looks up at his step-father’s face that’s just inches
away from him. The smile that he holds, that dark and ominous smile that emerges from his stepfather’s face will probably haunt Taehyung for life, as it’s the expression of pure satisfaction and monstrous desire.

“You shouldn’t have come back.”

He grabs Taehyung’s face, grip unbearably tight and uncomfortable, and slams it again into the wall, probably giving him a concussion or at least a massive headache that’ll last awhile. Tae struggles to stay upright, legs buckling under the weight of the crash but his step-father holds him up so that he doesn’t sink to the floor.

“Who the fuck do you think you are? You think you can just waltz out of here, breaking yet another rule, and then come back.”

A slap is thrown flat on his cheek, the sting not as bad as the pain in his head, but still sharp enough to thicken the tears in his eyes.

“What were the rules?” His step-father tightens his hold. “What were the rules we established.”

Taehyung chokes, trying to muster up the strength to breathe and speak, but finds it increasingly difficult. The bottle of disinfectant in his hand slips and lands on the floor, spilling over and drenching the room with a medicinal smell.

“A..Always be on..time.”

The grip loosens. “The next one.”

A lump forms in Tae’s throat and he can’t swallow it down no matter how hard he tries. “No talk..ing back.”

He’s shoved a little harder into the wall, his bruises squeezing together. “Next.”

“No help.”
He doesn’t realise he’s crying until his voice hitches, liquid streaking his stinging cheek and down his chin. He’s slapped again.

“No crying.”

Taehyung nods his head, remembering the fourth rule that had been so integrated into his mind.

It’s to never show weakness, which means, never to cry.

“No crying.”

“No escaping and no snitching.”

The grip tightens. “One at a time,” his step-father growls, kneeling Taehyung in the stomach so that he doubles over. He winces, more tears dropping off his face, and he subconsciously lowers his head into the other’s iron hold as if to hide his vulnerability.

“No escaping,” Tae gasps out, voice strained with pain. He cringes when he’s yet again thrown into the wall, magnifying the ache that’s spreading through his entire body.

“And the next one.”

“No snitching.”

His face is released and with it the support that’s holding up his body. He slumps to the ground, head rolling up and eyes drooping. He sees his step-father through blurred vision and wipes some more
tears that are dripping down to his lips.

“And what’s the final, most enforced rule, that we insist?”

Why do you say we when it’s just you who demands it?

Taehyung doesn’t want to say it. He can’t because his voice has pretty much left him at this point, but even if he could, he’d still refrain from doing it.

“Huh? What do we say byeong-shin.”

The reason Taehyung is so awkward and taken aback when somebody asks for his name is because he’s never actually called by his name at home. It varies, but the preferred title he is given is byeong-shin, which roughly translates to “retard” or “idiot”.

Honestly, why even have a name at this point if they aren’t going to use it? Taehyung knows that his birth mother had named him before sending him to the orphanage, but he’s vaguely surprised that his step-parents hadn’t tried to legally change it to ‘stupid’ or something yet.

He forgets how to reply, forehead hot and neck littered with unpleasant goosebumps. He feels horrible, sick even, and maybe the chills and fever he’s experiencing are due to some extremely poorly timed cold.

“I asked you a question.”

He’s back against the wall, a crushing weight restricting his throat and he fights for oxygen. The tears he had been trying to stop from spilling slowly begin overflowing again, and he sobs before he has the chance to stop himself.

Don’t make me say it.

His step-father curses. “How are you going to learn if you don’t obey?”
Taehyung attempts to loosen the choking hold by wrapping his fingers over the hands that captivate him, but his actions are halted with a sharp kick. He whimpers, knees buckling again, and closes his lips together to prevent another sound of weakness from escaping.

“I have no…” Taehyung’s voice leaves him, interrupted by a cry of discomfort.

“Finish the sentence.”

He cries with a throaty call for help.

“..Freedom,” Tae chokes out, wincing harshly.

“Say it as a full sentence.”

He sobs. “I have...no...freedom.”

The pressure releases all at once and for the billionth time today Taehyung falls to the ground.

“Good, good, there see? That wasn’t so hard.”

Taehyung looks up with pleading eyes, hoping that his step-father will grow tired and leave him be. He feels a hand in his hair, brushing out the strands that had fallen in his face, and then his eyes meet another set of brown eyes.

It only comes to Taehyung’s attention now that he had broken all of those rules today, which means he won’t be let off so easily.

“What happens when we break these rules, hm?”

Tae averts his gaze. “Punishment.”
“So, you understand.”

His step-father’s tone is back to menacing, and suddenly, Tae’s hair is being pulled in an aggressive and painful way.

Beer-stained breath reaches his nostrils and he grimaces.

“You understand, yet you still decided to go against them. Do you know why we have these rules, byeong-shin?” His step-father pauses, tugging Tae’s head up so that their faces are inches apart. “So that you learn discipline, and if you break these rules, consequences must follow.”

He’s let go, and relief floods his veins as his body is given a temporary rest. His arms shake on the floor, entire being trembling with a burning aftermath. He’d do anything to make the pain stop.

His step-father, who had apparently left him for a couple seconds, returns later with a glass bottle in his hand. This time, his step-mother is also present, an unreadable expression plastered on her face. By custom, the bottle doesn’t scare Taehyung anymore; he’s used to it. He knows it’ll hurt, but he also knows that it won’t be permanent, so his heart slows down a bit.

Nonetheless, he still gives out one last teary-eyed stare directed at his step-mother, hoping to awaken some sympathy within her, but she just looks away.

_I hate you._

Sweat rolls down the back of his neck and he shifts some weight over to try and alleviate the throbbing in his side. It helps a little but not enough.

His step-father crouches down beside him once again.

“I see you have bandages,” he starts, voice tight and unpredictable. Taehyung should’ve taken them off before coming inside. “What did we say about hospitals or getting help? I thought I’d made myself clear, but obviously not.”

Taehyung shakes his head, muttering apologies in hopes that it’ll prevent another beating. “It wasn’t
a doctor it was some random stranger I met on the sidewalk,” he pauses to catch his breath, flinching in the process. “It was just a friend..I swear.”

Taehyung is surprised that he considers Baekhyun a friend. Granted, he did save his life, but still, Taehyung doesn’t have friends.

It just isn’t in his nature.

“As if I’d believe a lie as stupid as that.”

He rips the material away from Taehyung's skin, digging past gauze to reach the wound. Tae cries out, pain spiking up his ribcage, and he turns his head away as the bandages are completely removed from his torso. His stomach glares with blood and blue, body glazed with a sort of toxic hue, and he bites down his scream of anguish. His step-dad grabs his neck so that his head is pointed uncomfortably upward, pulling a little harsher than usual.

“You’ve broken every single rule today, ah I’m disappointed. I really thought we were getting somewhere with all the lessons, but I thought too highly of you,” he spits on his face. “You disgust me.”

Taehyung knows he did, and he expected this, but somehow hearing it straight to his face hurts more than he thought it would.

“I’m sorry.”

“No, no, shh, don’t be sorry.” His step-father almost seems sympathetic. “How can you be? The fun hasn’t even started yet.”

Taehyung pales, quite literally gulping down a scream, and looks again at his step-mother.

Don’t abandon me.

She isn’t even looking at him.
Before he can really comprehend what’s about to happen, something loud shatters on his head, making his ears ring with the intensity. He’s surprised that he doesn’t yell, but it’s mainly due to the fact that the pain hasn’t set in it. Once it *does*, however, things start to get a lot less promising.

He can feel blood seep down his scalp and mingle with the tears in his eyes.

“This is the image of forgiveness. Do you want to be forgiven?”

Taehyung nods his head, clenching his eyes shut and to keep out the blood. The salt burns.

“Good,” his step-father smiles. “But forgiveness takes sacrifice.”

*I don’t care what you do, just make the pain stop.*

Glass is hurtled at his face again, this time missing his forehead by mere inches. Taehyung flinches, awaiting the searing sting, but is relieved when he gets none.

“It’s not the pain that I find distinguished, but the expression you make when you *think* you’re going to be hit. That is true discipline.”

Tae shudders, face gripped yet again by a strong fist. “However, that is a lesson for another time. You know you deserve this.”

Taehyung nods his head again.

The tears flow a little harder, both sadness and fright absorbing him in an enthralled trance. He sniffs softly, trying to stop the whimpers that leaves his mouth but gives up once the strength becomes too much to hold.

*I want my mom.*
He thinks this a lot in situations like these. He knows he doesn’t mean it, nor does he actually want to see his birth mother who had abandoned and betrayed him. She left him. However, at the same time, this deep feeling within him tells him that she wouldn’t have done this.

She wouldn’t have done this, would she?

Suddenly, his step-mother is by his side, grabbing the partially broken glass bottle from his step-dad’s hands and holding it tightly.

Tae thinks for a slight second, for a fraction of a moment, that she’s here to finally save him, to snatch away the weapon before it can be used against him.

However, that isn’t the case.

“You burden us. You don’t deserve this life. I’ll make sure that from now on, all you will see is black on black.”

Something smashes against his face.

He doesn’t remember much after that.

He feels indescribable pain, an agony he’s never experienced to such an extent, and then his voice leaves him. His face is eaten by a concentrated pang so prominent that he feels like he could die on the spot.

*If only death would come claim me.*

It would be an alleviation.

He sees a blinding black, which is odd because how can darkness be so bright and vivid? The more the black spreads, the more the pain increases, and he tries to scream but is unable to.

*It’s too much.*
His ears feel blocked and stuffed with cloth, the voices of his step-parents so dull to the point that he thinks he’s gone deaf.

And the smell, that pungent and overwhelming air, is rotten with irony crimson.

Perhaps he’s crying, or maybe he’s bleeding, there’s so much liquid on his face that he feels splattered with paint or oil. He can’t move, he can’t breathe or understand.

*I should’ve listened to Baekhyun.*

He tries to open his eyes, the source of the unbearable pain, but is surprised to realise that they aren’t closed at all. In fact, when he tries to close his eyes it feels as if every needle in the world is tearing at his skin, stabbing his pupils and ripping away at his eyelashes. He refrains from moving.

*Abandonment is better than this…*

He finally finds his voice, and the scream he emanates is nothing short of piercing. His chest feels sore from sobbing, his throat hoarse from the cries, and his cheeks feel beyond wet with some tormented substance. It’s *burning*.

He focuses on pinpointing his sight towards something, anything to actually see where he is, and almost dies from relief as a blur of colours makes its way through his painful vision. It fades in and out, flickering between bleached pigments and everlasting darkness, and he’s consumed with fear.

*What happened?*

His shoulders feel ten times heavier, his head an anchor and his eyes the gateway to hell.

He wants to die.

Never in his life had he experience a pain this bad. It’s augmented, growing and growing until it’s the only thing he can even think of. It expands in every direction, smouldering a path of pure
suffering, and he soon loses the ability to breathe.

Choking, he uses the wall as support, entire being sinking into the floor so that his bones are connected to the cracked concrete. He feels the sharpness of glass encase him, framing his bruised body and puncturing through flesh. The puddle of peroxide infiltrates his skin.

This is where I die.

He suddenly discerns the events that had just taken place. The sound, the glass, the pain, he understands now but by some means that’s worse. He can’t believe it. He doesn’t want to believe it. They couldn’t do that, she couldn’t have done such a thing it’s not-

Human.

He’s panicking, and when he panics he can’t breathe and now that he can’t breathe he’s panicking. It’s a continuous cycle, much like his pain, and there isn’t anything he can do except take it.

Submit to it.

Allow it to engulf and demolish him.

He slips into unconsciousness, partially because of lack of oxygen but mostly because the intensity of pain begins to reach a point of unbearable amounts. He feels heavy yet weightless, body floating between life and afterlife. He thinks he can hear bells.

Ringing and ringing, louder and louder, until…they stop.

He hears nothing, air now bereft of noise. That or possibly his ears have stopped working too, but he no longer hears death calling his name.

Unfortunately.

He struggles to stay awake, fighting sleep because he knows if he does it’ll only worsen his injuries.
However, another part of him also *wants* to lose consciousness, because at least then the pain will stop. He just wants to make it all *stop*, the pain, the suffering, the never-ending doom that showers him in crystallised hail.

He lets go.

His toes go numb first, crawling up a trail until his calves turn off and his thighs fall like steel bars. Next are his hips, switching off and melting into the floor, betraying all previous efforts of strength and density. His abdomen dulls, the pain now in a distant reality, and his chest soon feels heavy with immobility. Then, his arms collapse, drifting into a space untouched by his monsters, and then his hands lose all functions of tactility. He feels his head drop, his neck giving up, shoulders loosening and cheeks slacking in relief. He notices his skin tingle and then halt, singeing away feeling like an extinguished candle and then…

Nothing. He feels no more, and that is alright for now.

Before he completely dissolves into the ground, dissociating from his body and with the world entirely, something sparks in him. It ignites his soul before crashing down, something small but incredibly distinct. A thought.

He doesn’t want to stay here anymore.

He doesn’t want to *be* here anymore. Not in this place, and certainly not with these people.

He smiles to himself, the slight muscle movement making every nerve in his face prick and blaze, but he doesn’t care.

*They saved me, but they also broke me.*

It’s taken him a while to realise that he’s already *been* abandoned by them. The second they had laid their hands on him, marking his body with something worse than red, they had abandoned his very being, isolating pain from love. But now that he knows, it relieves him in a way.

*If I’ve already been abandoned…why am I still here?*
Sleep overtakes him.

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Chapter Summary

medical results, texts, and...vulnerability? It's a bundle of emotions for everyone.

–

Chapter Notes

hey! did you miss me :))

first i'd like to say a VERY VERY late happy new year! and happy holidays haha. If you follow me on insta you'll know the gist of why I disappeared for awhile and actually the truth is I hadn't meant to. I planned to post twice back in December but the chapters ended up being shit so I discarded them. I really wanted to treat u all for the holidays but geez they were so bad and I couldn't even finish proof reading them.

I couldn't really get through this chapter either cause it kept sounding awful but suddenly I finally started writing things that I was okay with so that's why it's so late. I'd like to say everything’s going great, however, that would be a lie haha.

I'll still try to update tho, i mean better late than never right? I've made a commitment to this story and I'm planning to give it my all!

I'm sorry for being lousy with the updates, and I'll try my hardest to improve the frequency of my chapters. thank you for being patient anyways and always leaving words of encouragement, you guys seriously make my day.

here's your well-deserved long af chapter, sooo happy reading!

さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Your medical results came back.”

Taehyung bolts up from the couch he’s sitting on, interest peaking at an alarming rate and replacing his previous state of absolute boredom.

It’s Saturday and that means there’s no school. Most people would rejoice to this idea, assignments truly an overwhelming hassle everyone tries to defeat rather than wish for, but Taehyung is different. He misses having the turmoil in his head that isn’t directed towards his personal matters but instead projects and numerical information that don’t mean as much in the long run. His sanity in the
meantime does matter in the future, and he’s praying for a day where he isn’t questioning his feelings and scrutinizing his actions to death.

“Took them long enough, they said one week and it’s been almost four geez,” Taehyung wipes his hands on his pants, some nervousness brewing in his chest. “Then again, I’m not surprised, the hospital’s always done that…although this time has been a little longer than usual,” he shrugs his shoulders. “What does it say?”

Yoongi traces across the room, sitting down in a quiet sigh right beside Tae. His hands shift the letter carefully, as if debating whether to read it or not.

“I haven’t opened it yet.”

Silence.

Yoongi fidgets in his seat, opening his mouth but then closing it again as he tries to elaborate how nervous he actually feels. He inhales sharply.

“…Well if you don’t move then I’m pretty sure it’s going to remain unopened,” Taehyung leans back against the cushions. “Stop stalling! You don’t even know if it’s bad yet.”

“Yet.”

His nerves heighten.

“Don’t be like that.” Taehyung folds his hands together and makes a unique gesture. “I’m sure it’s fine, c’mon what’s the worst that could happen?”

“It could say you’re dying.”

Taehyung pales, frowning harshly, then huffs out an annoyed sigh. He hits the other square in the stomach.
“Ow!” Yoongi clenches his abdomen, letter almost slipping from his hands. “What was that for?”

“Don’t scare me you asshole!”

“I wasn’t trying to scare you—”

“I’m sure it’s going to be fine so stop freaking me out!”

Taehyung pouts childishly and crosses his arms over his chest, letting out another grumble as he sinks more into the sea of pillows.

Yoongi laughs, some tension loosening. “Okay, okay, you’re right. I’m sorry, fine I’ll open the letter.”

The sound of paper shuffling reaches Taehyung’s ears and his heart stutters a little out of fear.

What if it’s bad?

There’s a tearing noise, paper splitting between ringed fingers, and then something is being flipped.

“Wait!” Taehyung yells.

Yoongi jumps, startled by the other’s outburst. “Fucking hell! What is it now? Don’t tell me you have a problem with how I’m opening it?”

“No, just..” Taehyung hesitates, intertwining his hands with his own in a nervous habit. “Don’t open it so quickly and so loudly, it’s like a marching band in here.”

“Taehyung what are you on about, just let me read the damn thin-”

“Here let me open it.”
“You’re blind how are you going to even read it?”

“I said I was going to open it not read it!” Taehyung sits up a little more, having dipped considerably lower into the depth of the velvety couch. “It’s less nerve wracking when I know what’s going on.”

It clicks inside Yoongi’s brain that Taehyung must be fairly afraid of the results too. Probably more than he initially thought, and the realisation makes his features soften a little.

“Okay.”

He passes the envelope to Tae, guiding the others hands to find the seal before showing him where to open the letter. Taehyung nods his head out of familiarity, brushing his own fingers against the paper until an unfolded sheet is staring back up at him.

It’s a one-sided stare.

“What does it say?” Taehyung asks after a while, eyes wandering through words rather than across them.

Yoongi takes a moment to read the contents of the letter, absorbing the information in a silence so eerie, Taehyung feels agitated just by hearing the other breathe.

Then, he hears an exhale.

“I can’t believe it..” Yoongi trails off, the emotion in his tone undecipherable.

“What? Is it bad? It’s bad, isn’t it? Shit, this is probably the worst time to tell you this but remember that text you got from Hobi last week? Well, I may or may not have responded and I was going to tell you and all but I figured you’d probably kill me but considering I’m dying you can’t really do that now cause it’s already happening. Another plus, since I’m dying you can’t really get mad at me either so I mean, I did technically do you a favour just don’t check your messages, and while you’re at it, don’t check your phone in general cause-”
“Taehyung, would you shut up,” he smiles brightly, his tone now more evident than before.

He’s happy?

“Well could you just tell me what the letter says already?!”

“You’re gonna live. Better yet, the tests are normal. They’re normal! Everything’s fine with you, which means we don’t have to worry anymore.” Yoongi sighs again, relief coating each syllable.

It takes awhile for the information to process in Taehyung’s mind.

Everything’s..normal?

His worries are alleviated, his own sigh of happiness dwindling his other thoughts and doubts.

“Dammit you scared me! Okay, I take back what I said about the Hobi thing.”

“Are you kidding me? You replied? Dude, that’s a low blow, you can’t just drop that bomb on me just before I open your goddamn letter.”

Despite his words, Yoongi still beams with a certain happiness.

“Yeah it was, but I panicked. I thought directing my attention to something else that I’ve been worrying about would subdue the worry I was feeling at the moment but I guess it just amplified it…”

“You think? Anyways, your tactic worked. I’m not mad, but that does depend on what you responded with though.”

Taehyung smiles sheepishly. “Aha..um on second thought, maybe let’s just forget I said anything.”
“Tae!”

“You weren’t going to respond so I had to take initiative! Come on, you can’t leave him hanging after he asks such a genuine question. Admit it, he’s into you.”

Yoongi sighs. “You don’t understand, he’s not. We just go way back.”

“Maybe I’d understand if you’d tell me how you two know each other. Or why stuff became weird in the first place.”

“It’s a boring story, all you do have to know is how to keep your smartass mouth shut.”

“I’m helping you out!”

“You think you’re helping me out.”

“I know that I’m helping you out, you’re just too stubborn to accept it.”

He sticks out his tongue.

“Geez, you immature little-”

“Sooooo, what do the results say exactly?” Taehyung interrupts excitedly, a clear attempt to change the topic.

“You really are a pain, aren’t you?” Yoongi chuckles, ruffling the other’s hair in an annoyingly endearing way. Taehyung huffs through his nose in response. Nonetheless Yoongi answers. “They have a bunch of doctor terms that quite frankly even I don’t understand, but the report says that the X-rays turned out normal, no crooked bones or errors in your skull or anything. Your brain scans were also normal, and you don’t have any tumours which is definitely good,” he trails off, trying to skim through the rest of the text to find any more significant information. “They took some blood tests just to be sure and those turned out alright, although you do have a slight iron deficiency, nothing to be too concerned of they say, but if you feel apprehensive about it they can always have you come back.”
“Going back to the hospital? I’ll pass.”

“That’s what I thought you’d say,” he pauses, reading the transcript over again. “And yeah, that’s pretty much it I believe. Pretty good results if you ask me. This is a good thing, we’re really moving on from what happened to you now. I’m happy.”

Taehyung smiles. “Me too.”

*I’m happy that you’re happy.*

Yoongi sniffs gently, blinking rapidly as he tries to hide his emotion.

“Are you…crying?”

Yoongi scoffs. “I’m not *crying* you idiot, I’m just…emotional I guess. It’s the first good news we’ve had in a while and I’m just relieved that it says you’re getting better. You deserve to have a good life.”

“Don’t get soft on me now,” Taehyung blushes with embarrassment, not really used to seeing the other cry. It’s not like Yoongi doesn’t cry, it’s just that he doesn’t do so often, and seeing him display such a vulnerable feeling is making Taehyung feel emotional as well. He smiles with a blinding sincerity. “I never thought a day like this would actually come believe it or not.”

“Oh, I believe it. Honestly, I was expecting something completely different, so I’m glad my speculations were wrong.”

“Now I feel like I was all nervous for nothing. Kind of an anti-climactic situation, don’t you think?”

“A little, but hey I’m not complaining. I was certain you were gonna die there for a second.”

“Wow, gee, thanks.”
“Well, you did concern me at that dinner and all… I expected the worst…”

It only comes to Taehyung’s attention now how nervous Yoongi has actually been. Why Yoongi had cried a little in relief once he realised everything was okay. He had been worried sick for weeks now, struggling probably more than he let himself show. Taehyung feels guilty that he had made the other so anxious, especially when he hadn’t known he was causing the other such dismay.

“I’m sorry I made you worry, hyung.”

“Now look who’s getting soft,” Yoongi hits him softly with a pillow. “Don’t fret about it, it’s my job to worry about you.”

I wish it wasn’t.

“And it’s my job to reprimand you for doing so.”

Yoongi hums as a response, folding the letter and putting it aside so that it no longer glares at him.

There’s a couple seconds of comfortable silence, the recent events sinking into both boys as they reflect on the contents of that letter.

I’m really going to be okay.

Taehyung can’t help the smile that takes over his face.

“Are you going bowling with us tonight?” Yoongi then asks, getting up from the couch to get something from the fridge.

“It’s tonight?”

“Jin only did say so a billion times. Also, wasn’t it you and one of your friends’ who decided to re-organise it?”
“Oh, right…It was mostly his idea.”

Taehyung hadn’t thought about it, and he’s unsure if he really wants to go.

_I just found out I’m not dying, the least I could do is celebrate._

Yoongi comes back with a glass of wine in his hand, its aroma wandering through the air in pungent whiffs. It smells sharp and tart with the lingering taste of grapes.

“Are you seriously having a drink at this hour? It’s barely noon.”

“It’s never too early to drink. Besides, we have your health to commemorate today. Calls for a toast.”

“You act as if I’m a war veteran.”

“With what you’ve endured, I’m sure you can be appraised as such.”

Taehyung goes silent, a little unnerved at the suggested meaning behind the other’s words.

“Yeah..”

Yoongi notices his discomfort and falters as he tries to change the topic.

The…events, if one can call them that, that happened to Taehyung six years ago aren’t ones he’d like to remember. He doesn’t like to focus on it for too long because it’s like reliving it. The dreams are bad enough, not to mention his so-called episodes, so drawing attention to his past in a completely normal situation destabilises him.

“I didn’t mean to-” Yoongi stumbles over his words. “I’m sorry for bringing that up.”
“It’s okay,” Taehyung smiles, trying to swallow down his unease as best as possible. His heart strains a little in his chest, memories coaxing their way up his spine and into his neck. He really tries to stop the faces from appearing in his mind, trying to let time fade them away forever, but it’s hard. He clears his throat. “So, about the bowling thing..I’d like to go.”

_They’re not here anymore so I shouldn’t be afraid._

“Really? Don’t feel pressured to go if you don’t want to. I mean we’d love to have you join us but if you’re doing it just to make us happy, then really it’s fine.”

“No, I genuinely want to. No lies, I’m being honest, I _promise_. Plus, who else is going to make sure you make a move tonight?”

“Funny that you’d assume such a thing.”

“It’s funnier that you think I’m joking.”

He laughs. “What’s your obsession with Hoseok and I anyways?”

Taehyung ponders over it. “I guess…I just want you to be happy, and I think that he makes you happy therefore I want something to happen. Taking care of me your whole life does _not_ sound like an ideal future. I also have the dating radar of the century, no literally, so I can mostly tell if someone’s into someone else. He _likes_ you, so just ask him out.”

He downs his drink and sighs, clearing his throat in the process. “You’re really going to get me drunk at this rate.”

“Gosh you’re almost as bad at feelings than me, and I’m practically allergic to them.”

“Speaking of, isn’t it a little hypocritical for you to tell me to ask Hobi out even though you can’t confess to Jeongguk-ssi either?”

Yoongi quirks his eyebrows in victory.
“T-that’s different!” Taehyung stammers, blush spreading further past his cheeks. “I don’t want to feel this way for him, for anyone really, it’s…weird.”

“Of course it’s going to be weird, it’s something you can’t control. But that doesn’t mean you should try to destroy your feelings. If it were anyone else, I’d say go for it.”

Taehyung frowns gently. “If it were anyone else?”

“I never liked Jeongguk-ssi.”

“Yoongi!” Taehyung laughs, partially confused. “Why not? And stop being so formal, you guys aren’t strangers anymore.”

“He’s childish. He irritates me.”

“I’m childish.”

“Yes, sometimes, but it’s cute.”

Taehyung makes a sarcastic gesture with his hands, leaning his gaze to the side. “He’s not so bad.”

“Of course you’d think that. You like him.”

“Okay, I think like is a little bit of a stretch—”

“You like him.”

Taehyung slumps in defeat, clenching his lips between his teeth. “So I might hold some different feelings for him…It’s not like I want to. I barely know him.”
“It’s been almost a month?”

“That’s not a lot of time!”

“True, and I guess love at first sight is improbable in the situation,” he exhales. “Still, I don’t like him.”

“You haven’t told me yet why you don’t completely like him though.”

Yoongi’s careful with his words. “Can’t one simply dislike another person?”

“Yeah but I know you. You don’t normally dislike someone unless there’s a significant reason.”

“Normally.”

“Is it because you’re worried he might be some sort of psycho killer?”

Yoongi laughs quietly. “Trust me, he is not the psycho killer type. You need to have a brain to be one.”

“Hey! He’s smart. Plus, that could be all a part of his plan,” Taehyung waves his hands dramatically. “It’s always the ones you least expect.”

“You want me to think he’s a psycho?”

“Well, no…But it’s easier to think that’s why you don’t like him rather than it be something else.”

“To be entirely honest, I don’t like him because I don’t trust him, and I don’t trust him because I don’t truly know him.”

“Then you should get to know him!”
“Ehh, I’d rather not.”

“You don’t trust people in general but I feel like you’re being especially cold to him.”

Yoongi sighs. “Taehyung, there are two things I value in this world more than anything else. One, is trust, and the other is you. Mingle those two together and I’m bound to have at least some hostility.”

Tae stammers over such a blatantly honest answer. “I didn’t know you thought all that about me…”

“Point is, as much as I want you to be happy I also want you to be safe.”

“Yeah, I know…I appreciate that, but you should still give him a chance.”

“Alright fine, he’s got one chance.”

Yoongi suppresses a brazen grin, drinking his drink quietly whilst trying not to let his sly expression show.

Taehyung smiles, then frowns softly. “Wait, was this all just an elaborate ruse to get me to acknowledge my feelings for him?”

“If you’d like to think of it that way.”

“You can’t catch me off guard like that!”

“You’re one to talk! You texted Hoseok without my knowledge. Plus, you were defending Jeongguk, it’s clear that you’ve acknowledged your feelings. I was just trying to nudge you towards that conclusion. Still don’t like him though.”

“Really? I think you’re warming up to him.”
“I’m not!” Yoongi crosses his arms. “You told me not to be so formal..”

Taehyung laughs. “Well I guess I am learning to acknowledge it, if only slightly. I’m not good with this sort of stuff.”

“You’re fine, you just aren’t used to it. Isn’t it time for you to have some happiness in your life?”

“I already have you.”

“As much as that is sweet, you shouldn’t let that stop you from exploring something new,” he pauses. “It’s weird because although I don’t like him I want you to experience this sort of thing...I’m conflicted between your happiness and your well-being.”

“You sound just like an overprotective brother. Like those ones in dramas,” Taehyung snickers.

“I can’t believe you just compared me to something so trivial.”

“It’s not a bad thing!”

“Yeah, yeah...I’ll admit, maybe I am a little overprotective.”

“It’s sweet.”

Yoongi smacks the other’s shoulder. “Don’t get soft on me.”

“You started it.”

Yoongi scoffs. “Childish.”
Taehyung smiles widely, shifting his position so that he’s sitting upright. “What time’s bowling, anyway?”

“You change the subject as if it’s nothing every five minutes. I can barely keep up.”

He smirks. “Maybe you’re getting old.”

“Do you want to die, brat?”

“Come onnn, answer the question.”

“It’s at six.”

He beams triumphantly. “We should get ready!”

“…It’s in six hours?”

“So? If we don’t want to be late, knowing how long you take, we should start earlier.”

“How long I take? What about you?”

“Technically I can’t see how I look so I don’t spend that much time focusing on my appearance. Although, I must say that the feel of the outfit is extremely important.”

“Gosh, you’re ridiculous.”

“In the best way possible!”

“Do you want me to run you into another door?”
Taehyung laughs nervously. “You’re joking, right?” He pauses at Yoongi’s silence. “Right?!”

“Guess you’ll have to find out.”

“Look who’s being childish now!”

Yoongi smiles softly, happy with Taehyung’s continuous energetic state at the moment. He had been worried, and even then, worried is a severe understatement. It seemed as if the other had been conflicted, ever since the dinner really, and Yoongi had wanted to confront him about his change in behaviour before it escalated into something much bigger.

But now it seems he’s better.

Yoongi remains attentive however, just in case it’s a façade, which is likely when dealing with someone as complex as Tae.

“You went all silent, what’s wrong?”

Yoongi tilts his head up, getting out of his own thoughts. “Nothing’s wrong. Just happy that things are going well.”

He hopes nothing’s wrong at least. He has a nagging feeling, a small but distinct feeling that things aren’t as great as they appear.

“Softie,” Taehyung mutters.

Yoongi chuckles gently. “Just this once.”

_Just this once, I want things to finally be okay._
They still end up being late.

Whose fault it was is debatable, however, one could guess who is largely to blame.

...It was Taehyung.

Granted, they hadn’t gotten ready when they said they would. Yoongi had decided to take a nap instead, after a long and tiresome week, and Taehyung had amused himself by contemplating over his life decisions whilst squinting into the oblivion.

Oh, and thinking about a certain person that’s undeniably been on his mind for almost a month now.

It’s like the more he tries to stop thinking about Jeongguk, the more he ends up actually thinking about him, and the more he tries to understand, the more confusing it all becomes. He wants to swallow up these strange feelings but also pinpoint what exact emotion they hold.

He can’t love the guy, right?

Taehyung shakes his head at the idea. Although slightly aware of his sexual orientation, he’s never been attracted to anyone, let alone a person he’s only known for so little. Maybe he’s once liked the idea of dating guys, but he shouldn’t be attracted to anyone, he can’t be, and so he’s thought that he would remain single all of his life. He wanted to remain single, but now, things are different.

It’s not like Jeongguk’s done anything in particular either, right? Sure he’s been nice to him, made him laugh, made him smile…comforted him, helped him, cared for him, made him happy.

Made the pain stop.

Taehyung shudders. Now that he’s reflecting on it, Jeongguk has done a lot, but still, all just in the span of a month.

But wouldn’t that make it more impactful? He’s done all these things in this short time span, and because what, he’s a good person? Why even bother?
Taehyung groans and pinches his nose in frustration, arising a confused remark from Yoongi as they make their way to the entrance of the bowling alley.

“What’s making you so hot and bothered?” Yoongi asks, laughing a little at the other’s intense internal debate.

Taehyung flushes. “It’s not like that.”

“Oh really? So, you’re just sighing into the wind for dramatic effect? Come on, what’s up.”

“Just a little nervous to go bowling.”

It’s not completely a lie. Taehyung is nervous to go bowling, but the only reason why he’s nervous is because he knows he’s going to be with Jeongguk, and interacting with the other whilst having this dilemma seems impossible at the moment.

“I can still take you back if you don’t want to go.”

Taehyung shakes his head. “No, no, I want to go. I’m just not used to being out all the time, but I want to make an effort.”

Yoongi smiles. “Okay.”

They reach the front door, the small jingle of a bell announcing their presence as they open it, and walk into the premises. Yoongi guides Tae gently, hanging onto his sleeve as if to serve as an anchor or lifebelt, and heads over to the double doors that lead to the actual bowling lanes. He’s made it two feet before he’s stopped, however, by a rather enthusiastic greeting by the only and only Jung Hoseok.

“Yoongiiiiii!”

Hoseok runs towards him, enveloping his smaller frame in a tight hug and breathes in a sigh of
content. Yoongi appears startled himself, choking on his own surprise and leans into the hug before muttering something in Hoseok’s ear. Hoseok bursts into laughter, whatever Yoongi said proving to be undeniably hilarious, and says something about the new generation of kids. In the chaos, however, Taehyung’s sleeve is ripped out of the other’s grip, and Yoongi grasps at thin air in hopes to find where he had been unintentionally pushed away. Tae stumbles a little, losing his balance, but manages to stop from falling over when his back runs into a considerably firm pillar.

No, not a pillar, a person.

He jumps in surprise, turning around quickly to apologise to whomever he disrespected but is even more stunned to feel two strong arms keep him in place. He struggles a little against the hold, afraid because he doesn’t know who’s touching him but even more so because someone’s touching him in the first place.

“Hey, let me go, I-”

And then he’s also being hugged. His eyes widen beneath his sunglasses, alarmed as he feels the figure’s shirt underneath his hands and flustered when he finally realises who the person is.

“Jeongguk?”

“Did I surprise you?”

Taehyung wants to distance himself, attempting to push off from the other’s chest, but Jeongguk glues his body onto his instead.

“You scared me you dickhead!”

Jeongguk laughs. “Well, you did run into me.”

“Blame Hoseok over there for suffocating the person I was holding on to,” he grumbles incoherently. “He just ran over there like I didn’t even exist!”

Upon mentioning it, Jeongguk turns around at where Yoongi and Hoseok stand, turning Taehyung
in the process, and Jeongguk’s surprised to see that the other two are still hugging. As if noticing their stare, Yoongi steps back from where he was being held and turns to them as well, embarrassed indefinitely but also smug in a way.

Right… Taehyung is still being encapsulated by his own hug as well.

Taehyung, in a clever attempt to escape from the other’s arms, catches Jeongguk by surprise by relaxing into his grip, seemingly innocent and at ease before bolting away in a desperate attempt to save his dignity and pride. His heart is beating wildly, face brimming with red, and he can feel the intensity of Yoongi’s stare plummeting into his back without even having to ponder over it.

“Oi, lovebirds stop flirting in the lobby!” Hoseok calls out, laughing childishly to himself as he nuzzles Yoongi’s head softly with the palm of his hand. He beams with a bright smile, one that even Taehyung can vaguely sense, and suddenly the atmosphere of the room is ten times brighter.

Jeongguk seems to blush more profusely, grabbing onto Taehyung’s hand in seek for comfort.

“Hey! Don’t just grab me!” Taehyung yells, yanking his hand away and holding it protectively to his chest.

Taehyung doesn’t want to mention how his sudden outburst had sparked a tendril of fear through his body. It was faint, barely recognisable, but it still unnerved him enough to leave a weird feeling in his throat.

Jeongguk pouts. “But he’s being meannnn.”

Hoseok laughs even harder, walking over to them to greet Taehyung properly. “You two are ridiculous. Anyways, long-time no see Taehyung, I thought you wouldn’t have shown up.”

“We saw each other at the dinner?” Tae responds, trying to focus on the resonance of Hoseok’s voice.

“..And that was practically a month ago?”
“Right, sorry. I missed you being around too, hyung. I was happy to come.”

“That’s what I like to hear! How’s my favourite second year doing?”

“Hey! What about me?” Jeongguk intervenes, mocking a hurt expression.

“I said what I said.”

Taehyung smiles softly. “I’m doing fine, what’ve you been up to?”

“Well thankfully I’m not failing my classes, and that’s because Yoongi’s been helping me study. I swear the man’s a genius, how is it possible that he’s so smart?” He whispers his next words. “What does he eat? What’s his secret!”

Taehyung grins internally upon hearing that statement, new fodder to tease Yoongi arising from that one set of words, and laughs quietly.

“Well if you must know, I think it’s the—”

“Alright, alright, that’s enough you two,” Yoongi says, walking towards them to interrupt Taehyung before he says anything embarrassing. He glares at both culprits in the situation, but also at Jeongguk for good measure. “I’m still older than you all, so watch it,” he sighs. “On another note, where’s Jin and the others? Is it just us?”

“Ah, no!” Hoseok elates, fiddling to get his phone out of his pocket. He opens it loudly. “Jin texted me twenty minutes ago that he’s on his way. Oh, and Namjoon’s with him.”

There’s no hostility to his voice but Taehyung can tell that the mention of Namjoon’s name almost brings an awkward ambience. He chooses to ignore it.

“It’s unusual for you guys to arrive before him, especially since you’re late,” Hoseok continues, glaring at the two for not being on time. “But I’m sure they have their reasons.”
“What about Jimin and Sammy?” Taehyung asks.

“Oh, Jimin’s already here and I’m pretty sure Sammy went to the bathroom,” Jeongguk replies, still as crimson as ever. He’s partially glad Taehyung can’t physically see how flustered he is at the moment, although he doesn’t doubt that Tae can’t sense it either.

“It’s like a whole big family,” Hoseok coos dramatically, wiping away an imaginary tear from his eye.

“Save us the dramatics.”

Hoseok smiles, then shifts his gaze as if he’s just now remembered something important. His eyes bore into Taehyung’s skeleton and the other shudders at the attention he now senses. He can’t tell who’s staring at him, nor if someone truly is in the first place, but he can indistinctly imagine the sudden awareness on his body. “Anyways, I know what you did Taehyung.”

His assumptions were right. “What I did? What did I do? Elaborate.”

“You shouldn’t mess with other people’s text messages like that. It can lead to misunderstandings!” Hoseok exclaims, although he seems less annoyed and more humoured by the whole situation.

Taehyung frowns, feeling mildly betrayed. “Yoongi! You told him?”

“Of course I did! It was your fault to begin with.”

Jeongguk feels lost but laughs nonetheless.

“You got all my hopes up for nothingggg,” Hoseok whines, and for a slight second Yoongi’s heart completely leaps into his throat.

Had he heard that correctly?

“Wait, what did the text say?” Jeongguk asks innocently, tugging onto Taehyung’s hand for help.
“It’s best if you don’t know,” Taehyung replies, about to yank his hand away at the sudden contact, but stops. He feels Jeongguk’s palm spread a reassuringly warm feeling throughout his body, a contrast to his initial spark of fear, and he leaves it be.

Hoseok lets out a giggle at his response, wrapping an arm around Yoongi’s shoulder as if to frame him entirely. “You shouldn’t toy with two adults like that, and here I thought I was going--” he stops himself from continuing that sentence. “You know, it’s best if I leave it at that.”

Taehyung covers his mouth with his other hand to suppress an even more obscene laugh, using Jeongguk’s figure to stabilise himself as he’s overcome with a fit of laughter. His chest vibrates against the other’s chest, and it makes Jeongguk’s heart flutter at the contact.

“Don’t joke around, Hobi! They’ll get the wrong idea,” Yoongi mutters, definitely not as amused as the others are in the situation.

“Come onn, what’s a little fun? I must say though Taehyung, the text was executed perfectly. I almost thought it was Yoongi there for a second.”

Yoongi hides his shame with his hands. “It was nothing like me!”

“I know him too well,” Taehyung smirks, staring innocently in what he assumes is Yoongi’s direction.

Taehyung inches back, unaware that he has been leaning into Jeongguk’s hold for quite some time now, and that their hands are still intertwined together.

He continues to not notice it, however, Jeongguk slowly begins to realise their position. He swallows slightly at the sight, something making him feel nervous and giddy all at once, but tries to remain calm. He interprets the other’s oblivious acknowledgement to the whole situation as an unspoken agreement, and so if Taehyung doesn’t say or do anything against it, nor will he.

“Now I’m curious though, what did you reply with?” Taehyung asks, subconsciously pressing his back more into the other’s chest. Jeongguk’s breath hitches.
It’s Hoseok’s turn to blush vigorously, clicking his phone shut urgently in hopes to remove all evidence. “Ah, that doesn’t matter now does it?”

“Yeah, tell them what you said,” Yoongi exclaims, smirking complacently to himself. He reaches for the other’s phone, missing the object by only a fraction as Hoseok raises his arm up higher than what Yoongi can stretch out to. He huffs in imperceptible annoyance, folding his arms together to mimic his frustrated expression, and looks up at Hoseok with squinted eyes. “No fair.”

“Shortie,” he laughs, smiling widely until he sees the death glare he’s being presented with by the other’s clearly not entertained body language. He swallows shallowly. “We should get going!” Hoseok yells, pulling Yoongi away so that he can’t grab his phone without his knowledge. He waves sheepishly at Jeongguk, who’s still frozen in place with Taehyung glued to his body, and motions his hand to come over.

Blinking out of his trance, Jeongguk glimpses down to look at Tae. He’s smiling a lot, and seems to glow despite being indoors, which is truly a sight to behold. It makes his heartbeat all wild again and he has to inhale deeply to make his nerves stop from moving so quickly.

He uses their joined hands to guide Taehyung in the direction the other two boys went. Taehyung doesn’t seem to mind, or if he does, he doesn’t show it, and so Jeongguk holds on a little tighter to stabilise more himself than the other.

“Wait up!” Jeongguk calls out, speeding up his pace a little. He doesn’t want to tug onto Tae’s hand too hard, so he refrains from jogging up to them, but the pair doesn’t seem to slow down nonetheless. They’re out of earshot.

“Do you think Hoseok likes him?” Taehyung asks suddenly, catching Jeongguk off guard.

“Uh, I mean I guess so, they’re friends, aren’t they?”

“Yeah but I meant it in a different sense. Do you think he has a crush on him and all?”

Jeongguk thinks over it. “I don’t really know Hoseok that well but from what I can tell it looks like they’re close. I wouldn’t call it a crush though.”

“What would you call it then?”
“I don’t know, I’m not really great at interpreting feelings. It seems to me that they would make a good couple, but that doesn’t mean they share the same feelings.”

“I knew it!”

Jeongguk laughs at Tae’s enthusiasm. “What makes you so interested in knowing?”

“Yoongi doesn’t have the balls to do anything so I figured I’d try to do something to help. Hence the text messages and all.”

“You know you shouldn’t meddle with other people’s relationships,” Jeongguk says, smiling at the pout that forms on the other’s face.

“I knowwww, but I can’t help to. It’s upsetting to see someone who’s clearly in love with another person do nothing because of doubt or confusion.”

Wow, sounds oddly familiar.

“Well, I’m sure they’ll figure out what they need to in due time. It’s better if they come to terms with it themselves, then I’m sure it’ll be even more impactful.”

“I guess so…but ah I just want him to be happy!”

“Yoongi?”

“Yeah. He may have a cold exterior at times but he’s truly the nicest and most caring person I’ve ever met.”

Jeongguk looks at Taehyung’s face to find an expression of pure admiration and respect. Most people would say that the expression lies in the eyes, however, when looking at the beauty that is Tae’s face, his expression lies more in his mouth than anything. It makes sense, considering his eyes aren’t always on display, but it’s also so unique and intriguing to witness. The way his mouth will
stay slightly agape, pondering in astute silence, or twist into a sarcastic grin. How it’ll give small
smiles, grimace or wince, glisten with the swipe of a tongue or open to let out the sound of laughter.
How it’ll smile so wide it could challenge the sun to a contest of vibrancy, or stay pressed beneath
tightly clenched lips.

It’s so utterly *him* that Jeongguk could fall in love all over again.

Except…

He had told himself he’d wait, unsure of his true feelings and certainly confused with his sexuality in
general. He told himself he’d wait because he doesn’t *know*, and wouldn’t it be wrong to mislead
someone without being sure of how or what he even feels?

Jeongguk has been straight his whole life, or he assumed he was because he’s only ever had crushes
on girls, and he’s only ever had girlfriends. He’s never fantasied about the idea of being with a guy,
nor has he had any random thoughts about what it would be like because it just never occurred to
him. That is until now. He isn’t repulsed by the thought of liking the same sex, but he’d be lying to
say that it didn’t scare him a little. He doesn’t even know where to begin with what he’s feeling, an
explanation just not making its way to his throat, so how is he supposed to act upon his emotions?
Wouldn’t his parents get mad if they knew? Would his siblings or friends shun him for it? He never
had to worry about this before, hell, he didn’t even realise this would ever be a situation for him to
get worried over, and so he’s begun to feel overwhelmed.

Why does he like Taehyung so much?

“She’s gone bowling before?” Tae asks, interrupting Jeongguk from his string of endless
thoughts.

He clears his throat, feeling caught although he had just been thinking. “Yeah, a couple of times in
the past with my family and only once with Jin. This’ll be the second time I’ve done it away from
home.”

“Home’s Busan for you, right?”

Jeongguk nods. “Where’s home for you?”
Taehyung visibly freezes but is able to collect himself in order to form a response. “Home is here.”

“You grew up here?”

“Not really, but I’ve experienced a lot of great things in the city. Wherever Yoongi lives is home for me, so I’ll consider it so.”

It’s a vague answer and both of them know it. It’s not unnatural since Taehyung has always remained vague with Jeongguk, maybe even too indistinct at times, and it makes his life seem hazy and unclear.

Jeongguk reflects back to that time Yoongi had said he found Taehyung all bruised and beat up. In what sense, he has no idea, nor does he know how he had been injured in the first place, but if that’s so, doesn’t that mean Tae could’ve been from someplace else?

Speaking of which, Jeongguk doesn’t really know anything about Taehyung’s personal life. He’s unaware of who his parents are, who his family is in general, he doesn’t even know where the guy grew up, and the lack of knowledge makes him feel left out.

Does he have siblings? If so, how many? What do his parents do and where are they from?

He wants to know why such a gap of information resides in these basic pockets of common knowledge.

He’s about to ask, voice lifting in a brisk inhale, but stops himself. He shouldn’t pry, and he’s already aware of how closed off Taehyung is overall. He’d probably just make things worse by making the other feel uncomfortable, and perhaps Taehyung has his reasons for being so vague. It may be nothing, but the risk might not be worth it.

He is curious though.

“You were going to say something?” Taehyung asks, noticing Jeongguk’s hesitation.

Well one question wouldn’t hurt, right? It’s been a bit since they’ve known each other now…and
they are pretty close, so maybe he trusts Jeongguk more?

“I just realised that I don’t really know that much about you.”

Taehyung quirks his head up in confusion. “What do you mean?”

“I mean I know a lot about you as a person, but I guess I just don’t know a lot about your life, or your family..”

“Why do you care?”

It comes out a lot harsher than Tae had intended but sensitive topics are prone to twist his emotions drastically. His teeth dig a little into his lips, as if regretting the sharp outburst, and he frowns underneath his sunglasses.

But Taehyung’s right. Why does Jeongguk care? He has this constant unsuppressed feeling to help and interfere, caring more than he should, and he doesn’t understand why he must.

Jeongguk looks down at their linked hands and hopes he hasn’t stepped too far.

He shouldn’t have asked.

“I was just curious, I thought that maybe—” he stops himself. “I’m sorry for prying.”

Taehyung squeezes his hand.

“I get it.” Taehyung smiles delicately, a new expression on his face. Jeongguk’s nervousness is so prominent that Tae feels bad for responding so harshly, not having controlled his emotions in the way he should have. He tries to steer the conversation in a different direction. “Don’t concern yourself with things that don’t matter though. Is knowing about my family really that important to you?”

Jeongguk scratches the back of his neck with his free hand. “Well, everything about you is important
He blushes upon saying those words, not having quite registered what he was about to say and just about forgetting to filter his feelings from his words. Taehyung’s face fills with surprise too, trying to shake off the emotions that he’s been so desperate to subdue just for the time being.

Why must Jeongguk say such things to him? His heart can’t handle it, and considering they’re walking so close to each other, he’s afraid the other will be able to hear how wild his heart is racing.

Jeongguk fumbles over his words. “I-I didn’t mean it so bluntly, I meant that I like knowing about you, you know? You’re interesting, but I get that some things don’t matter...ahh...just pretend I didn’t say anything, okay?” he laughs anxiously, trying to make the situation less uncomfortable. “I should walk with the others.”

He slips his hand out from the other’s grip with a panicked sigh but Taehyung catches his fingers before he can walk away. Jeongguk looks at him, startled, trying to figure out Tae’s expression through the indents of his lips.

“Wait,” Taehyung says, voice barely a whisper. He panics over a response, not sure why he had asked the other to stay in the first place. “Um...I guess it doesn’t hurt to tell you some things.”

It’s the first thing that comes to his mind and so he blurts it out. He partially regrets it. One reason being he’s not ready to talk about such details, no matter how small parts of the story he may release, but a second reason being that he’s scared. Afraid that Jeongguk will look at him differently, perceive him in a light that darkens and burns rather than shines. He doesn’t want to be pitied, but he also doesn’t want to involve the other in his own issues.

His past issues.

However, another part of him rejoices at the fact that he agreed. Taehyung wants to get better, and so overcoming the past is an essential part in doing so. Talking or even mentioning his family shows that he won’t let what they did control him anymore, and maybe confronting his past instead of running away from it will help him. He’s not ready but will he ever truly be? It’s a question of trying instead of avoiding, and so, Taehyung comes to an internal agreement.

“Well?” Jeongguk asks, surprise written across his face and especially present in his voice. Taehyung wants to laugh at the other’s genuinely excited reaction, exhilarated by the fact he had
actually given in to the idea, but fails to do so when he knows the thoughts he’ll have to relive.

He’s definitely soft for Jeongguk.

“What exactly do you want to know?” Taehyung responds with, unintentionally holding onto the other’s hand tighter. Maybe this will be harder than he thought, but a new feeling has washed over him.

Jeongguk notices Taehyung’s increasingly clenched grip but keeps his emotions steady. “Are you actually from here?”

Taehyung relaxes at the question, not exactly as invasive as he expected but still personal to him. His grip slackens. “Yes and no. I meant what I said that I consider this my home. I love Yoongi’s new apartment, and I’ve lived here for six years but…I didn’t grow up here.”

“Where did you grow up?”

“Daegu.”

Jeongguk absorbs the information quickly, as if it’ll disappear if he misses his chance to register what Taehyung says completely. His heart smiles at that fragment of privacy, such a small thing yet so impactful nonetheless. It means that Taehyung is opening up to him, and that factor of trust, that factor that he’ll no longer be left in the dark, makes him happier beyond belief.

“Can I ask some more questions?”

Taehyung nods his head, a little more at ease than before. “Sure.”

Jeongguk thinks over what he wants to say, excited but also apprehensive. He should still be careful of what he says, not wanting to upset him, but this may also be the only time his curiosities get answered.

“Do you have any siblings?”
Taehyung shakes his head. Easy question, simple answer. “No, I’m an only child.”

Jeongguk nods in response, inwardly smiling to himself. He finds Taehyung’s replies sweet, some sort of underlining innocence and gentleness radiating from each syllable. He’s tempted to hug him, brush a strand of his fallen hair, or squeeze onto his hand and hold him tight to his chest. He’s tempted to do other things too, but he tries to keep them subdued to the back of his head.

“What do your parents do?”

Is it really a necessary question? Probably not, but Jeongguk has been wondering about it for some time. He’s not sure why, but the littlest details matter to him, and every aspect of the other’s life would interest him even if it seemed boring to most.

Taehyung visibly swallows but nods his head in understanding. It’s a genuine question, and so to live up to his word, he answers. “My father’s a cop and my mother works as a secretary, or she did until she got fired.”

Taehyung cringes beneath his sunglasses, the frames shielding the crinkle of pain in his eyes but not the grimace the plasters his lips. He doesn’t want to call those monsters his ‘father’ and his ‘mother’. They don’t deserve that title. However, explaining the actual barren truth right now is something that seems impossible, even to the extents he’s taking to be honest, so he keeps the answer short and elementary.

Jeongguk’s eyes glitter as he hears more about Taehyung’s life, each piece of information like a prized possession. It’s an odd response but also a reasonable one, as Taehyung has hidden the entirety of his past and privacy until now. Normally, that’s something you get to know about people gradually, yet for some reason the subject had always been avoided up to this moment. However, with his excitement, he doesn’t really notice Taehyung’s cringe, nor the grimace etching his mouth. Rather, he doesn’t see through the other’s discomfort, for the first time unaware of how Taehyung is actually feeling.

“Oh, I’m sorry she lost her job.”

“No, don’t be,” Taehyung breathes out bitterly, irony deep in his words. “She probably deserved it.”

The malice is notable, and Jeongguk is faintly taken aback by how venomously Taehyung spat out
his words. It doesn’t suit him, his face purer than such a vicious reaction, and so Jeongguk guesses he must not like her.

For what reasons, he doesn’t quite know yet.

“Oh..” Jeongguk mutters, confused undoubtedly but also sorry he had even responded with anything. He was just trying to be courteous, but why is it that he still somehow manages to say the wrong thing at the wrong time? “What did she do?”

It takes a little longer for him to respond this time.

“Ah, I guess a lot? I don’t know the full story but..” Taehyung drifts off, his voice a little more distant than before. It’s the first time he’s even remotely opened up, and even then, his answers are short. Taehyung catches his own sour expression, sighing softly to erase his unease and removes his hand from Jeongguk’s grip. They both hadn’t realised how tightly he had been holding on to it. “I’m sorry, I’m making things awkward. I shouldn’t have answered.”

“No, no, wait,” Jeongguk smiles reassuringly but then remembers that the other can’t really see him. “You’re not making it awkward, if anything I am for asking you so many questions. I guess I overstepped my boundaries?”

Taehyung wants to say yes. In fact, he should say yes, because then things would return to the way they were. His privacy remaining private, his past hidden, and his issues remaining his issues. This is the easy way out, the ticket to get out of the conversation, what he wants, what he thought he wanted, and yet, he doesn’t say yes.

He says something, that quite frankly even he himself, is shocked by.

“I was adopted.”

Jeongguk chokes in surprise, not expecting that turn of events at all. He anticipated maybe a disregarded shrug, or a distasteful glance, but instead he’s hit with a smack of reality. A punch of truth that lands square in his face. It’s what he was looking for, so he guesses he should’ve been ready for it, but he hadn’t really expected the other’s life to be so different from his own. He attempts to reply but his voice falls short, a ramble of words coursing through his head but not quite making sentences. What should he say? He can’t just say nothing, and after Taehyung’s unwavering confession he feels like he owes it to the other to at least react.
But what does one say? What should one say?

Taehyung sighs, responding at Jeongguk’s silence. “I don’t live with my adoptive family anymore and I haven’t for some time. We don’t have a close relationship and so I don’t know how they’re doing, quite frankly, I don’t care how they’re doing. There’s nothing really unique to it, so I don’t talk about them to other people, which is why you don’t know about them. It’s not like I was trying to keep you in the dark, it’s just that it’s not really anything worth talking about. I don’t consider them family.” he intakes a breath. “As for my real parents, I don’t know them, and I don’t want to know them. My family is Yoongi, and that’s all that matters.”

Jeongguk stares at Taehyung, eyes wide and brain processing what he had just heard. It makes sense now, so much makes sense now. It’s all clicking into unsolved pieces, a puzzle Jeongguk hadn’t realised he had formed, and now it seems like he’s understanding the bigger picture.

Though, Taehyung’s not being entirely honest, is he?

It’s not a lie but it’s not the truth. The whole truth.

But that’s something he thinks he’s never going to be ready for. He can’t bring himself to talk about that again, even if he wanted Jeongguk to know everything. He can’t because if he does, he’s afraid he won’t be able to stop thinking about it, and there are just some things that should be avoided.

Maybe not his total past, but certainly those events.

“I genuinely was not expecting that,” Jeongguk finally responds with, still a little shocked but more receptive than before. He doesn’t feel bad that Taehyung was adopted, it’s not uncommon and family is family at the end of the day. Whoever raised you, taught you, and loved you deserves to earn that title of parenthood, but what seems to not make sense is that….Taehyung doesn’t consider them his family. He feels confused as to why Tae would dislike them so much, and why such a beautiful person could experience such hurt to make him feel that way in the first place. It doesn’t completely add up and that’s what upsets him. He doesn’t want Taehyung to feel sad or unloved or have felt those emotions in the past. He doesn’t want him to ever feel that way.

However, Jeongguk doesn’t want to ask and he probably shouldn’t ask. It’s not his place, and he surely doesn’t want this conversation to take a darker turn. For whatever reason Taehyung feels this way, is for him to feel and for Jeongguk to accept, even without knowing. If Taehyung wants to tell him, he shouldn’t have to dig it out of him like some sort of interrogation, and he’s happy to wait for
him to be ready to do so, even if that day never comes.

This isn’t an interrogation, so he shouldn’t treat it like one.

“Thank you for telling me though,” Jeongguk continues. “I’m sorry you didn’t have a close relationship with your family, but I’m glad you found a new one. I’ll do my best to be considered a part of it too, and hopefully I’ll deserve that title.”

Taehyung smiles, heart warming at the other’s response. He wants to tell Jeongguk that he already is a part of it, and that he already feels a million times happier being around his very presence. He wants to tell him that he’s glad he was able to open up to him, and that he’s sorry for not telling him the full story. He wants to admit that there is more to the story, but…

He can’t bring himself to. There’s still that inkling of doubt, a troubling seed that sprouts from his gut that just screams at him to not say anything. To not ruin everything before it’s even started.

And so he listens to it, because his instinct has always trumped what he thinks anyways.

Taehyung, without responding yet, grabs blindly towards the other’s chest and hesitates when he’s met with the warmth of Jeongguk’s hand. He jolts slightly at the contact but relaxes after adapting to the sensation.

“I’m happy you know now. I’m sorry if you were upset over it before, it wasn’t my intention to make you feel unimportant. I’m just not really used to opening up to people, but consider yourself special that I was able to do it so easily.”

Jeongguk feels as if his heart could burst, face heating up and a smile making it up to his lips. Even if he does end up being gay, and even if he does become a hundred percent certain of his feelings, it won’t matter if his family is against him. It won’t matter if his friends are or even if the entire world is because the feeling of being loved or being special to Tae outshines all of that.

Jeongguk sticks by his side again, taking his hand once more, nervous but now for a different and more light-hearted reason. He thought he would’ve fucked everything up with his curiosity, an uncontrollable urge to understand taking over him, and he’s glad it went in a positive direction.

What was he thinking? Better yet, why wasn’t he thinking?
However, he can’t be too mad at himself as everything turned out alright.

To extinguish the brewing silence in the air, Jeongguk hums a refined melody. This time the tune is familiar, a pop song that’s been crazy over the radio recently, and Taehyung appreciates his cover of it. Again, Taehyung could go on for hours at how beautiful Jeongguk’s voice sounds, how incredible the other is in general. He feels conflicted, as per usual, and for once he wishes the other wouldn’t be so nice to him, so lenient and compassionate and perfect, because it ends up confusing him even more.

And, at the same time, he does wish that Jeongguk remains all of those things. Because it’s exactly those things that makes him so happy.

See, he’s conflicted.

Conflicted but happy.

_Ugh, what I’m feeling is stupid. Why is it that I’m the one caring now?_

He wants his emotions to disappear.

They make it to the actual main room, several glossy lanes lining the interior and masses of people talking into blurs of incoherent speech. Taehyung can feel the commotion, hear all the unstrained and raw sounds of the people around him, messing with what he can comprehend in waves of disarray. He can sense the dim lights that still beam jarringly against his skin, and both hear and feel the music and its vibrations. He can’t identify his friends individually but rather the cluster of voices they make up, developing into something larger than what he can specifically detect. More importantly, he can sense the clamour that encases him, the air that only faintly dusts with air conditioning, and the tall figure beside him that still holds onto his slightly trembling hand.

It’s a lot for one to take in, and he attempts to calm down his rising anxiety by thinking of calming things. It’s what Yoongi told him to do in overwhelming situations such as these.

He thinks of that day he looked up at the sky, at the clouds, when he still had his vision intact. He thinks of the bench, sun beaming through blue, and the figure beside him that calmed him down so much.
He concentrates on each breath he takes, each exhale he releases, focusing so that he doesn’t get submerged in the ambience of the seeing, clearly too much for one to handle when they must solely rely on their other senses.

He thinks of that time Hoseok made him smile for the first time over something really stupid, and tries to remember the exact emotion he was feeling in hopes to replicate it right now. He thinks of the time Yoongi taught him braille, being oh so very patient as well as encouraging despite Tae’s initial bitter outlook, and his first actual Christmas. He thinks of all the conversations he’s ever had with his hyungs, especially the ones they’ve had together that never fail to amuse him.

His mind drifts off, to various pleasant events he’s experienced in the last six years, and suddenly he feels like crying.

Well, not actually crying, but at least the sensation or build-up before one cries.

It calms him down, which was his intention, but the nostalgia that comes with it also provides a saddening tranquil effect that he hadn’t thought through.

Jeongguk stops beside him, holding his hand back to indicate they’ve reached wherever it is they were going, and leans in to speak into Taehyung’s ear directly.

“There’s a bunch of seats behind you so you can sit down.”

Although his voice isn’t a whisper, his words come out delicately, tickling Tae’s ear and sending a slight shiver down his spine. He lets go of the other’s hand.

“Okay.”

Taehyung gradually staggers back, legs hitting cushioning, and very cautiously sits down, internally praying that he doesn’t miss the couch and ends up embarrassing himself in front of everyone. Thankfully, he makes it down alright, and once sitting, is incredibly confused as to what he should do next.

They aren’t actually going to make him play…right?
He can’t see, so that should be a precaution in itself, but besides that Taehyung’s never chucked a ball in his life. He doesn’t want to concuss someone, or destroy the entire alley like someone (who by the way can see) has done before. Sure, he’s been bowling before but he's never actually participated or thought of participating. It has been awhile since he's gone too..

Before he has too much time to stress over it though, someone sits down beside him. “Taehyungie! You ended up coming! I’ll live up to that anime promise I swear!”

Jimin, a true blessing but loud benefit in his world of darkness.

“Ah, ah, don’t screech in my ear!” Taehyung groans, smiling playfully nonetheless. “You were pretty convincing but don’t let this get to your head. I’m still not totally psyched to be here.”

Jimin pouts. “Aw, don’t be a downer. You’re gonna have a great time! Isn’t that right Jeongguk?”

“Oh..yes?”

“I love the confidence,” Jimin retorts sarcastically, grabbing a couple of sheets from the table that lies in front of them. “Hm, I can write your scores down for you.”

“I’m playing?” Taehyung asks in shock, truly wondering if his friends have gone insane.

“Of course!”

“But I’m blind.”

“And?”

“What do you mean ‘and’ I’m gonna kill someone! Do you want me to kill someone?”

“We’ll all be fine,” Jimin exclaims, waving his hands in a disregarding manner. “Just don’t throw the
“I’m not going to know what direction I’m throwing in, am I?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll tell you if you’re about to decapitate someone,” he leans in to whisper his next words. “Although if you do it to Jeongguk, you’ll be doing us a favour.”

“Hey! I heard that!”

“Just kidding, Kookie!”

Taehyung lets out a chuckle, still incredibly nervous about handling a gigantic bowling ball with no sense of direction, not to mention sight in general, but still slightly intrigued.

It is a wild situation.

“Plus, we’ll be drunk in a bit so we should all be careful with what we’re throwing. You can’t be as bad as Hoseok anyways,” Jimin continues, scribbling something down onto one of the sheets.

“Come to think of it, how did you become friends with him in the first place?” Tae asks.

“Who? Hoseok?”

Taehyung nods.

“He has a dance studio so I’ve been going there for awhile now. It’s kind of a huge coincidence that you’ve known him for so long too. Must be a small world, right?”

It’s been an extremely small world lately.

“Right.”
“That’s the beauty of university man! Besides, I work at the same place Yoongi does and his name has slipped a couple of times.”

*Is that how Jimin had told Yoongi about his whole Jeongguk encounter in the first place?*

“How long have you been working together?”

“How long have you been working together?”

“Since the summer, why do you ask?”

Taehyung nods his head in understanding. “I was wondering how you knew Yoongi but never really questioned it, but now that I think of it, you must have told him about those things then.”

“Pardon?”

Taehyung doesn’t want to mention his first encounter with Jeongguk when the other is standing right there. He motions his hands to try and elicit what he’s thinking but Jimin lets out a confused “hm” instead.

“The face touching!” Taehyung yells desperately, praying that Jeongguk doesn’t become aware of their conversation.

Something seems to click inside Jimin’s head and he laughs.

“Well, we only share Monday and Friday shifts together,” Jimin says, seemingly indifferent to the situation. “And it gets boring after some time so I needed to say at least something to keep me awake. I was pretty excited to share with him the drama of some stranger, though turns out, you guys were friends too,” he laughs at the irony. “Although now that I think of it, I should’ve connected the dots sooner when I met you. Yoongi talked about having a blind roommate but he never gave me a name so I didn’t really think of anything at the time…but it’s pretty obvious now that I know.”

“I’m annoyed he didn’t say anything sooner.”
“Well, what can we do? Maybe it’s fate that we all know each other!” Jimin declares excitedly. “Almost like someone’s writing our lives out so that they intertwine with each other. Kind of neat, right? Although now I’m worried I’m just a character in some story.”

Taehyung laughs. “Don’t speak such nonsense.”

Hah.

Someone sits down next to Taehyung’s unoccupied side and he flinches when the couch dips slightly without warning. He feels nervous despite his friends’ encouraging words, and he almost regrets coming along as the prospect of embarrassing himself is high. Not only that, but he’s been exposed to a lot of people, touch, and noise lately, and it’s starting to get to his head as he’s inundated with his surroundings.

He doesn’t want to get so agitated by the presence of others, but after being touched and bruised and hurt so many times without his consent, it feels as if his body has developed a natural apprehensive reaction to contact in general. He doesn’t want to be handled anymore or touched that way again, and whilst he knows that these interactions are different, vastly different, and that his friends only mean well, he can’t help but associate them to the same sensations he’s experienced in the past.

“How’re you holding up?”

It’s Yoongi, and Taehyung can tell it is by the hint of dialect behind his words. His voice is a whisper, and perhaps along with his light accent Tae can hear the distant worry and concern that laces his voice.

“Fine, I guess.”

He leans back into the seat, staring acutely at the other’s body. “You’re digging your nails into your hands. Either you’re in pain, or something’s on your mind, both of which aren’t exactly great.”

Taehyung focuses his attention on his fingers, which are indeed buried in his palms, and swallows conspicuously. He hadn’t noticed, and although the force of his nails weren’t pressing down too harshly into his skin, he can still feel the shallow indents they etched. He flexes his hand, wincing, and rubs over the marks to try and erase them out of existence. He clears his throat.
Yoongi had always been so perceptive.

“I guess I’m just thinking too much, hyung,” Taehyung confesses, also whispering so that Jimin and Jeongguk don’t hear him. He doesn’t want to ruin the atmosphere with a few infiltrating thoughts. “And I overestimated a little bit on how I’d feel being around so many people.”

Perhaps it was the opening up that made him feel so vulnerable and sensitive. With so much going on, he feels like his body can’t quite catch up with his mind, and now it’s starting to affect him more than it should. Maybe it’s also the fact that the last time he hung out with his friends, things didn’t end well, and so his body is automatically feeling uncomfortable at what might potentially happen.

“Do you want to go outside to get some space? I’m sure the fresh air would help,” Yoongi suggests, analysing the other’s behaviour in upmost definite nature.

Taehyung shakes his head. “No, no, it’s okay. I’m sure it’ll go away, it’s good for me to be here anyways. I have to get over the past eventually, and I can’t keep running away the moment I feel uncomfortable.”

He wants to be brave and finally overcome what he’s been feeling for so long. Opening up, even if slightly, to Jeongguk was the first step, and he wants to feel fine to assure himself that he is capable of recovery.

That he can have a normal life, and that he will have a normal life.

“I understand.” Yoongi starts, voice gentle. “But don’t force yourself too much and try to rush recovery. It’s normal for you to still feel this way, and if you need a breather, you should give yourself one. If you need anything, I’ll be here.”

He’s right.

“Hyung,” Taehyung calls out, a little louder to grab his attention but still practically a whisper. Yoongi quirks his head and Tae sighs quietly. “Thank you.”

Yoongi smiles, patting the other softly on the head. “Anytime.” He shifts in his seat, removing his palm to grab something from the table, and then returns to his original position. “In the meantime, let’s take your mind off things, okay?”
Taehyung nods his head again, breathing shakily, and puts on a smile to show that he’s okay, or at least, that he’s going to be okay.

Distraction is what aids him best, but at the same time…isn’t distraction just putting off the inevitable? He feels like he’s not addressing the problem that’s making him feel this way, and the more he ignores it, the more it expands until it’s too much to control. It’s why things have been going from awful to great, and then worse to better, he feels…

Confused.

Maybe he shouldn’t think about it so hard.

“Oh, Yoongi,” Taehyung says, flattening his hands onto his thighs. He doesn’t want to dig his nails into them. “How come you never told me that you worked with Jimin?”

“I didn’t tell you?”

Taehyung shakes his head. “I mean you said that you knew him, but you never really elaborated on it.”

“I didn’t think it would be important, besides, I only knew he was friends with you this September after he told me about the whole…” Yoongi trails off, stifling a laugh. Taehyung blushes.

“I get it!”

The embarrassment replaces his unease, proving to be oddly reassuring, however being flustered isn’t exactly an enjoyable feeling either.

To think of it, Jeongguk always had been special to him. Since the first day they met, from their very first encounter, something just clicked, and it’s so undeniably cliché that it seems unrealistic. He doesn’t completely understand why he opened up to Jeongguk, and he can’t tell if he regrets it or not yet. He doesn’t feel like he regrets it, but then again, his emotions like to play tricks on him sometimes.
He decides that for the moment, just this moment, he’ll distract himself. Letting conversation drown his thoughts, and forcing himself to grow accustomed to his friends’ contact.

No, not forcing himself to grow accustomed to it but allowing himself to grow accustomed to it.

The gentle touches that show they care about him and want him to be happy. He wants to get better and stop flinching upon the slightest graze. He wants to stop his mind from warping casual actions into demonic memories because they aren’t satanic and they aren’t evil.

They’re his friends, and he doesn’t want to be afraid of their interactions. Most importantly, he doesn’t want to grow afraid of Jeongguk’s interactions. He likes his touch, he wants to like his touch, but what if one day, he’ll learn to fear it? What if his memories deceive him, and try to make even those special gestures something to wince over?

He trusts Jeongguk, for some odd reason, and had been willing to share with him something he didn’t think he’d be prepared to share. He has to get over whatever it is that’s hurting him because he doesn’t want it to affect the other, and he doesn’t want it to end up hurting Jeongguk too.

He doesn’t want it to, and so, tonight will be a night of distraction.

__________________________

Here’s a lil bonus! It’s the text sent to Hoseok (from Yoongi’s phone) haha:

[one week ago]

_Hobi 🌟: So, do you still need a dancer?

[4 days ago]

_You: Yeah! Actually I was about to tell you that I wanted you to be in it._

_Hobi 🌟: REALLY?! That’s so great~ I won’t let you down!_

_You: haha I know you won’t. Seriously, your dancing skills impress me. I think you would accommodate the style of the music video really well._
Hobi ★: You flatter me hehe, but really I’m not that great. Though, for you to compliment me means you think really highly of me ;) I’m honoured.

You: shut up…

Hobi ★: What time and where do you want to meet?

You: hmm, I’m not sure yet but I’ll let you know. It depends on the weather and the lighting etc.

Hobi ★: I’ll make sure to leave time for it in my calendar :p

You: Don’t pretend like you have plans or something

Hobi ★: I’m not!! But seriously, I’ll make sure to leave time for it. I’ll even perform extra well for you

Hobi ★: **it, FOR IT, I meant the project and all haha

You: you better, I’m counting on you to make it look good

Hobi ★: It’s going to be great no matter what. It is your music after all

You: every song needs a good visual

Hobi ★: oooooo, so you think I’m attractive now ;)

You: I meant your dancing! And besides, all the visuals are important to the video so it’s not just you that I’m relying on.

Hobi ★: aww, you’re relying on me.

You: again, shut up

Hobi ★: haha you’re too fun to tease

You: whatever..

Hobi ★: can’t wait to work with you!

You: yeah, yeah, just be ready for my text

Hobi ★: Then, it’s a date~ ♥

[read 17:16]

Haha,,, did you think it was going to be something else ;) well, this story is nowhere near done so don’t get ur hopes up yet! see the notes for additional comments on the future of this story !
**Also if any of u were wondering how tae was able to text hobi on Yoongi’s phone he used the voice-text feature!**

Chapter End Notes

so I hope you enjoyed that! the text was kind of a little snippet of something I wanted to try, and I also love developing yoongi and hoseok's relationship even if it's just a side one. you'll come to see that they have a cute lil intricate plot of their own.

now about the whole thing I was talking about last chapter in the notes. IT DIDN'T HAPPEN LOL, however, I'm def planning to have it be present in the next chapter (I hope). I underestimated how much shit I had to write and then it just became way too long, but I hope the opening up segment satisfied some of u.

as for the future of this story, dw I'm going to continue it. I've been very close to quitting (well not actually quitting but taking a break) because some things have come up in my life and everything is just stressful. I won't go into too much detail but I'm really trying to give you the best and I'm sorry if it seems like i'm not (you guys deserve more than what I'm giving you ahh). don't be concerned tho! hopefully whatever it is that's happening will resolve, and hopefully I'll start feeling better about shit too :) this story gives me a lot of happiness, and sometimes I fall into a whole while writing it but it still always manages to lift up my mood in the end. kind of like an anchor but also a lifeboat,, if that makes any sense (probably doesn't). If you’ve made it this far, hi sjks tbh i thought nobody would've read it this far so I appreciate you being here honestly. I'd like to thank you for reading my story and being here with me throughout this journey. I'm so unbelievably grateful for you and I'd like you to know that if you're ever going through a hard time, that you can message me. it sucks when you have to deal with things alone, and I wish I knew that earlier. I'm here for anything and anyone, so don't hesitate to vent to me.

oof I've written a whole soft paragraph now ahh I'm sorry for being cringy lol. I have to do a paper now (kind of just finished this chapter instead of doing my homework but hhhh that's fine) so I needa go but thanks again for reading!

as always, happy reading, andddd

さようなら。
The last thing Taehyung thought of doing tonight was actually bowling with an eight-pound ball, which is odd because they did go to a bowling alley in the first place. He assumed, however, that he’d just be sitting on the side-lines, cheering at the darkness like he usually does, and providing easy company. He also hadn’t thought that all of his friends would be directing their complete attention to him, probably not dissecting his being as intensely as he thinks, but still enough to make him feel surprisingly more nervous than he currently is.

If that’s even possible.

He feels the weight of the ball weaken in his grip, his fingers slowly slipping as he attempts to aim in
what is *hopefully* the right direction. Jimin had directed him and guided his body beforehand, but after deeming his aim decent, had left Taehyung to his own doubtful means. He holds his breath, heart beating a lot more than it should at such a simple task (for most people at least), and contemplates dropping the object entirely. He would really like to avoid ruining the night by damaging something, or better yet, someone. He would also like to avoid murdering one of his friends, because wouldn’t that be an inconvenience?

He swings his arm back hesitantly, biting his lip in minute fear, and thinks yet again about bailing. Maybe if he imagined the ball being lighter it won’t be as frightening upon impact. It’s pretty delusional, but if he can convince himself that what he’s holding is, let’s say, a basketball or a volleyball, it would immensely help his internal concerns.

That is hard to do though when the ball feels almost eight times as heavy as what he’s imagining.

*Well.......I’m not getting out if it, aren’t I?*

Even his supposedly confident and motivational thoughts are uncertain.

He musters his strength, and lets his hand fly forward.

There’s a thud. A heavy noise that distinguishes itself amongst the chatter, leaving a feeling of dread float through his stomach. Rolling follows suit the thump, echoing through the tumult and cutting through contorted noise, almost blinding in sound but not quite loud enough to be piercing. There’s a gaping pause, a slick glide permeating the tense aura around him, and then wood is smashed together. Marble hits the back wall, a series of pins collapsing onto polished planes, and finally, Taehyung can exhalе his contracted breath.

His hands feel clammy. Scratch that, his hands *are* clammy, too nervous at the concept of injuring something or perhaps someone to focus on any calming thoughts. He’s afraid he somehow broke the ceiling, or damaged a lane, because whilst he might not be the strongest person in the world, chucking a bowling ball can still (and probably will) destroy anything that crosses its path (if aimed poorly). He didn’t *hear* anything indicating harm or destruction, but that doesn’t mean he still didn’t do anything bad.

He rubs his thumb anxiously, feeling as if a spotlight had suddenly started accenting his every movement, and turns around sheepishly. “Did I hit anything?”
He hears a sharp whistle announcing itself from where his friends are sitting. He can’t tell who it is specifically that did so, not having the capacity to identify someone solely through how they whistle, but from the high-pitched nature of it, Taehyung assumes that it could be either Jimin or maybe even Jin.

“How in the actual fuck did you manage to do that?”

Taehyung shrinks significantly. “Was it that bad?!?”

He hears shuffling coming towards him, as if someone is hurriedly dragging their feet across the floor.

“Are you kidding? Dude, the only thing you managed to hit were the bowling pins! You just knocked over eight of them!”

Taehyung thinks it’s Hoseok who’s speaking, and he beams slightly at the fact that he not only avoided destroying anything (or anyone) but also had been able to do well. That was an outcome he hadn’t even considered.

Someone, assumingly Hoseok, clasps a hand on his shoulder, startling him slightly.

“You better not be joking, I was freaking out!”

Taehyung shrugs out of the person’s grip, a fraction of panic erupting through his veins, but then remembers his internal agreement to get better. To stop running away. He needs to make an effort and he’s committed to make that effort if it means being able to withstand a simple nudge or a harmless gesture.

“Yes we could clearly tell, but I’m telling you, you hit eight pins!”

The voice blends in with the background and Taehyung can’t hear what the other said exactly.

“I did?”
The person lets out an exaggerated “yes” and Taehyung concentrates a little harder to try and pay attention to what they’re saying.

“That’s a relief.”

His voice comes out more nonchalantly than usual but it isn’t because he’s not thrilled. Sometimes when he’s out in public with his friends, the clamorous surroundings mess with what he’s trying to hear, and that’s difficult when relying on that specific sense to understand both body language and tone, not to mention what they’re actually saying, of the person speaking to him.

“Uh, Taehyung? Why is it that I’m the one that’s more excited over you doing something impressive?”

He hears a laugh in the background, and maybe…Namjoon speaking to someone back at the couches? The conjoined noise mushes the meaning in his brain.

Tae scrunches his eyebrows in response. “I-”

He’s interrupted by a foreign voice.

“Hey! Guy with the ashy blonde hair! Can you pass me that piece of paper on the floor, it has our scores on it.”

Despite the commotion that’s been disrupting his hearing, Taehyung knows he hasn’t heard this voice before. It’s lower, older, smokier in a way and holds a dialect even he isn’t familiar with. One could compare it to charcoal flickering in a fire, which sounds strange but entirely makes sense in his brain.

He hesitates.

“Hello? Can you hear me?” The voice echoes, slightly more impatient than before.
At first Taehyung freezes, because something about how the person speaks leaves an unsettling taste in his mouth. The voice is still unrecognisable, but the more it sinks into his head it seems to leaves a brash thought floating through his mind. It’s not familiar but at the same time, it associates itself with a memory Taehyung holds.

It almost reminds him of…his step-father.

The second thing he notices is the quite impossible task the voice is asking him. He stammers over his words, trying to think of a way to explain how he can’t help them out without giving away the truth of his impediment. Thankfully, though, someone is there to save the day.

“Don’t worry, I got it.”

It’s Jeongguk who says that, or at least, Taehyung is mostly certain that it’s Jeongguk who’s managed to save him from the situation. He can pinpoint that voice anywhere, the sweetness of it, the clarity of it, the overwhelming familiarity and beauty of it. Unlike the stranger’s voice, it reeks of comfort and kindness, and he’s sure he would be able to notice it even in the clamour.

It seems as if Jeongguk had still been sitting on the couches with the rest of his friends, his voice only slightly distant and almost a shout. He must have been paying attention to Taehyung and the situation in which surrounded him, and spoken up when necessary. Taehyung briefly hears him get up, but then loses the rest of his movements in the noise. He thanks him with every bone in his body, awaiting the chance to express his gratitude verbally as he steps aside.

“Thanks.” The unsettling voice says a couple seconds later, probably having received his paper of some sorts. They eye Taehyung oddly, unbeknownst to him obviously because he can’t see, but Jeongguk catches the unusual glance.

“No problem..” Jeongguk responds ambivalently, going to instinctively hold Taehyung’s hand but stops himself. He still feels a little bad for prying the other with his curiosities, even though that had been what he was looking for, and decides to give Taehyung some space. Not to the extremity of avoiding him or anything, but just enough to let the other know that he’s not being suffocated by his very presence.

The situation still disconcerts Taehyung mildly, despite the unnerving voice and its holder being gone, so Jeongguk attempts to relieve the tension.
“Oh, and to add on to what Hoseok said, that was an impressive shot, Tae.”

Taehyung lowers his head in embarrassment, wondering why his cheeks had begun to flush at Jeongguk’s compliment and not Hobi’s. Maybe it’s because his remark was more sincere and direct, but even so, he knows it probably has to do with the same reason why he had opened up to the other in the first place.

“Uh, thanks. I guess it was a lucky shot, I’m kind of intimidated at attempting to hit the last two.”

“You shouldn’t be,” Jeongguk says, smiling widely. “I believe in you!”

“If only your faith in me replicated my faith in myself.”

“How about I help you out?”

Taehyung tilts his head back up, quirking an eyebrow. “Help me out?”

“Yeah, like with the aim and everything. Two pins, two people, what’s the worst that could happen?”

“…I end up killing you.”

Jeongguk laughs. “That’s not going to happen. Your aim is pretty good. Besides, I entrust my life more with you than I do with Hoseok, so that should boost your confidence a little.”

“Hey! I’m still here, you know! Fucking lovebirds, don’t act like I’m not standing right next to you.”

“Sorry Hobi,” Taehyung chuckles gently, feeling a little more confident in himself knowing that Jeongguk will be there beside him. “But it’s true, I feel very unsafe with you being in this very building.”

“Now that’s just mean,” Hoseok whines, pouting dramatically. “I bust the ceiling one time-”
“—you almost burned down the alley—”

“And you act like I completely demolished the place,” Hoseok pauses, thinking over what the other just said. “Okay when you put it like that it does seem pretty bad.”

“My point.”

“Fine, I’ll go back to sitting like a boring person. But watch me win once it’s my turn.”

He sticks his tongue out childishly before returning to his seat, huffing out annoyed commentary whilst bothering Yoongi with his complaints on the quote “lovebirds”.

Jeongguk rolls his eyes, turning his attention back to the cheerful boy in front of him. He doesn’t quite know what it is, but Taehyung seems even more beautiful to him in this exact moment. He thinks it’s the other’s smile; that boxy smile that brightens the surroundings with such intensity that it accentuates his features a hundred times more stunningly. Or, his sunglasses that are perched a little bit too lowly on his nose, allowing Jeongguk to see the traces of grey hidden beneath his shields. Maybe it’s even the fact that he looks so undeniably happy, that it strains and filters all the sadness from his face, resulting in an expression that just enunciates grace.

Something squeezes in his chest, encapsulating his heart and ribs, and he tries to shake off the feeling by looking away.

“Could you pass me another bowling ball?”

Jeongguk nods his head hastily, unconsciously grabbing at his heart to notice that it’s beating quickly. He reaches over for a ball, putting his hands around it carefully, and spots his image in the black reflection. He looks dazed, eyes dancing between several emotions, and he has to look away from that too.

“Open your hands,” Jeongguk says, a shake in his voice.

Taehyung follows instruction, presenting his hands out in front of him as he awaits the weight of the ball to reach his palms and fingertips. Jeongguk lowers the object softly, guiding Tae’s hands so that
he can hold the ball more securely, and helps his fingers fit into the little holes that plummet the centre. Taehyung nods his head with assurance, testing the heaviness of the mass to familiarise himself with it.

Jeongguk, remembering his decision to give the other some space, steps to the side, but is pleasantly surprised to be stopped by Taehyung’s free hand. He stares down at him quizzically, unable to decipher the other’s emotion through his pressed lips, eyes still guarded by sunglasses. He goes to speak but Taehyung beats him to it.

“Could you point me in the right direction,” he asks timidly, reminding Jeongguk of his previous offer. He remains aware of his own hand pressing gently against Jeongguk’s chest. Taehyung can feel how hard the other’s heart is beating, and tries to figure out the emotion that he must be feeling. He’s not quite familiar with it, but something in his mind seems to click and arise its own explanation. “So I don’t kill anyone or anything…” He continues, removing his hand to relieve some of the awkwardness but also so that he doesn’t end up giving Jeongguk a heart attack.

*Did I cause that?*

He’s vaguely concerned that the other may be unwell, because why else would his heart be beating so quickly without anything impactful happening?

Instead of giving it much thought, even though he would like to, he goes back to focusing on the weight pressing into his fingers. He wants to get this over with before he actually ends up hurting someone, but he also wants to do well because…

Because Jeongguk’s watching him.

It’s a hard realisation but a certain one, because in the past Taehyung knows he wouldn’t have cared whether he hit only one pin or all of them. True, he hasn’t really actually gone bowling in the past, just observed with his ears, but he’s sure he wouldn’t have cared nonetheless. He wouldn’t have even minded if the ball traversed into the gutter, because it’s not like he would be expecting anything else.

Yet, with Jeongguk’s lingering stare, the one he can feel embedded into his back, and Jeongguk’s astute attention all on *him*, he feels as if he should be expecting to do well. To do well for him but also to make an impression. It’s a strange feeling to have, and possibly a foolish one too, but its present and it’s not going away so he might as well come to accept it.
He shakes his head absentmindedly, and Jeongguk perks his eyebrows in confusion.

“Not getting any more doubts, are we?” He teases, but deep down he knows how anxious Taehyung might be. He puts his hands on the other’s shoulders, not waiting for a response. “You’re not going to hurt anyone. I’m going to guide you in the right direction, so trust me on this. Is that okay?”

Taehyung nods his head, surprised to find that he really does trust him, and that he’ll willingly let the other guide him despite the slight intimacy and close proximity of the situation.

His body is shifted underneath Jeongguk’s strong grip, the other’s fingers pressing into his shoulders in a sturdy but gentle way. Although it feels almost intimidating to be handled so completely by another person, Taehyung doesn’t mind it because it’s Jeongguk. He notices his own heart beating rather loudly and rather quickly, not really sure why it is doing so but not opposed to the reaction either. From Jeongguk’s palms against his clothed skin, Taehyung can even tell the slight pulsations coming from his wrist, and it mimics almost exactly the same pace he is currently experiencing too.

“I’m guessing it’s too late to back out?” Taehyung voices, his own hand trembling ever so slightly. Jeongguk squeezes his shoulder in reassurance and gives him a hum of dissatisfaction.

“You’re already doing so well. I’d love to see the expression on everyone’s face when you end up winning on your first-time bowling,” he smiles, rubbing Tae’s arms comfortingly before placing them back on his shoulders. “Plus, I have complete faith in you. If it makes you feel better, I’ll be right here the whole time.”

It does make him feel better.

And Jeongguk saying that brings another spread of warmth through his chest, replicating that purple feeling.

“I think you trust me too much.”

“I think you don’t trust yourself enough.”
Taehyung attempts to retaliate but can’t find anything to say.

“I got you, didn’t I?” Jeongguk smirks, mocking Tae’s silence in a playful manner, and the other simply laughs at his response.

“Just point me in the right direction already,” he grumbles, a smile plastered on his face nonetheless.

It’s beautiful.

Jeongguk huffs patiently. “The right aim takes time to calculate. I want to make this shot count.”

Taehyung makes a small gesture with his free hand, the familiar way that shows he’s rolling his eyes, and relaxes tolerantly into Jeongguk’s stable hold. “Fine.”

He’s turned softly, each manoeuvre done carefully and thoughtfully. It stops the small trembles in his hand, yet his heart still beats at an alarming rate. It’s the other’s touch that’s making his heart so erratic; so wild and so free, and if this is what’s controlling Taehyung’s own heartbeat, could that also explain why Jeongguk’s is beating so similarly?

Is Taehyung’s touch affecting Jeongguk just as much as Jeongguk’s touch is affecting Taehyung?

The idea or thought of that makes Taehyung happy, because it’s as if he’s not alone in what he’s feeling.

“Okay, so thankfully your pins are right next to each other so you don’t have to do anything fancy like make the ball curve or something. Just swing straight ahead and hope for the best!”

“So, basically I’m winging it.”

“I mean, you’re winging it with some guidance.”

“And that’s supposed to make me feel more confident?”
“Yes?”

“You know I was feeling better about it until you said that.”

Jeongguk laughs. “Sorry, I was hoping to be at least somewhat truthful, however, that doesn’t change my faith in you. You still got this!”

Taehyung smiles, a little bit embarrassed by the other’s words, and tilts his head to the side. “Thank you.” His voice is earnest yet barely a whisper, a heartfelt tone underlining it all. He’s thankful that Jeongguk managed to turn his apprehension and anxiety into laughter and amusement, and he’s thankful for the emotion he’s feeling while being close to him.

He feels happy, undoubtedly, but also something else. Something more than happy.

Jeongguk lets go of his shoulders, arising a small piece of disappointment to fracture in his gut. It faintly surprises him, because he hadn’t expected to be so dependent on the other’s touch, nor feel upset once it’s gone.

Jeongguk seems to notice the other’s let-down expression, and his heart skips a beat. He leans in closer to Taehyung’s ear.

“Don’t worry, I’ll be right here the whole time.” He gives him a lingering stare, debating whether to do something daring or not. He wants to, he wants to trail his lips against the other’s skin, or caress his cheek and capture his smiling face forever. He wants to drag his hands against Taehyung’s waist, and perhaps hold them there longingly, wishing to hold his body against his.

He decides not to, for various reasons, but primarily because he doesn’t want to scare the other. He doesn’t want to make Taehyung run away, or wince, or even look at him in disgust. He doesn’t want to him to relive a painful memory, or have another traumatic episode.

He doesn’t want Taehyung to despise him; to loathe his very presence, because Jeongguk knows that the other is highly capable of that. It showed in his tone towards his step-mother; his old family who had obviously affected him more than Jeongguk could know.
And what if he does that something he wants to do, and Taehyung begins to address him in that same very way? No longer smiling at him but finding every word he says distasteful and revolting.

What if he isn’t even into guys?

There are too many risk factors involved and Jeongguk has only just become somewhat certain of his feelings. If not sure, at least aware of them. He can’t ruin everything before its even started.

Taehyung throws the ball.

It lands with another heavy thud, echoing across the lacquered wood in a pronounced way. It blends in with Jeongguk’s fears and conflicted thoughts, almost providing an ominous lullaby to his twisted theories and bashful emotions. His want to make Taehyung happy trumps his want to desire him. His want to have Taehyung laugh and smile overrides his want to kiss him; to hold him and to love him.

Jeongguk would rather have him be delighted and carefree than to be his.

Though, wouldn’t it be amazing if he could have both?

The two remaining pins fall, the collision of the bowling ball shattering them to the ground and into the gaping mouth that eats them. Taehyung turns around in hesitation, conscious of the sound but unsure of what it means.

Jeongguk beams brightly, still debating whether to hug him or give Taehyung his space. He suffices with a verbal response.

“You crushed it! See? Look what happens when you believe in yourself.”

Taehyung raises his eyebrows in absolute astonishment. “I did?”

He seems unconvinced.

“Yeah, you hit the two pins. And you thought you couldn’t do it, you really are something, aren’t
Taehyung lowers his head down, body shaking in a rhythmical way. At first Jeongguk thinks he’s crying, but then realises that it’s quite the opposite.

He’s laughing.

He lifts his head back up, flaunting one of his signature boxy smiles whilst putting his hands out uncertainly. He seems elated, relief etched in his eyebrows and pressed into his lips. He reaches blindly for Jeongguk, walking on wobbly feet to try and find him, and stumbles slightly over his poorly done laces. His fingers reach the other’s shirt, and he grips onto it tightly for support before enveloping the other in a small but sweet hug.

Jeongguk widens his eyes, freezing for a second in shock, before wrapping his arms around the other in response.

Even though he’s held the boy close to him before, it’s different this time.

This time, Taehyung is hugging him, and that’s something he didn’t know would feel so great or feel even better than just holding him.

He breathes into the embrace, holding a little tighter and a little longer. He wants to savour the moment, relish in the other’s affection because it is both a rare and sentimental gesture.

But unfortunately, it doesn’t last as long as Jeongguk hopes for.

Taehyung pulls away first, pink lightly dusting his cheeks as he sidesteps out of the Jeongguk’s grip. He stammers a little bit. “Uh, we um-” he clears his throat. “We should get back to the others.”

Jeongguk silently agrees, reaching for Taehyung’s hand to guide him back to the seats. Upon directing his attention to his friends, he notices that everyone’s eyes are on them, Jimin especially, smirking with an unbearable grin only just hidden by the rim of his glass. Jeongguk glares at him, a blush also creeping its way to the apple of his cheeks, and tries to play it off as being excited for Taehyung’s accomplishment.
“You two are really going at it. Who knew you’d become so close so quickly?” Jimin says, leaning back into the couches to avoid Jeongguk’s threatening stare.

“Shut up.”

The gold medal of responses. Jeongguk is truly a master at comebacks.

“Scary,” Jimin replies sarcastically, nudging Yoongi in the side so he can also partake in humiliating the two boys.

Mission: Successful.

“Do we need to get you two a room?” Yoongi asks, making direct eye contact with Jeongguk and his now almost scarlet cheeks.

“Hyung!” Taehyung exclaims embarrassedly, hiding his face in his hands. His fingers slip behind his shades to rub them, and he blinks a couple of times before lifting his head back up. “Don’t say things like that.”

Jeongguk can feel his heart slightly drop.

“I’m kidding, I’m kidding,” Yoongi replies, still eyeing Jeongguk in an almost speculative manner. He’s looking for something, maybe an answer to his flushed cheeks or seeming closeness to the other.

Jeongguk doesn’t think Yoongi’s too fond of him.

Jin and Namjoon, who had arrived later than usual, sit on the side-lines, seeming to mutually agree on the rest of their friends’ childish behaviour. Sammy sits with Jimin, also judging their childlike teasing, and quietly watches the situation unfold, hoping not to get involved.

“Though, what was that hug all about?” Yoongi continues, finally averting his eyes away from Jeongguk. They seemed to be burning holes into his very soul.
“I got excited okay!” Taehyung interjects, quite obviously embarrassed. “I wanted to do well and he helped me get a good shot…he didn’t have to do that so he was being nice…”

His voice trails off shyly, a sense of gratefulness washing his speech. Jeongguk feels glad that the other had appreciated his gesture.

“Aw, young love is too sweet.”

“Hoseok shut up!”

Jeongguk laughs at Tae’s outburst, cooing inwardly to himself because how can someone look so cute when they’re angry?

He’s not angry per say, but his mock frustration and slight irritation to the teasing brings out one of the most adorable pouts Jeongguk has ever seen.

“Let’s not tease them anymore,” Jin finally pipes in, awarding both Taehyung and Jeongguk’s eternal gratitude. He seems vastly amused, though frowns at the perpetrators to try and sell his act.

“Come on, it’s too easy!”

Jin glares at Yoongi; the only person who can actually do so without getting thrown into a wall, and Yoongi backs down with a huff.

Nobody talks back to Jin, and nobody dares upset him.

He’s scary when he’s mad, perhaps even deadly, and not even Yoongi would go against him, joke or not.

“Then that settles it!” Jin concludes, clapping his hands together loudly. The noise faintly startles Taehyung. “Who’s turn is it now?”
Hoseok gets up triumphantly, earning a couple of groans from the rest of his friend group because why oh why had they let him participate again after the last time he went.

“Wow, have at least some faith in me. You trusted Tae! And he’s blind!”

“Yes, but Taehyung can actually hit the pins.”

“He also didn’t burn down a bowling alley, not to mention destroy its ceiling.”

“I almost burnt down that alley, key word almost because I didn’t! That still counts for something, right?”

“You really aren’t helping your case.”

Hoseok crosses his arms and glowers at everyone (except for Tae because he didn’t say anything mean…and honestly, can he really get mad at him? It’s practically impossible) and stomps over to the lanes in hopes of restoring his reputation.

“You all are mean! How are you friends with these people Tae?”

“You’re friends with these people,” Taehyung replies, laughing between his words.

“Not anymore! After I hit this strike I’m disowning you all!”

“I guess that’ll never happen then,” Yoongi retaliates, and it only fuels Hoseok’s rage more.

“Fine! I bet I’ll get this strike, and if I don’t, you can come up with the punishment.”

“Oooo, I’d be careful if I were you,” Yoongi says, lowering his eyes slightly whilst leaning his elbows on his knees. His hands support his chin casually, eyes glazed with a sort of cunning desire, and the position makes Jeongguk feel intimidated even though it isn’t even directed to him. Hoseok swallows at Yoongi’s sharp, hooded stare. “If I punish you, you won’t like it.”
Hoseok quite literally chokes, his turn now to get slightly flustered at Yoongi’s low words. Frankly, everyone’s confused at how he worded that sentence, yet Yoongi himself doesn’t seem to regret his response. He scoffs deliberately, sitting back up, unbothered, and tilts his head up. “You better hit that strike Hobi.”

“Well now I don’t want to because you told me to!” Hoseok grumbles immaturely, avoiding eye contact because Yoongi’s eyes still seem to be glazed with that sort of strong, playful yet powerful intent.

“Then I guess you’re getting punished.”

“Please don’t say it like that.”

“Say it like what?” Yoongi smirks, faking dumb.

“So you’re not gonna let Yoongi tease Tae but when he threatens me you stay silent?!” Hoseok says at Jin, but the older isn’t responding to him. He’s laughing in fact, shoulders shaking up and down, and Hoseok feels betrayed at the other’s refusal to help.

“Chop chop, come on, isn’t it you that wanted to prove yourself?” Yoongi asks, finally letting go of his lidded stare. Instead, he directs his line of sight to the bowling lanes. The light reflects on the wood vibrantly, plummeting and dipping ever so slightly when a black ball is thrown from its recipient.

Hoseok can’t argue with Yoongi’s logic but still, he doesn’t like to feel so submissive in this situation.

“Fine, I’ll get it, you just watch.”

“Oh, I’ll be watching.”

The strange inkling of confidence dissipates, and Yoongi goes back to lying on the couch, seemingly unperturbed. Jin is pretty much cackling in his seat, Namjoon tapping him to try and get in on what’s so funny, and Taehyung’s laughing too, almost feeling bad for Hoseok.
Yoongi likes to tease the people he’s in love with. Though, it’s upsetting that Hoseok couldn’t possibly realise that fact solely from Yoongi’s actions.

Taehyung’s mad at them both for being so oblivious.

(which is aksjfalkdjf kinda ironic don’t ya think, okay I’ll leave oops. Love you, keep reading, yes I did just break the fourth wall. I like to keep it professional #notreally also sorry for posting late ahh ok bye)

Hoseok turns his back to the couches, and grabs a ball angrily, almost crushing the poor thing with his veined grip. He wants to prove Yoongi wrong but deep down he also wants the opposite.

If that makes sense…

While Hoseok gets ready to decimate the building, Jeongguk finishes guiding Taehyung back to the seats, sitting next to him but leaving enough distance so only their elbows are touching instead of both their legs and sides. Thankfully, Jeongguk’s heart isn’t beating as quickly anymore, although the feeling hadn’t necessarily been unpleasant. It was yearning for something, and now that it’s gentle, it feels like he’s lost something he didn’t even know he found.

Taehyung feels almost the same way. He’s aware of the other’s presence, that’s now a lot calmer than it had been before, but the fact that he can feel the other beside him, radiating warmth, still makes his heart pound into oblivion. Again, he doesn’t dislike the feeling or find it uncomfortable, he just finds it odd to say the least.

Odd yet familiar, because whilst he can’t pinpoint what it is that he’s feeling, he somehow already knows what it is. The answer is on the tip of his tongue but he can’t seem to swallow down the solution.

It’s…frustrating.

“I’m going to go to the bathroom,” Taehyung states. He wants to sort out whatever this thing he’s feeling is and finally clear his head from the purple haze that’s seemingly enveloped it. Maybe a splash of water will help him organise his thoughts. Maybe they’ll manage to explain the purple, and the reason why he wanted Jeongguk..well still wants him.. Although he had done conflicting actions that night, and had conflicting thoughts, he doesn’t know what he wants anymore.
He wants Jeongguk but he doesn’t want to want him. Does he even deserve to?

The events from that night replay in his head and he wants to die from embarrassment, especially considering the things he said and thought. He can’t tell what the fuck is happening to him, and he’d be lying to say he wasn’t scared.

He should go to the bathroom.

He never really had a direct confrontation of his feelings to himself, only glimpses of fluster and minute contradiction, and it shows. He’s accepted how he wants Jeongguk, and has definitely established how he doesn’t think he deserves the other nor should be with the other. However, he hasn’t allowed himself to understand why he’s feeling this way. He’s accepted things but he hasn’t understood them, and since he’s trying to make an effort to be better, perhaps it’s time he should.

“Wait, let me come with you,” Yoongi offers, hopping to his feet. “I have to pee.”

It’s probably not a lie since Yoongi likes giving Taehyung his own space (and doesn’t try to hover around him constantly) but Tae still gets the idea that the other is trying to see what he’s going to do.

Nonetheless, he doesn’t want to start a conflict, so Tae simply nods his head and gets up from the couch. He doesn’t really want Yoongi to be there when he begins to internally evaluate his emotions, but maybe he’ll pee really quickly and then leave him to his own means.

He goes to take out his white stick but a ringed hand stops him, instead offering an arm to help guide him to the restroom. Taehyung appreciates it because he does hate using it, and realises that he can’t really stay mad at Yoongi for long.

If ever actually, because Taehyung doesn’t think he could ever, in all his lifetime, get truly mad at him.

They walk in pretty much silence, letting out an occasional update to how the night’s going just to strike conversation. Though, Tae is curious of one thing, and so he decides to bring it up.

“What was that whole thing with Hobi back there?”
Yoongi smiles to himself, as if expecting that question. “I was having fun.”

“Fun?” Taehyung snickers, nudging the other’s ribs lightly with their connected arms. “That was almost hard to watch and I can’t even see.”

“It was a joke, Taehyung. Don’t read too much into it.”

Tae tries to hold in his cheeky smile and laughter, ultimately looking like an idiot in the process.

“Don’t give me that expression!” Yoongi exclaims, nudging him back in retaliation. “You act as if I kissed the guy. Plus, shouldn’t I be the one teasing you over your whole romantic interaction with the twat.”

“The twat has a name.”

“You’re not denying it.”

“Plus you already did tease me about it, or did you just forget how you embarrassed me in front of everyone?” Taehyung laughs. “Besides, it’s hard to deny something I’m not sure of. I still feel… conflicted.”

“I made you acknowledge it earlier, did I not?”

Taehyung bites his lip. “You did, and to be honest, I had accepted it before that, it’s just…I don’t understand why.”

“What do you mean you don’t understand why?”

“I don’t understand why I even like him? Better yet, how I can like anyone. I don’t want to, yet at the same time I do. It’s like my emotions are betraying my thoughts, everything’s all muddle together and confusing and weird and ugh!” He sighs heavily, clearly frustrated. “Why do I even feel this way?” He sounds as hopeless as he feels.
Yoongi nods his head, as if finally comprehending something. “I see.”

“See what?”

“At first, I thought it was just a matter of time and adaptation, maybe even you feeling weird about liking a guy or having a first love in the first place...but, to be honest,” he pauses, debating whether or not to say his next words. He decides to anyways. “I think what your step-parents said to you back then really affected you, more than you might think.”

“Yoongi-”

“I know I shouldn’t bring it up,” he interrupts, face written with slight regret. He should go easy with such a sensitive topic. “And I’m sorry that I am. I didn’t want to and I understand it’s hard to think back on but...maybe if we talk about it it’ll help solve your frustration. I know we discussed it a little bit before, but it wasn’t really that in depth.”

Taehyung guessed this prolonged conversation was going to come up sooner or later, yet he still doesn’t think he’s ready for it. “Hyung, I don’t know if I can.”

He said he was going to make an effort to get better but isn’t this a little far?

Taehyung shakes his head.

_No, getting better means getting over the past._

He should talk about it.

“But you’re right,” Taehyung continues, stopping his pace as he feels Yoongi slow beside him. They’ve reached the bathroom door. “As I said earlier, I can’t keep running away the moment I feel uncomfortable, and I do have to get over the past eventually. It’s been six years, so I should be fine by now.”
“When I said we should talk about it I didn’t suggest it would be easy. I’d be more concerned if you had already gotten over it, because even though it’s been six years, what happened to you—the events—that’s not something one can simply get over.” Yoongi sighs. “Don’t chastise yourself for being affected, because I don’t think anyone would have been as strong as you are in that situation. The abuse—”

Taehyung cringes at the word and Yoongi halts his voice.

It’s silent for a bit, and then he resumes, careful with his choice of words. “The things that happened to you weren’t just bad, they were inhuman. And even though you insist not to go to court, and insist to not get involved, they still deserve to be behind bars, even if it’s just—”

Taehyung shakes the hair that’s knotting in between the hinges of his sunglasses. He’s squeezing the other’s arm fairly tightly, and Yoongi had noticed. He feels bad for rambling, especially over a subject like this. “I’m sorry, the conversation is tailing into a different direction.”

The people who do know of Taehyung’s past always wonder why he never went to court with his case, or never even started an investigation towards his step-parents. Truth is, Taehyung was too scared in the past to do anything. He was thirteen, blind, practically an orphan. His step-father was a cop and had always told him the consequences of snitching and escaping. It was one of the rules they had established, and after being under those commands for so long, became a difficult habit to break. Even now he finds himself remembering some of the rules, as if instinct; engrained in his memory, but thankfully most have faded along with his past.

Then, once he grew older, Yoongi and Jin began insinuating the idea into his head, but he quickly shut them down. Not only is his step-father a cop, a pretty reputable one as well, but by then he had no more evidence. Sure, he had his blindness, but there was nothing to indicate that it was them who caused it. The hospital could have defended him briefly, but his step-parents would’ve been able to retaliate that it was someone else, or that “he always got into trouble and fights.” He was never confident that he could actually win a case like that, and it would prove to not be in his favour anyways. He doesn’t want anyone to know of his past, let alone strangers and authorities who may not even believe him anyway. One thing he hates is being pitied, but being seen as a fraud? As a liar? A person that could lie about those fucking horrendous afflictions? He doesn’t know if he would be able to handle that.

The last reason why he didn’t and still doesn’t want to is because he can’t be in the same room as them again. He absolutely cannot face them, hear the voices that dehumanised him, hear more and more excuses that he already had to put up with for so long. He can’t hear them pretend that they’re loving, and that they loved him, because it hurts too much. To know that they were capable of it but
didn’t, it just hurts. He’s afraid he’ll lose the case, have to go back to them, and after fleeing from their grasp and moving locations, he can’t risk them finding him again.

Therefore, he chose to leave the events in the past. A hollowing memory for only him to cradle and keep.

Yoongi had understood his reasoning, and had even disregarded the idea completely after hearing it. It is rational after all, and despite the injustice of it all, Yoongi accepted it.

That doesn’t mean he had agreed to it, though.

The topic’s never really been brought up since then. Maybe Yoongi’s slipped a reference to it here and there, or very subtly tried to pry a different response out of him, but besides that, nothing.

“I’ll try and talk about what they did to me with you. You can know..” Taehyung answers, taking a deep breath. “But not to those people. Not-” his own shaky breath interrupts his words. “Not to them,” he finishes quietly.

Yoongi nods his head, finally opening the bathroom door so that they can actually go do what they came to do.

“The point of me bringing it up wasn’t for this,” Yoongi replies, letting go of Taehyung’s arm softly. It drops to his side. “It was for you to understand what you’re feeling, and make sense of it all. The other thing, well, that’s a discussion for…” Yoongi wants to say for another time, but doesn’t. “It’s a discussion that won’t be discussed.”

Taehyung appreciates the comment. “No running away, right? That’s what I said. I’m willing to understand and to get better, but..baby steps.”

Yoongi agrees wholeheartedly before going into a stall and closing the door. The click of a lock echoes throughout the dimly lit room, showing that Yoongi really had been honest when he said he had to pee. In the meantime, Taehyung stands idly by, searching for the counter and the nozzle to the faucet with his hands, trying his best not to trip, run into something, or break anything.

He finds what he’s looking for, a cool texture of metal reaching his hands and pressing into the lines of his palms. It contrasts his inner emotions greatly, and he already wishes for the coldness and
refreshment of the water to douse him with reasoning. The understanding he yearns for. He takes off his sunglasses, placing them hesitantly onto the first hard surface he feels, making a mental note of which side he put them down on. He twists the knob of the faucet to one side, hears nothing, and then twists the other way. Water gushes out in a steady stream, also echoing throughout the bathroom as it fills the sink bowl with pristine clarity. The drain makes small sucking noises, swallowing up the water through three separate holes, and he cups his hands together so he can collect the contents before they disappear into the sewer pipes. Assuming he has gathered enough, he lowers his face down and splashes his entire face with brittle, if only slightly, chilly water. It’s cold enough to clear his head, also providing a bitter reminder of the pain in the corners of his eyes, but warm enough to not freeze him to the bone. He’s not sure if it’s done anything yet, but at least for now it’s managed to distract him from the complete chaos whirling through his mind.

Why do I like him?

Because he’s different.

Different how?

He speaks sweetly, he praises him in a way that makes him feel special...He helps him.

How does he help me?

He takes away the pain. He makes him laugh, he makes him smile.

He makes him happy.

Why?

Because...He cares about him and he makes him feel loved. It’s something his monsters never said he deserved, and now he has it. He’s proving them wrong.

But Yoongi cares about me, and I don’t quite exactly feel that way about him.

Jeongguk cares about him in a different way. In a desirable way, in a way that almost screams mine.
It’s the way Jeongguk touches him, or holds him, or talks to him. He speaks in a way that spells a different kind of care.

*Do I like him?*

Yes, he does. Taehyung likes him a lot, and thankfully he is definitive about that.

He accepts that he likes the other, and he is sure that he likes the other.

*Do I like the fact that I like him?*

…Yes. Yes, he does. Even though he may deny it, and even though he might try not to, he does, and it’s something that scares him.

*Am I allowed to like him?*

He doesn’t know. It’s foreign to him, and he’s afraid.

*Could I ever love him?*

Perhaps he already does.

The flush of the toilet interrupts his thought process and the stall opens. Yoongi gives Tae a questioning stare, looking at the still trickling stream of water that’s being wasted, and sighs softly.

“You’re wasting water,” he states, going to the sink that’s still running to turn it off. He side-steps towards the other one, and begins washing his hands quickly before drying the dampness off with cheap paper towels.

“Sorry, I was lost in thought.”
“Yeah I could tell,” Yoongi smiles, reaching for Taehyung’s sunglasses to hand them back. He stops though when he sees the droplets of water scattered across the other’s face, deciding to hand him a folded paper towel first. Yoongi pulls it out of the dispenser, nudging it in between Tae’s hands so that he’s aware and can identify what it is. Taehyung mumbles a thanks. “Did you come to a conclusion?”

Taehyung shakes his head. “I’m not sure, but maybe. The thinking helped.” He pats his forehead dry, turning the soggy side over and repeating the process with the rest of his face. “I know that I like him and I know that I don’t want to but I do. And I know that I do want to like him but dislike the fact that I do.”

“I’m not sure if that’s some development, but at least you feel better about it,” Yoongi answers honestly, leaning comfortably against the maroon tiled counter. The yellowish lighting paints both of their faces gold. “Maybe you should talk to him.”

“Are you crazy?!”

“You’d be an idiot not to be aware that he likes you too,” Yoongi replies matter-of-factly, arising a blush from the other. “And prolonging it just makes it more awkward for the both of you, as well as us as we have to watch it constantly..no offense.”

“None taken.”

“What I’m saying is that even though discussing it with me might clear some frustration, I think discussing it with him will actually erase it completely.”

“You’re reasoning makes sense..”

“I know it does.”

“But, I also feel that confronting it is well..scary,” Taehyung laughs softly. “Which is kind of stupid considering all of the other things that have happened to me.”

“Everything has its own degree of scariness, and of course talking about your feelings is something that you’ve always struggled with. It’s difficult, and I understand that more than anyone else because I used to be somewhat similar,” Yoongi hands Tae back his sunglasses once his face seems dry
enough, still damp, but not drenched like it was before. The light seems to bounce off of the
dewiness and it makes him glisten in an odd yet pretty way. “It’s how you were raised, but now you
don’t have to restrain yourself from opening up. It’s a hard habit to break, though I’m sure it’s
possible to overcome through time…and maybe liking Jeongguk is the thing that’ll nudge you a little
closer to that conclusion.”

“Hm, and you said you didn’t like him. If I didn’t know any better, I’d think you want me to date
him.”

“Well, unfortunately it is him of all people, yet, I’m not completely opposed to the idea. I’m being
selfish and protective, and also letting my annoyance for younger people get in the way for what’s
best for you. Even though I don’t like him that doesn’t mean I don’t want you to experience liking
another person. Remember, he’s still got that one chance.”

One chance.

Yoongi’s only giving him that one chance, and he’s almost afraid to even give the other that single
opportunity. He doesn’t fully trust him, and he has good reasons to be suspicious over people in
general.

“Yeah, yeah, I almost feel bad that he has to put up with you. So stubborn,” Taehyung teases.

“Hey, did you forget who’s the older one here for a second?”

“Fine, fine, I’m sorry,” Taehyung says, smiling slightly to himself. He adjusts his glasses, one of the
several other habits he’s picked up over the years. “And again, you’re right. This conversation did
help but it didn’t resolve as much as I hoped. Perhaps talking, or at least referencing the subject to
him will make me feel better about it.”

“There we go!” Yoongi exclaims proudly, feeling as if he had just broken one of Tae’s very heavily
armed barriers. Although it seems as if there are thousands more to go, one is a start, and that’s what
fully matters.

Taehyung sighs. “Now how to bring up the topic…”

“That’s for you to come up with, I’m only here for moral support.”
“I’m glad you could be of help,” Taehyung replies sarcastically, yet deep down he still appreciates all Yoongi has done for him.

“We should probably get back to the others now though,” Yoongi states, looking at his phone for the time. “We’ve been here for a while and they’ll start to get lonely without us.”

“Oh, you mean Hoseok is going to be lonely without you and his punishment?”

Yoongi laughs. “I was referring to Jeongguk missing you, but hey, whatever makes you feel better.”

Yoongi offers his hand once again and they make their way back to the door. He turns the door knob slightly, still holding Taehyung’s hand gently, only to feel it twist in the opposite direction, jamming the door in place. Yoongi sighs and lets go, allowing the door to be pulled open by whomever is on the other side and is vastly surprised to see a slightly worried Jeongguk reaching out for the door knob. The younger juts backward a little, not expecting the force to be released so suddenly, and immediately stares at their connected hands, a hint of envy on his face. Yoongi smirks inwardly, trying his best not to tease the other on the spot and his indistinct jealousy, and instead stares up to meet Jeongguk’s tense face.

“What’s wrong?” Yoongi asks, genuinely curious over why the other looks so concerned and maybe even afraid. It’s not just Yoongi and Taehyung’s joined hands that could make him present such an expression, and he looked worried before he had noticed it, so what could be making him feel so anxious?

Maybe Hoseok broke the ceiling again.

“Oh, you guys are here,” Jeongguk says, and instant relief seems to wash over his face. He sighs and rubs his eyes gently, as if he had been stressed out over something.

“You didn’t answer my question.”

Jeongguk seems put on the spot, embarrassment creeping up his cheeks. “Well, I was a little concerned when Tae hadn’t come back in a while and thought…”
Yoongi urges him to go on as he trails off.

“And I thought that maybe, you know, something bad happened..like that one night..”

Jeongguk looks away, avoiding Yoongi’s now shockingly amazed and appreciative expression, and chews his lip nervously. He hadn’t meant to be so honest in his answer, but there’s no point really lying about it.

Yoongi may like the other a bit now.

Only a little bit though. He still doesn’t trust him.

“Oh don’t worry!” Yoongi says, changing his mildly respectful expression into a smiling one. His eyes squint upwards when he does so. For some reason, he doesn’t want Jeongguk to know he had liked the fact he was looking out for Tae. “Everything’s fine, if anything, he feels better than he normally does.”

“I’m right here,” Taehyung groans frustratingly, pouting as he’s talked about as if he isn’t standing right across from them.

“Right, right, sorry.”

“But yeah I’m okay, just had to uh- go to the bathroom and all,” Taehyung says, also feeling a little embarrassed that Jeongguk had cared about his well-being. He could tell it was him because of his voice but also because he had been the one to help Tae that one night.

More importantly, however, Taehyung doesn’t really know how to admit that he needed a break to contemplate his feelings over Jeongguk. Yoongi betrays him by nudging him slightly in the ribs, as if signalling him to bring up the conversation. Jeongguk stares at him, oblivious to the situation, and clears his throat to try clear the awkwardness.

“I-”

“Can we talk for a minute?” Taehyung blurts out, interrupting Jeongguk’s attempt to start
conversation. Jeongguk’s glad because he hadn’t thought of anything interesting or significant to say, yet he’s confused as to what the other would want to talk about.

He’s worried that Taehyung had maybe felt uncomfortable around him.

Yoongi tries to stifle his laugh, only making Jeongguk more confused as Taehyung turns pink in the lighting.

“It’ll only be for a bit!” Taehyung continues, nervousness coating his words. He talks hastily as if to get the situation over with.

“Um, o-okay?” Jeongguk says, the statement coming out more like a question. He clears his throat again. “I mean yeah sure, do you want to go somewhere or…”

Yoongi takes it as his cue to leave. “There’s an upstairs patio a couple stairs up if you’d like to talk there..” He suggests, taking his hand out of Taehyung’s grip and patting him on the back a couple times in encouragement. Taehyung glares at him from underneath his sunglasses, blindly punching him in response and manages to connect his fist with the middle of his shoulder. Yoongi rubs it softly, muttering an ‘ow’ whilst steadily walking backwards to both give the two space and avoid another punch from the raging and immensely flustered Taehyung.

The fact that Yoongi knew there was a patio meant that he had been anticipating this situation.

How perceptive as usual.

“Have fun Tae!”

Yoongi departs and Taehyung remains there, nervous out of his mind but also ready to finally understand his emotions. He doesn’t really know what to expect but that’s okay for him. Even though he’s afraid of the unknown, this unknown seems to be different. It’s like he does know but he can’t remember the answer.

Hopefully things will resolve itself.
Jeongguk breathes in deeply. “Uh, soo I’m not in trouble or anything, right?”

Taehyung shakes his head. “No, not really.”

“Not really? Did I do something wrong?”

Jeongguk looks genuinely upset but Taehyung can’t see that expression.

“No, no, not really as in you’re not doing anything wrong, but maybe I am.”

Jeongguk now appears confused. “Oh.”

Silence permeates the air and it begins to grow awkward.

“So, the patio!” Jeongguk announces, trying his best to release the tension before it gets too thick to break. “Should we head over?”

Taehyung nods his head, fumbling for his white stick that resides in his left pocket. He doesn’t want to ask the other if he can hold onto his arm or something for support, so instead he swallows his hatred for the stupid object and whips it out. It finishes extending with a click, and Taehyung takes a quiet breath.

“You lead the way,” he says, tapping the white stick on the wall a couple of times to indicate where it is. Jeongguk walks forward first, going at a slow pace so that he doesn’t lose Taehyung unexpectedly and they make their way to the stairs in a drawn-out silence.

It’s not awkward like before but it’s still a little weird.

Jeongguk stops when he sees the flight of stairs, a sign labelling ‘to the patio’ placed on the wall beside it. However, as he stops, he doesn’t warn Tae that he’ll be doing so, causing the other to run headfirst into his back.

“Oh shit-” Jeongguk curses, turning around apologetically. Taehyung is rubbing his nose in surprise,
crinkling it slightly, not in pain but in discomfort to say the least. He looks confused so Jeongguk continues speaking to help clarify the situation. “I should’ve told you I was stopping..”

“It’s okay, normally I can hear peoples’ movements and such but I guess I was distracted by the noise around us.”

Jeongguk feels bad. “I’m really sorry about that.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Taehyung says, and he sincerely means it. “In any case, you stopping means we must’ve reached somewhere, right?”

Jeongguk keeps forgetting how perceptive the other is. “Yeah we did, just the stairs that lead up to it. Do you want me to help you or are you fine on your own?”

Taehyung clenches his white stick a little tighter. “I think I’ll be okay on my own,” he says, smiling to show that he’s not mad at the other. It’s not uncommon that people forget to be observant around him, and that’s mainly because he’s able to function so well by himself already without it. However, sometimes he really does need it just to know what’s going on.

Jeongguk takes the first step upward, telling Taehyung that it’s okay to start climbing up the stairs, and waits for him to take the first step too. He seems a little hesitant at first, but it’s more so because he’s afraid of the conversation that’s about to entail rather than the actual challenge of walking up the stairs.

He feels for the railing, making contact with it, and begins walking up as well. Jeongguk smiles down at him.

They reach the top effortlessly, the wind already whipping at Jeongguk’s hair despite it being a relatively calm night. The air pricks at his skin, the soft chill in the air biting at his face and crawling up through his clothes. It stings only slightly, but is truly a nice contrast from inside, which was beginning to feel stuffy and overwhelmingly noisy.

Jeongguk waits for Taehyung to also make it all the way to the top, watching his hair blow around in the fluctuating breeze. The other seems fairly irritated with the strands interfering with his sunglasses, but doesn’t say anything. Jeongguk on the other hand finds it beautiful.
When Jeongguk thinks the other’s settled enough, he guides him more towards the center of the patio, allowing the breeze to fully encapsulate the two in their own little world. He clears his throat for the hundredth time of the night. “So, what exactly did you want to talk about?”

Taehyung immediately gets cold feet, internally regretting coming all the way up here in the first place. What was he thinking? Is he actually insane? Even though he wants answers, confessing, or even talking about this sort of thing seems way out of his depth.

“Um, I-” his mind blanks on what to say, and he feels stupid for bringing the other all the way up here just to get embarrassed over something so futile. He lowers his head shamefully and tries to say at least *something* to help save his embarrassment.

“Hey, is everything alright?” Jeongguk asks softly, very much concerned over why the other is acting so strange. He doesn’t want him to feel upset and so the situation is making him worried. “You seem scared.”

Taehyung laughs anxiously, trying not to get engulfed in his own absolute humiliation. “Scared? Hah, no, not me, just a little..apprehensive maybe?”

“Taehyung, that’s quite literally the same thing.” Jeongguk perks his eyebrows in even more confusion. “Seriously, what’s wrong? You’re concerning me.”

Taehyung sighs. “Fine, I just..” he formulates the discussion slowly. “Is it weird for you that I’m..blind and all?”

He has to start it off like that because what if that key factor *did* bother Jeongguk? He assumes it’s bothersome to most.

“Taehyung, are you kidding me?” Jeongguk almost feels offended. Actually no, he *does* feel offended, because how could the other even ask something like that. “Of course it isn’t, why would you even think that?”

“Well, it isn’t just a normal thing. It’s a burden, and I wouldn’t want you to feel like I’m an overwhelming task to handle.”

“You’re not a task you’re a person, and you being blind doesn’t make you any less of that. Sure, it
isn’t often I meet someone who’s blind, but that doesn’t mean it’s some sort of vast anomaly or something to dislike. Why are you asking me these things? Do you seriously think I’m that shallow?”

“No! No, I don’t-”

“What is it then?” Jeongguk asks desperately, voice raising a little bit by accident. He regrets doing so immediately, however, as Taehyung visibly winces at the outburst, for a slight second going to block his face as if Jeongguk was going to hit him. He stops his movements quickly, placing his hands back down, but Jeongguk had noticed the action. His gut fills with remorse.

“I just wanted to know if you found that aspect of me..incompatible.”

“Incompatible?”

Jeongguk is still thinking about Taehyung’s reaction, upset at himself but more importantly afraid that Tae really thought Jeongguk was about to hurt him. That Jeongguk could hurt him and had the potential to. That he was even capable of making him feel pain.

*Does* Taehyung think that lowly of him?

“Could anyone ever love me even though I’m blind?” Taehyung finally blurs out, and as he does so, he feels some sort of sadness unravel in his chest. He chokes, brushing his hand against his throat, trying to breathe in but failing to do so. Jeongguk steps closer to him, taking the other’s hands away from his throat so that he doesn’t end up restricting his breathing even more, and places them in his own hands. They’re merely a few feet away from each other.

“Breathe in.”

Taehyung shakes his head, trying to convey that he can’t.

“Yes you can,” Jeongguk says, bringing both their hands so that they lay flat on his chest. “Focus on how my chest moves and try to replicate that same movement, okay?”

Taehyung nods and Jeongguk breathes in deeply, extending the inhale for a couple seconds before
exhaling gently. Their hands rise and fall with the action and Jeongguk repeats the pattern a few times.

Taehyung feels the movement, focusing on the calming nature of it, and feels the same sadness tie back up and bury itself. He gasps loudly, finally able to take in a much-needed breath, and stumbles unsteadily. His shoulders tremble, breaths a little uneven and shallow, yet he seems significantly better than before.

Jeongguk gives him some space so that he can breathe, letting go of his hands, and then continues speaking in a quieter voice. “Are you okay?”

Taehyung nods his head, shaking off the disturbing feeling. “How did you know that would work?” He’s still a little breathless.

“My sister has anxiety and needs help calming down sometimes. I tried to use the same tactic I’d use on her considering it looked like you were experiencing a similar reaction.”

“Oh..”

It’s silent and Jeongguk realises he never answered Taehyung’s question.

“I don’t know why you’d think otherwise, but of course someone could love you,” he says, voice almost a whisper and extremely gentle.

He wants to say that he already does but refrains.

“How do you know that?”

He really wants to say that it’s because he does but he stops himself.

“Because you’re perfect, Tae. How can you not realise how incredibly perfect you are? It hurts me to know that you only view yourself as blind when you’re so much more than that!” He lowers his head, trying not to exclaim his words. “The first time I saw you I couldn’t stop looking at you. It’s like you glow, and that’s impossible because humans don’t just do that, they don’t radiate in the way
that you do, they aren’t perfect like you are. So why can’t you understand that? Why can’t you realise that you’re lovable and that—"

That I love you.

Jeongguk raises his head back up, staring at Taehyung’s eyes through his sunglasses.

“That what?” Taehyung repeats, heart caught in his throat.

“That anyone would fall in love with you.”

Taehyung takes a small step forward, also raising his head even though his eyes meet darkness. He searches for an answer.

“Why do you think this way?” Jeongguk asks, hyperaware of the other’s close presence.

“It’s what I was taught,” Taehyung replies, almost sadly. “How I was raised.”

“By your step-parents?”

Taehyung doesn’t answer, but continues speaking. “I’m also not very good at talking about how I feel, or understanding how I feel.”

Jeongguk nods his head, subconsciously taking a step forward in Taehyung’s direction.

“It’s because nobody told me how, and once I figured it out on my own, I was punished for it.”

Jeongguk doesn’t know what he means by punish and he tries not to feel worried by the term used.

Punished…how?
Jeongguk hesitantly reaches to remove Taehyung’s sunglasses. “You do know that what you were taught isn’t true, right?”

“Maybe. I think I’ve realised it’s wrong but never accepted it being so.”

Jeongguk takes the sunglasses off and Taehyung closes his eyes immediately.

“Don’t close your eyes.”

“Why are you taking off my sunglasses then?”

“Because you shouldn’t hide something so beautiful behind them.”

Taehyung turns his head away embarrassedly.

“Are you ashamed of your blindness?” Jeongguk asks, folding the glasses and putting them in Taehyung’s pocket. Taehyung turns back to respond in reflex.

“I’m not proud of it, but I wouldn’t say I’m ashamed.”

“Open your eyes then.”

Taehyung slowly blinks his eyes open, grey meeting brown but in a one-sided stare. The light makes them seem brighter than usual.

“They’re beautiful,” Jeongguk confesses and Taehyung doesn’t know what to say. His eyes reflect an emotion of happiness, and this time Jeongguk doesn’t have to search for it in the other’s lips. He can see it there right in front of him, and he wishes Taehyung wouldn’t cover them up so often.

“Why are you-”
“What do I look like to you?” Jeongguk asks quietly, interrupting the other.

“What?”

“What do I look like to you?” Jeongguk repeats.

Taehyung’s confused.

“.….I’m blind?”

“I know, I know, but what do you think I look like.”

“How am I supposed to know?” Taehyung exclaims.

“Just make an educated guess.”

He thinks about it in his head.

“Fine, you probably have brown hair.”

“What makes you say that?”

“I don’t know, it’s a common hair colour; a safe bet.”

“Well, you’re right, I do.”

“See? Like I said.”
“Okay, okay, how about my eye colour?”

“Hm, blue?”

“Nope.”

“Are you really going to make me guess through all the options? What’s even the point of this?”

“Just answer the question.”

“Fine, you have brown eyes.”

“Right again.”

“I literally just picked the most common features.”

“Alright, how do the blind normally make a rough guess on what another person looks like?”

“I mean we don’t really. You could touch the other person’s face but-.”

“Okay, put your hands on my face then!” Jeongguk says excitedly.

“Why on earth would I do that?”

“..To feel how I look like?” Jeongguk asks uncertainly.

“Yeah I get that, but why would even want my dirty fingers on your face?”

“They’re dirty?”
“You don’t know where they’ve been, hell I don’t know where they’ve been.”

“Didn’t you just wash them after you went to the bathroom?”

Taehyung feels caught in his own lie. “Well-”

“Fine, I’m guessing that’s only what they do in the movies?”

“What movies?”

“I don’t know, the romance ones!” Jeongguk’s eyes widen at what he just said. “Not like I’m trying to do that, I mean- I thought that, I just-”

Taehyung shrugs, trying to put the other out of his misery. “I mean, I guess if you really want me to I wouldn’t mind, but to be honest, I don’t really care what you look like.”

“You don’t?”

“I mean, sure it would be nice if I did know but for some reason, I can already tell you’re beautiful.”

“.How come?”

“Just a hunch,” Taehyung smiles embarrassedly. “But looks aren’t important in my world anyway, so why does it matter to you?”

“I’m not sure, but since I get to see you all the time I figured it was unfair that you don’t get to see me.”

“All right well, if I am going to feel your face you’re going to have to help me out. But don’t blame me if you end up getting a pimple.”
Jeongguk beams brightly, holding onto Taehyung’s hands so he can bring them to his face.

A couple seconds go by and then he makes contact. The first thing Taehyung feels is soft skin, extremely smooth against his fingertips and a little bit cold due to the frosty wind. He’s hesitant at first, unsure if he should actually continue touching the other, but becomes more confident knowing that this is what Jeongguk wants.

He trails his fingers up the length of his cheek bones, sensing a firm structure underneath yet finding a softness to it. Taehyung thinks he must have a strong jawline, the sharpness underneath his throat, chin and jaw indicating so, but can also sense the gentleness of his cheeks contrasting the initial bulky image he had thought of. He moves his hands to both sides of his face, feeling the curvature of his ears and bending them back and forth softly. He squishes them, and then feels Jeongguk laugh slightly at the interaction, and Tae wonders if the other’s ticklish too. He lifts his hands and hovers them where the sides of his face are, the heat from his palms radiating so that they warm Jeongguk’s skin too, and drags them to his temples. Taehyung can feel the muscles clench and contract as Jeongguk swallows, pulsing almost in a rhythmic way. He then moves fingers up so that they reach Jeongguk’s hairline, tracing the way it outlines the other’s face. He brushes his hands through his hair and realises it’s longer than he had assumed, softer too. He reaches back to his ears and can figure out a rough image of how large his face is.

He then crawls his fingers more towards the center of Jeongguk’s face, feeling around for his eyebrows and the bridge of his nose. He has to tiptoe only slightly to reach his forehead, and once he does, is able to drag his fingertips down so they can outline the length of his eyebrows and the space above his eyes. There’s a nice distance between them, an even one, and Taehyung can vaguely imagine what the top half of his face would look like. He then carefully travels his hands so that they touch Jeongguk’s eyes, being gentle not to hurt him, especially considering how sensitive he is with his own eyes. He feels for the shape of it and imagines almost almond-shaped ones but maybe a little wider. He thinks he has double eyelids but isn’t sure, as well as the common under-eye bags of a college student. He then traces down the length of Jeongguk’s nose, noticing that it juts out a little bit but then smoothens itself near the button. He squishes it down to tease him a little bit, and finds it endearing when he wrinkles his nose in response. Finally, he trails his hands down to his cupid bow, feeling how it curves and flushes out. It’s considerably soft, with a hint of roughness probably from a small stubble or shaven one.

His fingers make contact with Jeongguk’s lips and his breath hitches. They’re warm, velvety almost, and feel tender underneath his touch. He caresses around the outline of them, trying to figure out their shape, but doesn’t quite pinpoint what it could be. He lingers there for a moment, heart beating unnecessarily, and finally comes to a conclusion.

Jeongguk is beautiful.
Taehyung already *knew* this, finding Jeongguk’s voice, personality, and talent all overwhelmingly attractive, but physically speaking...there’s no way he could be anything short of stunning.

He feels Jeongguk’s breath against his fingertips, suddenly making himself aware of their current position and goes to remove them.

Jeongguk holds onto his hands before he can. Taehyung can feel the other’s lips widen into an earnest smile, and it makes him happy knowing that he can actually figure out so without sensing it. He then feels the other lean in closer, a little *too* close, and for a second Taehyung thinks that their faces are only centimetres away from each other.

Maybe it’s because they are.

Jeongguk moves Taehyung’s hands back down, appreciative that he had gone along with what he had asked, but continues to hold them. Taehyung wonders why and what the other’s intentions may be when suddenly his hands are let go. An emptiness floats in his chest, but it doesn’t last long as he feels Jeongguk’s hands now against his waist, holding onto his hips strongly and securely. He yelps in surprise.

“*What are you-***

He’s cut off by something warm against his lips, quite literally taking the breath out of him, and becomes frozen in absolute shock. He can’t move, one part of his brain wondering what in the name of *fuck* is going on, but another part screaming hysterically because it knows what the *fuck* is going on and is extremely overjoyed by it. Taehyung tries to put the pieces together, feeling his lips dampen with the warmth, only managing to finally realise what’s happening when a puff of air meets his face.

He’s being kissed.

He’s being *kissed*.

He’s being kissed?!?

Taehyung’s mind finally seems to clear and he kisses back, shifting his hands so that they wrap around Jeongguk’s torso, bringing them closer together. He feels connected to him, every ounce of
confusion turning into one solid thought that screams desire, happiness, want. Taehyung feels less confused than he’s ever been in his life, and he hadn’t even talked, he hadn’t even confessed.

But isn’t this a confession in itself?

Jeongguk smiles into the kiss, elated that Taehyung hadn’t rejected him, and instead, responded in the same way. One hand still remains on his waist yet the other travels up to caress his cheek, tilting his chin upward slightly so that he can deepen the kiss in his own way. Taehyung’s eyes widen, having nothing to see but still broadening in surprise, and feels the very essence of purple sprout out from between their lips.

He can’t explain what he’s feeling because he’s never experienced this feeling before. It’s like the purple he had felt and imagined before, in his thoughts and that one night, have been amplified in this very moment, glowing in a way that seems to brighten his darkness if only a little. The sadness that had buried itself appears to decimate, strangled by the happiness he’s feeling and by the purple he’s imagining.

He can’t help but feel so much pleasure from just one foreign action.

Jeongguk makes a noise inside the kiss, muffled by their lips and their desperate breaths for air but still appears brightly clear and distinct to Taehyung. It had sounded needy, yearning in a stature that doesn’t make sense to him but still echoes with clarity. It’s like Jeongguk had wanted him just as much as Taehyung had.

Taehyung shivers at the realisation, the breeze providing a cover up to his reaction and he holds on to Jeongguk’s shirt tighter, stabilising himself as the black and purple around him spins in euphoria, accentuating his feelings to the highest extent. He hears Jeongguk make a similar noise again, a vibration more than anything else, and he can feel it echo from the edge of his lips to the tips of his gripped fingers.

He begins to feel the same way as that night; the night this indistinguishable purple had consumed him, and he smiles.

He smiles because he likes the feeling, he likes that fact that he likes the feeling, and he wants more of it.

He smiles because he can’t believe that the turmoil in his head finally makes sense, showering this
wash of light over him that gives reasoning.

He smiles because he likes Jeongguk and that he wants Jeongguk.

He smiles because Jeongguk seemingly likes him. A blind boy who was told nobody ever would, and that nobody ever could.

He smiles because he proved them wrong.

He smiles because he can proudly say, that in this moment, he’s happy.

Chapter End Notes

AHSHJSDHFJSHDJSFH

I FREAKED OUT WRITING THAT WOOPIE

started this chapter at 15, ending the chapter at 16, ARE U GUYS SATISFIED? I really busted my ass of here yet i still managed to post more than a month late...i’m sorry :( 

however, let's all be happy cause it's our sunshine's birthday! (and mine lolol but nobody cares about that) Idk if you know who my biases in BTS are yet (honestly they all are but I managed to choose) but they're tae and hobi, and lemme tell u I have so much love and appreciation for them ah! really want to write a paragraph but it's 1AM and I really should sleep so i don't die during class..but yes wish hobi a happy birthday for clear skin and good grades!

peace outtttt

happy reading!

さようなら。
Chapter Summary

back-to-back internal confrontations of the kiss.
what the fuck did it mean?
funny dialogue awaits!

Chapter Notes

boop! I posted :) okay love me whilst I go finish writing the next one
さようなら。

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The kiss was warm.

Soft.

Romantic despite having been so taken aback in nature, quite incredible despite Taehyung’s aversion to love. Well..not aversion, more of a lack of understanding, a lack of knowledge and a lack of experience, therefore becoming a lack of desire for.

But now that he’s tasted it, someone’s lips against his own, fighting to devour him and very much accomplishing that wish, he can’t stop thinking about it. Pondering over that action and trying to figure out how such a thing could feel so good.

It’s not something he had thought of in the past.

Perhaps it has to do with the fact that it’s Jeongguk. Taehyung had felt so conflicted until that point and had felt almost ashamed for liking the other, so the kiss was a wash of relief in itself. Something he hadn’t known he yearned for but now inexplicably does. That one moment brought him so much happiness, and it prolonged as the night went by and as the next morning strolled along.
But now, it’s Monday, a school day, and whilst he felt comfortable and exultant thinking about the situation over and over again, it is time for him to face the other and the kiss they shared.

Taehyung can’t help but feel the trickle of doubt seeping down his throat, raising the question: what if it was a mistake? What if Jeongguk hadn’t meant to, and he ends up telling Tae that he doesn’t know what got over him, that he isn’t even into guys, that he never wanted him in that way in the first place. It’s not like they explained the situation afterwards, a quite flustered Yoongi dashing up the stairs (once again) only seconds after their lips had parted, resulting in an interruption.

No words. No explanation. No time to state or even mention what had happened. It’s not like they were going to discuss it in front of all their friends.

Although Taehyung worries about these things, it isn’t as prominent in his mind as he imagined it would. Rather, he feels relatively calm for the most part, the inkling of doubt tormenting him only present in the back of his mind. It is a much more pleasant situation after all, in contrast to the turmoil that had consumed him just prior his bowling alley adventure. The majority of him screams because that kiss was too desperate to have not been meaningful. It held purpose, and therefore, he should feel secure of their….

Of their what? Relationship?

Perhaps it’s best to have a proper discussion of this instead of speculating over one singular yet impactful moment.

He hears footsteps near the doorway. Not actually the door opening since they removed all of them last week from the flat, a nuisance as well as a danger to the occasionally clumsy person that is Taehyung. Despite his perceptiveness, he tends to bump into quite a lot of walls..and doors for that matter, so removing them seemed like the best option. Though it does give him a considerable lack of privacy, which is something that Taehyung usually didn’t mind until that one night he guesses, he doesn’t feel completely uncomfortable by the fact that his room doesn’t have a door anymore because that means he won’t be running into it.

Relief takes sacrifices, and the bruises on his noise were becoming questionably noticeable at this point.

He sits up on his elbows in reflex to the noise, the padding of the bed cushioning his body in the familiar way that makes him want to stay there forever. Monday mornings are rough.
“Oh, you’re up?” Yoongi asks softly, treading the floor more loudly knowing that the other isn’t sleeping still.

Taehyung nods his head, slumping back down onto the bed and turning over so he can bury his head into his pillow. “Unfortunately.”

The material muffles his voice greatly.

Yoongi laughs. “Come on, you have to get up. The car’s fixed now so we have to leave before traffic starts to get bad.”

Taehyung complains against the depth of his pillow, whining how he doesn’t want to get up and that he doesn’t care if his teachers mark him absent (which they probably won’t but still). One thing, however, does manage to lift his head up, perking his interests.

Getting up does mean that he gets to see Jeongguk again, which means they can actually talk about what happen and establish whatever it is that they need to establish.

Taehyung turns his cheek to the side lazily, blinking gently without actually seeing anything, and sits up. “It’s too early for this.”

“It’s a whole seven-thirty.”

“Yeah, a whole seven-thirty too early.”

“Come onn, am I going to have to drag you?”

Yoongi’s being sarcastic but Taehyung ends up nodding with a childish pout on his face.

“I was joking,” Yoongi says, picking up one of the pillows by the end of the bed and throwing it at him. Taehyung yelps, glaring at what he wants to believe is Yoongi but is actually the blank plaster wall behind him. He folds his arms and huffs immaturely, going back to bury his body in the cascade
of blankets that surrounds him.

“Wait, wait,” Yoongi says, a hint of surprise in his voice. He sits down at the edge of the bed, shuffling closer so he can take a better look of Taehyung’s face. “You look…”

“Awful?” Taehyung asks jokingly, going to lay back down if it weren’t for Yoongi’s hand to suddenly stop him. Tae sighs. “Hey man, don’t be mean. I just woke up.”

“No, no, you look..rested?” Yoongi cups Tae’s cheeks with his hands, tracing underneath his eyes. “Your bags are less pronounced, and your hair and skin don’t seem sweaty or anything..That and you don’t look like you’re in pain.”

Taehyung laughs awkwardly, shaking his head back in forth to get out of Yoongi’s touch. Yoongi puts his hands up in surrender, trying to hide his smile of amusement despite the other’s lack of sight to see it anyways and waits for Tae to respond. “Uh, well I didn’t have a nightmare last night so that’s probably why.”

Oh.

Taehyung always has nightmares, hell, he even gets them during the day, not to mention his various flashbacks when he’s awake (the ones he still insists to call ‘daymares’), so to not be plagued by them seems to be some sort of miracle. He had assumed that for the rest of his life things would just be that way, tormented by sleep and cursed to relive experiences he doesn’t want to. He never had once thought that it would change, or at least improve, but now something else has seemingly replaced the demons that have consistently haunted him.

Yoongi appears taken aback, coughing to mask his disbelief. See, even Yoongi doubted that they would ever go away, and he’s the supportive type. “You didn’t have one?”

“Apparently. I mean, who knows, maybe I did and just forgot about it,” Taehyung scratches the back of his neck, a little nervous for some reason. “Like, did you know the average person has three to five dreams a night? We just forget about them all when we wake up, so I could’ve had like four dreams throughout the night, but I guess we only typically experience them during REM sleep because that’s when our subconscious is more awake which means that perhaps my subconscious-”

“Oh, okay, Taehyung, shh” Yoongi smiles, blocking Taehyung’s mouth with his hand so that he can stop talking. Taehyung resumes his insightful eruption of information, his voice considerably
muffled by the other’s palm but still incredibly annoying as Yoongi tries to shut him up with vaguely threatening comments.

Taehyung usually rambles when he’s nervous because when he’s nervous his thoughts run quickly, and when that happens it mirrors his speech.

“In any case,” Yoongi starts, taking his hands away from the other’s mouth, hesitant if he’ll start rambling again. He doesn’t. “I’m happy. That’s good, isn’t it?”

It’s more than good…It’s refreshing.

Taehyung nods his head, realising that the usual pain in his temples has also subsided to almost non-existent extents. “It’s really good, I’m just shocked I didn’t realise sooner.”

Yoongi nudges him gently. “Hm, I wonder if something happened to trigger such a restful night. Perhaps a certain someone?”

He’s teasing but he’s not entirely wrong. That’s because the reason for Taehyung’s temporary freedom is most likely due to the fact that the kiss had made him happy, had proved his monsters wrong.

It was like standing up to them in some odd way, but something else also seemed to have triggered this revitalised relief.

And that’s because he likes Jeongguk, and Jeongguk assumingly likes him. Him, a blind kid of all people, treasured by…an angel? A mirage of human perfection?

It feels unreal.

A thicker doubt seeps down his throat, pulsating, and he swallows densely in response.

*Does he like me though?*
He wouldn’t have led the kiss like that if he hadn’t, but maybe he had been sexually repressed and this was his way to get it out?

No, it’s wrong of Tae to think that. Jeongguk wouldn’t stoop that low and he knows it, so why are these doubts trying to escape their position in the back of his head and make their way to the front?

Why can’t he fully accept something good for once?

“Oh no, there you go being all deep in thought again, was it because of him?” Yoongi asks. “Now that I think about it, when I came to get you two, you guys seemed awfully flustered. I wonder…did you actually confess?”

Taehyung blushes, shaking his head vigorously. He isn’t quite ready to tell Yoongi about the kiss yet, or whatever that kiss meant, but he doesn’t want to lie about the truth either. Their promise of no secrets still stands strong. “Stop being stupid, I’m sure it’s because the medical results ended up being good or something…”

Yoongi doesn’t wholeheartedly believe him yet he admits that the explanation does seem plausible. “Okay, okay, whatever you say kid. Now, stop stalling and get ready or I will physically drag you from this bed and purposely run you into every wall I see.”

“Well fuck, that’s kinda harsh.”

“Then hopefully that motivated you to move your ass!” Yoongi exclaims happily, patting the bed enthusiastically as if to stir him from relaxation. “If we get stuck in traffic I’m going to get mad at you.”

“Okay, okay, I’m leaving the bed so stop threatening me with injuries.”

“Be at the breakfast table in 15, I’ll cook something nice for the special occasion.”

Taehyung raises his eyebrows. “Special occasion?”

“You had a nightmare-less night, that causes for celebration! Plus, I can tell from the blush on your
cheeks that you and your special someone had an interesting time last night. Perhaps the confession went well, and that’s a special event in itself, your very first relationship!”

“I didn’t confess!”

“Sure you didn’t.”

“And we’re not in a relationship!”

Yoongi hums in a bored manner, not accepting Taehyung’s refusals.

Taehyung groans, rubbing his eyes. “It’s pointless talking with you.”

“Did I not mention a wall? Multiple, for that factor?”

“Alright fine! I’m up, now stop pestering and make your stupid special breakfast without stating Jeongguk’s name for at least one second. Can you do that?”

“Funny, I don’t remember even saying his name at all.”

“Stop referencing him.”

Yoongi gets up from the bed, walking back towards the doorway with a grin on his face. “When you’re ready to tell me about it, I’m all ears.”

He’s perceptive. It makes sense, they learn and live off each other, and if one of them is one quality then the other quite similarly shares it too. But even then, Yoongi’s always been perceptive. They know each other too well.

Taehyung feels the tips of his ears burn with embarrassment. “Whatever.”
Yoongi laughs, walking out the doorway slowly so that the noise echoes around the halls a bit, before hurriedly walking to the kitchen in order to start breakfast.

What a bunch of kids.

Jeongguk wakes up five minutes past eight, panicking upon seeing the digital clock near his bedside stating he’s late, and especially freaking out over the fact that he had fallen asleep in the middle of studying for his mechanics test last night, which oh! Just so happens to be today.

He knocks over the series of textbooks forgotten near the edge of his bed, tripping over both the blanket and the collection of notes he had been studying several hours prior as he attempts to get ready in record speed. He hastily throws the books in his schoolbag, disregarding the papers as he goes to make his bed, smoothening the covers and fluffing up the pillows because although he’s late, he will not be reprimanded by Jin for having a messy room.

He’s most likely going to get scolded for sleeping in anyways, but he might as well not add onto his death sentence.

The morning just keeps getting better (emphasis meaning it’s not) when he feels something uncomfortable straining in his boxers, finally becoming aware of the massive hard-on he’s sprouting from a quite restless sequence of dreams featuring a particular person.

He panics a little more, suddenly reminded of his inner turmoil that proved to be quite distracting as he studied last night and the overbearing flutter in his heart that occurred once those thoughts of Taehyung resurfaced. The only thing he could even think about was the kiss; the other’s lips and the way he melted against his embrace. It felt so real, it was so real, and Jeongguk finds it difficult to focus on something else when those memories infiltrate his mind so harshly.

He’s suddenly re-aware of his current predicament, the impending tardiness and the actual impending thing in his pants. He runs his hands through his hair, pacing around the room whilst chiding himself for being so stupid in such an inconvenient situation.

“Fuck, fuck, okay this is fine, everything’s gonna work out just-” He closes his eyes and counts to ten, trying to wilfully lower his morning wood with unfortunately much failure. “We can think of something else! Something that isn’t him..”
It seems like the more he tries to ignore it the more the thoughts come back.

“This isn’t the time!” Jeongguk frustratingly groans out, choosing to disregard his dick entirely and focus on getting ready. He scolds himself. “You just had to pick the worst time to think about this, is fate really out to get me that much?”

He bangs his foot against his dresser angrily, cursing as that hurt his toe way more than expected. He holds onto the injury in hopes to diminish it, and hopping on one foot, he tries to pull his shirt off his body, thinking of the most repulsive things imaginable to get rid of his boner.

_Dying puppies._

Perhaps that’s a little traumatic but it’s definitely helpful in replacing the remnants of Taehyung’s lips from Jeongguk’s brain and his dick for that matter.

Not literally that is.

He successfully removes his shirt and puts on a new one, deciding to deal with his pants last for obvious reasons.

“You could help me out by going away.” He pleads one more time, thinking that maybe his words will help persuade his arousal to go down. “For fuck’s sake, this has got to be some kinda joke.”

Briefly combing his hair, he checks the time to see that four minutes have passed, not bad given his circumstance yet still not great considering his first class (which also happens to be the one responsible for holding his test) starts in around fifty minutes. It’s important to note that he needs to take the subway to get to campus in the first place, as well as walk to said subway and make it in time for the 8:30 train. The next one will then probably leave thirty minutes after that, at 9:00, and he frankly just doesn’t have the time.

Thankfully, after much reflection on dead kittens and terrible martial art movies (weird tactics but it works), Jeongguk finally feels the discomfort ease, taking it as his chance to change into some actual clothing whilst reciting the entire plot of Hunter x Hunter to make sure that his predicament doesn’t come back.

Wasting no more time, he takes his things and runs down the stairs, about to quite literally leap out
the door when the tallest figure imaginable runs into him.

Or more like, Jeongguk runs into him.

Jeongguk blanks.

Since when did Jin get so tall?

…And change his hair colour..?

“Oh, sorry, I didn’t see you run down.”

Yeah, that voice definitely doesn’t match.

“What the fuck?” Jeongguk blurts out accidentally, immediately realising his outburst and covering his mouth in embarrassment. He finally looks up to get a better view of the supposed stranger in his apartment and realises that it is Namjoon, a pretty shocking realisation because it is now a quarter past eight in the morning so why is the other in his house. Although Jeongguk doesn’t remember properly introducing himself to him, he is familiar with his presence considering they’ve hung out several times before with the rest of their mutual friends.

Doesn’t quite explain what he’s doing in his home, however.

Also..It’s just come to Jeongguk’s knowledge that the other isn’t wearing a shirt either. Why did it take him so long to notice? Probably because he wasn’t really paying attention to that factor, but now that he has, he feels flustered.

“Oh!” Jeongguk covers his eyes with his palms, trying to block his line of sight as efficiently as possible. “You’re uhh..You’re not wearing a shirt.”

“What, you’ve never seen someone shirtless before?” Namjoon asks, a hint of playful mockery in his voice. He laughs at Jeongguk’s embarrassed remark.
“Well yeah, I mean just- you’re my hyung, and also my roommate’s friend..it’s weird.”

“Friend hm?” He hums, feeling slightly intrigued. “Now did he say that?”

“No, I’m just assuming,” Jeongguk replies, still covering his eyes and waiting for the other to at least have the decency to, don’t know, PUT on some clothes. Thankfully, it seems like that was Namjoon’s intention in the first place as he had been holding a white shirt in his hands throughout the whole conversation.

“You can look up now,” Namjoon says, shuffling past him, now clothed, towards the kitchen. “I didn’t expect you to be so startled by the situation, but I guess it’s my fault for not telling you that I was here.”

“I’m sorry, about the..reaction and all,” Jeongguk apologises, stumbling over his words because not only did he fucking blaze right into the other and get embarrassed over his naked chest but he also cursed at him, quite abruptly. If Jin wasn’t going to kill him before for being late, he certainly will now knowing the current situation.

The morning just keeps getting better, doesn’t it?

Jeongguk clears his throat, continuing his train of thought. “What are you doing here exactly?”

Namjoon laughs. “You finally ask me that? I was wondering when you were going to,” he pauses. “Jin invited me.”

*Jin invited him?*

*Him?*

*Early morning + no shirt = ....*

“Well shit.”
Jeongguk covers his mouth again, scolding himself for yet another outburst because really, he needs to get his emotions in check. Namjoon laughs even harder at his reaction, clearly amused by both the internal connection and the reaction to it.

“I-I um, sorry about the reaction..again..You said Jin invited you?”

Namjoon nods, biting his lip to suppress another laugh.

“And…you stayed the night?” Jeongguk asks casually, though deep down he’s dying inside.

Namjoon nods again. “We were working on a project together and I accidentally fell asleep in the middle of it. I guess he didn’t want to wake me up.”

Oh.

“Also, we’re sleeping together.”

Jeongguk chokes. “Pardon?”

He can’t tell if the other is joking or not but quite frankly it doesn’t matter because one quick glance at the clock states that he doesn’t have the time to be having this discussion.

“We’re continuing this conversation later!” Jeongguk responds, yelling because Namjoon had traversed into the kitchen. “I have questions.”

“I’m sure you do.” He hears some clatter and a couple seconds later a banana is being thrown in his direction. Jeongguk catches it hastily, fumbling with his grip because the object had caught him by surprise, and finally secures it with a single hold. Namjoon peeps his head from around the corner, a smile on his face. “Don’t skip breakfast.” He winks and goes back to doing whatever it was he was doing originally, leaving Jeongguk slightly dumbfounded by the whole scenario.

“You-”
“Get to class!” Namjoon shouts back and Jeongguk listens by darting out the door.

What a..weird morning indeed.

Nine o’clock strolls by and Taehyung finds himself anxious.

His initial subdued doubts seem to have gone on strike because now discussing the kiss with Jeongguk feels next to impossible.

It’s not like he’s terrified of rejection, that he’s grown nonchalant to, but it’s just the fact of confronting his feelings and very emotions that petrifies him. He feels vulnerable in doing this, and that feeling is one of the many things he despises after what happened to him.

Why would anyone want to feel vulnerable? It’s weak, it’s peculiar…it’s scary.

In fact, maybe getting rejected is something Taehyung relishes, because then he wouldn’t have to confront this vulnerability head on, would he?

Unfortunately, that’s not quite how it works. Taehyung is doing this because he decided to, and he’s certain that he should at least talk with the other about it, if not for his own sake for Jeongguk’s.

It’s selfish of him to believe that he’s the only going through some sort of turmoil, as Jeongguk could be feeling something similar. That and the fact that he is a guy after all. He can’t be the only one having a complicated moment.

In the meantime, Taehyung types mindlessly on his notetaker, not fully aware of his surroundings and only just focusing on the teacher’s seminar so that he has something to study back on later. He sighs, troubled by various things but primarily the impending conversation that awaits him.

Someone taps his shoulder.

“Pssst.”
And of course, it’s Jimin.

“What is it?” Taehyung whispers back, pausing his typing momentarily.

“Why do you look so bothered, it’s stressing me out.”

“Stressing you out?”

“Yeah, it’s like you don’t think I care about your well-being or something, geez how dense,” Jimin retorts sarcastically. “Now, for the sake of all things holy, what is up?”

“If I tell you, do you promise not to laugh?”

Jimin is taken aback slightly at how little he needed to convince the other to confide in him. Normally it takes two sacrifices to the Egyptian gods and infinite promises of anime-watching to even get a peep out of him, so to have such a genuine reply makes Jimin smile.

“I promise. Now spill.”

Taehyung takes a deep breath. “I have a crush.”

Jimin blinks blankly, awaiting more to the statement but receives silence. That was it? He quirks his head to the side. “Yeah Tae, I know that.”

“What? Wait, you know?!?”

“On Jeongguk, right?” Jimin replies again, trying to contain his laughter because he did promise after all.

Taehyung nods his head shyly, trying to speak quieter so nobody hears him (as if people are even paying attention to their conversation in the first place).
“Well, that was kind of obvious, what you think I don’t have eyes? Or any sense of perception for that matter?”

“For all I know you could be lacking eyes since I can’t see and all-”

“That’s beside the point. Of course I know you have a crush on Jeongguk, you both are my friends! I even teased you about it!”

“I thought you were joking.”

“Partially, yes, but that doesn’t mean I didn’t have my suspicions. Hell, I think our entire friend group knows.”

“They do?!”

“You are incredibly dense for someone so observant.”

“Okay now this makes everything anti-climactic…I really had no idea you knew.”

“Eh, it’s fine, it’s cute that you’ve accepted your feelings,” Jimin coos, tempted to squish Taehyung’s cheeks together but refrains because he doesn’t really want to die today.

At least not before Taehyung actually confesses.

“So, do you think he knows?” Taehyung asks nervously, as if he hadn’t shared a kiss with him two nights ago.

“Who? Jeongguk?”

Taehyung nods again.
Jimin intakes a breath, thinking over it. “Nah, he probably has no idea,” he states matter-of-factly. “He’s just about the most clueless, oblivious, most unaware, *incognito*—”

“Are you done?”

“—Denser than *dense* person I have probably ever encountered in my life,” Jimin finishes, listing the qualities off his fingertips. “And that says a lot considering I’m friends with you.”

“*Hey.*”

“I’m not wrong.”

“Well I guess that’s a stupid question since we-”

Taehyung stops himself.

He’s not really ready to tell Jimin about the kiss either.

“Since you guys what?”

“It’s nothing.”

“Well come on! Now I’m curious,” Jimin whines, tugging onto Taehyung’s shirt in hopes to annoy him enough so that he can spill the tea.

“I told you it’s nothing.”

“Didn’t sound like nothing to me,” Jimin says, sticking his tongue out childishly. “You can’t tell but I’m sticking my tongue out at you right now.”
“Oh I could tell,” Taehyung jokes, sticking his tongue out in return. “If you can’t tell I’m sticking my tongue back in response.”

Jimin laughs. “Really? I didn’t quite catch a glance.”

“Park Jimin! Maybe if you stopped talking during my class you’d have a better grade in it,” the teacher calls out broadly, making the two boys go silent. Jimin’s face goes scarlet as Taehyung snickers. “And as for you Mr. Kim, I’m certain you can refrain from talking to your little buddy and get along with your work, or do I need to separate you two? This is university, so maybe you should start acting like university students.”

Taehyung and Jimin nod, trying to stop the laugh that’s brimming at their lips and return to their separate devices. Jimin nudges Taehyung’s leg softly, as if to reprimand him on his behaviour when they had both been equally as loud, and Taehyung shoves him softly back in return.

The teacher resumes the lesson.

Fifty minutes later, the bell rings, what was once jarring now a usual occurrence to him. He almost likes it, the ring more sonorous than his initial judgement.

Jimin helps him pack up his things.

“Don’t you find it strange that this university has a bell? Well, not really a bell I guess since it’s a bell tower, but still, it announces the end of classes and all,” Jimin states randomly, zipping his bag closed. “I thought we escaped those high-school like things but I guess it’s traditional here.”

Taehyung shrugs. “What does it matter?”

“I was curious, no need to be indifferent,” Jimin teases, holding onto Taehyung’s cuff to guide him to the next period. “And since when do teachers even scold us for bad behaviour?”

“We did deserve it.”

“That doesn’t mean we should have gotten it.”
“…No Jimin, that’s exactly what it means.”

“You’re missing the point! For a university, I feel like we’re still in highschool.”

“I wouldn’t know.”

“Oh, right, sorry..” Jimin says, feeling slightly bad for bringing up the topic. “I forgot you were home-schooled.”

“Well it wasn’t bad! Just not the usual, but I’m glad I don’t do that system anymore. It got boring..and lonely.”

“I wouldn’t have lasted one hour. If I don’t get enough social interaction within a day I go into withdrawal mode.”

“Withdrawal from people?” Taehyung asks jokingly, but Jimin nods seriously.

“I like being with others! Making them laugh and feel happy, it’s what I do! If I just sat by myself all the time I think I’d go crazy.”

“Well you would have an instructor.”

“Even worse, someone to scold me if I even try to talk to them.”

Taehyung laughs. “I liked it sometimes, it helped me distract myself from other things. It was a relief almost.”

“Well lucky you, you’re probably one of those kids that actually enjoy school and learning. Disgusting.”

“Is that supposed to be an insult?”
“No, but it still makes you a nerd,” Jimin teases playfully, opening the classroom door to leave. “A cute one at least.”

Taehyung pushes him to the side, smiling despite being embarrassed by his compliment. “Don’t say those things.”

“It’s true!”

Taehyung shakes his head.

“All we need is to get you some glasses, it’ll complete the look.”

“I don’t necessarily need them, do I? Plus, I have my shades.”

“No, you need those superman type glasses—fashionable nerd style. It would suit your personality too. Your shades make you look edgy but without the edge. So really you just look like the y. Pretty sad if you ask me.”

“I like my shades!”

“And I say they don’t suit you,” Jimin responds. “Now real frames on the other hand.”

“Glasses aren’t an aesthetic,” Taehyung interrupts.

“Tell that to Tumblr.”

“To what?”

“Ugh, nevermind. I forgot you’re a grandpa with technology, let’s just head to the next period.”
“You’re insane.”

“And you’re not?” Jimin retaliates.

“Fair enough, but you take the cake.”

“Now that I’ll take as a compliment.”

“You really shouldn’t.”

“It’s not gonna stop me!”

Taehyung does his usual sarcastic gesture, a small little roll of his wrist, and continues walking to his next class.

Perhaps he is ready to confront his feelings and face vulnerability. It’s scary but it’s what needs to happen anyway. It’s what’s going to happen regardless if he is prepared for it or not.

If it’s for Jeongguk..he’s sure he could do it. There’s not a lot of things he wouldn’t do for him..

Jeongguk is a miracle worker for one reason and one reason only.

For he is the master of getting to class just exactly on time.

It takes skill really, to be that precisely average on the tardy spectrum. Not even the bell can surpass him, and the object is solely programmed for that factor.

Alright, slight exaggeration, but one understands the idea.
He takes his seat at the back of the auditorium, gripping onto the packet passed around by the person a few chairs across from him. He stares at it, the ungodly test he had probably not studied enough for now straight in front of him, baring its teeth as if to mock his stupidity.

He whispers a ‘fuck you’ at it, contemplating to just walk out of the room but then remembers that he is striving for a career in this subject—even if it is not exactly what he wants.

He doesn’t hate engineering, but he can’t say he loves it either.

“Alright class,” the teacher starts, his voice echoing across the room. “You have until the end of the period to complete the test. If you finish early, place the packet on my desk and feel free to leave. Raise your hand for questions, and don’t forget to write your name at the top where it indicates so because despite it being university some of you still manage to forget,” he smiles. “That is all, you may begin.”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes, not understanding why the teacher has to be so incredibly salty but then again understands that it is early in the morning and they could be having a rough start already (like him).

He opens the test, heart beating profusely because what if he doesn’t know anything?

Even worse, what if he actually is familiar with the concept but just forgets how to do it? Nothing screams frustration more than knowing what a problem is but not being able to remember how to solve it.

He glances downwards, catching the letters of the first question. He lets out a breath, reading it slowly.

Okay…not too bad.

He scribbles down his calculations, thinking carefully and then applying the bit of studying he did do last night before falling asleep on the notes. It’s what he gets for studying on his bed. The test so far seems relatively simple, or at least, not absolutely terrible (like he had imagined), and he lets out a sigh of relief.

A couple minutes go by and things are going well, too well one might say, and Jeongguk cannot
believe his actual eyes. Is he…not going to fail? Is this the real life, or is this just fantasy?

Caught in a landslide.

Right, not the time.

Jeongguk writes something else down, about to let a little flow of confidence reach his soul when a figurative spark of a memory shoots down his spine. He goes rigid, face blanking at the realisation of his thought and he gets distracted.

Of course, it’s who one would expect it to be.

As if Taehyung could leave his mind for too long. Jeongguk’s too attached to him, too happy whenever he sees him, too sad whenever he goes, too desperate to touch him again. He’s whipped, so absolutely in love with the guy that it could hurt, so it’s no wonder that the kiss is popping back into his mind again. It took a while to organise his thoughts, but now, after what they shared, things seem to be a lot clearer.

His eyes go through the words plastered on the page. He knows they are there, how the black ink contrasts the white, and how each letter curves and forms to make a cohesive sentence. Yet, these don’t register in Jeongguk’s brain. Rather, his eyes feel disconnected from his brain, his thoughts having a mind of its own and his eyes left to trail alone.

He can see the words but he can’t focus on them. Numbers floating, letters dissociating; they’re present but don’t currently mean anything.

His eyes leave the page, staring blankly as he remembers what it was like to kiss the other. How perfect everything seemed to click into place. It was as if that moment on the rooftop was planned by some sort of director, some sort of romantic scene from some sort of book or movie. He can’t even begin to describe how beautiful it felt, to hold Taehyung in his arms and kiss him. Show him all that he couldn’t quite explain yet.

Though, an explanation would be good right now. In fact, it’s long overdue.

He needs to confess. He needs to and he wants to because although they kissed, they didn’t even get the chance to explain it. Explain and describe precisely in words how they felt, how they still feel,
and what goes on from then. He can’t just leave it, let it drift away in silence because that moment had been special to him; to both of them. He needs an answer from the other, if he had felt the same way as he had, if he had only kissed back as an autopilot reaction or if he had genuinely meant it. He needs to know: does Taehyung like him back?

It would have seemed so, but things are left unclear without having an actual discussion on what happened following the event. If only they hadn’t been interrupted right after they broke away.

Jeongguk wants to confess to make it official because he really wants to pursue whatever it is he feels towards Taehyung. Sure, it’s new to him, and sure, maybe he never has liked a guy before, but he knows he likes Taehyung, and that’s a good enough start for him.

He stares back at the paper, having gotten considerably lost in his thoughts. There are a few more questions left to go, though, he’s unsure how to continue on with the exam with the questions still left unanswered in his head.

The new queries that don’t have to do with mechanics or various mathematical problems, but emotions and feelings.

He needs to tell Taehyung how he feels, that’s for certain.

He sucks up his emotions for the time being and directs his attention back to the test, solving the next problem. This time, his eyes stare at the words with clarity, and he has found new understanding.

He needs to find him today.

Taehyung yawns as he walks to his last period of the day. It’s the one class he shares with all three of his friends, and the one class he truly enjoys more than the rest.

And that is: Music and Jazz studies.

How exhilarating, but truly, for Taehyung it is.
He’s somewhat nervous. Well, substantially nervous really, and it’s for the exact reason he thinks. His confession with Jeongguk lies, if not in the one hour and a half of class, at the very end of it.

He hasn’t really prepared what he’s going to say, nor how he’s going to explain whatever they did in the first place, but he feels like if he goes in with a more spontaneous approach, his response will be more natural. He doesn’t want to stage his confession but rather..go with the flow.

It may not be entirely the best idea, but he likes to think of it as an organic expression of his feelings rather than a tampered one.

Perhaps he really is getting better.

He retracts his white stick once he feels the door of the building, making sure to search for the sign underlined with braille, and once finding that it is indeed the right building, opens it and trails inside. He can’t even count the amount of times where he hadn’t done so and ended up on the complete wrong side of campus, but granted, it is his fault for not properly listening to his phone announcing directions in the first place. That, and being too stubborn to have someone personally help him get across (which would be helpful now that he thinks more about it).

His hand drags across the wall gently, searching for the door that leads to his classroom. It’s nice that his university had inputted braille on each of the signs. Maybe it’s actually because it’s a requirement of some sort, but it makes him feel more involved and more cared about when there’s nothing else to really guide him. He doesn’t like to burden others or making people feel like they have to constantly guide or babysit him. He likes to be his own person the majority of the time, and although acts of kindness are greatly appreciated, he’d rather not bother anyone.

He finds his classroom, heart beating nervously. He can feel the butterflies swarm in his stomach, and as he opens the door, can feel them heighten, ablaze with a new sort of apprehension. For once, he’s glad he can’t see the faces as he walks through the door because he’s sure that the very sight of Jeongguk would scare him straight back out again.

He can maybe use his blindness, for once, as an advantage to pulling off this confession.

Taehyung hears Sammy’s voice first, exceedingly calm as usual and seemingly structured as if to argue a point. Tae walks with slight hesitance towards the centre of the class, hip bumping onto one of the desks and he uses the furniture to guide the rest of his movements. Sammy’s voice gets louder and Taehyung smiles, now able to make out the conversation he’s having.
“I’m not looking at your birthmark,” Sammy states dryly, both indifferent and tired of the situation. It sounds like he’s been in this predicament for a while.

“Come onnn Sammy,” Jimin pleads. “It’s shaped like a butt and I need your word of approval so I can prove Jeongguk wrong! He thinks it resembles more of an apple or something but I digress—”

“So, you’re telling me that it’s a birthmark that looks like a butt…on your butt? And you need my word to convince Jeongguk that it doesn’t look like a butt- okay one, why did Jeongguk even agree to look at your butt in the first place? You know what, nevermind I don’t care,” Sammy takes in a breath. “No, I’m not looking at it.”

“Why not?”

“Well, firstly, I don’t want to see your butt, and secondly I don’t want to see your butt, so get someone else to do it.”

“I’m not really close with anyone else here now, am I? And I don’t want a complete stranger looking at my ass.”

“So you’d rather have me look at it?”

“Yes! Exactly!”

“This is absolutely the dumbest thing I’ve ever been asked before, undoubtedly. The last thing I’m ever gonna do is take a peek at your butt-shaped butt birthmark!” Sammy retorts, sighing quite dramatically. “And you’ve now made me say the word butt way too many times for my liking in the same minute, so if you excuse me, I’m going to continue working on our project. You know, the one that’s due in two days!”

“You’re no fun, seriously it’s just one peek I-oh! Tae! You came at a perfect time,” Jimin says excitedly, catching sight of Taehyung’s nearing figure. He sticks his tongue out at Sammy before turning his attention back to Tae. “Can you check out this—”

“Nope, I’m blind, ask someone else.”
“You were listening?!”

“Yes, of course I was, you were loud and I was barely that far away from you…I think. Anyways, stop annoying Sammy about your birthmark.”

“But maybe if you felt it—”

“I will get Yoongi to personally annoy you about his music composition during your work hours if you even think about making me touch your butt.”

“You wouldn’t dare.”

“Oh, yes I would, now Sammy’s right. Focus on the project.”

“You’re both no fun,” Jimin grumbles, and Jeongguk beams in triumph at the other side of the desk, having silently won his argument.

“Guess that means I’m right by default?” Jeongguk teases, nudging Jimin in the stomach with his elbow.

“That is literally not the case at all, if anything it means we tie in this argument. But mark my words, I will win, as I am right and always have been.”

“Okay Liam Neeson, calm yourself,” Sammy butts (no pun intended) in sarcastically, leaving Jimin oddly confused as he is not familiar with the name mentioned.

“What?”

“Right, it’s more of a Western thing, I forgot.”

“Did I not just say to focus on the project?” Taehyung asks incredulously, his nerves still flared because the sound of Jeongguk’s voice had startled him. He takes a seat beside Jimin, leg bouncing up and down in an agitated manner.
He’s nervous.

“Fine, fine, I’m working,” Jimin mutters, holding his hands up in surrender. He gives one more glare in Jeongguk’s direction before diverting his attention to his computer. He huffs immaturity every couple of seconds as if to prove a point.

A silence consumes them. It’s probably not as tense and uncomfortable as Taehyung imagines, but for some reason he can’t shake off the feeling that Jeongguk’s staring directly at him. Trying to dig up secrets and penetrate the quiet with his dilating gaze.

And it’s no wonder because it’s not just a feeling. Jeongguk is quite literally boring his eyes into the other’s figure, trying to analyse his entire behaviour through simply his deep stare. He taps his hands anxiously on the table, still eyeing Taehyung, pondering over his next movements and when to bring up the kiss, if at all.

It’s not something they want to discuss in public, and that goes for the both of them.

Jeongguk clears his throat. “Hey, uh, Taehyung?” He asks into the empty silence, grabbing the other’s undivided attention. Taehyung looks up at the direction of the noise, heart pounding, and gives a soft smile. He was anticipating something to happen, and his instinct was right.

“What’s up?” He replies gently, trying not to make his anxiety obvious.

“Can you help me with something?”

Taehyung wonders why the other wouldn’t just come near him instead of asking him. It’s like he’s implying that Taehyung comes towards him, which is kind of hard for him to do since he can’t figure out where Jeongguk’s sitting solely from his voice projection. He’d rather not make a fool of himself trying to stumble over there but then he realises that where Jeongguk’s sitting could be more isolated.

“Uh sure, what do you need?”

“Could you actually come over here?” Jeongguk asks, confirming his implications, and this time his voice is more pleading, clearly a hidden message laced behind his words. Jimin shoots Jeongguk a
weird glance, looking back and forth between Taehyung and Jeongguk before saying something inaudible under his breath. He continues typing.

“I’ll try,” Taehyung replies, getting up from his seat and very shakily walking over in what he assumes is Jeongguk’s direction. He drags his fingertips along the desk to help ground his dark surroundings a little.

Soon enough, a hand is stretched out in front of him, making contact with his upper body, and Taehyung stops.

“Alright good, wait there for a second,” Jeongguk says, and proceeding that there’s a couple seconds of shuffling and rearranging. Jimin looks up discretely from his computer again, interest marked clear on his face, and looks back down as to not be noticed.

“Jeongguk, what are you-”

And he’s getting up from his seat, holding something in one hand and grabbing Taehyung’s arm with the other.

“Hey, what are you guys doing we need to be working on the proj-”

“Sorry Sammy, this will only take a minute!” Jeongguk interrupts, practically dragging Taehyung by the forearm. Jimin tries to bite back his smile, aware that something is about to go down but not exactly knowing what, and pretends to be oblivious. Meanwhile, Taehyung stumbles in confusion.

“Wait, wait, not so fast!” Taehyung calls out, slightly panicked by Jeongguk’s increasing pace. He feels uncomfortable from being pulled so quickly, not having the ability to see where he’s going and therefore not having the ability to properly avoid running into something.

Jeongguk’s careful though, and his gentle hold guides Taehyung safely out of the classroom. Tae assumes that they’re going to stop once they’ve reached solidarity, but Jeongguk wants to be thorough and ends up going completely outside. He stops moving and Taehyung stops with his movements.

There’s a moment of silence again, only their heavy breaths filling the empty space, and Taehyung swallows nervously.
“So-” he starts, but Jeongguk interrupts him.

“Before you say anything, I need to—tell you something.” He takes in a shaky, nervous breath. “And, I need you to hear me out until the very end, because it’s, well I’m not quite sure how much I have to say but, there is one thing I’m certain of.”

Taehyung nods, heart ablaze with his butterflies.

Jeongguk inhales shakily again. “The kiss..it was..something I never experienced before. Not meaning it was my first kiss but I guess my first kiss with a guy, and I thought over it a lot and I realised..how perfect it was,” he smiles. “It’s not the fact that you’re a guy but the fact that you’re you. I can’t explain it, and I can’t explain why I did it either, but I don’t regret my actions. You make me feel this particular way—a good way—and I’ve never felt so strongly about someone like this in..well.. perhaps ever. I guess what I’m trying to say is-”

“I like you,” Taehyung blurts out, surprising more himself than Jeongguk but still surprising Jeongguk immensely.

“Well I was getting to that!” Jeongguk exclaims, blushing profusely at having dragged on his confession for that long. He blanks, now fully digesting Taehyung’s words; his confession to be exact. “Wait, you do?”

“Of course I do, what, you thought I didn’t?!"

“I wasn’t sure, I had some doubts..a lot of doubts really..but-” he quirks his eyebrows up. “Why did you have to blurt out your confession before mine!”

Taehyung fidgets with his hands. “Well you were taking forever and—I guess I wanted to tell you how I felt first. I didn’t go through a whole internal debate for nothing, so I wanted to make it worth the struggle.”

Jeongguk smiles at his honesty. “You stole my confession. Wow, and it was me doing all the hard work, putting my feelings on the line like that.”
“You postponed mine,” Taehyung retorts, a playful smile on his face. “But, I agree. The kiss was new for me too but..I really liked it. It made me feel happy, to be honest, you do as well, and not many things do that so thank you.”

Jeongguk feels like he’s about to cry. “So….what goes on from here?”

“I have not the slightest idea.”

Taehyung smiles shyly, aware how different this confession from Jeongguk is from the girls that used to confess to him six or seven years ago. How uniquely casual and relieving it felt to hear him speak, and how natural the conversation prolonged. He can’t help but regret hating the confessions of those girls, because without their bad precedent, he wouldn’t have been able to relish in how appealing Jeongguk delivered his. Or maybe, it’s just him that makes confessions not so bad after all.

“Can I ask you out or are you going to beat me to it too?” Jeongguk asks sarcastically, but deep down he honestly wants to just make it official.

“I’ll let you have this one.”

Jeongguk smiles again, a happiness so concentrated residing in his heart. “Then, Kim Taehyung, will you please do me the greatest of great honours and go out with me?”

He already has his answer.

“Absolutely.”

But it’s still nice to hear it.

Chapter End Notes

that happened! finally, i just realised how long i've been writing this fucking story for and damn it's been a time. we got the confession tho :) so at least we're moving more
towards the plot twist-i mean..climax of the story (hah)

can't wait for you guys to know what I've been planning all along! (for a literal 5 months geez)

happy reading!

(fun fact: i used the word 'quite' 17 times in this chapter! i'm unoriginal :) and lack a better word; or i'm too lazy to use an actual thesaurus..)

さようなら。
It’s November.

Yoongi sighs as he walks out the department store, a boring day at work having killed his mind, and the more work that follows him now something to dread for. It’s half past three, the sun scorching despite it being early winter, and the inklings of a breeze just out of reach. He wishes to lie down, take a breather or rest of some sort because dealing with customers all day is not something he enjoys doing, and can be rather exhausting.

He plays with his car keys in one hand, scanning the car park for his vehicle when he sees someone walking towards him. He can’t see exactly who it is because of the sun, a shadow covering the figure’s face, but he can tell it’s someone he knows because they are walking directly towards him. Yoongi gives out a confused wave, tilting his head to the side and walking hesitantly forward.

“Uh, hello?” Yoongi asks, weary that the figure isn’t saying anything.
The figure stops, a tense pinch to their stance. “Hi, Yoongi. We need to talk.”

Yoongi pales at the voice, squinting his eyes to receive a sense of familiarity in terms of appearance. He looks to the ground and then back up again, debating to make a run for it, before finally sighing. “What is it.”

Of course he’d recognise that voice anywhere.

“I don’t know, maybe it has something to do with what happened eight years ago? Oh, and then what you said to me two years after that, because believe it or not your actions have consequences. Your actions can hurt.”

“I don’t owe you an explanation, Joon,” Yoongi replies curtly, a pang of unripened guilt rotting in his stomach but certainly something he doesn’t want to bring up now. He hadn’t assumed this would be brought up again. “You already know what I did and why I did it, so I don’t know what you’re looking for.”


The wind Yoongi had wished for arrives, rustling his hair and passing through his clothing. He takes a step back. “I gave you one. Six years ago, for that matter. It’s not my fault if you’ve accepted it or not.”

He bites down his regret.

“Really? That shit excuse you called a reason for leaving?” Namjoon responds angrily, looking up to the sky in disbelief. He scoffs. “Did our friendship really mean that little to you?”

The guilt twists in Yoongi’s stomach and he swallows it down. “I told you I didn’t want to get you involved.” He wants to add more but chooses not to. “Now, did you come all the way here just to yell at me? Or perhaps the whole reason for you moving here is because you wanted to get back at me.”

“Get back at you?” Namjoon questions. “Is that really what you think this is? I came here to see you.
To actually try and make amends over what happened because clearly you won’t.”

“There’s nothing to fix, Joon. What’s done is done and nothing’s changed my mind since then, so please, if you excuse me-”

“You can’t just leave again!” Namjoon yells out, grabbing onto Yoongi’s departing arm quickly. His grip is a little too firm and he feels bad at the wince on Yoongi’s face, but his outburst was reasonable. Namjoon removes his hold slowly, stifling his rage with a sigh as Yoongi tears his hand back, rubbing his wrist sensitively. Namjoon continues. “You know, maybe if you sent me a text or something, replied to the several I sent you, we wouldn’t be in this situation. Maybe a simple ‘hey I’m okay’ or an ‘I didn’t die trying to deal with my brother’s messed up shit’ would have sufficed. You could’ve told me where you were! You could’ve at least talked to me!”

“I did, six years ago! And I can’t believe you still aren’t listening to what I said!”

“You really thought I’d let that slide? We’re best friends! Or at least, we were…and I wasn’t going to just throw away everything over some stupid conversation about-”

“It wasn’t stupid,” Yoongi interrupts quietly, taking in a shaky breath. “Aren’t you glad I came back to talk to you then? To tell you I had found Taehyung after two years in the first place? I had to leave, for safety precautions too, so I wasn’t just trying to avoid you.”

“But you still were. Stop acting like you care if you don’t! Just tell me what the real reason is and I’ll leave you alone. I’ll go back to Daegu, I’ll leave just how you left me, so tell me why.”

Daegu.

That isn’t what Yoongi wants.

“You want the truth?” Yoongi breathes, growing angrier. “Is that really what you want?”

“Yes!”

“The truth is that…we aren’t what we used to be. Six years ago, when I told you I had found
Taehyung, I meant what I said when I was going to go live with him. I am living with him. The truth is that I had to forget about you in order to do so.”

The truth is that he didn’t want to get Namjoon involved. Involved with whatever risky business Yoongi himself was getting into. Beneath it all, the frustration and the bluffs, Yoongi’s trying to protect him.

“That’s not true,” Namjoon says. “I don’t believe you. I don’t believe that you would ignore me purposefully like that, or forget me so easily. I know you’re lying.”

“Well that’s not my problem then because that’s what the truth is.”

“How come you can lie to me but not to anyone else?” Namjoon asks accusingly. “Or do you lie with Taehyung too? Because the Yoongi I remember always promised to tell the truth.”

“I don’t lie to him,” Yoongi responds, though the slight guilt in his face proves otherwise. “And I’m not lying to you either.”

It is a lie.

“Then, does he know about what happened? How you actually know why his life got so screwed up? How you were stalking him for two years! How you knew his real mother-”

“Stop it,” Yoongi interrupts, a pained expression on his face. He swallows sharply and Namjoon begins to understand something. “You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Maybe I don’t, but he clearly doesn’t either. You haven’t told him yet, haven’t you?” Namjoon says shortly, averting his eyes to the floor.

“It’s none of your business.”

“You mean to tell me he doesn’t even know? So you are lying?”
“I said it’s *none* of your business.”

“Bullshit!” Namjoon exclaims, and he’s surprised by his own outburst. He lowers his voice. “You know it is. It became my business once you told me, once you left us, and especially after our conversation.”

“And are you still mad at my decision now?” Yoongi asks angrily. “When you look at his face? When you stare at him and realise what a great person he is and how much his life didn’t have to be ruined? By his actions?”

Namjoon presses his lips together, going silent. “That’s not why I’m upset.”

“Then what is it? Huh, what is it that you still hate me for? What is it that you *really* hate me for? Is it because of my brother?”

Yoongi speaks accusingly, voice laced with malice.

“No.”

“The fact that I had to move away?”

“Not entirely..”

“Then tell me what the fuck you’re so upset so we can end this stupid argument!”

“I’m upset that you didn’t even give me a chance to help!” Namjoon yells, the confession stealing his breath as he tells it. He stutters slightly. “You couldn’t even let me go with you, you couldn’t even look back at me and say ‘we can do this together’ you just *left*."

Namjoon’s voice heaves.

“You didn’t want to! Joon you-“
“I’m not done,” he interrupts, looking at Yoongi square in the face. “You were all I had and you left. I had nobody yet you still left.”

“But Hoseok-”

“Was fifteen,” Namjoon interjects. “I love him, and he was always like family, but he wasn’t you. He didn’t even know! I needed you but you didn’t choose me. You didn’t let me go with you, you didn’t let me intervene, you just disappeared for six fucking years and gave me one half-assed excuse to make up for it.”

“You think that didn’t hurt me too? You were the one thing holding me back from just deserting without reason at all. You’re the reason I came back to give an explanation to begin with! Did you honestly think that I left you on purpose?”

He’s breathing heavily, upset but in understanding. Namjoon deserves to be outraged.

“Well it clearly seems like it. You didn’t give me a reason to believe otherwise. It was dangerous, you could’ve gotten yourself killed. Of course I was worried! I offered to help you, I wanted to-”

“Joon, enough!”

He doesn’t want to hear the risks involved, it’s bad enough that Namjoon’s aware.

What happens if Yoongi gets Namjoon involved and he’s hurt because of it?

“I came here,” Namjoon starts breathlessly. “Because I wanted to forgive you. I wanted to have my friend again, give him a chance to explain what he didn’t six years ago when he said he had found what he had left to find in the first place. I came back because I thought you wanted to see me too, but I guess I was wrong.”

Yoongi stays silent, unable to respond. He clenches and unclenches his hand in a desperate attempt to clear the storm in his mind. He chews his bottom lip, anxious; debating.
“So it’s like that, huh?” Namjoon spits out bitterly, taking Yoongi’s demeanour as a confirmation to his suspicions. The ones he didn’t want to accept because he thought they just couldn’t be true. How did things get so…different? How could Yoongi abandon him? “I don’t know why I even tried, I don’t know why I even cared. I don’t know why I thought you actually valued our friendship at all! If you don’t want us to be friends then fine, I’ll let you have your way. But maybe you didn’t have to abandon me to do so.”

Namjoon goes to leave, the sun beating at his back as if tauntingly but Yoongi catches his arm. He wears a desperate fallen expression, and he can’t help but let the truth come out.

“I left to protect you!” Yoongi cries, tightening onto his hold of the other’s hand so he can’t go away. He’s trembling slightly. “And I didn’t tell you because I didn’t want to get you involved. But I guess it doesn’t matter now…I’m selfish, and because of that, this is where we are.”

Namjoon turns back around, confused and upset. “To protect me? You thought leaving would protect me?! What the fuck is wrong with you!”

“You don’t understand,” Yoongi sighs, bracing the insult with shut eyes. He knows the other deserves to be angry, he should be angry, but it hurts still. He opens his eyes back up to speak, voice measured. “As you said, it was dangerous. I was getting involved with something that I probably shouldn’t have but I did. However, because of that, I didn’t want to drag you down with me. You don’t know what it’s been like, how I think we’re going to be found every second of the day by those monsters or one of their accomplices. I left so that you wouldn’t have to get hurt and so that I could keep both you and Taehyung safe. I left because I couldn’t let something happen to you because of me. I just- I can’t keep letting things happen because of me!”

He still feels guilty.

“Yoongi-” Namjoon attempts to interject, but Yoongi cuts him off with a motion of his hand.

He still feels responsible.

“I know you’re going to say. It was my brother’s fault, and you’re right. It was,” Yoongi admits, clenching his teeth. “But, he did it because of the money, and the fact that my mom and I needed it. So, at the end of the day, it does come back to me after all. I had to make things right, and I had to do so alone.”
It still eats him up inside and Namjoon begins to understand.

He begins to realise, well, everything.

“I’m sorry,” Namjoon finally says, staring at the other’s torn expression. “I didn’t know you were going through that, and it must have been hard on you. What happened still wasn’t your fault, and you need to know that. He didn’t suffer because of you,” he sighs. “But that doesn’t mean you weren’t reckless. You should have gotten me involved for that very reason, because what if you had gotten hurt? It would’ve hurt me just as much, and the fact that you didn’t even tell me makes me feel like you didn’t trust me.”

“Well, I knew you’d stop me if I told you, and I would’ve given in because I’m weak like that. I had to think of something else; another reason that could explain why I left.”

“So you lied.”

Yoongi nods his head regretfully. “I’m sorry that I did. And I’m sorry I hurt you. You didn’t deserve that, and you had the right to know the truth. I just couldn’t say it at the time.”

“And your solution was to abandon me,” Namjoon concludes, though the tone in his voice is solemn; hurt. He shakes his head as if to shrug off the feeling, an important thought on his mind. “Regardless of that, you should still tell Taehyung what he needs to hear. He deserves to know.”

“Tell him what?”

“You need to tell him the truth, Yoongi,” Namjoon responds, to which Yoongi shakes his head.

“Absolutely not. He’s already troubled with everything that’s happened, if he finds out about this—it’ll destroy him, especially considering-”

“How you promised to tell the truth?” Namjoon finishes, giving a pitiful sigh. “You swore that to me too once, but I guess you’re also experienced with breaking that promise, aren’t you?”

Yoongi takes the insult. “I can’t tell him because it’s too late to and it’s not necessary to. He’s
moving on, finally, he’s beginning to get better after all that’s happened. I can’t just throw the truth at him out of nowhere! We’ll go back to the start, everything would have been for nothing and we’d have to start over. He’d have to recover all over again,” Yoongi says. “And I promised to protect him too, so I can’t do that.”

“Just like how you thought you were protecting me by leaving?” Namjoon states incredulously. “He’s not going to be as understanding, hell, I’m still mad that you did that since you just told me so don’t think you’re off the hook that easily. Sometimes, it’s wise to realise that you don’t need to protect everyone. Especially those who don’t want to be protected.”

Yoongi sighs heavily. “Can we just..leave it at that? Please? I’m trying my best to keep everything together and I just-”

Yoongi’s distraught expression catches the other’s eye and he sighs. The last thing Namjoon wants is for him to hurt.

“I’ll give you a break,” Namjoon says softly, patting the other’s shoulder reassuringly. He feels upset and betrayed, but he also realises that Yoongi hadn’t abandoned him for nothing. At least he has a reason, not a very forgiving one, but at least one that explains everything he did. Namjoon can understand that, but it’ll also take time. “It doesn’t mean I’m not angry about what you did because you hurt me. You knew that it would hurt me, yet you still did it,” he breathes in slowly. “However, I can forgive you because I care about you. I don’t want you to suffer like I did for those eight years without you.”

Yoongi nods his head. “I thought you’d never forgive me after all…so thank you.”

They wrap each other in a much-needed embrace, maybe not entirely going back to the bond they used to share, but on a start to. Namjoon smiles, Yoongi breathes out a sigh of relief, and…

Jimin exhales loudly as he walks out from behind one of the pillars.

“Wow..that’s a lot to process,” Jimin says, interrupting their moment of reconciliation with his brief interjection.

“Y-you, you were listening the whole time?!” Yoongi yells, cheeks growing red. He looks up at Namjoon, who’s just as surprised, and then back to Jimin with wide, panicked eyes.
“Not all of it, but…enough,” Jimin admits, pointing to the two with his index finger. “And I have questions.”

Yoongi sighs heavily, shaking his head in absolute disregard. “This is none of your business.”

“Of course it is!”

“No you don’t understand, this-”

“I got a lot of it, okay?” Jimin interrupts. “So don’t think you’re all sly and can talk me out of it. I, Taehyung’s my friend too, and this clearly has a lot to do with him. Is he okay? What happened to him? Why does it seem like you were involved, and why does Namjoon, someone I thought we just met a month ago, know about it too?”

Yoongi looks back up to Namjoon, asking him with his eyes if it’s really okay to tell Jimin everything’s that has happened in the past eight years. From the very first time Yoongi heard the news of Taehyung from his brother, to the conversation he shared with Namjoon and the time he found Taehyung beaten in the alleyway. Namjoon shakes his head but slowly starts to reconsider something.

“It’s not my story to tell,” Yoongi finally replies. “And I don’t think Taehyung would appreciate me discussing this sort of thing with anyone.”

“You discussed it with Namjoon,” Jimin accuses, disregarding honorifics in subdued spite. “I don’t think Taehyung would appreciate that either.”

“That’s different,” Yoongi says but he can tell from the expression on Jimin’s face that he’s not buying it. “…Very different.”

“To be fair, I’ve awaited a proper explanation for six years,” Namjoon remarks, his reconsideration reaching a solid conclusion. “But, because of that, I also know what it’s like to be in the dark. Be distraught with the empty answers, and afraid of what you don’t know.” He turns to Yoongi and nods. “You should tell him.”

“I can’t, Joon. I just said I didn’t want to get you involved, no way can I just involve Jimin in this too! It’s dangerous, it’s not right, it’s-”
“Don’t you trust me?” Jimin asks, pleading the guilt card out of Yoongi. “I’m already involved because I heard most of your conversation, aren’t I? There’s no point holding back information that I’ve already had a glimpse at. Please? I-I really want to know so I can help.”

Yoongi lets out an aggravated sigh. “Are you kidding me?” He exclaims in frustration, searching with conflicted eyes between both Namjoon, who resides behind him and Jimin who remains in front. “Please don’t put me in this situation, it’s not—”

“Fair?” Namjoon finishes with irony, extremely aware of the unfair situation Yoongi had put him in for the last eight years. Yoongi sighs again, noticing that he’s lost this battle.

“I guess you have a point…” Yoongi intakes a deep breath, conflicted for the most part, but also slightly relieved.

Relieved that he won’t have to burden the truth alone anymore.

“You know it’s time to confront the past by now,” Namjoon states. “It’s the only way to keep from living in it. I know you don’t want to, but sometimes the things we need to do aren’t necessarily the things we want to do either. Please, don’t let others suffer how I did.”

Of course Namjoon has to go all old and wise at a time like this.

“You’re right,” Yoongi breathes. “And that’s the last thing I want…”

He turns to Jimin, eyes reflecting pain, and with a tormented exhalation, he begins to explain the truth.

Jimin stands there, completely and utterly dumbfounded, staring for a long time at Yoongi’s pursed lips and dipped eyebrows. He blinks slowly, tears in his eyes, salt on his lips, a wretched sob stuck in his chest. He’s shocked and afraid, extremely disturbed by the entire situation and just so angry that something like this could have ever happened to his best friend. Someone who he knew deserved nothing but happiness.
“I’ll give you a minute,” Yoongi mutters, conscious that what he said is a lot to bombard someone with, especially someone who’s so perky, positive and close with Taehyung in the first place.

“Where do I even begin?” Jimin asks, an expression of shattered distress on his face. “Taehyung was abused?”

Yoongi nods with a wince, unable to relive the moment of realisation either.

“You knew too?” Jimin asks, looking up at Namjoon with glossy eyes, a few slips of sadness falling from its cavities. Namjoon nods, arising a shocked puff of air to leave Jimin’s chest. “And you guys didn’t go to court, didn’t get the police involved? You didn’t tell anyone? What the fuck were you guys doing this entire time, how could you-”

“Hey, hey, hey, watch it,” Namjoon intervenes, a burst of protective rage reaching his movement and tone. Although he’s still angry at Yoongi for his disappearance, he can’t help the wave of defensiveness from taking over. “You weren’t there, you don’t know what it was like for him so don’t you dare judge his decisions.”

Jimin realises how his actions were out of line and apologises, not meaning to take out his anger on his friend.

A few seconds of silence passes by, allowing them to adjust to the situation.

“His step-dad’s a cop,” Yoongi then states, a few hidden tears making its way to his eyes too. They glisten, translucent in the winter sun. It’s hard to relive the past he knows he was involved in. “And Taehyung didn’t want to get law enforcement involved—he couldn’t. He was too unstable, too… tortured. I wanted to respect his wishes.”

Jimin nods in understanding, breathing a bit to stabilise his whirling thoughts. “So, your brother helped cause this? And the real culprit is Mr. Kim, as in the Mr. Kim? Billionaire, good-looking, untouched golden businessman of the century, Mr. Kim? He was abandoned and then adopted, and he became blind because of his adopted parents and then…you saved him?”

Yoongi nods again, because that’s all he can do, everything pulling too much on his heartstrings and tugging at his sorrows, a relentless force showing no mercy. He wants to cry, but knows that nothing productive will come out of doing it.
It’s a lot to process.

What he doesn’t expect next is the strong embrace Jimin wraps him in, hugging his body so tightly he can feel the desperation written beneath the other’s fingertips. Yoongi stumbles back at the force, looking down in surprise as he feels the other’s fists clench tightly at his shirt. “Thank you for saving him, hyung,” Jimin whispers, dampening Yoongi’s shoulder with his tears, his chest shaking slightly.

Yoongi, slightly shocked, remains motionless for a while, only getting out of his trance to pat the other awkwardly, trying to be reassuring but not quite able to ignore the uncomfortable feeling in his gut since hugging has never really been his thing. Nonetheless, he appreciates the comfort, even if it’s something he doesn’t fully enjoy.

It’s the thought that counts.

Jimin pulls away, noticing Yoongi’s stiffness and apologises again, wiping his tears quickly to prevent making the situation even more awkward. “Thank you for telling me.”

Yoongi takes in a shaky breath, letting the situation sink in. “So now you know... you know... oh god you know,” Yoongi exhales in stark regret, the world crashing down on him without warning. He’s suddenly unaware of what to do.

This wasn’t his story to tell. This wasn’t his story to ever tell.

Why did he have to dig up the past?

Taehyung deserves better than that. He deserves better than betrayal.

How could I?

He’s overwhelmed with panic, not paying attention to the concerned looks from both Namjoon and Jimin as they watch him deteriorate. He can’t be here.
“I-I need to go,” Yoongi mumbles frantically, ripping himself away from the situation and running to the direction of his car.


Namjoon calls out after him. “Wait! Yoongi, don’t go! It’s okay, this is okay, don’t-”

But Yoongi can’t hear him. He’s already in the car, hands trembling at what he had done and the truth sinking into the folds of his lungs with definite animosity.

He told someone about the past. He went against Taehyung’s trust, revealed deep secrets that Tae had only entrusted him with. He betrayed him.

Yoongi starts the engine, hyperventilating, shaking, unable to fathom his deceit.

He gave in to the idea. He thought, for a split second, that maybe telling someone would help relieve the tension, the burden of holding the truth all by himself. He was weak, and maybe it was Namjoon’s confrontation that made him vulnerable enough to let slip and say such an impactful truth. A truth he wasn’t supposed to share to anyone. How could he have been so reckless to yell his conversation with Namjoon in front of the whole parking lot in the first place? Maybe if he hadn’t, Jimin wouldn’t have cared nor have heard, and then Yoongi wouldn’t have betrayed Tae.

But…through this, he realises something else.

Namjoon was right.

Yoongi had always betrayed Taehyung. From the very moment he decided to hide the other from the truth, he lied to him.

Because not saying anything and not admitting the truth is just like lying after all.

Yoongi had always gone against his trust, he had always lied to him.
Yoongi had never kept their promise because he had broken it from the start.

_He deserves better._

He swerves the car drastically out of parking, speeding away as if to run away from his problems, leaving them behind with the residue of smoke and gas. He can’t go home, he can’t look at Taehyung without realising the things he’s done.

_I have always lied to him._

The things he not only said today but also the things he’s done since he met him.

Since he found him.

He blinks away the fog in his vision so he can see, missing an astray bicycle by mere centimetres as he twists around it, avoiding collision. He pants heavily, trying to grip onto the steering wheel for help, as an anchor, and catches his reflection in the rear-view mirror.

He’s not okay.

Panicking, he builds speed, pushing down on the gas pedal as hard as he can to escape the lurking self-loathing digging at his gut. Where can he go if not the apartment? It’s likely Taehyung will be home, and Yoongi knows that the other will know something’s wrong with him because he’s too, _too_ perceptive.

He can’t go to Jin’s either because it’s likely Jeongguk will be there as well. The last thing Yoongi wants is to see that face during his current state, and so he decides against it.

Then the only place left is…..

He makes a quick last-minute decision and turns the car to make a risky left turn, surfacing a round of several angry horns and beeps from the nearby vehicles. He flips them off in rage, hand tapping vibrantly on the peeled leather as if to mimic his racing heartbeat, and swallows harshly.
Please be home.

Maybe there’s one person he can depend on.

Someone who he also didn’t want to involve in this situation, but now can’t stop from doing so.

Because the truth is, he needs him.

And despite the selfishness of it all, he can’t help but feel twice as relieved knowing that he can always confide in this person when he needs to.

He drives faster, desperately, praying and wishing rhythmically, over and over, one thing.

Please Hoseok, be home.

The doorbell rings just as Hoseok sits down on the couch, his body utterly exhausted from being at the studio since noon and his mind absolutely fried from his early morning classes. He groans out loudly and with frustration, cursing at fate for being so poor on timing, and debates on pretending that it just isn’t there.

Ignore it dude. They’ll go away He thinks to himself, but that quickly changes when he hears the doorbell ring again, more urgently this time, and then again, frantically, agitatedly, desperately.

Loudly, more than anything.

Hoseok gets up from his position, aware that the situation might be important, but still feels mildly irritated at being interrupted from his well-deserved nap.

He walks quicker towards the front door as the ringing increases. “Okay, okay, I’m coming, relax, I’ll be there in just a minute-“
He opens the door, voice cut off by Yoongi’s forlorn face staring right at him with terribly devastated eyes, and Hoseok quite literally jumps. Concern takes over his face for three reasons.

1) Yoongi hasn’t looked this distraught in eight years
2) Something terrible must have happened
3) Something fucking terrible must have happened.

The other’s breathing erratically, not normally that’s for sure, and Hoseok’s worry increases.

“Hyung, are you okay? What’s wrong? What happened?” Hoseok asks, but Yoongi’s shaking his head as if to brush off the questions.

“I-I’m an awful person,” he chokes out, a few tears falling from the corners of his eyes, alarming Hoseok because he hasn’t seen Yoongi cry in…ever.

Well, there was one time, but Hoseok wasn’t supposed to have been there to see it in the first place.

Hoseok urges the other inside, closing the door behind him before taking Yoongi’s hand supportively and squeezing it to show that he’s here for him. That he’s not going anywhere, and that he’s going to make sure to take care of him and work through whatever it is he’s currently going through.

He sits him down on the couch (the one he himself was about to rest on), and with his free hand, rubs the back of Yoongi’s neck tenderly, something that always calmed him down when they were younger. Yoongi immediately seems to let out a sob of relief, leaning into the other’s hold as if Hoseok had just provided him with the cure to his agony. He drops his head down so that his mint hair covers his face.

Hoseok swallows unsurely, mustering himself to speak. “Is everything okay?”

It takes some time for Yoongi to respond, but he manages to nod and croak out a ‘yes’ whilst holding his trembling hand with his other one to try and mask his anxiety. Hoseok grips onto the other’s shaking fingertips more securely in response, stroking them soothingly to try and ease his nerves because nothing pains him more than to see Yoongi so upset.
Hoseok sighs. “Well that’s a dumb question on my part because clearly something isn’t okay. What happened? Did something happen to you? To Taehyung?”

Yoongi shakes his head, but upon thinking more on it, nods.

Something did happen to Taehyung. Yoongi happened.

And he happened to be the one person to betray him without even his knowledge.

“All right, all right, what? And what did you mean by you’re an awful person?” Hoseok asks pressingly, trying to keep his voice level to not distress Yoongi even more.

Yoongi lifts his head up, eyes lined red. “I lied to him. I—I’m hurting him and he doesn’t even know it. He deserves better, he deserves someone who isn’t corrupt—I’m the reason he’s suffering!”

His voice is strained, breaking at the very edge of his words. Hoseok breathes in deeply, trying to take everything in and keep his fear at bay. He needs to be calm so that Yoongi can also calm down.

“I don’t understand what you’re saying. Taehyung loves you, he values and respects you a lot. He’s not suffering, he’s—”

“You don’t understand,” Yoongi shudders, clasping onto Hoseok’s hand tighter. He swallows down a distressed whimper. “He’s going to hurt, he’s going to hurt, he’s going to find out the truth and once he does—he’s going to break…and it’s going to be all my fault.”

Hoseok shakes his head, confused yet refusing to believe the other’s outburst. “That’s not true. I know for a fact that he admires you more than anything. He’s so utterly happy around you, I don’t think I’ve ever seen him angry at you, like ever. There’s nothing you could’ve done that would make that change—”

“Unless he finds out I know his real parents,” Yoongi interrupts, feeling as though his heart has been ripped out of his chest. “If he finds out that I knew what happened to his mother, and I didn’t tell him. That I knew about his adoptive parents but didn’t help sooner. That I know why his life got so screwed up. That it’s all my fault that it happened! You don’t know what I did, you don’t know why
I...left. You don’t know the shit he had to go through because of me or the reason you and Joon had to suffer.”

Hoseok begins to understand what Yoongi’s referring to, and he swallows deeply before speaking. “I do know.”

Yoongi tilts his head up, looking Hoseok dead in the eye with a surprised yet still devastated expression. He blinks slowly. Once. Twice. “You know?”

Hoseok sighs, prompting Yoongi to lean further back into the couch. He does so, leaning his head against the pillow and ever so slightly touching Hoseok’s shoulder with the cusp of his head. They share a look. “I guess the jig is up, huh? Yes, I know. I was...there when you and Namjoon had that conversation eight years ago. The one about your brother?” Hoseok refers, keeping eye-contact with the other gently. “You guys didn’t know I was there because I was hiding, I was going to surprise you with something, but then I guess the situation didn’t work out that well,” Hoseok continues, smiling sadly to himself as if he remembered something nostalgically upsetting. “I know what happened, and I know what you did and why you did it…I admired you and still admire you for it. I know that you came back two years after that, telling Joon that you had found Tae and that you were going to leave again, and I admit, I was mad at first when I found out but…I understand why you felt you had to. I didn’t want you to know I knew because, well, I thought you’d tell me when you were ready, and I didn’t want you to think I invaded on your privacy or something...regardless, I’m really happy you did go back for Taehyung, and I can tell you did an amazing job taking care of him, so please, don’t think for a second that you hurt him or made him suffer because if anything...you made him happy again, and that’s truly one of the most incredible things I have ever witnessed. You saved him, hyung.”

Yoongi stares at Hoseok for a long time, drinking in his words and facial features astutely with a feeling of disbelief. Hoseok attempts a smile, a little flustered by his own words (and staring at the other’s face for so long) and continues to stroke Yoongi’s thumb in a calming nature.

Finally, Yoongi breathes out slowly, the initial shattered look in his eyes having softened considerably. “Thank you,” he says, voice barely above a whisper, and Hoseok smiles widely and earnestly at having, if only slightly, cheered him up.

“Of course. You are the last person I’d ever want to see so upset, especially over themselves. Seriously, you’re the kindest person I know, so don’t ever think like that again. Please.”

Hoseok’s words are sweet but are underlined with a sort of desperation, as if it physically hurts him to see the other in such distress and pain.
“I don’t know what I’d do without you,” Yoongi admits, and Hoseok can feel his heart leap into his throat, not used to his display of such genuine emotion.

They stay there for quite some time, Yoongi’s head just brushing the other’s shoulder, and their hands intertwined.

Yoongi knows that their position and situation, their feelings and connections, are deeper than just friends, but he can’t get into that now.

He’s too shaken up, and he doesn’t want to exploit Hoseok’s kindness as a way for him to express how he truly feels.

The fact that…he really does like him.

Well, he really does love him.

Yoongi’s known it for a while, since they were small, but he never could act on it. That’s why he couldn’t tell Hoseok that he was leaving because he didn’t want him to be ashamed of him, to hate or loathe or hurt because of him. He couldn’t have him involved, especially at such a young age, and he didn’t want to endanger him because he loved and still loves him. Yoongi hadn’t wanted Hoseok, his precious sunshine, to think he would or could ever abandon him.

But the truth is that he did, and the fact that Hoseok knew all along, and still understood and admired him for it, reminds Yoongi why he had fallen for the guy in the first place.

And as they lie there, Hoseok providing the light for him when he struggles to find it himself, he realises just how much he missed out on. How, if he had stayed only a couple more months, he wouldn’t have missed Hoseok’s sixteenth birthday, or Christmas and Easter. He wouldn’t have missed Hoseok’s development from a carelessly reckless teen, to a more mature adult, one that’s grown up so much and yet so unfairly so.

And even though he did that, even though he left, even though Hoseok deserves to be as angry as Namjoon, he isn’t.

“You’re much kinder than I am, did you know that?” Yoongi says softly in the silence, his voice quite gentle in comparison to his usual tone.
Hoseok laughs, shaking his head. “Impossible.”

“You really are. You should hate me, I expected you to once you found out the truth. But you knew all along, and still liked me, still kept being friends with me,” Yoongi continues, beginning to play with Hoseok’s fingers too. They’re longer than his own, larger too, and they seem to secure him in a way that’s all too familiar.

When did Hoseok grow up so much? When did he no longer become the little kid, but the one Yoongi could fully rely on?

“Well, I’m not all perfect. I was mad at you at one point, when you came back to talk to Joon and not me. It…hurt,” Hoseok admits sadly. “But I knew you did it because you didn’t want to get me involved, and I know that the last thing you wanted was to hurt me because as I said, I heard your conversation with Namjoon that one night, eight years ago. I knew that the reason you gave six years ago was not the same tone as the one left with two years before that. I know you cared about me and that you still do. So when I met you again, here in the city a couple years after, I was so unbelievably happy.”

“Why didn’t you tell Namjoon I was here? You could have, and I wouldn’t have known it was you.”

“I thought on it,” Hoseok replies, fiddling with one of Yoongi’s rings light-heartedly. “But it wasn’t my decision to make. If you weren’t ready to see him, or get him involved, then I had to respect that choice. I wasn’t put into your situation, so I can’t blame you for things that I myself would not have been able to handle. I am surprised that you continued to talk to me though, considering you cut ties off with Joon.”

“I assumed you didn’t know, meaning you weren’t involved in the situation anyways. Turns out, I was wrong, and not about just that. I shouldn’t have ignored Namjoon, he was my best friend, he is my best friend, and I hurt him… I should’ve told him the whole truth… He deserved better.”

“What did I say about beating yourself up?” Hoseok chastises lightly. “You’re kind, hyung. Stop saying that we deserve better because you’re already the best there is. I’m assuming that you both had a talk? When I saw him again I was worried how you two might react.”

“Yeah we did…it started rough but we came to an understanding,” Yoongi answers, unknowingly leaning his head more on Hoseok’s shoulder and less on the couch pillow. “I think we’re going to be okay, it’s just—well he said some things that I realised were right, and now I’m not sure how to deal
“How Taehyung needs to know the truth?”

Yoongi nods. “That and I told Jimin about Taehyung’s past, which triggered my panic attack to begin with. I felt like I had betrayed Tae, and then I realised, I always had been by not telling him the real truth. It’s his past and yet he doesn’t know.”

“Then maybe it’s time you finally tell him that,” Hoseok agrees kindly, going back to rubbing the back of Yoongi’s neck with his free hand. It’s one of the only acts of compassion Yoongi not only tolerates but finds very calming. Hoseok plays with the hairs at the back of his head, tenderly brushing the bleached strands between his fingers and brushing his fingertips against the other’s skin gently, arising a hum of content.

It’s like he’s a cat.

“How should I?” Yoongi asks, closing his eyes as the feeling of relaxation consumes him.

“I’m not sure,” Hoseok responds. “But I know if anyone can do it, you can.”

Yoongi smiles softly, an exhaustion he hadn’t quite acknowledged creeping up to him. “What if I break him?”

“You won’t. I don’t expect him to handle it…lightly, but I’m sure he’ll come around,” Hoseok replies honestly, realising that the other is about to fall asleep. He doesn’t mind if he does.

“Whatever the case, he deserves to know,” Yoongi finishes quietly, voice slipping lower into sleep. “He always deserved to know.”

Hoseok nods his head, smiling to himself at how cute Yoongi looks falling asleep on his shoulder. The elder would never admit it, but he truly seems small and vulnerable at times like these.

It makes Hoseok want to protect him. “I love you, Yoongi.”
His confession is a whisper, something he quite frankly can’t even hear that well and Yoongi hums in response, having clearly not heard or understood what Hoseok had just admitted to properly. It’s not a lie, Hoseok does love him, and in a way that’s more than just friends and admiration. He just isn’t ready to reveal such a deep secret to the other just yet.

Hoseok chuckles gently, noticing how tired the other must have been, and appreciates his relaxed features, a beautiful contrast in comparison to his heart-wrenching state earlier. A couple minutes later and Yoongi’s calm, easy breath fills the room, head limp against Hoseok’s shoulder, and eyebrows no longer clenched in emotional pain.

He seems happy; tranquil and calm, and Hoseok’s glad that he was able to help him overcome his inner turmoil, if only for the time being.

All he deserves is to be happy.

“I really do love you, hyung.”

He rings the doorbell once.

Twice.

No answer.

He knows he shouldn’t have come to the other’s house so late, but he didn’t know who else to confide in. Maybe he should leave, or at least wait until a more reasonable hour, it’s rude to come uninvited, but Namjoon’s conflicted, and he didn’t know who else to turn to.

On the third ring, he hears someone rush down the stairs, evidently hurrying to get to the door, and Namjoon prays it isn’t Jeongguk that greets him.

The door opens. “Namjoon? What are you doing here?” Jin asks from inside the doorway, squinting
tiredly outside as he tries to fathom why the other had decided to visit him at two in the morning on a Tuesday.

Namjoon thanks fate for it being the person he had hoped for. “I’m sorry, I know it’s late…uh, can I come in?”

His response is sheepish yet his nerves are racing, his expression earning a confused yet lenient look from Jin as he opens the door wider and steps aside to let him inside.

Namjoon paces a little bit across the floorboards as Jin closes the door in the meantime, rubbing his eyes tiredly. “Okay, not like I don’t adore your presence, but why are you at my house so early, and why do you look so anxious? Did something happen?”

Namjoon lets out a little exhale “Well, not entirely, I was just really conflicted and needed your advice.”

“And…you chose to do it now, at this hour?”

“It couldn’t wait, and I also couldn’t sleep,” Namjoon admits. “Now the more that I think about it, this was selfish I’m sorry. I woke you up and I probably could have just asked you at a more reasonable hour so I don’t know why I bothered you so late, I just-”

“Alright, slow down,” Jin interrupts kindly, offering Namjoon to sit on the couch. He accepts because the continuous pacing had started to grow tiresome. “First off, you’re not a bother, so I’m glad you felt comfortable enough coming over because you needed to. If you ever need me don’t hesitate to get me. Secondly, if you have an issue, I’m more than happy to hear you out, so don’t worry about it. I want to be there for you.”

Namjoon smiles softly, his dimples on display, and Jin inwardly coos. “Thank you, Jin.”

“Now, what’s up? Do you want me to make tea or something?”

“No, no, it’s fine. I already woke you up, you shouldn’t have to brew up anything, it’s just…I talked with Yoongi today..well yesterday considering it’s already morning.”
"You did?" Jin asks with disbelief, happy that Namjoon had actually done it because they had talked about it just the night prior. It didn’t take them long to figure out they both knew the truth of what happened in the past. It was practically the first thing they discussed. "How did it go?"

"…Surprisingly well," Namjoon replies, another smile on his lips. "But I’m afraid I might have hurt him."

"Hurt him? Wait, wasn’t he the one that left you for eight years? How did you-"

"I may have pressured him to tell someone about Taehyung’s past," Namjoon blurts out, even more ashamed of his actions upon hearing it aloud. "And he did end up telling it…and I realise now that I probably should’ve respected his wishes at keeping it private but I guilt-tripped him into it and I feel awful..I think it affected him badly, and the last thing I wanted was for him to be in pain."

Jin widens his eyes for a second, understanding the situation, before remaining silent to come up with a solution. "Okay so..firstly you’re right you should have respected his wishes. His relationship with Taehyung is very strong and protective, he loves him more than anything else, so you must have really made him feel bad about what he did for that to happen-"

"I know, which is why-"

"But," Jin interrupts. "It doesn’t mean it’s entirely your fault. You see, something else might’ve been on his mind that made him want to say it. Even though you may have persuaded him to, he must have thought briefly of something else that convinced him to follow through and cave in with what you said."

"Are you sure? I was very persuasive."

"Yes, I am sure," Jin blows out gently. "Yoongi’s a complex person, I would know that more than anyone else besides Hobi probably. And you would know too, since you were best friends. He feels immensely guilty in general so something you said could have triggered things he already thinks of, like his overwhelming stress at keeping that truth in the first place. It’s a huge burden, and it’s painful sometimes to hold alone. He may put on a mask, but deep down, he really does suffer."

"All the more reason why I shouldn’t have said what I said. I do agree that Jimin deserved to know, but perhaps it wasn’t my place to interfere."
“Wait, it’s Jimin who knows?” Jin asks. “Well, it doesn’t really matter who it is, but at least it’s someone trustworthy and someone who cares about Taehyung a lot. In any case, don’t feel too guilty about it.”

“But he seemed really upset when he left,” Namjoon says, the memory of Yoongi’s pained face plunging a hole through his stomach. “I hadn’t seen him that distraught since…since the day he told me what his brother did.”

Jin nods his head. “I think he’s going through an…epiphany of some sorts. Perhaps it does have to do with what you said, but I’m sure that he’s handling it with reason and ration. He’s a logical guy, I understand why you would be worried, but I know that he’s going to be okay. Do you want me to call just in case?”

“No, no, I don’t want to wake him up if he’s asleep,” Namjoon replies. “I just…I don’t want to lose him like I did all those years ago.”

“You won’t,” Jin promises lightly. “I know that he’s going to stay this time. He won’t abandon you again,” he smiles. “You should apologise though when you get the chance, if you really think it hurt him that much.”

Namjoon nods reassuringly to himself, feeling slightly better about the situation. He hadn’t meant for Yoongi to react in such a way, but it just goes to show how much he really cares for Taehyung.

It makes Namjoon happy.

He smiles. “Thank you for helping me…talk through it. And sorry again for coming at such an hour, I should’ve known better.”

“Don’t be stupid, I want to be there for you,” Jin admits, going over to give the other a kiss on the lips. “And, since it is late, you can stay here if you want. It’s sometimes dangerous to drive so late at night, you know?”

Jin has a playful look in his eyes, a perky smile on his lips.

“I think I traumatised Jeongguk the other day when he ran into me without my shirt on,” Namjoon laughs, smiling brightly up at Jin as he cups his dimpled face in his hands. “You sure he can handle
having me here again?"

“He was already supposed to be on his way to school,” Jin mutters amusedly, giving Namjoon another peck as he urges him to get up. “We’ll be more discrete this time!”

“Okay, okay, but you’re going to sleep since I kept you up, so we’re not doing anything tonight,” Namjoon declares earnestly, letting Jin drag him by the arm up to the bedroom.

“Yeah, yeah, you say that now, but I’ll make you change your mind,”

He gives him a teasing side-glance.

“Keep it down! Jeongguk will hear,”

“As if, the guy sleeps like a log. He didn’t even hear us last night.”

“Jin.”

“What, we made a lot of noise…studying.”

Namjoon rolls his eyes. “Just get to bed, and sleep this time, you need it. Your ass is the one that’s going to hurt in the morning so-”

Jin hits the other softly to shut him up, glaring at him for his comment. “Fine, but tomorrow-”

“For sure,” Namjoon finishes warmly, letting the other take him to his room to get a well-deserved rest from today.

They’ve all truly earned it.
my friend recommended that i use that tool on the computer that makes a robot read aloud your text. this was for more accurate proof-reading ++ when i'm way too lazy to go through 22 pages...again...for the FIFTH time..

meaning i sat here for 30 minutes and watched this drama unfold with an automated, monotone, british man robot voice. it was kind of hilarious but also time-consuming.

also i hate my writing.

happy reading!

さようなら。
Jeongguk had thought that once he confessed his feelings for Taehyung, their relationship with each other would’ve changed drastically (for better or for worse) or at least appeared differently in the eyes of others. However, what he didn’t expect was for things to be quite literally the same, facing the hard fact that nothing has really changed between them at all.

Sure, they know that they’re together, and they know that they both feel the same way, yet, it doesn’t seem to affect their overall relationship. The only thing their confession seemed to do was soothe the uncertainties they both experienced in handling their emotions, which was helpful and extremely worthwhile, but still not exactly what Jeongguk had presumed.

Maybe he was too eager and too expectant over his developing relation with Taehyung. He never intended it to be fast, but he hadn’t calculated that it would be so slow either.

It’s been almost three weeks now since both of their confessions. They haven’t talked about it since then, and their usual comments to each other go unnoticed by their friends.

It’s like they aren’t really…dating.
Which Jeongguk doesn’t wholly mind. He does find it slightly disheartening to know that he’s being treated the same way as he always had, but he also knows that Taehyung isn’t one to show skinship, or be overwhelmingly compassionate in general. He shows his love and admiration in different ways, more discrete yet wholesome ways that reflect why Jeongguk had fallen for him in the first place. It’s just different from his past dating experience.

Perhaps it has to do with the fact that this is Jeongguk’s first time dating a guy, and whilst he has accepted the fact that he may like men in addition to women, he feels heavily strange and inexperienced about the basis of the situation.

He doesn’t want to mess things up and yet he feels like he already has. Is he supposed to treat this like something he’s used to, or should he be honest with his confusion?

Maybe the turmoil and uncertainties haven’t completely vanished.

Despite that though, and the small to non-existent changes in their relationship so far, Jeongguk has noticed that Jimin has begun to realise something. He doesn’t know quite what it is, but he gets the feeling that Jimin knows about their conversation, or at least, something about Taehyung in general.

He seems slightly standoffish, nervous maybe, and on top of that, he keeps giving Jeongguk the weirdest glances every time he interacts with Tae to begin with.

Jeongguk assumes that Jimin has already figured out about his confession to Taehyung, and awaits patiently for the teasing to commence. Meanwhile, he wonders why his relationship with Taehyung seems so much different than the ones he’s already had (excluding the fact that he’s a guy just for the time being). He knows something else must be involved too, because does the gender of who you’re dating really change your connection to them that much?

Shouldn’t the gender be irrelevant and more the personality that captures your interest in someone else?

Jeongguk has no idea. He barely knows anything even remotely concerning the subject and one can’t blame him for being unknowledgeable. He’s never experienced it before, never even thought or considered it before, so this is quite literally a huge leap for him in terms of finding himself and who he really is.
“Alright class, settle down,” the teacher announces, quieting the rising chatter of several students so he can commence the period. It helps Jeongguk get out of his own head. “I’ve graded your assignments, and I must say, some of you really impressed me. Makes me look forward to how you’ll perform in the next project. Now, those who didn’t do as well, you’ll have your chance to improve. I didn’t expect everyone to nail the very first assignment, so don’t worry too much if the grade isn’t to your liking. For the time being, we’re going to lean more into making our own compositions,” he states happily, smiling as if he had just bestowed the class with the most exciting news possible. “Since you now know the different styles and artists of these music genres, I think it will help you more in your own creations. Sort of like an influence or guide to aid you along your way! You can work alone, or in groups if that’s what you prefer, just know that we’re not starting anything today, just getting an idea of what to do.”

He finishes his instructions with a grin before shuffling some papers in his hands, roaming around the classroom to distribute the grades to each student separately.

The class stirs and with a mix of mild excitement and indistinguishable murmurs, one half of students happy with the new task given, and the other seemingly indifferent or even frustrated at the pending exercise at hand. Sammy turns to Jimin, being part of the half that is excited about the composition.

“I have so many ideas already! My roommate and I compose a lot for fun, and he’s *still* trying to convince me to join his band. I digress, but he’s very insistent..and persuasive.”

“I don’t know why you’re still refusing,” Jimin replies back, lying his head on the table so that his cheeks smush together. It muffles his speech in an adorably cute way. “Wouldn’t being a part of a group or band be great? It’s like you’re one big family doing the very thing you all love together *and* on top of that, getting recognition for it. What’s not to like?”

“It’s time consuming,” Sammy states, an undertone of longing in his voice. “And besides, I never thought I’d actually do it.”

“What do you mean? If you like it shouldn’t you just go for it?” Jimin asks earnestly, genuinely curious over why someone would purposefully refuse their dream. It’s his innocence that makes him so beautifully endearing.

Sammy sighs. “Because it isn’t that simple.”

Jimin expects him to say more, perhaps some insightful explanation as to why things aren’t so easy and straightforward but is disappointed when Sammy leaves it at that. *Why aren’t things just simple? Why can’t they be anyways?* Jimin taps his hands impatiently on the table, inches away from where
his head is placed so that his fingers are seen up-close and he exhales loudly as if to announce his internal dilemma.

“Alright, why isn’t it simple?” Jimin finally asks, the question lowkey killing him on the inside.

Sammy looks up from where he was playing on his phone, raising his eyebrows. “What do you mean why isn’t it simple? It just isn’t.”

“There’s got to be a reason.”

“Okay, here’s one, my family doesn’t want me to do music,” Sammy responds matter-of-factly, not really paying too much to it. “And you can fail quite easily at it, not to mention how much you have to sacrifice to even make a dent into the world of stardom. Can’t be a disappoint to my parents and then fail at my dream, now can I?”

Jimin ponders for a few seconds. “Well, you won’t know unless you try.”

“Are you kidding me?” Sammy states incredulously “You know, you’re pretty naive Jimin.”

“Hey, I’m not! I’m just saying that if you don’t go for your dream you’ll never know what could’ve come out of it. Why be afraid of failure when not even attempting is just as worse?”

“See, naïve.”

Jimin huffs in frustration. “Me being optimistic and hopeful isn’t naïve, it’s realistic in a positive way!”

“No, that’s idealistic, and while it is nice it isn’t quite beneficial in the real world. I would know as I graduate next year, and I’ve gotten a glimpse of what life is like. Let me tell you, it is not pretty.”

“You’re such a downer, Sam.”

“I’ve told you to never call me that again.”
“Okay Sam, but whilst you brood in your world of self-analysis, I’m going to be with Taehyung relishing in happy intentions! Right Tae?”

“Hm?”

“See, he gets it!” Jimin says anyways, making Sammy roll his eyes in response.

Taehyung perks his head up questioningly, not having paid attention to the conversation, and furrows his eyebrows in confusion. “What? Gets what?”

Despite it being such a small reaction, Jeongguk can’t help the feeling that overtakes him. His heart flips, beating quickly because how can one look so absolutely cute without even trying? He tries to cover up his blush by hiding further behind his opened laptop.

“You know, being optimistic! Isn’t it nice to look forward to the future and pursue your dreams?”

“Huh, never really thought about it.”

“What.”

Taehyung coughs. “I’m blind, there aren’t many people that would want to hire me anyways. No point going for a dream that’s bound to fail from the start. Can’t help my situation, it’s just how it is.”

“Damn why is everyone I’m friends with such a downer? Is it such a crime to be happy and hopeful? Let yourself experience what you want and screw whoever says otherwise!”

“You’re awfully naïve,” Taehyung states mindlessly, going back to type something on his notetaker. It arises a remark of victory from Sammy and an offended sigh from Jimin. “Of course not everyone is going to have the opportunity to do what they love.”

“Even Taehyung agrees with me,” Sammy declares triumphantly. “And he wasn’t even listening.”
“Okay, but don’t you agree that whilst some people are more privileged than others, you can make your own opportunities if you really try? If you go for it then maybe you can catch up with those who had a head start from the beginning,” Jimin suggests brightly, trying to keep up his optimistic outlook intact.

“I mean sure, but it depends how much you’re willing to put on the line to do so. Most people would rather stay in their comfort zone if it means living decently enough. Why are you so passionate about this subject to begin with?” Taehyung replies, this time more interested in the conversation. He never really thought about doing what he wants before, so this is quite a new perspective.

“Living decently isn’t living though. Why not be happy? I’m passionate about the subject because I feel like all my friends don’t want to pursue their dreams! It makes me sad that you’re not even going to do what you want. We all have around two or less years left in university, this is the time to figure out what we want to do and how we’re going to do it.”

“Jimin, don’t press it,” Jeongguk finally says, acutely aware of Taehyung’s slightly clenched hands and tightening grip. It’s concerning how much a subject can seemingly hurt the other, and Jeongguk wonders and worries why it would. “We have enough time. Besides, sometimes it’s not always bad to play it safe.”

“I guess, but it’s not as great as going for the thing you truly want to do..” Jimin mutters softly, more to himself than anything.

Jeongguk gives him a smile. “What do you want to be then?”

“I really want to teach music! Or perform for that matter, but I’m not sure which one I like more.”

“And how about you Sammy?” Jeongguk asks, earning a ‘are you serious?’ glance from the other. Nonetheless, he responds.

“I guess I wouldn’t mind being in the band my roommate’s creating..”

He shudders as if his approval to the idea had disturbed him.

Jeongguk then looks to Taehyung, who doesn’t really seem to be paying attention. “What do you want to do, Tae?”
Taehyung jolts up at the question, not really surprised but...distressed. He expected the question yet he still doesn’t want to answer it.

“Programming.”

He resumes typing thoughtlessly, unaware or perhaps more choosing to be unaware of the strange looks the rest of his friend give him.

“What about singing?” Sammy and Jeongguk ask in almost unison, surfacing an annoyed expression from the other.

Sammy and Jeongguk share a more private look, wondering why they had thought of the same thing. Maybe it’s because Taehyung’s shown interest in it before.

“If you already had an assumption, why did you ask?” Taehyung replies tartly, unclenching his hands to reveal a few indent marks embedded in his palms.

“I didn’t know..and I thought you’d elaborate,” Jeongguk responds honestly and something seems to soften in Taehyung’s appearance.

“I mean, I’d love to sing or perform. I even wanted to be a professional saxophonist at one point, but programming is equally as neat I guess.”

“A very contrasting dream but a respectable one nonetheless!” Jimin juts in happily. “Is it your dream?”

Jeongguk knows it isn’t. He can tell.

“I’d like it to be,” Taehyung says soberly, something about the way he’s speaking implying that it’s far from it. He lifts his head up, attempting to stare at Jeongguk. “What’s your dream, Jeongguk?”

His heart skips again, perhaps not quite expecting the other to ask him the question back. He clears
his throat to unclog his surprise, earning yet another one of those weird glances from Jimin and he smiles when he speaks. “I want to be a singer too, I guess.”

“And you’re doing engineering?”

Jeongguk nods, realising his situation. He’s only doing it because he needs to support his family, and he knows being a singer, pursuing his dream, is something that is highly likely to fail.

“Then don’t be a hypocrite,” Taehyung utters, maybe a playful response or maybe a serious one, honestly, Jeongguk can’t tell. He knows what Taehyung’s implying, and somehow, they’ve had this conversation before.

The teacher comes by their table, eyeing all three of them before giving Taehyung a slight glance. He hands out four individual sheets, asking Jeongguk to pass the last one to Tae and departs quietly to hand out the rest to other students respectively.

Jeongguk leans over to hand Taehyung his paper, unsure if he should read it out or not considering there’s no braille on the sheet.

“Do you want me to tell you what you got?” Jeongguk eventually asks, noticing that the other isn’t really taking action to configure it himself.

Taehyung nods his head appreciatively, moving his hand to try and grasp onto the sheet but misses, instead brushing his hands against Jeongguk’s folded ones.

Instead of letting go, however, he keeps them there, even going to the extent of holding Jeongguk’s fists gently.

Jeongguk smiles in response, looking down at Tae’s sheet to try and find the grade.

His mouth almost drops open.

“What? Is it bad?” Taehyung asks quickly, noticing Jeongguk’s change in behaviour to be a negative sign.
“Why do you always assume the worst?” Jeongguk asks with a small chuckle, taking Taehyung’s hands in his own now.

“I don’t know, it just seems the most logical,” Taehyung expresses back defensively, though a prominent smile is plastered on his face.

“You got a hundred on the project,” Jeongguk states happily, making Taehyung’s own jaw drop to the floor.

“I got a what?” Taehyung asks disbelievingly, shaking his head as if he hadn’t heard the other correctly. There’s no way.

“A one hundred, I’m serious!” Jeongguk repeats himself, laughing when Taehyung’s eyes widen the most they’ve ever had. He can’t really see them, as they’re covered by shades of course, but the raise of the other’s eyebrows says enough.

“Don’t play!”

“I’m not!” Jeongguk replies seriously, a laugh etched in his voice. He guides the other’s hands to the paper, giving him physical yet still unseeing proof of his perfect score. Unfortunately, it unfastens their hands from each other in the process; something Jeongguk finds silently disappointing.

Taehyung taps the paper hesitantly, as if it’s alive, before pretending to read it over.

In the meantime, Jeongguk looks at his own paper, expecting a good grade as well since it was a collective group effort after all only to be presented with an…89.

He turns to Jimin and Sammy who seem to be happy with their grade, undoubtedly getting something along the high 90s, and he frowns softly to himself.

What had he done wrong?
Maybe he hadn’t completely expected to earn a hundred, as that is a little much, but at least something in the 90s? At least a 90.

“What did you get?” Taehyung asks earnestly, quite evidently pleased with his results. Jeongguk can’t blame him.

“Umm…not bad? I guess?”

Taehyung frowns, understanding the actual meaning behind his words. “Not bad? I thought you would’ve gotten the same as me, considering we did work on the same thing.”

Jeongguk had thought the same too, but clearly the teacher thought otherwise. He tries to find the professor in the crowded classroom, spotting him near another group of students and coincidentally makes eye contact with him right when his stare reaches his face. He almost shrivels in embarrassment, looking away and then back to his paper in stark dissatisfaction.

Maybe his proposal of explosions had been overheard by the teacher and he hadn’t appreciated his sense of humour.

Though, that wouldn’t have directly affected his grade that much considering it was the final output that was being assessed.

Taehyung pouts sadly beside him, and Jeongguk feels bad for making the other upset. “Ah, don’t be upset. It’s not that bad, I’m just a little surprised that’s all.”

“No, you deserved a good grade on this. It isn’t fair. You should talk to the teacher after class.”

Jeongguk looks back at his paper, the 89 staring back at him boldly in an almost insulting manner. It’s not that bad of a grade, but it was certainly not what he wanted or expected to get. Especially since the rest of his group did well.

Could the teacher just hate him?

Wow, tough luck.
He decides for the time being to forget about it, directing his attention back to Taehyung, who seems to be pouting intently in the direction of the table.

Jeongguk nudges him playfully. “Hey, don’t worry about my stuff. You got a hundred, celebrate that! It’s extremely impressive and you should be both happy and proud of yourself. I’m proud of you.”

Jeongguk’s genuinely happy for the other, despite his own grade, and wishes Taehyung would be as amazed as he is right now.

“I know, but still, it’s you that should’ve gotten it.”

Jeongguk shakes his head. “Don’t discredit your own efforts. You worked hard, and you deserve the grade you received. C’mon admit it, you’re pretty awesome, aren’t you?”

Taehyung smiles softly to himself. “You’re really cute when you say things like that,” he admits, quite literally making Jeongguk’s day as he absorbs the other’s genuine words.

The blush on his face is indescribable.

Forgetting about the grade seems more than possible at this current moment. In fact, upon hearing those words, even if he wanted to focus on his grade he wouldn’t be able to. Taehyung just has that effect on him.

Maybe things are just as they should be, not entirely different, but not as similar and unchanging as Jeongguk initially thought.

They are dating, but that doesn’t mean they have to make it obvious all the time, if at all.

“Can I kiss you?” Taehyung whispers gently, making Jeongguk choke on his own spit at the straightforward request. He coughs violently, making the other vaguely concerned for his well-being before he manages to strain out a few words.
“As in, right now?” Jeongguk asks, nervously looking around him as the world continues to flow at medium speed. He coughs again, clearing his throat loudly.

Taehyung nods his head in reply, a light pink dusting his cheeks.

Jeongguk gulps, flustered to say the least. “With everyone watching? Are you sure?”

He doesn’t know why he’s embarrassed all of a sudden. He had been so eager to portray his relationship with Taehyung out towards the world since they confessed, but now that the other’s asking him to kiss in front of everyone, he feels extremely anxious.

“Would that bother you?” Taehyung asks softly, reading the situation with his other senses. The last thing he wants is to make Jeongguk uncomfortable.

Meanwhile, Jeongguk internally screams, freaking out because Taehyung wants to kiss him (something they haven’t done since that night at the bowling alley), because Taehyung doesn’t usually offer things like skinship, and because it’s so random and so sudden. Why not before?

More importantly, he’s freaking out because even though he really really wants to kiss the other, something seems to stop him from doing it publically. He’s unsure what it is but he sure wants to punch it in the face because it is literally ruining a perfect moment, and again, for a reason he doesn’t understand.

Doesn’t he want to kiss him? So WHY isn’t he yet? What’s stopping him?

Is he..embarrassed of sharing their relationship with the world? Or perhaps he just isn’t ready?

Jeongguk’s confused all over again, deciding that maybe he isn’t quite mentally prepared to announce to both his friends and peers that he’s in a gay relationship. It’s not like he’s ashamed of it, it’s all just so new that it’s messing with his head, and he wants to announce it at a later time. When he’s readier.

He admitted to himself that he didn’t care if he would be judged by others because Taehyung’s love and admiration for him would truly trump all that. Yet, he still can’t help the underlining doubts overall, and the fact that he’d rather keep their relationship private. A secret, for the time being.
He turns to Taehyung, playing with his fingers again before intertwining them together; paper disregarded. It’s time for him to be outwardly honest about both his feelings and inexperience to the situation. “I don’t know if I’m ready to do things like that in public yet,” he confesses quietly, heavily apologetic. “I do want to do it, trust me I’ll gladly after class, over and over if you like, it’s just, I’m new to all this and I don’t know if I’m prepared for others to know...”

Taehyung smiles authentically and sincerely, heart beating wildly in his own chest. “I thought I’d ask because you felt really tense, though maybe I should’ve read the situation better. I can forget when a lot of other people are around me,” he laughs sheepishly, not embarrassed but overwhelmed with a sort of sweet emotion. “I also had the desperate urge to.”

Jeongguk bursts with a perpetually grand smile, heart pulsing with the utmost vibrant feeling one could imagine. He heavily debates whether to just take him into the bathroom, do maybe other things than kiss too, but decides not to since it is...school and all.

“Stop being so perfect,” Jeongguk responds lowly, his voice heavy with a sort of slow burning desire yet innocent endearment. “You actually wanted to kiss me?”

Taehyung smiles, nodding his head.

Jeongguk’s more inwardly happy that their relationship seems to be progressing from those two and a half weeks of pending action. He still accepts to take it slow, and realises that it’s just as much for his own benefit as it is for Taehyung’s, but also accepts the slight modifications in their tone with each other.

Again, things haven’t changed completely, but they truly aren’t as standstill as what Jeongguk had thought of for the past few weeks. Jeongguk gives him a longing stare, wondering why he himself feels so unready and unsure about making their relationship public. He never thought he’d be one to ask for it to be private, assuming that’s what Taehyung would want in the first place.

“Does others knowing about us make you feel strange?” Jeongguk asks in a hushed tone, drawing Taehyung’s attention back to him.

He thinks about it. “Not really to be honest, but if it makes you feel strange then I don’t mind keeping it private either.”
His response is quite the opposite of what Jeongguk was expecting. Since Tae is always so private about himself, Jeongguk assumed he would want this part of his life to also remain a secret.

Jeongguk hums softly. “Why doesn’t it make you feel strange?”

He wants to know what he’s missing, why he’s feeling so…closed and shut in. He rarely keeps secrets about himself, in fact, he doesn’t, so wanting something this big to be a secret to him bothers him. Although it shouldn’t, and it seems like Taehyung doesn’t mind either, it’s different than how he would normally act, and he wants to know why.

“I guess because I don’t know what a relationship is supposed to feel like, and I don’t know what to expect from others knowing. Since it’s new, I don’t really have an opinion on how things are supposed to go, or what’s supposed to happen. I just know I feel something different; a good feeling that is. You’re my…first I guess you could say,” Taehyung replies, his answer making Jeongguk’s heart squeeze even more.

“I’m your first? Like, your first relationship ever?” Jeongguk asks, bewildered because even though the other is blind he has so many qualities about him that surpass the usual person. He couldn’t possibly have not been in a relationship for the past nineteen years.

Taehyung nods. “I mean when I was way younger, like in middle school before the whole..blind thing occurred, I would get asked but I never really felt anything towards them. With you, it’s different, and since I’m the first guy you’ve ever dated, I suppose we’ll be experiencing a lot of firsts together then.”

The comment makes Jeongguk happy, realising just how similar their predicaments are. The fact that Taehyung had even accepted and reciprocated Jeongguk’s confession makes him even more bewildered and happy then because it was his first time doing so.

Taehyung chose him and entrusted Jeongguk in being his first significant other…ever, and that’s something Jeongguk now cherishes more than anything else.

And perhaps Jeongguk also entrusted Taehyung in being the first guy he’s ever dated too.

“Anyways, don’t worry about others knowing,” Taehyung says, reverting back to their original conversation. “If you aren’t ready for it, then that’s fine, you don’t have to be. I have no idea what to do or what to expect in this but I do know that I really like it when you’re happy, so please, do what
makes you feel comfortable so that you can be happy, Jeongguk,” he smiles widely. “It’ll make me really happy too.”

How does one even react to a statement like that? Such a wholesome way of saying things that it could easily quell any arising doubts Jeongguk might still have? His urge to kiss the other seems to intensify.

“Thank you, Tae. I think I did need to hear that,” Jeongguk confesses, smiling a little under his breath. “And if there’s anything you aren’t ready for yet too, let me know. I wouldn’t want you to feel cornered.”

Taehyung beams with a bright expression in response, nodding his head affirmatively as if they just established some sort of rule in their relationship. That they’ll make each other feel comfortable with whatever it is they’re feeling or experiencing.

The tower bell rings deeply, and Taehyung seems immensely more relaxed.

“What on Earth were you guys whispering about over there?” Jimin asks teasingly, staring between the two suggestively. “Did you do any work?”

Jeongguk blushes. “Yes! For that matter, we did! Are you still pressed about our dreams?”

“Very much so, but I won’t inflict my personal opinions onto you if that’s not what you want, I guess. Just be happy!”

Sammy rolls his eyes. “That’s not what he was saying to me this entire time but-”

Jimin shushes him. “They don’t need to know. Besides, you made me change my mind.”

Sammy raises his eyebrows.

“Okay fine, only a little bit, but still you did,” Jimin admits, instinctively helping pick up Tae’s things from the table, holding onto them securely. He turns to Jeongguk, noticing that he isn’t packing up. “Are you coming with us? We don’t have class for a while.”
Jeongguk nods. “I will soon, I just need to discuss something with the teacher real quick.”

Jimin gives him a curious glance but shrugs it off nonetheless. “Alright, we’ll be somewhere outside. Don’t take too long!”

Jeongguk smiles with closed lips, quietly wishing that he wasn’t about to initiate this conversation. He doesn’t even know what answer to expect from the teacher, and he’s scared that he had done something immensely wrong.

He sucks up his frustration, and taking a breath, waves goodbye to his friends as he gets ready to confront the teacher.

Jeongguk takes a step forward, staring intently at the teacher who’s currently arranging several papers into folders. “Uh, Mr. Kang? Can I talk to you for a second?”

Mr. Kang looks up from what he is doing, smiling warmly at Jeongguk as he continues to walk up to him nervously. “Sure, what do you need?”

Jeongguk hands out his sheet, looking back up at the teacher. “I wanted to talk to you about my grade..and what I can do to improve.”

Mr. Kang nods his head understandingly, almost expecting this conversation from the other. “Ah, I see, can I look at your sheet quickly?”

Jeongguk passes it over, a hitch of nervousness in his feet. He chews his lip.

“Allright so,” the teacher begins, rubbing his eyes from underneath his glasses. “I took marks off from you because of your dishonesty.”

“My dishonesty?” Jeongguk questions surprisingly, not having expected that conclusion.

“Yes, with the composition.”
Jeongguk stares blankly at him, not perceiving his message.

“How you actually did the composition and let Taehyung-ssi take the credit?” Mr. Kang elaborates, making Jeongguk’s eyes widen incredibly.

*What.*

“I think there’s been a misunderstanding, Taehyung really did do the compos-”

“I don’t need to hear the excuse, Jeon. Just make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

“No, you really don’t understand. I didn’t do the composition at all..what makes you say that I did?”

Mr. Kang sighs, giving the sheet back to Jeongguk. “I don’t think it would’ve been possible for Taehyung-ssi to have done it. It requires a lot of..visual perception..despite it being music, and I know you were very passionate and detailed over it so I was able to put two and two together.”

Jeongguk feels deeply infuriated. “Sir, with all due respect, I think you’ve severely underestimated Taehyung’s abilities. He’s very talented at what he does, regardless of his impediment, and I think it was wrong of you to think otherwise without any proof,” Jeongguk remarks carefully, not wanting to anger the teacher after all but still wanting to stand his ground. “I think you made a false assumption, and he doesn’t deserve your lack of faith.”

Mr. Kang blinks heavily, opening his mouth to say something; hesitating. “It didn’t affect his grade, if that’s what you were wondering.”

“Yet it affected mine?” Jeongguk asks, not seeing the justification behind the teacher’s actions. “Perhaps you could’ve confronted us about it, if you were skeptical, and then we could’ve explained the situation? He really did make the composition.”

Mr. Kang sighs again. “If you would like me to give you a better grade you should’ve just asked. Though, I’ll have to deduct points from Taehyung-ssi’s grade if that’s so.”
Jeongguk stares irritated, not believing his ears. *Why* isn’t the teacher just listening to him? Is it that hard to understand? “I don’t understand why you don’t believe me. I’m telling the truth.”

“So, what if you are?” Mr. Kang says with embitterment, taking a completely different tone than before. He seems..angry, frustrated even. “Do you even know Taehyung-ssi? What he’s done and who he’s betrayed before?”

Jeongguk is absolutely confused. “What do you *mean* do I even know him? Of course I do! How would you know? And isn’t using the word betrayal taking it a little *too* far when talking about academics?”

Jeongguk likes to think he knows the other but there’s a subconscious voice that tells him he doesn’t. Taehyung did open up about his past, if only partially, that night at the bowling alley to him, so he must know some things…right?

Jeongguk sighs. “I’m sorry if I seemed disrespectful. I don’t know what Taehyung’s done before, sir, and I don’t know if he’s cheated on assignments before or gotten someone to do the work for him in the past, but I do know that he *did* work hard on this piece, and he did it by himself. You should know that.”

Mr. Kang takes in a deep breath, regaining his composure and usual warm tone. “Look, I’ll improve your grade, I can see you’re passionate about that.”

“Will it harm him?”

Mr. Kang thinks about it. “Because you were reasonable, it won’t. But don’t expect this sort of leniency all the time.”

Jeongguk wants to punch him, brimming with an unfathomable annoyance. Even though he did agree to his request, a very much justifiable one if anything, he’s still angry that it seems as if the teacher is doing him a *favour* instead of just doing the right thing. Not to mention the extra addition to his statement, making it appear as if Jeongguk’s in the wrong. Nonetheless, Jeongguk smiles, aware that this situation is as best as it’s going to get (and because he doesn’t want to be rude and end up making the scenario worst for the both of them).

“Thank you, sir,” he says, biting down his string of swears with a polite façade. Mr. Kang nods his head curtly, gesturing that Jeongguk gives him the sheet back so he can perhaps re-grade it. Once
handed over, he places it in a separate folder, grabbing his things up to leave the classroom. He looks up from his glasses, staring at Jeongguk from beneath them and raising his eyebrows questioningly. “Do you need anything else?”

Jeongguk shakes his head hastily, realising that he had finished what he had come to do and has no reason to still be standing there. He takes it as his cue to leave.

Exiting the classroom with a huff and a vague overall confusion, Jeongguk closes the door with a gentle thud. He hears someone jump slightly at the noise, most likely having startling them, and he looks down to see Taehyung crouching by the side of the door, staring aimlessly at the ceiling.

“Were you waiting for me?” Jeongguk asks, a soft undertone in his voice as he goes closer towards him. He hadn’t expected the other to be waiting alone, and rather thought he’d be outside with Jimin and Sammy. The fact that he had personally waited for him makes him feel happy.

Taehyung nods his head, a little bashful, and goes to get up using the wall as his support. Jeongguk helps him slightly, putting his hands on the other’s waist to help stabilise him. Jeongguk can feel Taehyung’s slender figure beneath his fingertips, warm and soft to the touch, and holds them there even after he’s gotten up alright.

Taehyung leans his head to the side. “What was taking you so long?”

Jeongguk debates telling him what he and Mr. Kang had discussed. It’s not really necessary for Tae to know, nor will it be beneficial to him, so Jeongguk chooses not to. The last thing he wants is to sour his seemingly good mood, especially with such a petty thing like that.

Though, Jeongguk is curious as to why it appears as if Mr. Kang knows Taehyung somehow. Maybe they’ve met before? Or knew each other outside of school?

“Sorry, Mr. Kang was a little stern in the beginning, but he was nice enough to improve my grade. Or at least, that’s what he said he would do.”


Jeongguk smiles, admiring the other’s happy and cheerful expression and how his hair fans out, an ashy array of waves, against the wall behind him. He steps closer, almost pinning Tae to the wall but
leaving enough space so that their hands just barely brush each others.

The door opens again.

Mr. Kang walks out, multiple things in his hands, and he holds the keys to the classroom door with his teeth, letting them dangle and jingle in the air. He shuts the door with a heavy exhale, almost letting the keys slip, and quickly arranges the materials in his hands so he can lock the door properly. He gives a peculiar glance to the side, noticing Jeongguk and Taehyung’s interaction, but doesn’t say anything. Instead, he clutches the keys between loose fingers and whistles his way down the opposite corridor, giving the slightest strange stare in their direction before disappearing entirely. He must have figured it out.

Jeongguk’s heart lurches a bit, not entirely pondering over Mr. Kang’s assumed acknowledgement of his relationship, but also at the situation at hand.

They’re alone. Corridors empty, classrooms free, silence encasing them comfortably.

They’re independent of people.

“Are you okay?” Taehyung asks. “Your heart leapt a bit.”

Right, he’s perceptive. Especially when they’re close.

Jeongguk swallows, a thought taking over his mind. “Hey Tae, is it too late to answer your request?”

“My request?” Taehyung repeats with confusion, not following along. Jeongguk covers the slight distance between them in response, more of a small gap than a distance really, this time truly pinning him against the wall. Taehyung sucks in a sharp breath. “Ohh, that request.”

Jeongguk hums a low undertone, trailing his hand up to the other’s cheek. “That request,” he expresses fondly, repeating the other’s words of realisation affectionately. “We’re alone.”

Taehyung shudders visibly, seeming to subtly lean forward though that could just be Jeongguk’s imagination too. He tilts his chin up, smiling against Jeongguk’s tender hold as his heart increases its
pace for the billionth time since they’ve been together. “We are, aren’t we.”

Jeongguk uses his other hand, the one that isn’t holding Tae’s cheek, to gently remove his sunglasses, wanting to see Taehyung’s whole face without their shadowing frame. However, before he can fully do so, Taehyung stops him almost immediately, stiffly holding his shades in place as if they’re a security belt.

“Why do you want to take them off?” Taehyung asks quietly, his grip over the handles tightening slightly.

“Because you don’t have to hide beneath them with me.”

Taehyung stammers, flustered by his honesty. “D-don’t just say that. You don’t have to be nice, my eyes…I don’t what they look like myself but I bet they’re all awful and red and full of scars. It’s not pretty.”

“It’s really the opposite, Tae,” Jeongguk replies warmly, removing the sunglasses completely as Taehyung’s hold slackens, restriction vanishing. “They’re…brilliantly unique. Even though they appear cloudy, they seem to shine with something else. They twinkle, almost.”

“They don’t work, that’s impossible.”

There’s a bite of resentment to his words and Jeongguk realises that Taehyung’s angry, almost..mad at himself that his eyes don’t work. It must be frustrating for him.

“It’s not the light they reflect, but I guess what you’re feeling,” Jeongguk finishes quietly, going to trace underneath his eyes softly. The skin is smooth, some pale streaks scarring the eyelids and directly beneath his lower lashes. They are patterned like fragments, marks from several healed cuts, and can only be seen up close. Taehyung winces because his eyes have always been sensitive since that day six years ago, and Jeongguk wonders how the other lost his vision to begin with. It looks painful. “And, even with those faded scars, I find them absolutely perfect.”

Taehyung’s nose scrunches up slightly, something Jeongguk finds cute. “Don’t say such cheesy things, this isn’t some Korean drama,” he says, trying to be sarcastic, but the vulnerable waver in his voice says otherwise. He’d always been self-conscious about his eyes and how they looked to others. Jeongguk leans in closer, fingers trailing gently from his eyes down to his jaw, and Tae’s breath hitches. He wants to kiss him.
“Really? I think our situation would make a great drama.”

Taehyung bites his lip. “You’re ridiculous.”

There’s a moment of repressed electricity, constrained only by their intent to finish their conversation, though, it doesn’t seem like it’s going anywhere now. They don’t want to talk quite anymore. Jeongguk stares at Taehyung silently, grey eyes averted to the left, faintly closed, a rose on his cheeks.

And so, Jeongguk closes the space between them.

He kisses Taehyung softly, a lingering brush of the lips at first, moving his hands to the other’s waist so that he can hold him better, gripping onto the pockets of his pants mindlessly. He smiles, gradually beginning to move against the other, and deepens their embrace by pressing Taehyung further into the wall. He kisses him slowly, sensually, and passionately, tempted to release his inner restraint but realises how much he would rather savour the moment. He wants to feel the sparks ablaze on his fingertips, fluttering as he drags his fingers up and down Taehyung’s sides, wrapping them around his torso securely as if to hold him tighter. He wants to make this moment last, this feeling last, a tremendous desire quenched and sated by a final kiss.

He kisses him with patience yet with an eagerness all too prominent. It goes unmistaken, and Taehyung reciprocates by clutching onto the belt loops on Jeongguk’s waistband as if to ground himself from the other’s touch.

Jeongguk’s hold on Taehyung’s sunglasses goes weak, and the indistinct sound of them clattering to the ground doesn’t register through their brains. They’re too focused on each other and the touches they’re giving, a moment in which they finally show how much they had wanted one another like this.

Jeongguk moans quietly, voice muffled by the kiss, and is able to move more freely without the previous hold on the other’s sunglasses. His hands trace along the curvature of Taehyung’s spine, most of his front pressing into Jeongguk’s as well so that his back bends slightly off the wall. Taehyung’s surprised by how much the sound of the other’s moan had affected him, needing to hold on tighter to avoid from falling completely, and travels his hands up so that they grip onto the jacket Jeongguk’s currently wearing. It’s coarse against his fingertips, a charred smoothness, and he pulls on it tighter to bring them closer together. His legs grow weak with a sort of tingling sensation, the only thing keeping him upright being now the firm hands on his waist. He lets himself lean against Jeongguk, trusting him, relying on him, and yelps suddenly when he’s pushed into the wall a little more fervently.
Another sound also leaves his mouth. A sweet, high-pitched, restrained and therefore surprised vocal expel of the pleasure that had built up in his limbs. He turns a million shades redder, aware of what it was as he relates it to the sound that had left his mouth that one night almost three months ago. He’s not used to it, and on top of that, finds it embarrassing and almost shameful to be so expressive and free. He feels more secure holding in his voice than letting the impending sound release, but perhaps for a more suffocating reason than embarrassment too.

He wasn’t able to use his voice in the past, in whatever scenario or case, so eventually, he had grown accustomed to it. It was the norm, and something he felt as usual.

Despite that, he can’t help but be overwhelmed with the new feeling he’s experiencing.

A shudder encases him as he feels Jeongguk travel kisses along his jaw, leaving his mouth temporarily to litter his skin with pleasurable sensations throughout. He hadn’t thought something could feel this good, that Jeongguk could make him feel so electric and warm and eager solely with his lips. He’s good at kissing, great in fact, and the way he holds Taehyung as if he’s the only person of value in this world makes him feel all the more safe. Protected, in a way.

For the first time, Taehyung begins to crave for a touch. For his touch. He’s never been able to stand contact before, was too afraid by the hidden implications behind any grasp or brush to begin with, but with Jeongguk it feels immensely different. His touches are just so gentle. So kind and carefree and they handle him in a way that’s completely opposite to how anyone else would. Taehyung doesn’t know if this is progress from his promise to get used to the contact of other people (specifically his friends), but in any case, he doesn’t seem to be opposed to it right now, and instead yearns for more.

The kisses move lower, nipping right along his jawline and then below his chin. He shivers again, a prominent feeling saturating in his body, and he suppresses another moan that echoes silently at his lips. Unable to contain himself, he whispers out Jeongguk’s name breathlessly instead, the sound of his voice eminent on the other’s mouth as he trails the kisses lower, sucking on a patch of exposed skin.

It sends a spark through him, easing out into a strand of sensual amplification, and he’s only able to manage the feeling by shutting his eyes tightly, a reflex of some sorts. His head presses more into the wall, neck tilting slightly to the left to allow easier access, and he trails his hands up to the collar of Jeongguk’s jacket to stabilise himself more. He pulls onto the material harder as Jeongguk kisses mercilessly, searching for something, and swallows yet another forceful sound, this time with much more effort.
But then, Jeongguk seems to find whatever it was he was looking for. Something washes over Taehyung, an indescribable feeling of just euphoria that it’s almost impossible to explain. Taehyung’s never felt something exactly like this, never imagined he would, never thought this much pleasure came from kissing in general.

He never quite had the impression that his neck was so sensitive either.

The whimper escapes his throat unmercifully, stealing its way into the air before he has the time to repress it. Jeongguk smiles, seemingly in victory, and continues sucking at that same spot, the place right below his earlobe and the stripe of skin leading up to his ear.

The electricity overrides, streams of fireworks enveloping the blackness, and then he sees the purple bloom forward.

Taehyung swallows thickly, feeling breathless, and voices a thought with much effort. “Hey..won’t the-” he’s cut off by his own quiet moan, leaving him tongue-tied as the other continues what he’s doing whilst listening to what Taehyung as to say. He starts again. “If you leave a…hickey, won’t the others rea..lise?”

Jeongguk hums indifferently, kissing up to his ears and nibbling the lobe a little before pulling on it gently between his teeth. Something warm begins to bloom in his abdomen. “I guess it’s too late now,” he replies, though he doesn’t seem totally regretful. He smiles against the other’s skin. “It looks pretty on you.”

Taehyung blushes softly, body still pressed to the wall and supported by Jeongguk’s embrace. His stomach tightens in a pleasant way, and Jeongguk admires the other’s dishevelled appearance. Swollen lips, hair ablaze, neck displaying two bright hickeys against feverish skin. His eyes closed in beading ecstasy and his hands grappling onto the other’s clothes firmly, as if to anchor himself. He’s beautiful in that way, and perhaps Jeongguk has fallen for him even more.

Jeongguk kisses him back on the lips, slowly and softly, finishing their moment sweetly to calm down their previous urgency. He deepens the gentle kiss with the slight of his tongue, wandering with a greater sense of innocence than lust, and lifts one of his hands to caress Tae’s cheek softly.

It’s then when they hear a loud, echoing crash down the hallway.

Jeongguk pulls away quickly yet reluctantly, appreciating this time with Taehyung more than
imaginable yet understanding the indication behind that sound. He turns around swiftly, surprised as his eyes meet the face of a startled and quite flustered girl—around eighteen in age—sprawled on the ground. Around her lies a series of heavy-looking textbooks, a pencil case with exploded contents littering the rest of the floor, and a flask of what looked like dark coffee. The crash must have been the sound of her fall.

Jeongguk whispers that he’ll be right back to Taehyung, who also seems to have noticed the noise from his perked expression, and goes to help the student who had fallen.

“Hey? Are you okay?” Jeongguk asks worriedly, rushing over with temperate concern. He crouches down beside her, attempting to pick up the objects that had dropped, and stares at her with unsettlement. “Did you fall?”

The girl nods her head, rubbing the back of her nape softly before sitting up, face bright red and hands shaking as if she had seen something she wasn’t supposed to have seen. “I’m okay,” she says nervously, looking up at Jeongguk only briefly before avoiding his worried gaze. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to cause a scene. I’m really clumsy sometimes.”

Jeongguk laughs softly. “Don’t worry about it. I’m just glad you’re alright.”

He helps the girl up, handing her back the textbooks and pencil case that had fallen (with the contents inside) and the flask which had emptied its drink all over the floor. Jeongguk realises that the girl’s clothes are now stained near the edges with brown.

“Oh, you’re clothes..” he states pitifully, pointing at the tainted fabric unfortunately. The girl sighs.

“It’s fine, it’ll wash away hopefully. I’m just mad that the coffee is all wasted now…” she replies, trailing off a bit in hesitantance. She eyes Jeongguk strangely, her stare then shifting to Taehyung who’s still leaning against the wall behind them. She smiles to herself, still mortified but a softer expression painting her face. “I’m sorry if I interrupted…anything.”

It’s Jeongguk’s turn to feel embarrassed now, suddenly aware that the cause of this girl’s fall was most likely due to what she saw between him and Taehyung. He bites his lip sheepishly. “Ah, it’s okay. Did you se—Were you um, watching us the whole time?”

He doesn’t want to accuse her of stalking them but he also wants to know if she had been purposely watching them. Something about that thought sends a chilling feeling down his spine.
The girl shakes her head vigorously. “No, no, I was running down the hallway because I’m late to class, you see. I guess you guys took me by surprise and I ended up running straight into the corner. Gosh I’m so clumsy, I should’ve been more careful. Again, I’m really sorry.”

Jeongguk nods carefully to himself, a little uncomfortable with the fact that this random girl knows about his relationship with Taehyung now, but also reassured to know that she doesn’t seem to be repulsed by it. If anything, she just seems immensely apologetic for witnessing the kiss in the first place. “Really, it’s alright, I’m very clumsy too sometimes,” Jeongguk says kindly, handing her the last of her stuff. He notices that she seems to be struggling with carrying everything. “Are you okay with all that though? I can help you carry your things to your next class. It looks like a lot..” he offers.

The girl smiles. “Thank you, but I think I’ve caused enough trouble already,” she looks at Taehyung again, who is quite clearly oblivious to the situation before turning back to Jeongguk with an amused look on her face. “Plus, I don’t think your boyfriend would appreciate you leaving him all alone on the wall over there.”

Jeongguk chokes, not expecting such a broad statement. “B-boyfriend?”

“That’s what you guys are, right? Or wait, I shouldn’t assume, people hook up for fun all the time it just seemed like you liked each other a lot—” she cuts herself off, blushing profusely. “Not like I was watching it for that long or anything! I just, you know, got a glimpse and—I’m really only making this worse I’m gonna stop talking,” she takes a deep breath. “Whatever you guys are, I hope it works out.”

Jeongguk swallows, realising that this person only means well. He exhales before letting out an easy smile. “Yeah, you’re right, I don’t think my boyfriend would like that too much. Thank you, and I’m sorry if we made you drop your things.”

Something about calling the other his boyfriend makes his heart warm, fluttering with a nice sort of feeling.

The girl shrugs her shoulders. “I should’ve been looking where I was going in the first place. Have a good day umm…” she drags the rest of her sentence because she never learnt Jeongguk’s name.

“It’s Jeongguk,” he says, going to stick his hand out but then realises that the girl doesn’t really have any free arms to shake it. He retracts it sheepishly. “What’s your name?”
The girl grins, nodding her head curtly. “I’m Hyun-Ae, but my friends now call me a Heo-dang because I’m such a klutz all the time...and I mean, it kind of shows.” She laughs brightly, gesturing at the situation. “Anyways, I really need to go because I’m already super late to class but it was nice meeting you Jeongguk-ssi! Tell your boyfriend I say hi, and that I’m sorry..again.”

“Will do.”

She sprints her way back down the corridor, almost running into the next corner five seconds later but stopping on her heels just as she’s about to do so. She turns around embarrassedly, balancing the wobbling objects in her hands, and takes a deep breath, smiling to show that this is indeed a daily occurrence. She continues to walk, this time more carefully and at a more reasonable speed. Jeongguk laughs to himself, shaking off some of the coffee that got on his hands and walks back to where Taehyung is. He seems to glow under the light, and the two red marks on his neck appear even more vibrant than Jeongguk last remembered.

Taehyung hears him walk back. “What was it?”

“A student ran into the wall and fell over. She dropped her books everywhere and I felt bad,” Jeongguk responds, brushing Taehyung’s bangs out of his eyes. “She kind of..saw us.”

Taehyung bursts out laughing, eyes crinkling up endearingly.

“You’re laughing?”

Taehyung struggles to breathe in between his laugh, holding onto his stomach as he imagines the situation. “I mean, she must’ve been so surprised if she fell. I feel so bad but—you got to admit it’s a little funny.”

Seeing the other laugh makes Jeongguk do so as well, a sponge of amusement in his chest. “I guess. But what if she ends up telling other people?”

Taehyung’s laughter dies down gradually, and he unknowingly stares at the other, the amusement on his face turning into a very gentle expression. “I’m sure she won’t. She has no reason to. And even if she does, I don’t think the people she’ll tell would care too much.”
Jeongguk gives a small smile. “Well, we were kissing out in the hallway so I guess we knew the risk of someone seeing us but...still, it feels weird.”

Taehyung leans forward, pushing himself upright a little using the wall and searches for Jeongguk’s hands. He finds them, fumbling to intertwine them and then gives them a soft squeeze. “It makes sense since you’re not ready for others to know. If anyone asks about it, I’ll be quick to deny it too if that makes you feel more comfortable.”

“No, I don’t want you to have to deny it,” Jeongguk responds honestly, feeling guilty that the other would do something like that for his sake. “It’s not like I’m ashamed of our relationship, I guess I just want to keep it private for the time being.”

“That’s alright. Not being ready doesn’t mean you’re ashamed, it only means you’re taking your time to sort through some things, and it’s none of anyone’s business anyway.”

“That’s...nice to hear,” Jeongguk says, trying to hold in a grin as he suddenly remembers something from before. “I have to admit though, I do like calling you my boyfriend.”

Taehyung’s eyes crinkle up again in another signature boxy smile. “I like hearing you say it.”

They share another kiss, a little quicker and less intense than their previous session, but passionate nonetheless. When they pull away, they both seem to be ablaze with a kind of brightness, stronger than the fluorescent light shining overhead or the sunlight streaming through the window.

Jeongguk hums softly to himself and wonders if he’ll ever be ready to talk about his relationship with his friends. He wants to, but at the same time, he feels as if he needs to sort out things within himself too. It’s uncomfortable to discuss it when he doesn’t even fully understand everything himself, and would rather think about it in private so that he’s certain before revealing it to other people. Primarily, he’s going to try and figure out his sexuality, aware that this is his first time liking a guy, and then debate if that’s something he’s willing for others to really know. For the time being, no, but he’s sure that he will soon, especially with Taehyung’s support.

Jeongguk looks down at him, heart afloat, and wraps him in a tender hug, not able to express in words how much he has grown to like him. Love him, that is. “You’re perfect,” he whispers lightly, arising a warm smile from Taehyung that presses into his clothed chest.

“You are too.”
sweet non-dramatic chapter :) i had a lot of fun writing it! i also like making relationships seem more realistic, especially LGBTQIA ones, because people tend to overlook the complications that those couples (and couples in general) endure. It's also more realistic that someone who thought they were straight their whole life is now a little afraid or uncertain in their same-sex relationship, because i know i would be.

that's that! thank you for the 6,000 reader milestone, and thank you for sticking by! ur comments and support mean a lot to me.

happy reading!

さようなら。
Taehyung feels lightheaded as he leaves the building.

Not in an uncomfortable way, and not entirely in a bad way either, but more in an unusual one. He feels out of his head, afloat almost, reflecting over the recent moments in a sort of mist or foggy haze. It’s hard to explain, and as he walks out the door, Jeongguk accompanying his side, he feels unsteady on his feet. He’s never quite been kissed like that, been held and touched like that before. Better yet, he hasn’t felt something so rich or good before; something that was able to make him lose control over both his restraint and his voice. His emotions are racing, coursing through every erratic nerve in his body, and he believes that it’s that which is contributing to his feeling of dizzy yet giddy euphoria. He’s happy, unable to quell the small smile etched on his lips or the lightness spreading throughout his body, still tingling from the other’s touch. He feels inexplicably satisfied and warm, safe in some incredulous way and authentically untroubled.

So when he finally sits down next to his friends, the winter breeze dusting his face and the feathery
brush of Jeongguk’s hand still on the crook of his back, he can’t help but display his bright smile with a content sigh on his lips.

“Someone’s happy,” Jimin teases, warming his hands by rubbing them together as he realises how chilly it’s starting to get. He stares up at Jeongguk, who’s also going to sit down. “What did you do to him, Jeongguk?”

Taehyung exhales loudly through his nose “Why did you assume he’s the one that did something?”

“Because it’s true and I’m good at guessing things,” Jimin says straightforwardly. “Unless it was someone else that you waited outside the classroom for.”

“Not to mention the fact that you guys were gone for quite some time,” Sammy pipes in, not usually one to start something but still chiming in when it’s obvious. This is one of those pretty obvious times.

“Whose side are you on.”

Jimin smiles knowingly in response. “And so, you prove my very point,” he mocks amusedly, eyeing the two of them sceptically before briefly resting his gaze onto Taehyung’s sitting figure. It’s a quick stare yet a prolonged one as well, and Jimin realises it’s been hard not to look at the other recently. The simple glance he does give switches his expression almost immediately, flickering between pitiful disbelief and a somber, almost forced smile, before he finally decides to shift his stare off of him completely. He knows he shouldn’t bring it up, and after Yoongi’s reaction he knows that Tae shouldn’t know he knows either…but how is he even supposed to function around him after finding out the truth? He feels like he’s walking on eggshells, aware that the slightest thing he says or does could trigger Taehyung in some awful way and he doesn’t want that. He doesn’t think he’d be able to handle seeing him in pain, noticing now that if the other were to even relive a fraction of what his past was like, he would cry.

Jeongguk catches Jimin’s fluctuating stare, feeling a twinge of concern spring in his chest that’s more of a doubtful curiosity than anything but ever so slightly laced with unease. He has no idea why he would feel that way but something about the hurt in Jimin’s eyes makes him feel like something bad has happened.

Jimin clears his throat. “In any case, what were you guys actually doing that took so long?”
The mood instantly changes and Taehyung chokes on his spit, going to adjust his sunglasses only to realise he doesn’t have them. He leans his head down on the table and pulls his sweater up higher in order to hide the mark on his neck, desperately wanting to cover his face somehow but restraining from using his hands.

He can’t be too obvious.

“So something did happen,” Jimin exclaims, looking between the two again, this time making sure to avoid staring at Tae for too long. He swallows down a lump in his throat and tries to keep the situation lively.

“I told you, I was waiting. Jeongguk had to talk to the teacher and I was being a good friend—”

“—friend, sure—”

“And,” Taehyung continues, frowning deeply at Jimin’s interruption. “He got held up. Mr. Kang must’ve been stingy with his grading or something,” he finishes, subconsciously scratching his neck, hiding his hickey in the process.

“Yeah, yeah, look it’s okay if you don’t want to tell us yet but come onnnn, you can’t keep pretending that something isn’t going on forever,” Jimin says. “Plus, if you’re gonna pretend and lie about it at least be good at it. Do you really think I’m not going to support you guys?”

Jeongguk looks at Taehyung, then to Jimin sceptically. He sighs, smiling softly to himself. “Stop prying.”

Jimin groans in frustration. “You’re being—”

“Reasonable,” Sammy interrupts, eyeing Jimin particularly. “He’s being reasonable. Now I’m all for exposing the obvious but it’s his business after all. And we respect that, don’t we?”

Jimin physically deflates, putting his finger up to retaliate but then drops it down. “Alright fine, but don’t think I don’t know what’s happening. I’m onto you,” he looks at the both of them with squinted eyes, curiously. He whispers his next words. “You can’t fool me.”
“Enough now, leave them be. Or else we’ll start prying into your life,” Sammy says jokingly, only to be surprised when Jimin actually beams at the idea.

“I would love nothing more!”

Sammy rubs his eyes tiredly. “It was-” he stops himself from saying anything else, to tired and annoyed to begin his explanation. “Never mind.”

Taehyung laughs softly, a quite sudden wave of dizziness washing over him temporarily in the process. He feels himself lose his balance in his seat, Jeongguk’s hand the only support protecting him from completely leaning off the bench, and he frowns gently at the sensation.

“Hey, you okay?” Jeongguk asks quietly, noticing the other’s discomfort. He holds onto his back tighter, grounding him in a way, and Taehyung nods his head.

“See,” Jimin whispers to Sammy, gesturing at the two. “Something’s going on.”

Sammy shuts him up with a smack on the head. “I’m not afraid to hit you again so zip it.” He rolls his eyes playfully and then goes back to looking at his phone, smiling at Jeongguk’s interaction from beneath his screen because he can’t help but find whatever Taehyung and he have together cute. He tries to refrain from butting into their privacy though.

“I’m fine just-” Taehyung’s interrupted by an even stranger sensation. A pinch, a quick yet vibrant sting and then something liquid dripping down his nose. It streaks a path from his nose down to the bottom of his lip, thicker than water and collecting in volume. He brushes his mouth with the back of his hand hesitantly and feels something oddly viscous and wet stain his skin. Something he can’t see, obviously, but something he can still ultimately decipher. Blood.

He’s familiar with its consistency and the way it paints his skin tauntingly, and he frowns again as the sting becomes a more prominent ache and the blood turns from a flow to an increasing flood.

“Your nose is bleeding,” Jeongguk states with concern, removing Taehyung’s blood-stained hand from his face to replace it with his own. He cups his palm to keep the blood from ruining the other’s sweater. “Shit we should probably get some paper towels or something..do you guys have any?” Jeongguk asks, looking up at Sammy and Jimin worriedly. Sammy nods his head uncertainly, searching through his pockets before pulling out vastly crumpled up tissue, wrinkled beyond belief and almost tearing at the touch of his fingers. Something about Jimin’s pale face seems to mark more
severity and he looks alarmingly more afraid than the rest of them.

“I’ll get some more,” Sammy says, handing Taehyung the sad-excuse he can call a tissue before getting up. “There’s a bathroom inside so I’ll be quick. Keep your head tilted forward, and pinch your nose a little bit to stop the blood flow. It’s common to get these since it’s getting colder and all, so I’m sure you’re fine.” He turns to Jimin, staring at him oddly before trying to convince the other that he shouldn’t look as frightened as he does with his eyes, yet it doesn’t seem to work. Jimin swallows, shakily, then nods his head, more to himself than anything. It seemed as if he had been battling a thought.

“Alright then I’m off.”

Sammy jogs lightly back inside the building, running a hand through his hair tiredly as he continues to think about Jimin’s reaction. It’s just a nosebleed, so why would he appear so distressed in the first place Sammy has no idea of. Though, maybe it was the suddenness of it all that alarmed or took him off guard.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Jimin asks, the expression he had earlier returning as he sees Taehyung bite down a wince. His eyes reveal more of his actual emotion now without his shades to conceal it, and it’s evident that he’s experiencing at least some discomfort.

Taehyung puts the tissue to his nose, feeling Jeongguk’s hand supporting his grip. It’s not like he had told the other to do it and he doesn’t want him to feel like he’s obliged to stop the blood from going everywhere when Taehyung could do it himself. He is glad, however, that Jeongguk is willing to help.

The sting masks itself into another gnawing sensation and he winces again, trying to shake off the ache by wrinking his nose. It feels like someone had snipped something from the inside or tore a piece of his muscle or ligament, and the more he feels his nose leak, the more the dull twinge seems to amplify.

“Does it hurt?”

“Jimin, it’s just a nosebleed I’m fine—” he cuts himself off with a grimace, clearly not living up to his words. He sighs at the incredibility of his statement, leaning to say something more plausible. “It’ll be okay once it stops, don’t worry.”
“No, I should be worried. You don’t deserve this, Tae. I know it’s just a nosebleed, but still, you don’t deserve to be in pain anymore.”

It’s an outburst Jimin couldn’t keep sedated. He knows he shouldn’t let the other know, especially since Yoongi had seemed so regretful and distraught after revealing Tae’s past. It was a secret, and Jimin needs to pretend like it still is one, but it just hurts to see him wince like that when he knows this used to be a recurring expression for him.

Taehyung removes the tissue from his nose temporarily, prodding Jeongguk’s hand softly, and the blood clots. His eyes are slightly wide with confusion, his heart straining at the meaning behind Jimin’s words.

He feels like…he knows.

He tilts his head, almost defensively. “What do you mean, anymore?” Taehyung asks, bringing the tissue back to his nose as he feels the blood continue to seep out of it. He feels the sting erupt from the front of his forehead to the bridge of his nose, not overwhelming but still oddly present.

Jimin hesitates. “I don’t want you to be in pain like how you were at the dinner party at Jin and Kookie’s house…it hurts to see you suffer. This is similar, isn’t it?”

Taehyung exhales quietly in relief, afraid for a second that Jimin had found out the truth even though he knows it’s practically impossible. The only person who knows about what happened to him, entirely, is Yoongi, maybe Jin, and he knows that Yoongi would never disclose that sort of information. He doesn’t want anyone to know, he’s not ready for anyone to know, ever, and Yoongi is aware of that. It’s hard enough for himself, but the true fact of burdening someone with his own pain…that’s something he hates more than anything. His suffering isn’t anyone’s business, as terrible as it sounds, and he’d rather move on with his past than relive it.

“I don’t think it’s the same. My test results from the hospital came back and everything was fine. Maybe I bumped my head into something and didn’t realise.”

Taehyung’s trying to convince himself that everything’s fine. That he probably ran into a wall because he’s blind and can’t see, and probably got himself injured and didn’t even realise.

Jimin emits concern, eyes deeply worried. “Are you sure? You’re not in too much pain, right?”
Taehyung nods his head, proving to be a bad idea as blood spurts out of the tissue and most likely onto his clothes beneath him. He curses softly to himself, shaking his hand off to the side as he feels a few droplets fly, littering the grass with crimson, and tilts his head forward like Sammy had said. Jeongguk swears too, cupping over Taehyung’s own bloody hand to try and stop it from going everywhere else. Taehyung uses Jeongguk’s shoulder to support the lean of his body, holding the tissue tightly at his nostrils.

“It looks bad but it’ll pass soon. Bloody noses are harmless.” Taehyung says, his voice only slightly shaky. He won’t admit it, but he’s afraid too. Mainly because he’s aware that one isn’t really supposed to feel pain, or at least this much, when they have a nose bleed, but maybe it’s the cold air that’s making it feel funny.

“You don’t even know how it looks like, dummy,” Jimin responds, earning a laugh from Taehyung. He stops quickly though, groaning as the reaction makes more blood fall from his nose, making him more lightheaded than before. He sucks in a breath as a sting permeates through his skull.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” Jeongguk asks this time, voice echoing concern as he relives the moment at Jin’s dinner. He doesn’t want it to be a repeat of last time. “Do you want me to call the nurse? Yoongi hyung?”

Taehyung goes to shake his head but cleverly avoids doing so. He’s NOT going to make the same mistake twice. “No, no it’s okay. I’m perfectly fine. If you call Yoongi he’s going to think it’s serious.”

“Well this looks pretty serious,” Jimin announces genuinely, thanking the lord as he sees Sammy run out of the building with a mountain of tissues in his hands. He pants as he comes closer towards them, sitting down in a huff before handing Taehyung several tissues as his current one soon becomes too soaked to use. Taehyung smiles appreciatively.

“It’s not, nosebleeds are common. You know, Sammy’s right, it’s probably the dry air. Winter’s already here and it’s getting colder by the minute. Maybe we’ve spent too much time outside and my nose decided to get all funky.”

“Yes, because spontaneous and painful nosebleeds are common occurrences.”

“They are!” Taehyung declares. “And it’s not even that painful so I doubt it’s anything to be concerned over. It’s the dry air, period.”
“Okay, okay, if that’s what you think,” Jimin sighs. “Don’t waste your energy convincing me and focus on getting the blood to stop. It seems like a lot and I don’t want you to pass out or anything.”

“I doubt you can pass out from a nosebleed.”

“Oh, you’d be surprised,” Jeongguk says, as if speaking from experience. He shudders at a memory and proceeds to clean off his hand with one of the tissues Sammy had brought. He then goes to take a few fresh ones and places them directly underneath Taehyung’s nose, stopping the blood from spreading significantly. The tissue starts to turn red gradually, and so he holds it tightly, tilting Taehyung’s head slightly forward with his clean hand and resting his fingers on the top of his head. He plays with his ashy hair, twirling it between his fingertips and ruffling it tenderly, showing his care for him in a more intimate way. Taehyung seemingly leans into the touch, still resting against the other’s shoulder, and holds onto the hand Jeongguk’s using that’s stopping the blood flow. He does it to stabilise himself, the world getting significantly less balanced and disoriented, but also to reflect some of his own deeper feelings towards the other.

Sammy smiles to himself again.

“It’s okay if you aren’t okay, Tae,” Jeongguk says into the air after some time, pinching the soft part of Taehyung’s nose softly. He smiles when Tae’s face wrinkles up again, a cute reaction Jeongguk can’t seem to stop cooing over. He continues his thought. “In fact, it’s better if you tell us when you aren’t so we can help you. Don’t carry the burden by yourself.”

Taehyung sits on the other’s words for some time. Blinking slowly and changing his tissue every so often to absorb the blood. It’s begun leaking less now, but the pain hasn’t gone away quite yet. “What if…” he smiles humourlessly, a peculiar feeling in his chest. “What if that’s all I know how to do? What if I don’t know how to open up to you guys. What if I just am this way and that’s just how it’s going to be, because that’s what I was taught, what I grew up with, and it’s all I learnt from..my step-parents.”

Jimin cringes visibly, an expression Sammy catches only briefly.

“Then we’ll be there to help you learn otherwise,” Jeongguk responds lightly, brushing the bangs out of Taehyung’s eyes tenderly. He removes the slightly less bloody tissue from Taehyung’s nose, wiping around his skin to clean off any remaining crimson, and exhales as he finds that the bleeding has stopped. Taehyung’s gentle frown slacks, and the muscles in his forehead relax as the pain disappears. “And we’ll show that whatever you experienced before was wrong.”

Jimin suppresses his need to yell, sustaining his distress into the deepest parts of his soul. Taehyung
can’t know but..

A lot is starting to make sense now.

Taehyung smiles and nods his head, agreeing with an internal thought. “Well, I’m alright now, and that’s the truth. Sorry for..dirtying your hand..and for making you get tissues Sammy.”

“Don’t apologise for having a bloody nose, Tae. It’s normal, we’re just glad it got better cause man, that was a lot of fucking blood and I mean a lot, how are you not even slightly light-headed?”

With those words Taehyung feels his body give up into Jeongguk’s sitting embrace, an incredible wash of dizziness returning and making itself apparent despite him already sitting down. His fingers tingle, he feels suddenly warm, and then everything seemingly becomes normal again. Taehyung shakes his head confusedly, the feeling of faintness going away as oddly as it came.

“Maybe you should go to the nurse,” Jeongguk suggests quietly, helping Tae sit back up as he was before. “I know it’s not serious but at the very least you should rest just to make sure you’re well enough to go to class. I’ll stay with you if you want.”

Taehyung considers it. “I don’t want to bother them, or make anyone worried.”

“You won’t. Trust me, we’ll worry more if you don’t go.”

“Okay.”

Taehyung ended up staying most of the day in the health centre. Frankly, it’s not really a health centre, more of a place students can come to rest, but there are some tablets and over-the-counter medicine you can take so he likes to think of it as such. Jeongguk stayed with him too, as he had promised, and Taehyung can’t lie and say he hadn’t enjoyed being with him.

The infirmary is separated into several private rooms. There’s a nurse near the front desk, who
evaluates the severity of patients, and a room for counselling down the hall. To stay in a room, one just has to scan their ID with one of the monitors displayed in the waiting room, and list their symptoms or illness. Jeongguk had explained to the nurse what had happened, and she couldn’t help but have pointed out Taehyung’s blindness on the spot. She seemed surprised, confused why Taehyung would ever go to a school like this with his vastly hindering impediment, but was polite and evasive nonetheless. She granted them a room, which was pretty cozy for a makeshift hospital-like space, and Taehyung sighed at ease when he finally sat down on the bed. It had been firm, but all he had needed at the moment was to sit down.

And soon, their brief stay turned into an hour-long excursion.

“You’re sure you’re feeling better?” Jeongguk asks for perhaps the hundredth time since they got there. Taehyung nods his head, no longer hesitant that blood might come pouring out of his nose, and breathes in slowly.

“I promise, I’m fine. In fact, I feel great now. I just don’t like the fact that I stayed here pretty much the whole day.”

It’s around one in the afternoon now.

“I’m pleased only if it helped, and if you insist you’re okay, then it was worth coming here.”

Jeongguk smiles underneath a pool of shimmering light, streaking from the blinds on the window and painting his face with lines of sunlight. Taehyung can feel the warmth, along with the humming heat emanating from the heater underneath his bed, and can also agree that maybe coming here wasn’t so bad after all.

“Thank you,” Taehyung says softly, playing with the blankets that drape around his waist. Again, it’s a lot cosier for a place that probably doesn’t get prioritised in terms of payment and money. “For staying with me. You didn’t have to and… I liked that you stayed.”

Jeongguk feels the urge to embrace the other once again. “Of course I stayed. Who else was going to make sure you remained in bed instead of waltzing off to class? You’re stubborn as hell.”

Taehyung laughs and Jeongguk does so with him, the moment supposedly humorous but leaning towards intimate. Jeongguk stares at the other with an indescribable look; a look of happiness and admiration but also underlined with some sort of painful longing. He’s falling in love with Taehyung,
or rather, he already has, and he isn’t quite sure what to do with himself.

“You’re staring,” Taehyung says quietly, unsure why his tone became so hushed all of a sudden. It seemed appropriate in the situation, and he had only guessed the statement with the silence encapsulating them.

Jeongguk laughs shyly, feeling caught, but doesn’t stop looking at him. He traces the other’s feature with care and precision, enamoured by his beauty and all his silent qualities. The way his lips stay slightly open, naturally pink and extraordinarily soft, or his eyebrows move to whatever expression he is trying to convey. It’s also the way his skin glows despite being underneath the shadow of the wall, illuminated by some crazy force that manages to highlight the small moles that scatter his face. Jeongguk leans closer to where he had been sitting on the bed, taking Taehyung’s face in his hand gently, caressing his ear with one finger as he lets their foreheads touch.

“I can’t help but stare,” Jeongguk responds softly, brushing the hair that frames Tae’s face away from his eyes. He feels captivated by a gaze that cannot see him. “It may come as a surprise to you, but you’re hot as fuck.”

Taehyung scrunches up his nose cutely, an overwhelming feeling of happiness consuming him, marked slightly with embarrassment, but for the most part joy. “I’m not sure what I look like, since the last time I saw myself I had been barely a teenager, so you could be right,” Taehyung smiles. “Or, you could be wrong.”

“I’m never wrong.”

“Hm, is that so?” Taehyung asks playfully, wanting the other to finally close the distance between them. He bites his own lip lightly, an energy pulsing within him.

“Yes, and I can prove it,” Jeongguk says quietly, hovering his lips right above the other’s lips. Taehyung can feel his breath tickle his skin. “For example, right now, I believe you’re expecting me to kiss you.”

Taehyung smiles again, slowly leaning towards him, hesitant to press their lips together despite being inches away from touching. “I mean, anyone would’ve guessed that.”

The sexual tension is astounding.
“Perhaps, but I also know that you’d rather have us stop talking and get to it. Isn’t that so?” He moves his hand so that it’s on Tae’s neck, dragging his fingers up to the other’s ear. He traces over the hiccups he had given him earlier today, and Taehyung shudders, the memory sending a sensitive feeling down his spine.

Taehyung blushes slightly and removes his teeth from his bottom lip, smoothening the indents they made with his tongue. He hears Jeongguk swallow. “Then what are you waiting for?”

Jeongguk laughs at his statement, cupping his face again, searching for something through his eyes in a sort of desperate expression, before finally kissing him, starting slow yet eager. He holds the back of Taehyung’s head gently, running his hands through his ash hair, and bites onto Tae’s bottom lip like he had been doing himself seconds prior. Jeongguk tugs on it softly before kissing him again, this time with a more prominent desire. He slides his tongue into Taehyung’s mouth, catching the other by surprise, and pushes against his body, trailing his hands down to his neck and then his chest. Taehyung shivers as the kiss gets more intense, falling back down onto the bed, back pressing against the firm mattress as Jeongguk straddles his waist with their lips still connected. Taehyung adjusts his hands so that they’re now holding onto Jeongguk’s hips, moving them higher up his back as the other continues to devour his mouth. He runs his nails against the other’s clothed skin, letting his hands fall to the side to grasp at Jeongguk’s waist again.

Jeongguk groans, leading the kiss in desperate movements and pressing his waist further into Taehyung’s groin, lifting his shirt slowly above his torso to touch his abdomen. The sun streams across the bed, shining against their bodies and turning the white sheets golden. It paints them in a scintillating way, gleaming against their skin and washing their clothes with light as they forget everything they had been doing beforehand. Jeongguk’s hand travels higher, dragging up Taehyung’s bare skin teasingly, perpetually slow, and Taehyung exhales in pent up pleasure, breathing heavily as his lips are captured by the others again.

“I like it when you touch me,” Taehyung confesses shakily, his mouth falling open as Jeongguk grinds down on him once more. He grips onto the other’s body, aware that their situation is progressing into something much more tempting, and he’s unsure if he’s ready to get to that yet. Jeongguk kisses down his jaw like he had done before, retracing his steps and kissing over the hickey that still marks his neck, debating whether to leave a new one or to keep moving lower. He decides to do something new, trailing kisses down Taehyung’s throat and roaming his hands all across his torso, traveling up before sinking lower towards the rim of his pants.

“I know you do,” Jeongguk whispers back in response, brushing over the zipper of Taehyung’s pants gingerly, tugging it ever so slightly down. “I’ll touch you as much as you want.”

Taehyung leans back into the mattress, his neck lightly glistening with sweat, his heart pounding profusely. He feels tension in his abdomen, a pressure in his pants, similar to their moment before and equivalent to the sensation he felt that one night. He’s scared. He doesn’t want to grow afraid of
the other, and associate his touch with something else. He doesn’t want to associate whatever this is
with the things his father did to him, and he certainly doesn’t want the good feeling he has with
Jeongguk to end. He knows that they’re dating now, and that it should be okay, but his lingering
doubt and fear remains stark in his mind. He wants this feeling to last forever, but what if it goes
away once they do something more?

Jeongguk makes a bold move, running his fingers across Taehyung’s crotch ‘accidentally’, stroking
them up and down, slowly, from his pelvis back to his zipper. Taehyung moans audibly, off guard,
hips thrusting slightly towards the other’s hovering body, seeking friction and warmth. He’s met with
Jeongguk’s clothed abdomen, rough jeans against soft textile, pushing down on the pressure that’s
only growing inside his pants. He covers his mouth in embarrassment, feeling his ears turn pink
because the sound had left so unexpectedly from his lips.

Jeongguk stops kissing him for a second, looking at him intently with a frown on his face. “Don’t
hide your voice. I want to hear you.” He goes back to playing with the other’s zipper, kissing along
the lines of his chest and his semi-clothed stomach.

Taehyung shudders, thinking of an excuse that’ll cover up his true mood-ruining explanation to why
it would be so awkward for him to simply moan. “But…we’re in the infirmary. People will hear us..”

Jeongguk looks over at the door, which seems miles away from them at the moment, and then back
at Tae, admiring his flushed cheeks and swollen lips, spit-stained and red from Jeongguk’s touch. He
likes how the other seems to be glistening underneath the sunlight, chest heaving up and down, skin
riddled with goosebumps and a particularly hard bulge in his pants. He likes how his face erupts in
pleasure every time he touches or kisses him especially right, and above all else, he likes it when he
hears the other express his satisfaction.

“The door’s locked, Tae,” Jeongguk whispers, continuing his previous actions. He runs his hand
along the length of the other’s thigh, arising another shiver from him. “The walls are thick too..It’s
not like they’d suspect anything, so don’t cover it up. I like hearing you feel good.”

The way Jeongguk says it makes Taehyung blush even harder, putting him in a vulnerable state and
therefore lowering his restraint. So, when Jeongguk goes to play with the other’s zipper once more,
Taehyung can’t help the high-pitched moan that escapes his lips as Jeongguk accidentally kneads
right into his arousal. He smirks, playful, cherishing the way Taehyung’s eyebrows scrunch up and
jaw goes slack, a series of quiet whimpers leaving his parted lips. He whispers Jeongguk’s name
quietly, yearning, and something about the crack in his voice sends something electric down
Jeongguk’s spine.

“Fuck, Tae..ah that was hot.”
Jeongguk’s own jeans begin to feel tighter, and upon looking down at himself, he can see the own direct causes of the situation. He curses silently, looking back at Taehyung to see his equally turned on state.

Things are progressing dangerously fast.

Jeongguk reconnects their lips, kissing Taehyung passionately before lifting him back up into a sitting position. He brushes Tae’s hair back, deepening the kiss, and cups his face again, caressing his jawline gently.

“I want you,” Jeongguk mutters into the kiss, humming in satisfaction as Taehyung slips his own tongue into Jeongguk’s mouth. Jeongguk pulls him closer, dominating the embrace, before breaking apart temporarily, their breaths intertwining in desperate pants. It feels amazing, it really fucking does, but they both know if they don’t stop now, there will be no going back. “But we should wait.”

He’s referring to sex.

Taehyung nods his head hastily, a tight, pleasurable feeling still consuming his body, and lowers his head, trembling with the fervour of it all. Jeongguk lifts up his chin, kissing him softly one more time on the lips, biting onto his bottom lip once more before breaking away so they can both catch their breaths again.

Taehyung pants, skin glistering, and leans his head to the side lazily, a smile etched on his face. He feels high off of euphoria. “Can I suck you?”

Jeongguk chokes, not expecting such a blatant response from the other. He refrains from moaning at the thought, the words sending various fantasies of Taehyung’s request floating through his head, how he’d look, how it would feel, his lips; red and sucking. He tries to shake off the image, not wanting to get ahead of himself, but can’t seem to with the other sitting right in front of him, intently waiting for an answer. “Fuck, you didn’t need to put it so bluntly.”

Taehyung laughs, an unreadable look in his grey eyes, looking the most alive he’s ever been. “Was that a yes?”

“You really want to suck my dick in the infirmary?”
“You said the door was locked,” Taehyung responds alluringly, rearranging himself so that he’s resting on his knees. He bounces on the mattress, almost excitedly, awaiting Jeongguk’s response. “I want to make you feel good too..”

Jeongguk’s heart squeezes at the other’s reasoning. “I think the boner I have right now shows how much you turn me on.”

“Then, can I take care of it?”

Jeongguk sighs, unsure why he’s not giving into the idea right away. He wants what Taehyung’s asking to do, in fact, he’d love nothing more than the other’s lips wrapped around his dick, quenching the desire he has for him, it’s just that..he doesn’t want to exploit Tae.

He doesn’t want him to do something he might regret.

“Are you sure you want to? You don’t have to do it, so don’t feel like you’re required to. I want you to do what you want.”

“Jeongguk-ah,” Taehyung says slowly, shuffling closer to the other. “If I didn’t want to do it, I wouldn’t have asked.” He reaches out for Jeongguk’s shoulder, finding his chest instead, and trails his hand leisurely down the line of his torso. He stops right along his abdomen, feeling muscle beneath the clothes, and uses one finger to travel the rest of the way down to his waistband. “I want this.”

Jeongguk nods his head, letting out a heavy breath as Taehyung eases his hands near his zipper, pulling it down gradually. He inhales sharply, anticipation thick on his tongue, and looks down at Tae’s lowering figure, his stomach now lying flat on the bed, legs slightly sprawled. Jeongguk stares at the other’s moves acutely, swallowing when he begins to remove his jeans, fumbling to lower his boxers as well, fingers finding their way meticulously despite not being able to see. He leans on his elbows, staring down at Taehyung with lidded eyes, a lustful expression twinkling within them as he watches the other strip off his pants low enough to showcase his briefs, going to grab the bulge that’s evidently outlined through it.

He’s hesitant at first, deciding what to do, before he begins rubbing Jeongguk’s dick through the thin material, dragging his hand up and down in drawn-out strokes, palming the base of his length and then the rest of it slowly. Jeongguk sighs in pleasure, a short exhale that turns audible near the end, a pleasure overcoming him in waves.
Taehyung smiles when Jeongguk’s dick gets harder, slightly wet from their previous actions, and warm to the touch. He slowly takes the briefs off his waist, the head of his dick popping out first, indefinitely aroused. He then removes the rest, waiting a couple seconds first instead of putting his hands on it to determine what he should do next. Jeongguk mentally braces himself, unsure if he’s going to be able to survive the amount of pleasure that he’s about to undertake, swallowing again more in desire than nervousness.

And then, he feels hands around his erection, wrapping around the length securely, stroking up and down as if to prepare him for what’s to come. Jeongguk closes his eyes, jaw slackening slightly, and he grips onto the bedsheets, clutching onto them tightly as the other continues to jerk him off. He swallows one more time, suppressing a groan, wanting Taehyung like this perhaps more than ever before. He feels electricity in his veins, flowing rapidly, pulsing beneath his skin in what he can only identify as pleasure, and he longs to look back at Taehyung. And so, he does, watching the other move, his facial features turning sultry and erotic in a way while he remains concentrated at the task at hand. His cheeks are slightly flushed from arousal, and his skin appears sheen in the light.

He feels like he could get off just like this, the image in front of him too perfect and sexual, the sensation too overpoweringly good. He feels like he could eventually cum simply by hearing the other moan his name, the fantasy of him also getting off to something like this incredibly hot and potent in Jeongguk’s mind. Taehyung just has that effect on him, and he wonders why and how they hadn’t done any of these things sooner.

The friction releases for a few seconds, leaving Jeongguk feeling empty, only his thoughts to fuel his needs, and he watches, with slightly dilated eyes, as Taehyung repositions himself. His face gets closer to his erection, his breath nearer and hotter against the base of his dick, and Jeongguk can’t seem to stop staring at the other, admiring the aroused expression on his face that seemingly overtook his innocent one. It makes him happy to see that Taehyung’s also enjoying their...moment...

Jeongguk feels his saliva thicken, his desire only increasing with Taehyung’s gradual movements, and he’s able to picture the rest of the pending events unfold in his mind. He wants this, they both want this, and that’s conceivably the greatest thing about it all.
Taehyung exhales heavily, a sound of pleasure disguised as a strained sigh, and leans in closer, lips grazing the skin of Jeongguk’s erection only slightly. It still manages to send a magnification of the pleasure he was feeling before to explode throughout his body, consuming his limbs and overtaking his voice briefly with a slip of curses.

“It’s…big,” Taehyung admits softly, turning redder at his honest statement. He widens his mouth and closes it again, stretching it out cutely in a way that makes Jeongguk’s heart strain, such an innocent action for a situation like this. He tilts his head slightly to the side, his hair falling to the front of his face, and licks a stripe of his length, holding onto the base and moving from the bottom to the top in a long, accentuated motion. Jeongguk’s head falls back, eyes fluttering shut, and puts his weight back onto his elbows as he’s overcome with pleasure. Taehyung hums in satisfaction, running his lips up and down the shaft, applying pressure near the tip.

Jeongguk lets out a choked moan, clutching onto the infirmary sheets tighter. “Fuck, Tae.”

He feels an incredible warmth, immediately satiating yet enhancing his pleasure at the same time, sending sparks through his body. He loses his voice, jaw loosening in a silent moan, and squints his eyes open to look at Taehyung. As imagined, the other has his lips wrapped around him, cheeks aglow, moving slowly along the entire shaft, hollowing his mouth to allow more to fit. Jeongguk says his name loudly, squeezing his eyes shut in bliss, trying hard to resist thrusting into the other’s mouth as the pleasure begins to feel overwhelmingly good. He moves his hand from the bedsheets, finding Taehyung’s hair and brushing it out of his face, tucking some of the longer strands behind his ear while the other continues to suck him off. Taehyung groans at the feeling of the other’s fingers in his hair, cheeks aglow, sending vibrations to course along Jeongguk’s dick, and he restrains another moan, a harder one to suppress, as he feels Jeongguk tighten his grip. He holds onto his hair a little harshly, following the other’s movements with a stable grasp, and pulls on the ashy strands as the pleasure becomes more intense. He moans Taehyung’s name, perhaps a little loudly, and his pants and whimpers of ecstasy seem to echo throughout the room. He moves his other hand, the one that had remained limp at his side, reaching to touch his chin with his fingertips. He brushes against it, and Taehyung smiles, moving one of his hands too in hopes to find Jeongguk’s. His heart fills with warmth when he feels the other hold onto that hand, intertwining their fingers securely together, and rest them back on the bed, clutching each other strongly.

“Please,” Jeongguk moans breathlessly, re-adjusting his grip onto Taehyung’s hair. His respiration gets heavier and quicker, his levels of self-restraint lowering significantly. “Don’t stop.”

Taehyung’s heart races, a tightness increasing in his pants, and he takes more of Jeongguk inside his mouth, bobbing his head slightly up and down. He feels many things at this moment, especially with his lack of sight, and he’s able to identify the emotions flowing through him and the physical actions that are occurring clearly. He feels Jeongguk’s dick in his mouth, hard and pulsing, dripping precum against the flat of his tongue. He can feel the heat emanating off both of their bodies, and the sun streaming across his back, the sheets entangling around them messily. He can sense Jeongguk’s
arousal and increasing state of euphoria, retaining the moans of pleasure the other had emitted from his mouth, and becomes happy again knowing that it was because of him that Jeongguk made those sounds. He can feel the hardness in his pants, and the slight twitch that occurs every time Jeongguk moans his name or pulls his hair. He can smell sex in the air, engulfing them, and prints it in his mind as a memory.

He can sense how arousing this situation is and how close Jeongguk is to him. It makes him feel happy, carefree, liberated in some inexplicable way. He feels overrun with diluted pleasure and afloat with the pressure on his tongue. He feels the grip on his hair, guiding his motions and tightening every time the pleasure intensifies, their heavy breaths consuming the air.

He can’t help but moan around the other’s dick at the sensation, swallowing against it and pushing it deeper so that it barely touches the back of his throat. Taehyung’s not expecting to gag, and therefore isn’t surprised when he doesn’t.

“I’m close,” Jeongguk strains out weakly, taking his weight off his elbows and sitting more upright, watching his abdomen bend and convulse to Taehyung’s movements. He holds onto the other’s head more securely, watching intently at the actions unfolding, and throws his head back once more when Tae runs over the slit of his dick with his tongue. He leans on his shoulder, staring back at Taehyung because his eyes can never leave him for too long, and squeezes their intertwined hands to show compassion. He watches, with pleasure, how Taehyung seems so natural at what he’s doing, as if this wasn’t his first time, and wonders if he’d be the type of person to watch (or…probably listen to?) porn.

Jeongguk doesn’t really assume so, not because he’s blind but because he just never seemed to be interested in things like this. His angelic features didn’t help in contradicting that assumption either, but maybe he has secrets Jeongguk isn’t aware of.

Perhaps it has something to do with his past too.

Whatever the case is, he appreciates him. He appreciates the gesture, and the way he does it so passionately, and appreciates the fact that Taehyung had considered him deserving enough to receive something like this. He wants to make Taehyung feel good too, to pleasure him numb, and a part of his deeper, more conserved thoughts want to dominate him and make him his entirely.

Jeongguk feels a familiar sensation arise in his abdomen, something he hasn’t felt by the hands of someone else in a long time. He stifles a groan, trying hard not to choke the other by thrusting too hard, and eases his grip off his hair, running his fingers through the grey strands tenderly. He wants to warn the other before he finishes so that he doesn’t end up with a mouthful of his sperm; although hot to see, probably not the most pleasant experience for the recipient.
“Ah—Taehyung,” Jeongguk starts slowly, unable to fully concentrate on his words with the high he’s feeling. He swallows thickly, breaths rapid. “I-I’m going to cum.”

He squeezes his eyes and then re-opens them, grinding his teeth together to prevent any other loud moans that might make themselves heard outside their room. He keeps Taehyung’s hair in his fist, breathing shallowly as his ecstasy heightens, before letting go of his grip on Taehyung completely so he can remove his lips. Much to his surprise, however, the other keeps his position, even going deeper to try and prolong Jeongguk’s almost climactic state. Jeongguk cries out yearningly, restraint almost fully gone and voice barely contained. He resorts to clinging back onto the bedsheets, feeling the sensation unravel almost unbearably; pulsing, amplifying, throbbing and augmenting.

God, he needs to cum.

Taehyung moves faster and deeper, aware from the other’s words and desperation how close he is, and tries to focus on dragging out the last few moments. He sucks along the base, travelling back towards the top, and pays specific attention to the head, taking him back in completely.

With one last movement, Jeongguk moans out Taehyung’s name, cumming forcefully into his mouth and collapsing back onto his elbows, eyes rolling into the back of his head in ecstasy. His climax washes over him, turning his breaths ragged, his voice hoarse, and his legs limp, mind absolutely blank and fogged over with pleasure. Taehyung sucks him out through it, trying to collect his ejaculation so that it doesn’t fall on the sheets. He moans as he feels the liquid smear his lips and trickle down his mouth and to his chin.

Jeongguk pants heavily, eyes still closed, his mind seeing stars. He doesn’t think he’s ever cum that hard before, or maybe it’s just because he hasn’t had a partner for a couple of years. Sure, he’s masturbated during that time, but it’s different when it’s out of your control and in someone else’s. He sits back up, leaning slightly forward and ruffling Tae’s hair gently, watching his next moves intently. Taehyung smiles, letting the other’s dick fall out of his mouth with an audible sound, saliva streaking his cheeks and leaving a mixed trail from the head of his dick to his tongue. Cum dribbles near the corner of his mouth, thick and white, and Jeongguk shivers at the other’s absolutely wrecked and dishevelled appearance. Swollen lips, fiery fogged eyes, jaw golden and skin glowing, sweat thinly layering his skin, chest heaving up and down breathlessly. Jeongguk takes his thumb and swipes at Taehyung’s bottom lip, picking up the cum that had been slowly dripping from it, and watches the other lick it dry, swallowing sharply at his eagerness.

“That was…” he starts, unable to verbally express how amazing everything felt. He still feels high off his climax, only just now starting to come down, and thinks that he could live in this moment forever. “Incredible.”
Taehyung smiles, gulping down the rest of the semen in his mouth bitterly, shuddering as if to erase the taste. “I had fun, though, cum tastes fucking awful.”

Jeongguk laughs sweetly, opening his arms up so Taehyung can fall into his embrace. He holds onto his shirt securely as they both reflect on what just happened. “I bet, that’s why I was trying to make you not swallow it.”

“I thought it wouldn’t be that bad!” Taehyung exclaims honestly, resting his head against Jeongguk’s chest. They’re both sitting up right, Jeongguk hugging Tae softly and letting him lean against him. He runs a hand through his slightly sweaty hair, sensually and calmly this time, and eases him into a more tranquil state. “But it did taste kinda better knowing it came from you.”

Jeongguk taps him playfully on the head. “You don’t have to lie.”

“I’m not lying! I swear,” Taehyung replies, burying his face into the other’s shirt. He smells so much like him at this moment, with the lingering scent of sex and sweat in the air, that it seems to put Tae at ease. He closes his eyes despite it being futile. “I really enjoyed that.”

Jeongguk nods, resting his head on top of Taehyung’s, kissing his hair and then his forehead softly. “Me too.”

They stay like that for some time, basking in each other’s presence, and Jeongguk hums his familiar tune again, rocking Tae back and forth calmly. He looks down, finally noticing the obvious erection the other’s sprouting in his pants, and wonders why he hadn’t said anything earlier.

“You must be uncomfortable,” Jeongguk whispers gingerly, lowering his hand so that it rests on Taehyung’s waist. He kisses him on the cheek. “Do you want me to take care of it?”

Taehyung’s quick to shake his head, readjusting himself to appear more comfortable but ultimately fails in doing so. Hearing and feeling Jeongguk become so undone before him had truly turned him off beyond belief, not to mention with their previous actions, yet Tae would rather remain untouched at this moment. For some reason, he feels that if Jeongguk jerks him off, it’ll arise unpleasant memories and even more unpleasant associations, and he desperately wants to keep whatever they have right now the way it is. He doesn’t want to be reminded, or ruin things because of his own issues, and therefore decides against it. He figures he’ll just take care of it himself when he gets back home, realising that it’s going to be hard not to think about what just happened for the duration of the day. “It’s okay. I just wanted to pleasure you today.”
Jeongguk smiles endearingly yet still insists. “You sure? I feel bad that I’m the only one getting anything. Especially when you’re still hard.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Taehyung says with a smile, looking up at the darkness and hoping he’s facing Jeongguk’s direction. “I had a lot of fun doing what I did, and it’s enough for me… You’re quite expressive, aren’t you?”

Jeongguk blushes slightly, dropping the previous subject because he can tell it’s making Tae slightly agitated. “I can be... vocal about my satisfaction sometimes, though, it’s only if the person is doing it well, in which, you were.” He winks but then realises that Taehyung can’t quite see him. “I winked... by the way.”

“I figured,” Taehyung responds with a laugh, breathing into the other’s shirt deeply. He admires the silence and ease drifting throughout the air, the sun brilliant on his face. “Honestly, I like hearing you moan.”

He doesn’t know why he confessed his pending thought but he doesn’t necessarily regret doing so. It’s the truth.

“Do you now?” Jeongguk says playfully, smiling to himself.

“It’s hot.”

Jeongguk laughs, wrapping his arms around Taehyung’s torso loosely. He draws in closer, placing his lips by the other’s ear and lets out a quiet, realistic moan, smiling widely when Taehyung seems to get ten times redder. Jeongguk laughs brightly, teasing the other by poking his cheeks and exaggerating a few more sounds of pleasure.

“Don’t take advantage of it!” Taehyung protests, voice muffled by Jeongguk’s shirt. His face grows hot in embarrassment. “I told you in confidence!”

Jeongguk hugs him tighter, swaying side to side on the bed. “Did you like it when I moaned your name?”

“Stop!” Taehyung laughs, shoulders shaking with amusement. He displays a dazzling smile and Jeongguk can’t help but stare yet again, heart churning with content.
“Hey Tae,” Jeongguk starts, feeling a concentrated happiness for the other.

*I love you.*

He stops himself, surprised at what he was about to say, not wanting to scare Taehyung away with some bold confession. The other gestures for him to continue, lifting himself off his chest with curious eyes.

“What is it?”

Jeongguk exhales nervously, getting cold feet. “Nothing, it’s nothing just-” he breathes in and smiles, kissing Tae’s forehead and letting his lips linger on his skin. “You’re perfect.”

Taehyung leans back into the other’s embrace, squeezing his arms around his torso, and beams. It seems he’s accepted his feelings for the other, and suddenly, starting to fully understand them too. One thing is for certain, and it’s that he wants to have Jeongguk by his side, experience life with him right there, and be a part of the other’s world too.

Maybe.

_Maybe_, he loves him.

“Are you doing anything for winter break?” Jeongguk asks after a few moments of silence, nervousness back on his tongue.

Taehyung shakes his head. “Not really. Yoongi’s going to be gone most of the time doing a project with Hoseok, and I know Jin’s going to see his family. I was going to have the apartment to myself but Yoongi doesn’t want me to be alone for so long so I thought I’d stay with someone.”

Jeongguk brightens. “That’s perfect! Well, I mean, I’m going home for the break and I really want you to come with me, just to see where I’m from and all,” he widens his eyes. “If you want that is! You don’t have to and I understand if you’d rather stay here.”
Taehyung shuts him up by hitting him lightly on the shoulder, smiling to himself. “I’d love to come with you,” he shuffles into a more comfortable position, burying his head deeper into Jeongguk’s shirt. He breathes in his scent, something prominent of pine trees and lavender, and it arises the feeling of spring inside his gut. He smiles. “Plus, it gives me an excuse to meet your family.”

“.you want to meet my family?” Jeongguk asks warmly, happy that the other cared at all.

“Yeah..it’s nice seeing a stable family sometimes, especially when it comes to you.” Taehyung admits quietly, reliving the winter breaks he had back when he was younger that weren’t so pleasant. He shakes them off hastily. “And I want them to like me.”

“Of course, they’re going to like you.”

“I want them to actually like me. Not simply tolerate me just because you find me appealing.”

“Okay well don’t talk as if you’re some sort of object, you’re more than appealing. As I said, you’re perfect. They’ll be happy enough seeing that I’ve made a friend whilst abroad.”

Taehyung laughs gently. “If they’re anything like you, I’m sure they’re incredible.”

Jeongguk’s heart warms. “You’ll get along great.”

Taehyung feels himself starting to get tired, maybe the actions he had been doing previously a little too strenuous for him in his light-headed state. Even though he isn’t anymore, he had been for a while, and exhaustion is definitely starting to show now that his adrenaline and high has worn off. He closes his eyes, feeling his breathing slow down, his heart pace, his body relax itself.

“Hey, don’t fall asleep,” Jeongguk says quietly, a subdued tone etched in his voice. He shakes Taehyung a little, making the other jump unexpectedly, and he apologises for not warning him beforehand. “You should sleep when you get home, it’ll be bad if you wake up late and then have to travel back by yourself in the evening.”

Taehyung nods his head in agreement, reluctantly getting out of Jeongguk’s secure embrace, pouting to himself with a cute frown.
He coos inwardly. “You’re cute, but it doesn’t change my mind.”

Taehyung sighs, a smile on his face, and finds Jeongguk’s face with his hands, tracing over his features silently. “I know.”

They make their way out of the room to sign out.

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Chapter End Notes

i’m still really new at writing smut so i’m sorry if it isn’t that good lmao

i hope to get better as this story progresses and by practicing it more in my future works!
(i already have an idea for another book oops)

thanks for reading and commenting! makes my day to see you guys happy with something i could do. stay healthy and happy, ily :)

happy reading!

さようなら。
Chapter Summary

jin and namjoon talk, taehyung freaks out over his sexual life and jeongguk has an eye-opening revelation.

!!!!

some calm before the impending storm

Chapter Notes

she's not dead???:\|

teehee i'm not gonna say anything cause i have no excuse except...i was *this* close to dropping the story.

and i still might...but for now,, enjoy this chapter!

happy reading.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jin sighs heavily, brows pinched in an almost uncomfortable expression. “You can’t come.”

Namjoon, who is currently putting on his shoes, replicates Jin’s frown, pouting softly to himself as he disregards the other’s rejection. “But it’ll be nice, hyung. Why can’t I?”

Jin fixes his shirt, fastening the last few buttons before taking a break to look at Namjoon intensely, eyes staring deeply into the other’s. Namjoon swallows. “You won’t like my parents. They aren’t... friendly like you’d assume, and I’m only going because I have to since it’s the holidays and all. I wouldn’t want to bore you with the same-old cliché family issues, now would I?”

This makes Namjoon curious, as he hadn’t expected the other to have complications with his parents. He has always been so polite, so cut and clean and straightforward yet motherly and caring in this beautiful way. He assumed that he couldn’t have a rough relationship with his family because Jin’s perfect, and it doesn’t quite fit his aesthetic. Knowing more about him makes his heart soften, and he suddenly feels like he’s made a deeper connection with the other. “All the more reason why I should come. If it’s going to be a difficult time for you I want to be there to make you feel less
uncomfortable.”

Jin smiles, a little forcedly, and leans over to kiss Namjoon’s cheek, fixing his collar in the process. “Thank you. I appreciate it, Joon, but you don’t understand. You being there will make it more uncomfortable. I can handle them on my own.”

Namjoon deflates a little, a gentle sadness etched on his face, and Jin feels guilty. It’s not the other’s fault, and he isn’t quite sure if he’s ready to tell Namjoon the whole truth as to why he shouldn’t come. It’s not something he wants to involve him in, and it’s not something he needs to know anyways. “Do they not know your..sexuality and all.”

Jin sighs, looking at Namjoon straightforwardly, lips pressed tightly together in order to hide how they quiver. “No, they don’t,” he says, a stone in his chest. “But that isn’t the reason why you shouldn’t go. You don’t want to come, trust me, you’d much rather stay here. It’ll be boring anyways.”

“How can it possibly be boring when you’re going to be there?”

“Don’t sweet-talk me into it,” Jin whines, getting up from the bed to lift up his pants. He zips them hastily, throwing Namjoon’s tie back at him as if to support the tone in his voice. It hits him in the chest lightly. “In a perfect world, yes, you would be accompanying me, meeting my parents who’ll gladly accept you and the fact that you’re a guy..however, this isn’t that perfect world, and you being a guy is the last of my worries. They’re…traditional, and rich traditional parents don’t let their sons bring home guys they’re seeing or even girls they’re interested in. It’s just how it is.”

“So, they don’t like you dating, big whoop. What if you tell them I’m just a friend? If they don’t know you’re pan, then they won’t even suspect we’re together. It’ll be a win-win situation, and you’ll get to have me by your side in case things get rocky. I’ll tell them we met in school and now have the same profession or something.”

Jin likes the idea, but knows deep-down that what Namjoon’s suggesting is only a recipe for disaster. “You see, they don’t even know that I’m working here, they don’t know, well, anything truly about me. I told them I’d be here, ’re-evaluating’ my life, preparing myself for what they want from me, but the truth is I left to get away. I don’t think you really want to see what my life is supposed to be like.”

“You’re right, I don’t want to see what your life is supposed to be like because I want to see what you’re making of it now; what you truly want to do. Don’t fall into their expectations, be who you want to be and take a stand against them. They can’t control your life forever, you know?”
Jin shakes his head with a smile, laughing ironically to himself. “If only it were that easy. Look, I’m not trying to seem like I’ve had it all bad. My parents are fine, minus the controlling and overbearing aspect, and I know they just want what’s best for me. They simply have a very peculiar, and different way of showing it. We don’t get along because of that, and the last thing I want is to drag you into it.”

“Please?” Namjoon asks sweetly, giving him a pleading puppy dog expression. His dimples stand out harder against his cheeks, and Jin finds it extremely difficult to say no. “They don’t have to know a thing, and I’m great at questions. Just test me.”

Jin looks at him incredulously, eyebrows raised, before sighing and standing up straighter, staring him down with confident eyes. “You really want to be tested? My parents are the definition of business, the faces of the entire industry, and they will very much do so.”

“I said what I said.”

“Okay,” Jin says playfully, racking his brain for something his parents would say, or at least, ask him. They liked testing him, their only-son, the supposed heir to their company, with information that certainly wouldn’t help him in the profession he wanted to pursue at the time. “What caused one of the largest stock market drops in China and when did it occur?”

Namjoon’s eyes sparkle, mind reeling back to the old newspapers he used to read as a kid. “February 27th 2007, the SSE Composite Index of the Shanghai Stock Exchange tumbled 9% from unexpected selloffs and it was the largest drop in 10 years. It triggered major drops in worldwide stock markets, ensuing global chaos. Then, June 12th 2015, the China stock market crashes and continues into July and August. By January 2016, the Chinese stock market experienced a steep sell-off which set off a global rout. I can name multiple American, Thai, Filipino, Japanese and even Brazilian stock crashes if you’d like. Whatever it takes to come.”

Jin looks up at him, mouth agape, staring at him for a couple of seconds before smiling widely. “Why and how do you know that?”

He feels like Namjoon would’ve been a better son to them than he himself ever was. The realisation hurts a little but he’s not entirely upset about it.

“Newspapers and photographic memory.”
Jin feels an unexpected wave of proudness wash over him and he laughs softly. “You never cease to amaze me.”

Namjoon smiles, smoothening out his shirt before kissing Jin longingly on the lips, tilting his chin gently with two fingers. “So, can I please come? I’ll behave, and after that maybe we could—”

“Alright, alright,” Jin interrupts, staring at the bed and its messy sheets and then to Namjoon again, signalling the other to help him make it. Namjoon sighs, dragging the sheets carefully over each other, folding the edges and tucking the excess underneath the mattress before looking down at Jin’s shorter frame expectantly, awaiting an answer. Jin exhales. “You can come but on one condition.”

Namjoon nods his head eagerly, thanking Jin both in words and with a tight embrace. He kisses his forehead, tempted to go back into bed with the other and sleep next to him, holding him tightly by his side. “Anything.”

“You can’t question what you might hear from them or from me. What is said is said and you can’t ask me about it.”

It’s an odd request, and Namjoon finds it strange that Jin would declare something so unlike him. Nonetheless, he nods, accepting his proposal because meeting Jin’s parents is something that trumps perhaps anything.

“It’s a done deal.”

“Good,” Jin says happily, pulling Namjoon in closer to his body before breathing in deeply. He rests his head against his clothed chest, an unknowing stress now off his shoulders. “The last thing I’d want is for you to take things out of proportion. They can be quite pushy and domineering.”

“You make it seem like there’s something I don’t know about. Or at least, something I should take out of proportion.”

Jin stays silent for a moment, pondering. “We’ll find out, I guess.”

Namjoon wants to ask but doesn’t, aware that this may be a test to see if he can truly hold up his end
of the bargain. No questions, no asking, he’s got to accept that, and so he swallows down his curiosity and hugs the other tighter, leaning his chin against Jin’s head. “Okay.”

It would be nice to stay like this for a few minutes, appreciating each other’s presence, but unfortunately for them, they have things to do. Jin looks down at his wrist, checking his watch, and stares up at Namjoon, interrupting their small moment. “We should get going. Yoongi said to be there at three.”

Namjoon nods reluctantly, still unsure about the whole situation but ready to finally confront things with Yoongi since their last conversation. “Yeah, you’re right, I don’t want us to be late.”

“All because someone couldn’t control their urges,” Jin teases playfully, gesturing at the now fully made bed. Namjoon feels his cheeks flush, adjusting his shirt and putting on his coat, now needed as winter approaches and turns the air bitterly raw.

“Are you referring to the conversation or the sex?”

“Both.”

“Right,” Namjoon says curtly, grabbing his keys off the nightstand. “Can’t say it wasn’t worth it.”

“Shut up and get in the car.”

Namjoon smiles, taking the other’s hand in his own and kisses it softly, departing first as Jin continues to get the rest of his things.

He sighs once Namjoon leaves the bedroom, a tension in his temples and a guilty feeling resting in his throat. He should have explained everything, but at the same time, things are better like this. His parents have a habit of ruining relationships for him and he can’t let them ruin yet another one because of their requests, especially this one.

This relationship means too much to him.

And it’s not like it’s a guaranteed destruction that awaits him. They might not even bring up the
discussions Jin would rather keep hidden, and everything might, *hopefully*, turn out well.

He’s unsure, but a small part of him thinks that there’s a chance everything will end peacefully, and so he’ll take it. Shrugging on his coat, he puts on a pair of mittens before heading out the bedroom too, smiling when he hears an obnoxious honk from outside.

“I’m coming!”

He opens the front door; the wind biting at his cheeks and harsh on his lips, and laughs to himself as he sees Namjoon struggle to fit in the passenger’s seat of the car with his long legs. He waves uncomfortably, ushering him to get in as it’s cold, and Jin nods, opening the door to the vehicle quickly and closing it behind him. He warms his hands by rubbing them together, taking off his mittens to get a steady hold of the steering wheel. The leather is brittle on his skin, icy cold, and he shivers both from the temperature and the other’s intense stare on him.

“I’ll put on the heater,” Namjoon says, taking Jin’s car keys from his frozen fingers and placing them into ignition, turning up the heating so it blows fervently against their skin.

Jin thanks him, an unnecessary nervousness in his gut and relishes the heat. He thinks it’s from the conversation that awaits him but he also believes that maybe it has to do with what he was discussing with Namjoon before.

He loves him a lot, and he doesn’t want to jeopardise what they have with an irrelevant meeting with his parents. In any case, he puts away the conflict aside, if only temporary, and focuses at the task at hand.

“Do you know what you’re going to say?” Jin asks quietly, lowering the intensity of the heating so he can hear Namjoon’s answer properly.

“No idea,” Namjoon replies honestly, a little tremor in his voice. He appears to be nervous too. “And I’ve been thinking over it for awhile now but I can’t find the words to say. I don’t know how to organise my thoughts and convey what I need to convey, and it shows since the last time we talked I ended up scaring him shitless,” he breathes sharply, eyebrows creased as if remembering the event pains him. “I just feel so..guilty..and hurt and *betrayed* and I know that I need to say something or we might never become friends again but it’s hard, Jin. Is that even something we can achieve again? Is what happened something we can come back from? It scares me.”
Jin rests a hand on Namjoon’s cheek, cradling it softly between his fingertips. He wears a pitiful smile as he searches through the other’s eyes, looking at the deep-ridden conflict and pain in them, and finds it hard to breathe. “I know it does, and I can’t even imagine what you must be going through. With all your lives intertwined, Taehyung and his past, you, Hobi and Yoongi being best friends and then, all of a sudden, strangers…it must be hard but I know you can recover from it. You guys are like family, and family, good families, don’t abandon their own.”

Namjoon hesitates. “I hope so. Because I’d hate to admit that this family too, was a bad one.”

Jin knows he’s referring to his own family, a topic he hasn’t heard Namjoon speak of in depth. He knows somewhat along the lines of it, and he knows that he and Yoongi bonded over something quite similar. They both had quite dysfunctional families, and Jin knows that it’s something extremely sensitive for the both of them. It amazes him how many families around him suffer to show love and compassion, and he’s somewhat grateful that his parents haven’t abandoned him.

Yet, at least.

“I’ll keep throwing ideas around until one sticks.”

Jin nods, driving out of the pathway effortlessly, twisting his head back to see if he’s going to hit anything with the rear of his car. “I think things will work out well, regardless of what you say.”

“Me too, or at least, I hope so.”

He nudges the other lightly in the shoulder, noticing his grim tone, hands steady on the steering wheel. “Don’t worry, I’ll be there with you.” He begins to better understand Namjoon’s reasoning on meeting his parents now, and feels something warm bloom in his chest as he realises how equally infatuated they are with each other.

He thinks he’s the one.

He makes his way onto the main road, finding the warmth comforting, and begins the route to Yoongi’s apartment, a small smile on his lips.
Taehyung gets home at around five, not expecting to have stayed on campus for so long. He and Jeongguk had talked for a bit and following that, they met up with Jimin and Sammy to eat lunch (which they had missed).

The moment he shared with Jeongguk unfolds and unravels throughout his mind continuously, leaving him embarrassed yet content as he reflects on how much they both enjoyed what they were doing. He can still hear Jeongguk’s voice in his head, echoing, laced in purple, and he shivers as he unlocks the front door, grounding his thoughts by focusing on the soles of his shoes hitting the ground.

He hears voices when he enters the apartment, a couple of them but not many. He’s slightly apprehensive, mainly because Yoongi didn’t say he was bringing friends over, and also by the way they’re speaking. It’s hushed, voices low and careful, some sort of lingering tension in the air. Taehyung’s too far away to hear what they’re saying, but he knows something, at the very least, is going down.

He walks quietly down the hall, using the wall as support as he treads across the floor, trying hard not to make a sound. He makes it to the door of the bathroom, identifying it by the braille he comes in contact with, and debates going inside and hiding. His shoes brush the ground lightly, and he realises suddenly that he had forgotten to take them off when he first came inside. He attempts to undo them, leaning against the wall for support, but misjudges the distance between the plaster and his back, resulting in a quite abrupt fall to the ground.

The voices stop, the tension easily intensifying, and Taehyung curses as a sharp pain crawls up his back, receiving most of the impact from the fall. He chastises his stupidity, aware that assuming where things are never work in the long run, and that he should’ve at least been more careful with his surroundings. He hears feet shuffling against the wood and concrete, distinct in his mind although barely audible, and sits up quickly, not wanting to look like an idiot in front of his friends (or the supposed intruders).

Upon thinking about it, if these voices really are kidnappers, Taehyung would most certainly be dead by now, or at the very least, soon.

Death by stupidity. It’s fitting in some way.

Thankfully, the voices aren’t killers or even his monsters (which is a factor he only now, starkly realises), in fact, they’re his friends, and he knows because their footsteps are quite unique to his ears. Jin’s light shuffle, Yoongi’s heavier strides, another, longer and louder tread that is more unfamiliar to him but predominantly carried by someone tall. He can sense an overwhelming apprehension and stress, awaiting the chance to spring free, and tries desperately to find a way to alleviate whatever it is that is causing such an emotion to occur.
He hears them stop, figures steady. Then, a voice.

“Taehyung, why the fuck are you on the floor?” Yoongi asks, confused for the most part. There’s a tiredness in his voice.

Tae laughs sheepishly, patting the ground next to him comfortably with a smile. “I was taking off my shoes.”

Not entirely a lie since he was trying to untie them.

“Near the bathroom?”

Taehyung nods, trying to hide his embarrassment by pressing his lips together, and starts to get up slowly. As he does so, he feels arms supporting him, guiding his back up properly, and he identifies the touch as Jin’s because of the way his hands are shaped and how carefree and gentle his touch generally is. A lot of people tend to be hesitant when they touch him (with Jeongguk as an exception), which makes sense as he makes it clear he doesn’t exactly love it (though his progress on getting used to it is coming along), but the unique thing about Jin is that he’s never been hesitant with him. He’s been comfortable, happy and good-natured, perfectly normal and gentle with him, even if especially nosy at times, and it shows in the way he handles him. He still remembers the first time he met Jin, and the way he interacted with Taehyung for the very first time. It had been a shock to him, for both of them probably, and he’s sure he had scared and worried Jin with the cry of fear that escaped his lips when Jin first embraced him tightly, clearly reeking sympathy. Yoongi had explained to Jin later that Tae didn’t like to be touched, given what had happened to him only recently, yet Jin still kept his comfortable approach around him. He gave him space, yes, but he was never uncertain or tentative with his movements.

Taehyung can’t say he totally hates it, and naturally, he has grown to like it as the years pass by. He still finds his prying annoying, but he knows the other does it because he cares about him, and he appreciates the intention.

“You didn’t fall, did you?” Jin asks, eyeing Tae particularly as he notices him rub his back sorely.

“Stop worrying, hyung. I slipped a little but I’m alright, plus, it’s not like this is the first time I’ve fallen. I guess I was a little distracted.”
He tries hard not to bring the thought of Jeongguk to his mind again.

“What are you doing home so late anyways? I was going to come get you after work but I stayed late so I assumed you’d have been back...if you texted me I would have gotten you..”

Taehyung waves Yoongi off, reassuring him that it’s okay. “Oh no don’t worry! I decided to hang out a little more with my friends and lost track of time. One of them walked me to the train and I found my way from there.”

Yoongi nods, the tension still tight, and Taehyung smiles awkwardly. Namjoon looks between them incredulously, almost upset at the silence.

Namjoon clears his throat. “You should tell-“

“Shut up,” Yoongi interrupts, his voice dangerously low. It sends a chill down Namjoon’s spine, and quite frankly everyone’s, surprise stark on their faces. Yoongi hardly gets angry like this, and when he does, it’s usually over a pressing matter. The air feels a thousand times more tense and brittle, Namjoon’s comment dissipating in its viscosity, and Taehyung quirks his eyebrows up, confused.

“Is there something I should know?”

Jin gestures for everyone to be quiet, handling the fragile air delicately. “Not quite. How was school, Tae? I wish you came earlier because we were just leaving. I could’ve cooked you something.” He sends Namjoon a stare that emanates ‘be quiet’.

Taehyung feels even more confused, hesitant in his response. “Um, thank you? School was fine I guess,” he falters as he remembers his moment with Jeongguk once again, trying not to blush. “What are you guys doing here?”

He’s aware of how terrible Jin’s attempt to change the subject was, but he also doesn’t want to question it further.

“Catching up,” Jin replies with a smile, trying to ease the situation down before it can explode. The truth is inches away from being disputed, and it’s not something that’s going to be taken lightly. “Turns out we had a lot of things to talk about.”
Taehyung nods his head, swallowing nervously. He can still taste part of Jeongguk in his mouth, but it isn’t so bitter anymore. “That’s…nice.”

There’s an awkward silence, permeating the air in what Taehyung refers to as the classic silence of the night, quite versatile in its brutal nature.

Someone claps their hands together abruptly and it startles him.

“Well, we were just going,” Jin says forcibly, slipping on his coat and gloves. Taehyung can hear the cloth shuffle against his skin, a rustle of sounds wafting left and right. “But it was really nice to see you. Next time we’ll stay longer for sure, I promise.”

Taehyung gives an uneasy smile, nodding because that’s the only logical thing he can think of at the moment. Honestly, way to be subtle on their part.

Namjoon says his quiet goodbye too, a little forced and definitely reluctant, but nonetheless present. Taehyung is no idiot to the situation, yet a deeper part of him doesn’t want to know whatever it is that’s going on. Maybe it’s selfish but…he’s happy, and he hasn’t been this happy in a long time, perhaps ever. He doesn’t want to ruin this feeling before he’s even gotten the chance to truly indulge in it. He’s not ready too.

However, another part of him also realises that if he gets used to this happiness, its departure will only leave him more broken.

He hears the front door close, Yoongi’s breaths unusually tense, and he chooses to let his initial thought succeed. He wants to be happy. He doesn’t want to get involved in whatever they were discussing.

He doesn’t need to because he’s moving on, and nothing they say or do will change that. He hopes nothing will change that.

Yoongi clears his throat. “I’m sorry if things came out a little strange.”

Taehyung smiles, dismissing the situation. “It’s okay, whatever it is, I don’t want to know about it.
It’s not important.”

Maybe what he’s doing is also stubborn. He knows it’s important but he convinces himself that it’s not.

Yoongi feels even more guilty, a collection of stones in his throat. He wants to tell Taehyung but at the same time, if Taehyung doesn’t want to know, how can he? How can he destroy his life, again, without even his consent? At least if he had asked, Yoongi would’ve felt better, realised that this is something that has to happen and it’s something that Taehyung wants to hear, no matter how terrible, but the fact that he doesn’t want to know at all? Can Yoongi still tell him?

He needs time to think.

“How was school?” Yoongi asks, deciding to change the subject. It’s stupid because Jin already asked him that same very question but Taehyung smiles, finally peeling off his shoes with his feet and making his way across the cold floors, glad that Yoongi brushed the topic off. Even with his socks the temperature shoots tendrils through his body, winter taking a toll on their heating for sure, but he tries to ignore it as he recollects the day in his mind.

The blush desperately tries to creep onto his face again as he tries to stop the scenes of Jeongguk from replaying in his mind. How can one be so hot solely from their voice? Their touch? Their presence? He misses the other despite it only being a few hours since they last talked.

“It was alright, how about you?” Taehyung replies indifferently, trying to subdue the memories he had felt from appearing in his mind again; the feeling of Jeongguk’s dick in his mouth still a vivid, almost tangible memory.

“But, Taehyung doesn’t want to mention the nosebleed for two reasons. One being he doesn’t want to make Yoongi worried over something seemingly alright, and the other because Yoongi’s been acting
differently, clearly.

And it’s not just from what he walked in on today. That conversation reinforced things, and it radiated the same uncomfortable and dangerous energy he’s been feeling from Yoongi for awhile now, but Tae’s sensed that something’s been off since before then. Yoongi’s not sharing something, he’s not telling Taehyung something. At first he thought it would be impossible, considering they always tell each other things, especially when it’s the truth, but he also knows all too well about wanting to keep things to yourself. He doesn’t want to pry Yoongi or have whatever it is that he needs to say upset him, so he doesn’t bring it up. However, it does bother him that the other may be conflicted over something, especially if it’s because of Taehyung himself.

He’ll tell Tae when he’s ready, then. When they’re both ready.

“I don’t know, I just think we should still be careful,” Yoongi responds carefully. “It’s been on my mind lately and even though we haven’t seen anything strange in awhile, we can never be too safe.”

Taehyung nods his head, thinking this is what’s made Yoongi so apprehensive lately. “I’m sure my parents haven’t found us. We moved so far away and it’s been years so don’t you think they’d have already made their move by now? Plus, normally we get an indication of some sorts. There’s always a sign.”

Yoongi breathes in anxiously, realising that his loud conversation with Namjoon might have drawn some unwanted predators. He has a bad feeling. “Still, be careful alright? You don’t know who they’ll send to try and find you again..more or less, who they’ve already sent. I don’t want to scare you but..please, be careful. I can’t help but remember how things used to be.”

Taehyung smiles softly. “Don’t worry, hyung. I’m safe now, nobody’s out to get me. Plus, I have you to protect me anyways.”

“Yeah, yeah, what good am I to you really?”

Even though Yoongi’s joking, he’s still deeply referring to the truth he hasn’t told Taehyung yet. The truth he still deserves to know.

The longer he waits, the worse it’s going to get but…he can’t seem to bring himself to ruin Taehyung’s life just yet, at this particular moment. He’s too happy seeing the other smile and laugh, almost recovering from his long-induced trauma.
He can’t ruin his life again. He can’t.

“You’re the best, and you know that,” Taehyung replies, smiling at the other in broad amusement.

Yoongi laughs to conceal his guilt. “Alright, alright.”

He feels like he’s lying and it’s killing him inside. Every time he says something to Tae, something that isn’t the truth so hence, everything, Yoongi feels as if his heart is shredding underneath his dishonesty. He feels like he’s suffocating, unable to focus on anything else but the impending doom that awaits him; the both of them really. It hurts to suppress the truth but it hurts to let the truth out as well. He’s stuck, and he can’t figure out what is better; what is more important?

He had been sure after his talk with Hoseok that he would tell Taehyung, for better or for worse, but upon seeing the other’s drastic positive change in mood, he can’t help but reconsider. His primary goal is to have Taehyung be happy again, and now that’s it’s finally happening, how could he rip that away? Isn’t this happiness more important than the truth?

Does he deserve to know something that will only end up hurting him more?

Yoongi sighs, rubbing his face tiredly before looking up at Taehyung again, slightly illuminated in the shadows. He’s still standing, going to sit down as well, and his face seems to be slightly pink, perhaps from the cold. The light from the window catches his skin and Yoongi’s gaze travels his body, something unusual sticking out to him.

“Did you get stung by a bee?” Yoongi asks, confused but slightly concerned, verbally motioning for Taehyung to come closer. Tae’s expression widens, and he moves hesitantly backward, covering his neck with one of his hands in reflex.

“What do you mean?”

His voice wavers with a sense of nervousness, unintentionally giving his façade of cluelessness away.

“Don’t play dumb I saw you cover that up. What is it, is it a—” Yoongi’s eyes grow wide,
immensely wide, and he gasps loudly at the sudden realisation. “You have a hickey!” He declares in surprise, a smile making its way to his face. His smile gets bigger, a slight tease to his voice. “You have two hickeys!”

Taehyung attempts to run off and avoid the confrontation but gets stopped by Yoongi’s racing form, practically running to grab his shoulders and take a closer inspection. He holds onto Taehyung’s sweater, tilting his neck to the side so it catches the light again and stares at the two red bruises on his skin. They appear vibrant against his regular golden shade, and Yoongi almost yells in excitement at the indication.

“You got laid? And you didn’t tell me?” Yoongi states in disbelief, conjuring up various assumptions and conclusions that may not be entirely accurate.

“Okay I did not get laid, hyung, and they’re not—”

“They’re totally hickeys don’t even try to deny it,” Yoongi interrupts, smiling as Taehyung blushes, inevitably defeated.

“Alright, you got me, they’re hickeys, but don’t make a big deal out of it okay, it really isn’t that huge of a deal. Let’s just handle this like adults and drop the subject.”

Yoongi’s curiosity peaks, disregarding everything Taehyung had said.“By who? Don’t tell me it’s—”

“I’m not telling you who it was so don’t even try.”

Yoongi gives a playful smirk. “Okay but we all know who it is that did it.”

“No, we don’t,” Taehyung states stubbornly, pretending to be oblivious. “We absolutely do not.”

“It was Jeongguk.”

Taehyung glares at him, a sharp, indirect, sightless stare. “You don’t know who did it because I didn’t confirm anything.”
“And we don’t know who fucked up the DVD player, but let’s be real, it was Hobi.”

“Yeah you’re right it was definitely him,” Taehyung admits off-handedly, distracted by the initial conversation for only a second before drifting back to it. “But that’s irrelevant to our conversation, you aren’t going to know how I got them or who I got them from.”

“It was a hundred and ten percent Jeongguk and I can’t believe you didn’t tell me!”

“Okay, I didn’t say it was him, and I didn’t tell you because it just happened today!”

“Well you aren’t saying that it wasn’t him either.”

Taehyung stutters. “I-”

“Exactly! No denial means it’s true which therefore means you took the next step and you are fucking someone or someone is fucking you and holy-”

“There was no fucking,” Taehyung states clearly, drawing his hand up defensively. Yoongi smirks at the other’s inadvertent confirmation, though ready to plummet Jeongguk for even touching Tae, still glad that he had been comfortable with such a thing regardless. It is a huge step of progress, that’s for sure. “And the person who did give them is not comfortable coming out nor speaking of what happened yet, so I’d appreciate it if you didn’t pry.”

Yoongi puts his hands up in surrender, apologising curtly. “Alright, fair enough, though, can we agree that we all know who it was.”

“Hyung! What did I just say?”

“You’re right, you’re right, I’m sorry.” Yoongi smiles, unable to stop himself from embracing Taehyung tightly. He squeezes him maybe a little bit too firmly, refraining from joking or teasing him any further because this is pretty big for him. “I’m honestly happy for you,” he mutters softly, ruffling his hair in a brotherly way. Taehyung scrunches his nose and whines at Yoongi to stop, his head turning into a mop of ashy tangles. Yoongi’s always wanted him to experience this sort of thing and now that he has, it’s sort of a dream come true.
Precisely why he can’t muster up the courage to tell Taehyung the truth right now. Not yet.

“Did it feel good?” Yoongi asks, more playful than anything, nudging the other’s arm teasingly.

Taehyung flushes, the slight stammer and rush of embarrassment to his cheeks confirming it all in itself.

“What was it like? What happened? Did you guys go far? How far did you guys go?”

“Hyung!” Taehyung protests shyly, his face now easily three shades redder than before. “Boundaries, I’m telling you, you’re crossing some boundaries.”

“Come on, this is exciting, tell me a little bit of what happened at least.”

Taehyung sighs, defeated, remembering the events that had taken place. He turns redder. “Well, we kissed.”

“I got that part.”

“We kissed..a lot..”

“I understand, Tae.”

Taehyung hides his face in his hands, smiling in definite embarrassment. His hair covers most of his expression, but Yoongi can still tell how happy Taehyung feels reliving the moment. “And..you know..I did some…things.”

Yoongi raises an eyebrow. “Things?”

“It wasn’t sex!” Taehyung exclaims in a defensive outburst, his expression flustered and bashful. Yoongi laughs, accepting that as an honest answer.
“Okay, so if it wasn’t sex than what did you do?”

Taehyung hesitates, unsure if he can truly admit what he had done aloud. He feels embarrassed thinking it over again and even more embarrassed having to tell Yoongi about it.

“Come on, did you suck his dick or somethi-”

Taehyung cuts the other off by blocking his ears with his palms, putting up a childish barrier. “Lalalalala, I can’t hear you sorry! I guess you’ll never find out!”

Yoongi chokes in disbelief, not expecting his assumption be to true. “So you did suck his dick, wait you actually fucking did it!” He laughs in surprise, going to raise his voice for the whole neighbourhood to hear. “Did you hear that? Taehyung sucked a-”

“Yoongi! Shut up.”

Taehyung closes his eyes, which serves no purpose because he can’t see anyways but at least it visually cuts him off from Yoongi entirely. He continues to drown out the other’s accusations.

“Tae,” Yoongi starts, rolling his eyes at his behaviour. “Tae, stop being loud and listen.”

Taehyung shakes his head, continuing his audible refusal to tell Yoongi more.

“Okay, okay, I won’t ask anymore, you can stop.”

Taehyung stops abruptly, opening his eyes again only to see black. It’s weird but he does get a fragment of hope sometimes, the slightest expectation, that he’ll be able to see once he opens his eyes again. He knows that it’s completely impossible and he’s trying to get over it, but sometimes he relishes in that hopeful moment for too long, and he begins to feel sad.

“What I will tell you is that I was comfortable with it, despite everything that I could’ve associated it with, and I’m glad. This means I’m getting better, hyung.”
There’s a predominant happiness in his voice but also a lingering fear too.

“But there’s something bothering you still, isn’t there.”

It’s hard to hide things when you know each other so well.

“Well,” Taehyung starts, his eyes shining softly. “I’m afraid that I’ll start associating the things I do with Je—him, with what I already know. I like what we have too much and I’m just nervous if I’ll mess things up. I really don’t want to mess things up.”

Yoongi’s eyes soften. “You’re not going to mess things up, Tae. If anything, thinking that you’re going to will make you overthink things, which can lead to things actually being messed up in itself. Just take it easy, and remember, communication is key.”

“Okay Mr. IKnowAllAboutRelationships.”

“I’m being serious.”

Taehyung sighs. “I know, I know, and thank you for the advice, it is helpful and I appreciate it it’s just... I’ve kept a lot of things from him. He doesn’t know what’s happened to me and I don’t want him to. I don’t think I’d ever want him to.”

“He’s going to find out the truth one day, it’s bound to happen. And wouldn’t you rather it come from you?”

Hypocritical.

Taehyung thinks about it, realising that Yoongi has a point. “I mean, you’re right. And since he rooms with Jin it’s bound to slip eventually, but what if his opinion on me changes? What if he pities me, or acts too careful around me, or stops laughing with me like we used to once he finds out that things weren’t so easy for me before? Things aren’t easy for anyone and I don’t want to be the exception.”
“Does he really look like the type to pity someone?” Yoongi asks matter-of-factly. “I might not like the guy, but I do know he has a somewhat decent character. If he can’t be normal around you once knowing then that’s his problem more than yours.”

“You think he deserves to know the truth?” Taehyung asks honestly, a slight vulnerability in his voice.

Yoongi swallows thickly. “Everyone deserves to know the truth, Tae.”

Taehyung nods his head, assertive about one thing. Maybe it’s time for Jeongguk to know the truth. The full truth.

“Speaking of..finding out the truth,” Yoongi says hesitantly, conflicted between his idea to tell Taehyung what he needs to know or to just keep it to himself. “Did you ever find out what happened to your birth parents? Did you ever find out who they were..?”

The air gets darker and Taehyung shakes his head, finding his way to the couch to sit down. Yoongi follows him, trying not to say the wrong thing.

“No,” Taehyung exhales tiredly, not appearing sad or upset but rather..uninterested. He’s not defeated or lonely about it but indifferent, something Yoongi didn’t quite expect. He doesn’t seem to care. “And honestly, why would I? They never did anything for me and they probably never will. It’s better to move on this way.”

Of course, Taehyung’s missed his real mother. Sometimes, in his lowest moments, he wishes to have her by his side, comforting him, nurturing him like any real mother would. However, most of the time, Taehyung doesn’t think about her. He doesn’t because it’s hard to think about someone who doesn’t even know you like you want them to know you. It’s harder to move on when you have a sense of hope towards someone that doesn’t even think twice about what you might be doing. He wants to not care, and so by training himself to forget about her, he’s accomplished just that.

As for his father, his real father, he has no idea who he is. He holds less sentiment towards him because he feels like he has no connection to or with him. He doesn’t care though. He was probably a shit father to begin with.

Yoongi bites on his tongue. “I just figured you might be curious, but you’re right, it doesn’t matter. What matters is that you’re happy.”
Taehyung nods his head unsuspectingly, still debating if telling Jeongguk is the right decision. If he’s going to know the truth he’s going to have to know everything, no holding back, and Taehyung doesn’t know if either of them are ready for it.

He guesses they’ll just have to try.

Jeongguk looks at the screen intently, eyes glazed with some sort of focus, his notebook out as he takes various notes on the events playing on his laptop. He feels stupid. Quite frankly, he is stupid, because although someone like him, who’s never juggled the idea of boys liking boys before quite less him the one liking them, it’s weird that he knows so little about his own body.

He’s a guy yet why has he only discovered certain things and parts that are inside his body just today?

He sighs, rubbing his eyes tiredly as he exits the video he’s looking at, not really interested in everything that’s being shown to him. He was just getting around the idea that he might be bisexual because that’s something that made somewhat sense to him, but...watching gay porn has been nothing but a boring and awkward experience so far.

Does he not like men then? He’s thoroughly confused.

Despite this, he clicks on the next link, trying to educate—yes educate—himself on male pleasure and the different ways in which one can achieve it, specifically for their partner. After his day in the infirmary with Taehyung, he can’t help but notice how inexperienced he is when it comes to two guys having sex. Sure, he knows how it works with girls (at least he hopes so) but guys seem to have it much different. For starters, anal is a huge new concept for him.

He looks at the two guys on screen, everything severely exaggerated from the facial expressions to the voices, and tries to pay attention to what’s actually going on. He can’t really imagine doing something as intense as what the video portrays with Taehyung, the whole ordeal not really being his thing, and figures that maybe this wasn’t such a good idea after all.

He tries to pay attention to the video as best as he can but can’t find the strength too, eventually clicking off the tab with a pained expression. He rubs his face in his hands, exhausted to say the least, and blows out through his mouth, trying to come up with a solution to his predicament. Maybe
he just needs to find something more tame and less..hand-cuffy..

He browses through the page again, the vast collection of lewd thumbnails glowing on the screen only making him more uncomfortable. This isn’t his first time using the website so why did he decide today, of all times, to be shy?

This is normal. It’s the same thing he’s always done just..this time it’s with guys. Only.

He finds a video he might like and goes to click on it, inches away from pressing play when his door bursts open, the sceptical figure of Jin standing outside his doorway. Jeongguk practically feels his heart jump into his throat, cursing at himself for not locking his door (rookie mistake) before closing his laptop at a speed and force he never thought possible. Jin tilts his head to the side, a confused look on his face as he narrows his eyes.

Jeongguk clears his throat. “Uh..did you need something?”

Jin points at his computer, raising his eyebrows slightly. “Care to tell me what it was you were doing?”

Jeongguk sighs exasperatedly, staring at Jin for a couple seconds before rolling his eyes. There’s no point lying at this point. “Fine, you got me, I was watching porn. Have your laugh and then get out, believe it or not this was a learning experience.”

Jin can’t help but break out into laughter at his response, covering his mouth to hide his amusement but in retrospect only making it more obvious. “I’m sorry, it’s just.” he laughs some more, his eyes tearing up from the extent of the situation before clearing his throat, trying to compose himself as best as he can. “I was going to tell you I made dinner but if you’re busy I can come back at another time.” He starts laughing again, unable to breathe as he lowers his eyes to the ground, his laughter intensifying.

Jeongguk glares at him, throwing one of his pillows straight at Jin’s stomach, causing him to land on the floor and inevitably, laugh harder.

“That wasn’t very nice,” Jin says teasingly, tossing the pillow back at Jeongguk’s face.

“Maybe you should’ve knocked then.”
“I was going to but I didn’t think I would need to. It’s seven, I didn’t think you would deal with your urges now but I mean-”

“Hyung, could you shut up,” Jeongguk groans, hiding his face in his hands. “Respectfully,” he adds sarcastically.

“Alright, alright, I’ll take my leave and let you do whatever it is you have to do. But please, make sure to wash your hands when you’re done, I don’t want you contaminating the food.”

“Oh for fuck’s sake, that isn’t what I was going to do!”

“Really? So what, this was for research purposes?” Jin asks sarcastically, surprised when Jeongguk actually says yes.

“Yeah, it was! And it was a weird experience to say the least.”

“Oh, you’re being serious?” Jin says, bursting into more incredulous laughter. Jeongguk goes to throw another pillow but ends up knocking his notebook over in the process, allowing it to splatter itself among the floor for all to see.

Jin takes the book before Jeongguk can say anything, staring at it curiously before beginning to understand something. “Wait, you are being serious.”

“Yeah that’s what I’ve been saying! Now if you wouldn’t mind could you give it back I was-”

“Hold on, hold on,” Jin says, putting his hand up as he finishes reading the last of his notes. His eyes widen, surprise heavy in his voice. “You’re gay?”

Jeongguk pales, not having considered that this would lead to his eventual coming out. He knows that Jin would be supportive of it, of course he would, but he wasn’t ready to say anything about it yet. He doesn’t know what he is, and he doesn’t want anyone to know what he is anyways. He swallows, staring at Jin’s surprised expression for a couple seconds before looking away. “You should uh, you should leave.”
“Wait, Jeongguk, wait,” Jin says abruptly, his tone gentle and his expression sympathetic. He shuffles closer to where the other is sitting, taking in a deep breath. “I’m sorry..I took away your decision to tell me when you were more comfortable and I didn’t realise that this was something you weren’t ready to share. I shouldn’t have read it.”

“No Jin, it’s whatever, could you just,” Jeongguk stops himself with a sharp inhale, his hands shaking slightly. His heart pounds in his chest and it feels like the room just got a thousand degrees colder. “Could you just go?”

“It’s not whatever,” Jin says, shaking his head. “And I’m not going to leave you because this is something that is important. I want you to know that it’s okay to be so and that I’m here for you, no matter what.”

“I’m not gay, Jin!” Jeongguk exclaims loudly, catching the both of them by surprise. His outburst had been defensive and almost angry, a layer of hostility in his voice.

“Jeongguk-”

“I don’t know what I am,” he interrupts softly, looking up to stare at Jin’s face again, a sad look in his eyes. “I hate labels and I thought I was something but now I’m reconsidering everything and hell, I think I like girls still? I just don’t know, everything’s so confusing and society has all these expectations and I don’t know what they want from me! I don’t want people to know, I don’t want my friends to know..”

“You don’t need to know what you are,” Jin says calmly, getting up to sit on the bed as well. He rubs Jeongguk’s back gently, aware of his prominent flinch but rest assured when he doesn’t urge him to move or get off of him. “Not yet at least. And it’s okay to be confused. It’s okay to feel attracted to boys and it’s okay to not. It’s okay to feel attracted to girls and it’s okay to not. It’s okay to be attracted to both, and it’s okay to be attracted to neither, so don’t force yourself to view some things as normal and others as not normal when it comes to who you are and what your preferences are. You don’t have to tell us, and you don’t have to tell anyone, but just know that we will be there for you if you decide to.”

Jeongguk lowers his head, feeling more at ease, and he exhales loudly. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad to confide in someone. “I like this boy,” he starts, a small smile on his lips. “And he’s the most beautiful and incredible person I’ve ever met. I think I love him, hyung. Actually, I know I love him, but I don’t know how to love a guy. I don’t know the first thing about loving a guy so I’m confused.”
Jin smiles, wrapping Jeongguk into a comforting hug. “Liking a guy is like liking a girl, and I would know. It’s not about gender it’s about the person, and I think you love him because he’s him. Your feelings are raw and honest, and so it’s no different than when you fell in love with a girl.”

Jeongguk laughs softly. “I know, I know, emotionally I feel that way but..I don’t think it’s the same sexually.”

“Well, you’re right, things are a bit different in that sense but it’s not totally different,” Jin admits, resting his chin on top of the other’s head. “In fact, I’d say it’s more similar than you’d think.”

“I knew you were going to be supportive about it, hyung. I always knew you would be. I just couldn’t bear to tell anyone because I didn’t know what I was going through and I wanted to figure it out. I didn’t want others to have me all figured out before I could do it myself. It’s not like I didn’t trust you, I want you to know that I do trust you and I do feel safe around you, it’s just..”

“Don’t worry, I understand,” Jin interrupts. “You don’t need to justify yourself for wanting to keep this a secret because this is your secret, and nobody has the right to know it unless you’re okay with it. Even if you know we’ll be supportive, it doesn’t mean this still isn’t a big realisation and change for you, so never think you owe anyone the right to know this until you’re ready and comfortable to.”

Jeongguk nods his head, lifting his head up and looking at Jin’s face gratefully, embracing him in a full, thankful hug. Jin smiles and hugs him back, squeezing him tightly before pulling away to rustle his hair. He flicks his forehead softly and Jeongguk tilts his head curiously.

“Don’t be so hard on yourself,” Jin says quietly. “You’re always hard on yourself.”

Jeongguk sighs. “I know. Thank you for being understanding.”

“Hey, of course. Honestly, if you have any questions just let me know. I know a thing or two about dating, both male and female, and I wouldn’t mind helping you out.”

“Seriously?”
“Do I look like I’m kidding?”

“Okay I have one question then,” Jeongguk admits hesitantly. “And you have to promise not to laugh. You can’t laugh!”

“I won’t!”

“Swear it!”

“I swear I won’t laugh,” Jin promises with a smile, happy to help the other with whatever.

“Then..why is gay porn so awkward?”

Jin presses his lips together, willing himself not to laugh because he promised he wouldn’t but Jeongguk can identify his expression almost immediately.

“I told you not to laugh!”

“I know, I know, I’m not. Give me a minute.” Jin wills his smile to die down and he looks at Jeongguk seriously, desperately trying to subdue his laughter. “Okay, so, first, maybe it’s awkward to you because personally I don’t find anything awkward about it.”

“Jin, I did not need to know that.”

“Right, however,” Jin responds quickly. “Maybe it’s awkward for you because I don’t know, this is your first time watching it? It’s different, it’s quite strange at first and it’s kind of intense. Additionally, the type of porn you watch doesn’t identify your sexuality so you don’t have to like it in order to like guys.”

“Okay, maybe I should rephrase this then,” Jeongguk sighs, searching his mind for the right words but the right words that won’t make this situation awkward. The last thing he wants is a ‘birds and the bees talk’ from his overbearingy kind roommate. “I don’t really find it that appealing.”
Jin nods his head. “Which is fine. Now, can I ask why you were watching it in the first place? If it wasn’t for… the intended use after all.”

“Research, remember?” Jeongguk re-states, scratching the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Yes, but why?”

Jeongguk sighs, playing with the edges of his computer nervously. “For that guy I like. I don’t exactly know how to… make him feel good in other ways, like sex-wise, so I was trying to learn how. It wasn’t that great of an experience though.”

Jin nods his head, thinking that the gesture was sweet in a weird way. “Well, you know, you could just ask.”

“Ask you?!”

“Yeah, is it that hard to believe that I have some insight on the matter?”

“Oh, that’s not the problem, I know you have insight on the matter. Very much insight,” Jeongguk rambles. “God, I hear you and Namjoon almost every night you’d think he lives here too. No, I wouldn’t plan on asking you because that’s even more awkward.”

“Alright, firstly, Joon and I don’t have sex that much don’t be so melodramatic and secondly, what do you mean awkward? I am wise, Kookie. Value your resources.”

“See, the way you just called me Kookie right then is extremely awkward when we’re talking about sex.”

“I suddenly see your point.”

“My question is really why I find gay porn so awkward if I find the things I do with this guy the exact opposite.”
“And as I said, porn doesn’t define your sexuality.”

“But-

“You don’t have to force yourself to like it just because the things you do with this guy are things you also like,” Jin interrupts. “You like the things you do with him because it’s *him*, not necessarily because he’s a guy. You find *him* attractive, not all the other guys you see on the website. You’re attracted to this guy and nobody else right now, which means if you want to educate yourself, you need to imagine that *he’s* the one you’re doing things to.”

Jeongguk thinks about it over a bit, things seemingly making sense. “You’re on to something.”

“No, I’m right and it’s taking you forever to realise it. Look at the situation. You find the things you do with this guy great because it’s with him and no one else. Therefore, it’s only natural that these other superficial scenes with other guys wouldn’t stimulate you.”

“Okay please never say ‘stimulate’ in a sentence again, especially if it’s referring to me.”

“Noted, but still, I rest my case.”

Jeongguk nods his head. “I think you’re right. But then, how am I supposed to educate myself on the matter when everything looks so..unappealing?”

“Well, you think of him instead of whoever you see on your screen. You think of yourself and him, together, but honestly advising you how to masturbate right now isn’t something I thought I’d be doing in my life.”

“This isn’t about that!”

“Yeah but I’m telling you, it’ll be hard *not* to do so if you’re imagining him in that situation.”

“Can you please stop hinting at your personal sexual life,” Jeongguk says, grimacing as he tries not to think about it too much.
“Okay, okay,” Jin says, putting his hands up defensively. “I just thought I’d say.”

Jeongguk reopens his computer, clearing the tabs and shuddering at the lasting images in his mind before turning back to Jin. “Thank you. Not only for the advice but for showing me that coming out isn’t such a terrible thing after all. I don’t know what I’d label myself as, and honestly, I don’t really want to label myself as anything, but my biggest fear was that people would assume things about me and identify me before I could identify myself. But thankfully, you helped me understand who I am now without jumping to your own conclusions, and that was relieving.”

“Of course, Kookie. That’s what roommates are for. Especially roommate’s like me. In this house, we’re family.”

Jeongguk smiles, fiddling with his computer again, feeling as though a weight has been lifted off his shoulder.

“And, whenever you decide to tell me who this amazing, beautiful, and incredible person is, I’ll be more than happy to support you,” Jin says with an uplifting smile, patting the other on the shoulder a couple of times before getting up.

Jeongguk smiles, looking down at his wrists before lifting his head up, a bright smile on his face. “It’s Taehyung.”

And the confession only made his smile a little brighter.

Chapter End Notes

hiya it’s been awhile and probably the longest i’ve ever gone without an update but to be honest it’s a miracle i even finished this chapter. i love this story so much, dont get me wrong, and i want nothing more than u guys to finally read what i have planned but man,, finding motivation IS SO HARD. I hated everything in relation to this story so much and I dreaded even looking over what I had already written. I wrote the first part of this chapter almost two months ago and it took me until last thursday to even
finish...then i procrastinated another couple days proof reading because re-reading my work honestly just made me feel so sad and frustrated.

i really wanna keep writing this story but it's gotten a little stressful and i hate knowing i'm letting ppl down or treating u guys badly. i've always been shitty at updates but this time it's because i wasn't trying,, and normally i do try to post things as quickly as i can which makes this update so disappointing and quite honestly, pathetic.

nonetheless i'm so glad it's finally done and i thank u guys for all the support in the meantime. i've met such amazing people through my dm's and so many people that i'm glad to call my friends now. ur all so sweet and imaginative and overall, just incredible people, so thank u so so much.

happy reading!
Taehyung awakes from his first nightmare in a while at four thirty in the morning. He’s breathing heavily, apprehensive and alert, his body still trained for something that should no longer frighten him. Goosebumps stand out on his skin despite him feeling hot underneath the blankets, almost suffocating in heat, and it takes him a few seconds to understand where he is. He associates the darkness with being awake instead of sleep as he hears his more realistic surroundings, the sound of the heater rumbling against the walls and his own, now slower and more even, breathing. He focuses on the wind gasping for breath outside, whirling by his window in a wild attempt to break inside, and the sound of a clock ticking silently on his bedside, counting down the seconds until the alarm should go off. He feels better knowing that he’s awake, out of the reach of those arms and hands and disgusting touches, no longer near whatever will harm him in his memories. He sighs audibly, lying back down on his pillow to try and ease his startled nerves, humming to stop himself from falling asleep again.

He doesn’t want to go back there quite yet.

The sky turns from black to a deep blue, the inklings of sunshine grasping for freedom as the night slowly begins to wash away. Taehyung can’t see it and he can’t necessarily feel it either, but this time of day has always comforted him. The night is too stark at times and it leaves too much time for his memories to linger and consume. The day, however, is too bright and noisy, overwhelmed with movement and pressure and judgemental people that can be entirely exhausting most of the time. The
bridge between dusk and dawn is the most calming time to be awake, where the night is saying its goodbye and the day is saying its hello, everything tranquil and slow as light floods the stars in a slow and gradual way. It comforts Tae when he has these nightmares because it reminds him that he’s safe. There is no commotion to stir him and no time for the monsters to come back, just peace and safety, a nice silence after an unconscious battle between his fears and reality.

He wipes his forehead, a burning palm cooled by the coldness of his face and he begins to laugh through his humming. He breathes in the cosy air, surrounded by warmth and darkness, and finds relief in knowing that he’s alive. He sits up a little more upright, elbows perched against the soft mattress and he searches for his phone with his left hand. He finds the corner of it, brushing it closer off the bedside table with his finger and hears it plop against the covers, illuminating the ceiling with a glowing blue light. Taehyung picks up the device, fingers shaking despite internally being at ease and plugs in the attached earphones, lowering the volume as his aid begins to talk to him and guide him through the home screen. He’s used to how his phone is formatted now, not really needing the aid but more so keeping it there in case he makes a mistake or forgets where something is. He searches through his texts, the voice reading each one aloud, also announcing his battery in the process.

100%.

Good, it had been charging.

The time reads forty-five minutes past four now, alerting Taehyung that it’s far too early to be doing anything right now. However, he decides that being awake is better than being asleep, so he finds comfort in the voice that’s communicating to him and his fingers against the screen. He removes his left hand temporarily, searching his bedside for his braille display, a handy (and wireless) tool that helps him text others without having to go through the painfully slow process of siri announcing each letter back to him (it’s easier on a computer). He then proceeds to reply to his messages, Jimin’s “hey, did your nosebleed go away for good?” and Sammy’s “your secret is safe with me..”

Whatever that means.

Taehyung hovers over Jeongguk’s number, not having any reason to text him or quite frankly call him other than the fact that he wants to talk to him. Honestly, he wants to hear his voice, although Siri being great company for now, not exactly human enough to ease all his worries.

He finds it selfish though for him to interrupt Jeongguk’s sleep just because he himself doesn’t want to. Nobody wants to be woken up at five in the morning, no matter who it is or what it’s for, and he thinks he’d feel worse knowing he woke the other up for no reason at all.
Taehyung smiles, exiting the app to put on some music because that always did seem to make him feel better. Lofi at dawn is also quite a nice vibe regardless of what’s happening, and it does distract him a little on his impulsive need to call Jeongguk at the literal brink of dawn.

Piano and rain fill his ears, making the black warp a little and become softer, not so jarring and empty as it usually is. The sky becomes less dark, duller and defined in a way, the clouds starting to take shape as the night falls down slowly and Taehyung finds his breath comforting. Nightmares are inevitable, and he’s used to them, however, the feeling they leave him with, that chill in his spine and bitterness in his mouth, those are things he’s never been able to get accustomed to. He knows he’ll have them, but it’s equally as painful and uncomfortable each time they arrive because no amount of preparing can brace himself for the dreams and their aftermath. It’s alarmingly vivid, and despite knowing what they’ll describe and what they’ll show, the feeling never weakens itself.

His phone chimes and the voice announces that he’s received a text message. Who would be texting him at this hour, he doesn’t know, but his questions are answered when Siri reads aloud the name soon after.

Taehyung drops his phone. He lets it reside on the covers, just above his knees and resting slightly on his legs through the sheets as his heart races and pounds. He feels butterflies in his stomach, a warmth in his chest and a feeling of surprise fill his veins until it reaches his fingertips.

“Hey, I know it’s early but when you’re up can we meet up before school? I want to talk to you about something and I don’t want it to wait until music.”

Jeongguk sent this message at 04:52, thirty-three seconds ago.

Taehyung nods at the recap of Siri’s words, his doubts being confirmed and realised. He picks his phone back up, both hesitant and eager to respond, happy that the other is awake but also concerned that he is awake at the same time. He shakes his head, thinking of something to say before typing something quickly on his wireless display, fingers shaking as he debates to press send.

“Siri, read back my message to me please.”

His voice is quiet and slightly hoarse, cutting through the peaceful silence momentarily.

yeah of course, is everything okay? I have something to tell you as well.
Taehyung cringes at his own words, realising that he’s never been the best at texting because he always overthinks everything he types. Nonetheless he sends the message, waiting nervously for the other to respond.

A minute later he gets another chime, this time followed by two others. The voice reads it to him clearly.

yeah, yeah, everything’s fine don’t worry, everything’s great actually.

What about you? What’s your mysterious news? Something good I hope.

also,, what are you doing still up? do you even sleep?

Taehyung smiles widely, an excitement bubbling in his chest and a happiness surrounding him as he conjures up a reply. He never thought that he’d be texting someone at this hour, let alone his boyfriend.

hypocritical for you to say, what are you doing up? and my news is fine, well it’s not really but I think you’ll appreciate me telling you about it. It’s something I want you to know.

His phone is silent for a bit, then a ding.

haha I go to sleep early so I can run in the mornings. I normally go at six but it’s supposed to be snowing later and I didn’t want to run in it.

Now I’m really curious on what you have to say.

Another ding.

Also, you didn’t answer my question.

Taehyung frowns. What question?
The chime comes in almost immediately, startling him slightly.

**Why’re you awake?**

Taehyung reflects over it, wondering if he should tell the truth or not. He doesn’t really want to but since he’s decided to tell Jeongguk about his past anyways he figures he shouldn’t lie about anything now. He’s ready to tell him, and he doesn’t want to hide anything anymore.

**Nightmare. Woke up twenty minutes ago.**

Taehyung can sense the gears turning in Jeongguk’s head, and he’s worried if the other will get either too concerned or too curious. Perhaps both.

He’s surprised, needless to say, when he doesn’t get a text but a loud abrupt ring from his phone, resonating around the room and through his earbuds harshly. He blinks, the sudden call startling the fuck out of him as he turns off his ringer, not expecting such a crisp noise to cut through the air. The voice reads out the description to him, slowly and robotically of course because it’s not like she has emotion that can replicate how intensely he’s freaking out right now and he swallows.

He accepts the call, palms sweaty as he hears his phone connect to the other line, faint breaths and the sound of birds now audible in his earbuds.

“Tae?” Jeongguk asks quietly. His voice is also hoarse but denser, his speech a little heavy and out of breath.

Right, he’s running.

“Jeongguk, what-what are you doing calling me at this hour? People are sleeping!” Taehyung whispers exasperatedly, trying to keep his voice as quiet as possible.

“I know, I know, I just,” he pauses thoughtfully, and Taehyung can sense him smiling from the other side, perhaps biting his lip. “I wanted to hear your voice.”

Taehyung feels himself blush, the warmth of the covers not seeming to help his cheeks calm down.
“Of course you’d say something like that.”

“Mhm, I’m quite romantic, aren’t I?” Jeongguk teases, his breaths a little less breathless than before. “Now, are you okay?”

“You called to ask me if I was okay when you could’ve simply texted?” Taehyung asks, raising an eyebrow.

“No, I called so that I could make sure you wouldn’t be lying when you’d tell me you’re fine. Now I can hear it in your voice. It’s more authentic.”

Taehyung laughs softly. “Well, I am fine, so I wouldn’t be lying anyways.”

“You’re sure?”

Taehyung sighs audibly, smiling to himself. “I’m sure. But thank you for calling, it’s nice to hear your voice.”

He hears Jeongguk let out a breathy laugh. “Well, since we’re both up, do you want to talk now?”

Taehyung hesitates. “Over the phone? I don’t think-”

“No of course not over the phone dummy, you think I would text you that message if I didn’t want to talk in person? No I meant, do you want to meet up now and..talk.” Jeongguk realises how strange his suggestion is only after he suggests it but it’s too late to take it back.

Taehyung’s mind immediately becomes more alert and he suddenly feels like he’s full of energy. “I mean yeah but where? Don’t you live at Jin’s? How are you going to get from there to here?”

“Didn’t I say I was running?” Jeongguk says playfully.

“No, you’re not gonna run here Jeongguk are you insane—”
“Relax, relax, I never said I was gonna run here now.”

Taehyung exhales in relief, hardly believing him.

“And,” Jeongguk continues, some sort of amusement in his voice. “It’s because I’m already here.”

Taehyung blanks, not knowing what to say. “Please tell me you’re joking.”

“Now, I don’t know your address but I’m pretty sure you know the park between the apartment complex and the train and I’m there so, are you still up for talking?”

Taehyung lets out a shocked breath.

“Am I supposed to take that as a yes, or..?” Jeongguk asks with a smile, checking his watch for the time.

Taehyung shakes out of his haze, rustling to untangle himself from the bedsheets. “Wait, wait, don’t move and just—how do you even know I live near the park?”

“I room with Jin, Tae. But it’s a complete coincidence that I happen to run this route every morning.”

“Right,” Taehyung says curtly, more to himself than to Jeongguk. “Okay, but this may take a while, I don’t want to wake up Yoongi and I forgot where I put my coat so-"

“I’ll let you borrow mine,” Jeongguk interrupts. “It’s not too cold right now despite the snow falling in an hour so if you can’t find it..you can just use mine.”

“Jeongguk, then you’re going to be cold where’s the logic in that? Just let me-”

“Tae, I’ll be fine. I’m running, I’m too sweaty to put it on anyways. Plus, aren’t boyfriends supposed to lend their partners their jackets?”
The way he said ‘partners’ makes Taehyung swallows sharply, a shiver crawling up his back.
“Alright fine, fine. Don’t hang up though! I’m not about to get lost, in the park of all places, without a jacket at this hour.”

“Fair enough, I didn’t plan on hanging up anyways.”

Taehyung smiles again, feeling afloat.

He’s ready to tell Jeongguk, and he hopes, in all honesty, that Jeongguk’s ready to hear what he has to say.

Taehyung repeats his location again, a disgruntled Jeongguk replying saying that he doesn’t see him regardless of what he’s saying. Taehyung sighs, letting his phone clarify where he is, again, so that the other can realise that he is indeed where he says he is but Jeongguk shakes his head.

“I’m telling you, I am in front of the fountain and I don’t…” Jeongguk pauses, squinting his eyes and then widening them as he sees an approaching figure. “Wait nevermind I see you…sorry.”

Taehyung laughs to himself, rubbing his hands together because it’s freezing despite Jeongguk stating otherwise. Taehyung thinks that the other must not think so because he had been running, which makes him really wish he had found his coat to begin with. He finds himself even more confused, however, that the other would be running at this hour in the first place.

He hears heavy breaths coming towards him, rushed footsteps becoming louder and louder as Taehyung finally retracts his white stick, putting it back in his pocket. In his haste he had forgotten to put on sunglasses, mainly because he’s lost so many pairs already that his collection is severely lacking, and even if he had remembered to put some on he probably wouldn’t have been able to find where they were. He doesn’t quite mind though because he’s used to not wearing them around Jeongguk, and since it’s so early and so cold out, he doubts many people will be around to see him anyways.

He suddenly feels hands around his waist, pulling him closer into what he identifies as a chest. He knows it’s Jeongguk by his scent and warmth, by his gentle touch against his neck and back and from the way he holds him so securely. Taehyung sighs happily, burying his head in the other’s shirt and allowing himself to be at ease. Jeongguk kisses the top of his head.
“That would’ve been really awkward if I turned out to be someone else,” Jeongguk says after a while, laughing as Taehyung nudges him in the shoulder.

“I would’ve known if it was someone else, you think I’d hug a random stranger?”

Jeongguk smiles. “Nope, that would be highly unlikely.”

He leans down to kiss him, a strong breeze whistling through their clothes. Taehyung shivers.

“Right, my coat, you must’ve been cold I’m sorry,” Jeongguk says softly, wrapping the other’s body with a jacket that’s way too oversized for him. He smiles at Taehyung’s slightly baggy form.

“Yeah I was because someone said it wasn’t that cold but clearly-”

“Yes, yes, I know it’s colder than I said but look, don’t you feel warmer?”

Taehyung crosses his arms, feeling an immense change in temperature but not wanting to give the other the satisfaction of admitting it. “Your shoulders are wide.”

Jeongguk laughs. “I’ll take that as a yes.” He rubs Taehyung’s shoulders a bit, gradually warming him up.

“And you’re tall…”

“Which means it’ll cover more of your body,” Jeongguk retorts logically, rolling his eyes as he observes the other’s pouting expression. He kisses his cheek softly, rubbing the back of his neck endearingly. “Come on, let’s sit somewhere to talk.”

Taehyung nods his head, going to pull his white stick back out from his pocket when Jeongguk catches his hand, intertwining it with his own. Taehyung faces the floor, blushing slightly yet keeping his hand in the other’s, the warmth from his fingers making his own feel a little less frozen.
They walk for a few minutes, the breeze not affecting Taehyung as it had been before now that he has this oversized barrier protecting him. He can feel an icy sensation on his nose, the rest of his face slightly illuminated by the rising sun, providing warmth to his forehead and cheeks. Jeongguk guides him slowly, not dragging him but walking peacefully by his side, their hands connected and safe within each others.

The sky changes from its deep blue, becoming a soft lavender, accentuated by glowing oranges and pinks, the horizon a stripe of golden light across the buildings and trees. Jeongguk’s face becomes painted with amber, a gentle ember that spreads across one half of his face, brightening his brown eyes until they appear clear and almost sparkling. Taehyung can imagine how beautiful he is, he can picture it in his head without physically seeing him. He can picture his brown hair and how it turns golden in the sun, how his skin shines or blushes every time he gets embarrassed. He doesn’t need to see it to realise it’s there, and he doesn’t need to see him to confirm that he is indeed, beautiful.

Jeongguk stops, squeezing Taehyung’s hand to notify they’ve reached wherever it is they planned to go. Jeongguk guides him to a wooden bench, helping him sit down before sitting down himself, brushing the locks of ashy hair from the other’s face every time the wind carries it over his eyes.

The ashy blond compliments the grey.

“So..do you want to go first?” Jeongguk asks Taehyung hesitantly, more than curious to know what it is he’s going to say.

Taehyung shakes his head. “No, you go first.”

Jeongguk nods, taking in a deep breath before speaking. “Okay so, I came out to Jin,” he starts wearily, smiling when Taehyung’s face immediately lights up. He continues on with more confidence. “Which was a little rough at first but wow, he’s great at understanding people, which isn’t too surprising to be honest. He’s always been supportive. I’m not quite sure what I am but he did help me understand a few things, and why I have feelings for you. I also told him that we’re together, and it wasn’t as bad as I imagined it would be. I feel more comfortable with others knowing now, he helped me realise that, so..what I’m really trying to say is..that, well we don’t need to continue hiding our relationship.”

Taehyung smiles, resting his head against Jeongguk’s shoulder, the clouds drifting by in a sky of lavender and pink. The sun rests solemnly behind the buildings, creeping up on them and washing the city in a haze between day and night. The wind calms down for a brief moment.

“I’m proud of you,” Taehyung says quietly, still wearing a bright expression. “I’m glad you were
able to do that, it’s not easy and it’s kind of terrifying not going to lie.”

Jeongguk laughs. “Yeah I think my heart dropped into my stomach.”

“But you were able to do it, and honestly it makes me happy to know that you did. You must feel so relieved.”

Jeongguk kisses his cheek again, playing with a strand of his hair idly. “I was. And well, I couldn’t have done it without you. You helped me come to terms with it. Remembering you helped me say what I needed to say.”

“I did nothing,” Taehyung replies, waving his hand out dramatically. “That was all you.”

Jeongguk clears his throat, watching the trees begin to sway again, the leaves catching fragments of light every so often. “Now, what was it that you wanted to tell me?”

Taehyung’s expression becomes a little less bright, not significantly so, but enough to make Jeongguk notice. He puts his hands back down on the bench, turning towards Jeongguk hesitantly with furrowed eyebrows, trying to make sure he’s going in the right direction. He sighs, eyes staring emptily at the corner of his face.

“It’s not good, is it?” Jeongguk asks softly, hoping that his suspicions are wrong. Taehyung presses his lips together.

“Well, it’s not great,” Taehyung admits, an almost pitiful smile on his face. “But before I say what I’m going to say…you have to promise me something.”

Jeongguk nods his head. “Anything.”

“I want you to promise me that you won’t treat me any differently or look at me any differently once I tell you this. I don’t want you to.”

Jeongguk takes a minute to understand what he’s saying before nodding his head thoughtfully. “Okay, I promise, Tae.”
Taehyung lets out a breath, unsure where to begin. He thinks he’s ready for this, well as ready as he’ll ever be. He’ll never be fully ready for this, but he thinks he’s in a place now in which he can almost be so. He can’t keep stalling it and he can’t keep being afraid. He clears his throat. “So, I told you that I was adopted but I left some things out...a lot of things out honestly, and the truth isn’t as pretty as I want it to be,” he pauses, searching for the right words to say. “Let me start from the beginning. My mom and dad abandoned me as a baby, I was put in an orphanage and I stayed there for four years. It wasn’t nice but it wasn’t bad. I was fed, people took care of me, raised me in a way. I made some friends but I was really quiet as a kid so I could never maintain them. I think I managed to make one close friend at the time, I don’t remember her that well because it’s been so long but I know she existed at the least. She ended up getting adopted a few months before me though.” He intakes a breath, giving Jeongguk a chance to respond in case he wants to. Jeongguk remains silent, listening intently while nodding his head every few moments. There’s a painful expression on his face that he tries to shake off. “And well, I got adopted. It was a dream come true for me. I hated the beds at the orphanage, I swear they were like rocks and I was kind of a cry baby. It was because I hated being alone.” Taehyung laughs, remembering something despite it being so long ago. He doesn’t remember direct experiences but more so feelings and blurry, fragmented images. “My new family appeared nice at first. I remember them smiling a lot when they were signing papers and patting my head. Then they were taking me to my new home and things were really nice...” Taehyung feels some sort of sadness brewing in his gut. “They were nice to me. They cooked me good food and I had such a nice bed to sleep on. I went to a good pre-school and they seemed to like talking to me. They could get aggressive to each other at times, and sometimes my step-father would raise his voice at my step-mom. I could handle that though...that was bearable.”

Jeongguk stares at Taehyung worriedly as he goes silent. “And then?”

Taehyung rubs his face with his hands, hating to relive the beginning of the abuse. “Then I turned five. My step-parents wouldn’t talk to each other and so we ate each dinner in silence. He would get home late and so would she, they weren’t really around to take care of me so I handled things, for the most part, on my own. If they were talking it would lead to an argument and then more yelling so I tried to spend most of my time away from them, to not make things worse. I remember my step-father getting angry one day, as per usual, but something about it was different. He had so much rage in his eyes I thought—I thought he was going to kill someone or break something or both...I was terrified. He hit my step-mother. Twice. Once with his hand the other with a bottle. She cried and ran upstairs so I went to go see her. I was scared because I’d never seen him be violent before, just aggressive with his words.” He winces. “She looked at me with so much frustration and sadness. She told me that this was my fault, and that she should’ve never taken me in. She said that my step-father was angry because of me and that he’s hurting her because of me. I was blamed for everything and I couldn’t even begin to deny it...I believed it and so I couldn’t deny it...After that, the communication got worse. My step-father became a drunk and soon bills began piling up. The police station wouldn’t fire him though. He had formed a friendship with them and a lot of the cops were drunks at that time too so it didn’t entirely matter. My step-mother would always scold me, she liked yelling at me when my step-father wasn’t around because when he was around she would be the one getting yelled at. I took it because I thought it would make her feel better, that I would finally be useful to her and help her instead of hurting her, like she said.”
“But you weren’t—”

“Sh, sh, Jeongguk I know,” Taehyung interrupts reassuringly. He doesn’t know if Jeongguk can handle the rest of the story. “I know now, I’m learning to know. Back then, it was a little different, but I promise you, things are becoming okay.” He wishes he could comfort him more but he can’t go off topic. It’s too hard to stop now and relive what he’s already started with no positive outcome. He takes a deep breath in to continue the story. “She grew to resent me and I grew to resent her. My step-father brought her pain and apparently, I was the cause of it, so why did they adopt me. Why? I asked myself that every night and every day I wondered if things would magically resolve themselves. I prayed that they would,” he trails off a little before resuming. “On my sixth birthday I received my first hit. My step-father was drunk, not really a surprise, and my step-mother wasn’t home so he took it out on me. He found it easier to hurt me because I didn’t fight back as much. I was smaller, weaker, and I knew that if this would relieve his stress then I could handle it. I could be his punching bag because after all, he adopted me. He saved me from being alone, so how could I be mad at him? I must’ve deserved it. He liked hitting me more than he liked hitting my step-mom. He liked being in control. A couple months after that he started establishing rules. Always be on time, no talking back, no help, no crying, no escaping, no snitching, and—of course no freedom.” He recites them perfectly and yet painfully, the commands still second nature to him despite it being so long. “He did this so I couldn’t run away. He did it so I’d feel guilty if I did. He wanted to make sure I stayed, not because he loved me but because he loved hitting me. He imprisoned me by making me believe that I needed him, for whatever reason, and that I depended on him. He manipulated me and it worked..”

Taehyung feels Jeongguk’s change in mood, and he’s worried if this was such a good idea after all. He can sense his sadness and despair, and it hurts him because he didn’t want Jeongguk to be hurt by this. Nonetheless, he continues. “My step-mother would only watch. She was glad that she was no longer the one getting hit and their communication improved. My step-father still hated her though..when I was around seven, after a year of consistent abuse, a teacher called me aside. They said they were worried about me, that I looked as though I were in pain and that I wouldn’t socialise with the other kids. He asked if everything was alright at home and I said yes, because I was not allowed to snitch. The teacher called social services regardless, I guess it’s their job to do so and maybe he had found some sort of evidence but as far as I was concerned, I never said anything. The school had to call in my step-parents and of course they reassured that everything was fine. They said I was just really clumsy and reckless, but they said they were going to try and take care of it. During that meeting, they kissed me on the forehead, and it was the first piece of affection they had given me in two years.” Taehyung averts his eyes to the floor, so much frustration bubbling up in his chest. He hates to admit that that piece of affection had meant the world to him despite how badly they treated him. “That was the thing…they were such great liars. They were so good at pretending and lying and smiling. God, I hated their smiles. It hurt because if they could pretend so well to be great parents that must’ve meant that they were capable of being so. They just weren’t able to be so with me. Both of them were extremely mad at me once I came home. They said I snitched and I promised them I didn’t but they didn’t believe me. I learnt, for the first time, what it was like to break one of our established rules..” he pauses to recollect his breath, another wince appearing on his face. Jeongguk holds onto his hand tightly, silent to show his respect but comforting enough to reassure him. Taehyung continues. “I didn’t go to school for the next few days. I came back a week later and the scarring hadn’t gone down. I said I had tripped on some barbwire and people believed me because my step-parents’ lies had been so convincing. It hurt but I couldn’t call out for help. I couldn’t at the risk of it not working. Then I’d be really dead. My step-mother began hitting me when my step-father wasn’t around, and soon, I became accustomed to it. She was the worst.I know I should’ve
hated him more, because he hit her and he hit me and he started all of this but..a part of me felt indebted to him. My step-mother would only make things worse, and so I hated her as much as she hated me and my step-father took joy in that. He set us up against each other when we could’ve worked as victims to get him thrown in jail. I knew it would never have worked though even if that was the case, he’s a cop, he could get away with it..he did get away with it.”

Jeongguk holds onto Taehyung’s hand even tighter, if possible, a sick feeling in his stomach.

“My childhood continued like that. I turned eight and the abuse still didn’t stop, it was a constant in my life that I had become used to. Gradually, things became worse, each birthday just another milestone of the years I’d been imprisoned by them. My step-mother lost her job around that time and she took it out on me, saying that her boss couldn’t handle her being so feeble and weak and that it was my fault she was like that. She complained to my step-father too, when she really couldn’t handle it, but he was too drunk to be angry. There was one point, a three-month period in which things did get better. My step-father hit me less, my step-mother was quieter and calmer. She hated me still but she rarely talked to me enough to show it. I made a few friends at school and my grades were good. I was finally getting somewhat of a life and it was relieving. I had felt so so relieved, as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders and I could finally breathe for the first time in years. And I’m not sure why, considering things weren’t perfect during this time either. Just less terrible.”

Taehyung breathes in shakily, knowing by heart what happens next. His dreams make it impossible for him to forget. “It didn’t last long but it was there, and those three months meant everything to me so I thought this is where things get better. I thought that this is where things change for the better… but then,” his voice breaks and Jeongguk grimaces because hearing Taehyung sound so hurt and afraid at this moment destroys him more than he thought possible. He doesn’t want to put Taehyung through this even if it was the other’s idea to tell him after all.

“Tae, you don’t have to—”

“I can do it, I can do it,” Taehyung insists painfully, a trembling in his body. He takes in a couple deep breaths, composing himself, organising his thoughts because it helps him calm down in these situations. He swallows and then begins to speak again. “My step-father touched me..not like before, it was worse than before because this was something more dehumanising than the punches..more terrible than the pain. He violated me and I didn’t even understand what it was he was doing at the time, I couldn’t even begin to understand I just knew that I wanted it to stop. It hurt, it hurt me so much and I kept saying no over and over again but he wouldn’t listen to me and my step-mother—she got angry at me for his actions as if it was my fault he was doing this to me. As if I had asked for it despite my cries and begs for help. I screamed and I pleaded and she didn’t even help me. She just let him..do what he wanted..and then blamed me for the aftermath like I was the bad guy. As if I was the one who made him stop loving her when he had probably never loved her to begin with.”

Taehyung buries his head in his hands, a sob creeping up his throat despite no tears falling from his face. His breathing grows shallower, his tone desperate. “I was ten, I was ten Jeongguk..I was—I was ten..”

Jeongguk wraps Taehyung in a warm embrace, rubbing circles on his back comfortingly as he tries
to regain his breath. It feels both terrible and relieving to tell someone all of this. Both traumatic and healing as he has to relive memories and re-evaluate his monsters’ choices and actions, almost justifying himself when he has no need to be. He doesn’t have to justify his emotions, not for this.

Taehyung lifts his head up, feeling around for Jeongguk’s chest with his right arm. He lays his hand over the other’s heart, letting it rest there for a bit until it goes limp and falls back to his legs, almost lifeless in a way. “That was the worst of it. I thought that was the worst of it. For every night that happened I cried and I cried, so much so that I received another beating for it because one of our rules was no crying, and I couldn’t break that rule. He would feel sorry at first, reassuring me that it’s okay and that I’ll be alright but then as I still continued to panic and shake and sob, he grew annoyed and restless. I didn’t cry after that again. I couldn’t allow myself to.”

Jeongguk holds onto Taehyung’s hand again, and it’s only then when Taehyung realises that the other’s hand had been shaking profusely too. He feels bad for hurting him with this. He hadn’t wanted it to, not like this, at least. “Jeongguk your hand—”

“Continue, Tae. Continue. I can handle it, it’s you that I’m—” Jeongguk’s voice grows sadder, as if he’s on the verge of tears. Quite frankly, he is. “I know you want to tell me this but if it hurts you..I don’t want to put you through more pain. I can’t, not after this, not after all this. You deserve so much happiness and joy and peace and it hurts to know...”

“I know, I know,” Taehyung continues soberly. He squeezes Jeongguk’s hand, the warmth between their palms reassuring. “And I don’t want to hurt you with this either.”

Jeongguk shakes his head. “No, this isn’t about me. If you feel like you need to do this then you should do this..I want to be there for you now, right here, in this moment. I couldn’t before...I wish I could have been there, I wish I could’ve saved you when nobody else could. I wish I could’ve held you and took you in and sang you songs and made you laugh because that’s the childhood you deserved. Not this..nobody deserved this..”

Taehyung nods his head. “Then, I’ll continue.” He breathes in again, this time with a little more ease as Jeongguk’s grip on his hand stabilises him. “Things were like that for what seemed like forever. Some days the beatings were worse, others I’d be aching so badly from the day before, the week before, that I couldn’t get out of bed. I couldn’t walk, I couldn’t talk, I could barely think. I grew skinnier, I grew weaker, I grew..sick. Mentally sick, emotionally sick, physically tired and beaten and practically lifeless. I was a living corpse and it scared me because every day I stayed there I thought it would be my last. I didn’t want to die but then some days I thought, ‘hey, that wouldn’t be so bad. At least then the pain would stop.’ And I hate myself to this day for thinking that. All I wanted was for the pain to stop..it had to stop because I felt like I was going to die because of him. I was going to die in that house, unloved, and I couldn’t bear to die alone like that. I couldn’t bear to be alone, and I think that’s why I stayed for so long. I had nobody, I had nowhere to go. They were all I had and, in a way, it comforted me. They gave me purpose, a fucked up one but one
nonetheless, and I felt that if I left, I’d be nobody. I’d be worthless, and therefore, not worthy of living. If I left, I felt like I would be dead too,” he pauses again. “So those were my options. Die in that house, or die outside of that house. I thought over it a lot and I could never reach a solid answer. The beatings hurt but slowly, I could learn how to deal with them. I was great at hiding it and I was even better at smiling through it. I felt as though I could keep holding up that façade and everything would be alright. Some part of me also felt like I deserved the pain. It’s the part of me that had been brainwashed by them. So, a lot of the time I wanted to stay. But then, the worst nights came. The nights where he touched me, or the nights he would get mad at me for something I didn’t do and I wouldn’t be able to move or sit properly for the next few days. The days my scars became harder to hide and people would start talking. Making up rumours or false accusations, or even true accusations that I didn’t want to believe and therefore got defensive over. I couldn’t let anyone know what was happening because that would lead to something worse...And I didn’t want to know what could be possibly worse than what I’d already experienced.” He laughs ironically. “When I was eleven I felt like I was constantly being watched. I thought it was my step-parents, analysing my every move, but I know they couldn’t have cared that much for me. Someone was watching me, someone who was good at it, and I was scared because if they managed to find out what was going on, I would die in that house. It was probably just me imagining things since I never physically saw anyone looking at me, I just sensed it...It was weird because I felt conflicted. I didn’t want to die in that house but if I could survive living with them I thought that was close enough to life I could get, and I didn’t want to push my luck. After all, my real parents didn’t care about me but these people once said they did. I told myself that they loved me even though I knew they didn’t.” Taehyung relaxes as Jeongguk rubs his shoulders soothingly, grounding himself. “The day I became blind was an eventful one to say the least. It was also the day I escaped, twice that is, once temporarily and then the other for good. I had come home late and of course, one of our rules was to always be on time, so my step-father didn’t take it lightly. I felt like he was angry over something else because he was really drunk but when he talked to me and looked at me, all I could see was the anger he had towards me. He beat me pretty badly that day. I hadn’t recovered from the last one and normally he gives me just the right amount of time to somewhat heal before hurting me again. He did this so my bruises wouldn’t be as obvious underneath my school uniform, but that day, he didn’t. But I should’ve known that he wouldn’t because the beatings had become progressively worse. They happened more often and with more severity, but I thought that he would calm down again. That this was just a rough patch and he was taking it out on me for the sake of it and not because I had done something wrong. Well, he always thought I was in the wrong, but I was careful not to anger him enough to make him even more violent so this was different. Something had happened but I didn’t know what. I just knew that I’d be the punching bag for it. I ran away that day because I needed fresh air. I knew it was against the rules but the beating was bad, and I really thought I was going to die if I didn’t leave. It was in that moment that I knew that I didn’t matter if I was in or out that house, I just didn’t want to die. Despite the pain, and the wish to finally be relieved of all of it, I didn’t want to die. That was the easy way out, and although I thought of it sometimes, I could never imagine myself actually being dead. I didn’t want to. I made it quite far away from them and I guess I was high on some sort of adrenaline because as soon as I stopped moving I collapsed on the floor. The world was spinning, my head was pounding, every inch of me hurt so I rested. And then, this boy found me.” Taehyung smiles a genuine smile, and it’s the first time he’s looked happy since telling this story. “He had silver hair. He helped me, cleaned my wounds, talked to me and comforted me. He was a stranger and yet I felt like I had known him my whole life. I felt okay confiding in him. I felt at ease knowing he was there to help me. I talked to him for a bit, and he was every inch of kind you could imagine. I don’t know why he helped me that day, but honestly, I think he helped save me too. Not only by treating my wounds but by reminding me of something important. That I don’t need my step-parents’ love to feel validated. That I shouldn’t stay with them because it will only cause me more pain and more suffering. If he hadn’t said those words to me that particular day, I think I would’ve never have left, and for that, I am eternally grateful. I passed out a little after that and I woke up in a dance studio, in
pain of course. I think the other guy had been crying a bit but I didn’t mention it. We all had our own problems, and something about the way he talked to me made me think he had experienced something similar. He then admitted that he had. I realised I had been gone for hours and I panicked. I planned to only stay out for a couple of minutes, not nearly enough time for my step-parents to notice but I had been dumb and foolish and way too unrealistic. The guy tried to get me to stay but I was so brainwashed with the idea of needing my step-parents that I couldn’t. I didn’t want to be alone. I thought I needed them to be alive and so I couldn’t just leave them. Their abuse hurt but I’d rather live with it than be alone, on the streets, or as an orphan. Because of them I was no longer alone, and that was something I never wanted to be again. So, I went back.” Taehyung’s smile vanishes completely. “And that was a mistake. Perhaps the biggest mistake of my life. I knew I was going to be punished. I knew it and I readied myself for it but I was still so unprepared for what was about to come. I thought I could sneak my way upstairs, pretend I had been there all along but one quick yell in the kitchen announced that my father knew I had run away, and he was not happy about it. I didn’t get far before he spotted me and...needless to say, it wasn’t fun. I think that day was the worst of the beatings. I had broken all the rules and I had angered him beyond belief and his smile...his sadistic, sick, twisted smile will perhaps haunt me for life. He was furious, enraged, and he had every right to be at the time and yet I was petrified. I knew that I was going to die, and I regretted not staying with that person after all because at least then, I’d have a chance at life. My step-father taught me a lesson and then my step-mother kneeled down beside me. She took the bottle from my step-father’s hand and I thought, I truly thought that she was going to save me. She was finally going to save me and I almost cried in relief because despite our differences she was going to save me. She was going to be a mother. That relief didn’t last long, though, because she wasn’t there to save me...She was there to finish the job...” Taehyung winces, remembering the pain. “I don’t want to tell you how much it hurt. I can’t begin to describe it and it’s futile to try and do so but just know that it was the worst feeling in my life. It was the worst pain in my life because this was not temporary. I could feel that it wasn’t. I didn’t know what was happening at first, I just knew that my voice had left me and that fire had consumed my eyes and I was in so much agony that I felt as though I were dying. It was at that moment that I realised I had already been abandoned by these people. I wouldn’t be alone if I left them because I was already alone. The day they first hit me, touched me, ruined me, was the day they broke and abandoned me. They saved me but they also destroyed me, and so, I had a choice to make. I made the choice to leave, however, I was in too much pain to move right away. When I finally found my voice, I used it to all my capacity. The screaming didn’t dull the pain but it helped relieve some of the terror I was feeling. Soon, I began to understand what had happened but I couldn’t believe it. I couldn’t believe that she’d do such a thing. I wondered why I was still there after all this time and I regretted thinking the way I had thought before. If only I had escaped sooner, this wouldn’t have happened.”

He hears Jeongguk crying, his audible sniffs and attempts to hide his tears a dead giveaway. Taehyung wipes the tears from the other’s cheeks, smiling sadly before kissing the corner of his lips. “Please don’t cry.”

Jeongguk takes in a shaky breath, nodding his head. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry I shouldn’t be the one crying right now its just...”

“No, I don’t want you to cry because I don’t want you to be hurt too. I didn’t want to make you suffer.”
The sun has risen considerably since before, the sky now a pale blue, the faint outline of stars almost completely invisible with the slowly engulfing light. Jeongguk tries to stop his tears and the pang in his heart from rupturing but the pain Taehyung had experienced is too much for him to comprehend. He holds onto Taehyung’s shirt lightly, pulling him into his chest so he can hold him and never let go. He feels like if he lets go he’ll lose him forever, and honestly, he’s experienced this feeling with the other before.

“You’re not making me suffer, Tae. They made you suffer, and I never want you to apologise on their behalf. You’re so brave and strong and everything I could never imagine to be. You are absolutely incredible, and I don’t think anybody could have been able to survive what you experienced..”

Taehyung sighs into Jeongguk’s chest, feeling slightly uplifted by his words. He can feel the other’s chest heave with his subdued sobs, and his heartbeat pound through his ribcage in a way that’s almost desperate and aching. He’s glad that the worst of the story is now over, and that he didn’t die or combust when telling it like he had felt he would. He continues to ease the pain their both feeling. “I fell asleep after that. It felt like hours but it had only been minutes. All I know is that when I woke up, things were still black and blurry. I could still see some things, but reality and darkness flickered and flashed before my eyes unwillingly, until I could only control fragments of my mind. I woke up because of the pain. It had been unbearable and crying made it worse but I couldn’t seem to stop. I knew I had to get out of there but I could barely move. Nonetheless, I tried. I made it out of the house, out towards the street. I barely made it onto a sidewalk before collapsing to the ground, every single part of my body burning and giving up simultaneously. I dragged myself to a nearby corner, the black around me spinning and my limbs in an unfathomable amount of pain. I couldn’t hear myself think over the loud noises. Everything appeared to be so loud and so terribly invasive. I couldn’t see but I could hear and feel everything around me. It was overwhelming. I sunk completely to the ground, my back against a wall, my body trembling and my mind replaying the recent events over and over again like a broken record player. That, was when I truly thought I was going to die. I was dying, and I would’ve probably been dead if not for…” Taehyung smiles again, exhaling a deep breath. This is the part in his past where he’s saved. “If not for Yoongi. He found me that day. He found me all beat and broken in that alleyway and I don’t know how or why but I thank God every day for it. He had been the right person at the right time in the right place and I cannot begin to convey my gratitude that he had been the one to see me first because if not, I could’ve ended up entirely different. I still know, with utter conviction, that I would’ve winded up dead if it weren’t for him. He saved my life..and even if I get mad at him sometimes or he gets too involved in my life and my love life for that matter, I could never hate him because he saved me. He’s the reason why I’m alive and that’s all I wanted to be. All I wanted was to be alive..” Taehyung leans closer into Jeongguk’s body, allowing himself to be embraced more tightly. He leans his head against the flat of the other’s chest, his eyes unintentionally staring off into the horizon. “I remember waking up in a hospital. I couldn’t see and I panicked. The doctor told me what I feared to hear, she did some tests and I was officially confirmed blind. I felt overwhelmed with regret, as though a stone had been dropped down on me and ripped my life apart. I felt...like everything was crashing down, so much so that I could feel nothing. Yoongi visited me the first night I was in there. He had come every day, waiting for me to finally wake up. He held me as I cried and I felt connected to him in a way because here’s the stranger that saved me and he’s not abandoning me. He’s staying with me, hell he stayed with me. My worst nightmare of being alone didn’t come true because he decided to stay, and although I still don’t know why he did, I’ve learnt that I don’t need a reason.” Taehyung relaxes as
the rest of the story becomes easier to tell. “Rehab took a year. I had to learn how to walk again, communicate again, let alone the multiple surgeries I had to undertake to get better. I was too weak in the beginning to undergo surgery, so I had to wait a few days before they could get started. I ended up needing eight surgeries, and since they were all technically labelled as emergency surgeries I didn’t need my step-parents’ consent, which was immensely relieving. The first surgery I had was when I came in, where they removed the glass from my eyes and attempted to give me back my vision. The second was for my abdomen because they had found internal bleeding within my body due to various blows. The third was for my ribs; my step-father had broken three of them. My doctor said that another rib had been fractured for quite some time now, and she wondered how I got it and managed to live through it. I had surgery on my right lung as they fixed my ribs. Apparently it had been punctured upon collision, and if they had not caught it that day I would have slowly suffocated to death. The next few surgeries were done to fix my legs. They told me smaller fragments of bone had been chipped from my fibula, which were tearing away at the muscle within my whole leg. It made sense then why I had such a hard time walking that day. I thought it had just been due to the bruises. My last surgery was on my abdomen again. I had a cardiac arrest during the night due to a sudden rupture and they had to do an emergency procedure. Yoongi had been by my side that day, we had been talking about the future and what I wanted to do once I got out. He had told me something funny about wanting to start a boyband or something, that he could rap and I could sing and we could find more members and become an unstoppable force. I assumed he was joking.” Taehyung sighs. “So, when my heart stopped beating, I knew that his did too. He prayed for me until the sun rose, and even when the doctors brought me back to the ICU and said that I was okay, he still prayed. He prayed for me until I woke up, and when I spoke out to him again he practically clung onto me and sobbed. I figured out a couple years later that Yoongi was not religious... I hadn’t realised he cared for me that much. After I was out of the woods in terms of internal injuries I still had to deal with the aftermath. My body was weak. It was in constant pain from the strain it had to go through and it still ached tremendously, not to mention my mental health was a wreck at the time. They found that I was extremely malnourished so I had to be fed with a feeding tube for a couple months because it hurt too much to eat. I also couldn’t quite swallow properly, and with all the surgeries I had to undergo, they didn’t want me putting more strain on my body by chewing and swallowing. Yoongi stayed by my side. He’s the one that helped me learn braille and sit without trembling. He’s the one that taught me how to have a life again. I couldn’t really talk during that time, because I had a literal tube down my throat, but it allowed me to listen attentively. Yoongi and Jin spent a good amount of time informing me on things so I wasn’t bored, and I know Yoongi hardly ever left my side unless it was to go to the bathroom or to take a shower. I honestly tried to make them leave after a while because I wanted them to have a life too. Of course, they never listened to me though. Even during Christmas time, they refused to leave, and I couldn’t really blame them because they didn’t want to spend time with their families either. We all had family issues. After three months I was taken off the feeding tube but I was still attached to a ventilator because my lungs were too weak and damaged to work on their own. My doctors said they still needed time to recover, but I was too upset over the fact that I couldn’t even breathe on my own to listen to them. It made talking hard too, but at that point I was just happy I could talk so it helped me see a silver lining.” He laughs light-heartedly. “I felt so useless and weak during this time, being attached to all those machines. The beeping of my heart was also quite distracting, and I remember freaking out one night because I just couldn’t stand being in that bed anymore, attached to that fucking ventilator and those numerous machines that simply wouldn’t shut up. Yoongi had to call in a nurse because he was sure I was going to kill myself or something. I wasn’t going to, of course I wasn’t, but I guess I did give him a scare. I was off the ventilator in another 3 months. I realised that I had spent half a year in this bed, being kept alive by mere robots because my body couldn’t even do it on its own and it was depressing for me. I thank Yoongi and Jin for being able to lift my spirits during that time, because honestly, I feel like it was the lowest point of my hospital experience.” He stops for a bit to let Jeongguk respond if he wants to but the other remains silent and attentive.
Tae continues. “When physical therapy finally came along I was determined to excel in it. I had spent so long in a bed that the last thing I wanted to do was sit, but when it actually started, I sucked at it. I didn’t realise how much my body hurt until I had to move, and each step I took required painstaking effort. Sure, I felt like shit when I would lie down too, but I had gotten used to that. Walking was a complete other story. It took me three weeks to walk on my own again, and even then, it took incredible concentration. Yoongi and Jin had been doing a tag-team style of assistance, where they would take turns in the day spending time with me, making sure I was as comfortable as I could be and as happy as I could be. They comforted and reassured me, made sure to talk to me and update me on what was happening in the world. I still had terrible nightmares, worse than the ones I have now because back then everything was much more vivid and fresh. If I wasn’t in physical pain I was in emotional or mental pain, and most of the time I was in all three. I’ll tell you, the recovery process wasn’t pretty. It was much better than my time in that household of course, but it was fucking awful nonetheless. Getting back to being a functioning human being was perhaps the hardest thing I ever had to do, but I am glad I was able to do it. After I could walk, I took speech therapy for a week. Thankfully, my conversations with Yoongi and Jin had improved that ability significantly, but I still had to learn how to talk perfectly without the ventilator helping my lungs and without the pain getting the best of me. Soon, my body began to heal, and once that month was over, I was able to walk, talk and breathe again with either limited to no discomfort. That marked the seventh month of being in that hospital.”

Jeongguk breathes out loudly. “Wow…Tae, I can’t even begin to imagine..” he trails off, looking at the other’s face with an expression of respect and bewilderment.

“But I still had a long way to go,” Taehyung continues, squeezing Jeongguk’s hand reassuringly. “For one, I had to spend two months in a blind facility learning how to live my life as a visually impaired person. It was tough and I hated it at first, but Yoongi helped me get used to it. During this time, I also had to undergo therapy. I had a regular therapist and then someone who worked on PTSD patients treat me. I was so brainwashed and wired with those rules my step-father gave me that I couldn’t tell them the truth. I never entirely could. I told them this, that I couldn’t break the rules, and I’m sure they thought I was insane because I never elaborated on it at the time. Honestly, if it weren’t for Yoongi defending me, I’m sure I would’ve ended up in a psych ward or something. My regular therapist told my doctors that she thought I had been abused, and I knew they had their suspicions too because every time they asked me what caused my injuries I would go frozen in fear. Yoongi told them not to ask me after a while, because I clearly couldn’t handle the question, and so out of respect they didn’t try and pry it out of me. I could tell they still pitied me though..My regular therapist and I got along well after some time. I was able to confide in her a little, and I told her that those rules were given by my step-parents. When she asked if they hurt me I shook my head, but once I listed the rules to her, she seemed to understand that they had indeed. I liked her because she understood what I was saying without me actually having to say anything. I guess it’s her job to be able to, but it made me feel more normal. She helped me with my nightmares and taught me how to make the emotional pain duller. She helped me come to terms with my past and move forward with my life. After three and a half months of therapy, she cleared me as mentally stable, and that was a huge step of progress for me. I still went to her after that, even after I was discharged from the hospital but then I had to leave Daegu, so I didn’t see her again. My last few months in the hospital were spent doing weekly check-ups, testing my blood-levels and re-examining my incisions to make sure everything was healing properly. They offered me a surgery that could potentially fix my sight but it required consent from my step-parents as Yoongi wasn’t legally my guardian. There were also
other reasons I decided not to do it. The mortality rate was too high, meaning that if I took it I would likely die in the process. Jin at the time had been so kind to pay for all my hospital bills as I didn’t want to use my medical insurance in fear my step-parents would find me again. This surgery was costly, and although Jin was willing to pay for it, I knew I couldn’t ask him such a thing, let alone let him be scolded by his own parents for trying to help a complete blind stranger. Once he heard that I had a high chance of dying he didn’t really want me to take the surgery either. The main reason though was over the whole consent thing. I had just escaped from my step-parents and I was in no way about to give them a way to find me again. Since my hospital records had just contained my birth family and then the orphanage I was sent to, they couldn’t reach out to my step-parents without contacting the orphanage. Since I didn’t grant them permission to do that, they couldn’t proceed with the action, and honestly, with all the rumours of me being abused I don’t think they wanted to contact them either. I made sure not to confirm the rumour. One being because I was wired not to but another being because I didn’t want the hospital to bring in law enforcement. That would have definitely notified my step-parents where I was, and I could not risk the chance of them taking me again. After I was discharged, I was an entirely different person. I was better but I was also worse, because physically I had lost something so important. But, on the positive side, my injuries were healed. They left scars I’m sure, but at least nothing hurt like it did when I still lived with my step-parents. I moved in with Yoongi, and after a couple months we decided to move completely out of the city so that they couldn’t find me again. They kept trying to find me after that though. I felt bad because Yoongi had to keep changing jobs for me, and keep leaving his friends to ensure my safety. We moved quite often at the beginning because there were always some signs that we were being tracked or followed. Of course they were going to find us eventually, and so we had to be careful. For Yoongi’s sake just as much as mine. I owe him a lot, you know? And him saving me is only the tip of the iceberg because he’s done so many other things for me. My first birthday without my step-parents occurred in the hospital, and even though I could barely talk let alone eat during it, it was still insanely better than the birthdays I had at that house. So, the next year I was discharged Yoongi did something special for my birthday. He helped me associate it as a good thing instead of being another milestone of suffering. He not only helped me get my life back, he helped me get a better life back. We moved to a new apartment earlier this year in yet another attempt to remain hidden. It seems as though it’s working because everything is fine, and to be honest, we were fine in our old apartment, we just wanted to play things safe. These are just things that show how he constantly puts me before anything else, especially himself…And now we’re at today.” Taehyung smiles in relief. “I’ll be honest with you. I’m still scared and I’m still traumatised. I have nightmares a lot and panic attacks and flashbacks and random episodes where I can’t stop hurting but...I’m better. I’m getting better. I’m finally getting happier and in a way I never thought possible. You have made me so much happier than I’ve ever been in my life and quite frankly, you are the reason I am finally learning to be okay… I also need to thank you now, for saving me and allowing me to keep this beautiful new life without it being tainted by my step-parents..I have to because you have changed me in all the best ways possible and for that..Thank you, Jeongguk. Thank you so much.”

Jeongguk kisses Taehyung on the lips suddenly, catching the other by surprise as he had no warning or indication of it beforehand. Once he realises what is happening however, he kisses back, holding onto Jeongguk’s clothes tightly and letting himself relax completely into his grip. He can feel Jeongguk’s tears mingling between their lips, salt now evident on his own tongue but he doesn’t care. He just wants the other to be near him, holding him, kissing him, wiping away all the pain he relived so that he can finally move past it. Jeongguk pulls him in closer, deepening the kiss, his movements desperate as the tears start falling down faster. Taehyung follows the pace with an equal fire in his body, the sorrow and pent-up frustration that he had been feeling finally gone and deflated, seeping out through his lips and being revitalised by the kiss he is now sharing. Jeongguk pulls away quickly to catch his breath, gasping and panting, his tears leaving wet trails down his cheeks before
wasting no time to kiss Taehyung again, moving his hands up his back and then down again. Taehyung can feel the other’s lips quivering and his chest heaving, all the emotion he’s currently overwhelmed with now expelled through this one intimate moment and he can’t help but respond in an equally desperate and urgent way. He finds comfort in the way Jeongguk strokes his back, his somewhat cold hands crawling up his shirt, making him shiver as a sudden chill envelops his bare skin. He doesn’t mind it though, in fact, it revives him more. It makes him realise that things are okay. He told Jeongguk the truth about his past and things are okay. He didn’t pity him or bombard him with questions. He didn’t judge him or make him feel like he’s weak and vulnerable. He simply understood and accepted him, and that is all Tae wanted him to do.

Taehyung whimpers in a mixture of relief and pain, feeling Jeongguk’s tongue slip into his mouth, wandering through every crevice in hopes to erase the agony he had felt all this time. He kisses him as if this is the last time he’ll ever do so, his hands trailing up Taehyung’s spine sensually, arising goosebumps in their wake and a sensation of pure bliss and tranquillity.

Taehyung whispers Jeongguk’s name in between the kiss, his tone yearning and breathless, arms wrapping around his neck to pull them closer, the feeling of Jeongguk’s cold fingers on his spine awaking him in a way he never imagined. He feels free. Free of his monsters, free of hospital beds, free of nightmares and episodes and trauma, free of pain. He wants to kiss Jeongguk forever, until every last part of him that had been destroyed is rebuilt and refortified. Until he’s no longer tormented by his past or the many dire outcomes of his future that would have occurred if not for Baekhyun or Yoongi or Jin or Jeongguk.

He wants to kiss Jeongguk because he loves him.

They break away briefly, lips still inches away so that their breaths fan each other’s faces, intertwined and entangled in webs of heightened euphoria. Jeongguk leans in to kiss him again, breaking away in intervals to regain his breath and prolong the moment until they are both too tired to continue.

The day has defeated the night in the meantime, and the stars have said their goodbyes to allow the sun. The clouds have become illuminated with translucency, the light of the day shining through buildings and bouncing off windows, adorning the park and its city with a shower of golden brilliance. The sky blooms violet, the blues and oranges and pinks and soft lavenders all combining together one last time to paint a canvas of harmony, signifying a peace before departure.

The sun gleams above them, not at its full brightness but bright enough to turn their hair amber and their eyes clear. The clouds come together, forming clear patterns and distant fog and then, snow begins to fall. It’s light and airy, refreshing, and the snowflakes land on their noses and melt, blending into their salty kiss.
Taehyung pulls away, letting their breaths recollect and their foreheads touch, lips still inches away from touching like before. Jeongguk smiles through teary eyes, the sun making them appear as if crystals were in them and he lets his hands rest on Taehyung’s skin. They are overcast with light and snow, cascading around them in a way that’s far from overbearing.

“I should be the one thanking you,” Jeongguk says softly, blinking to let the last of his tears fall so that he can see Taehyung’s face in pure clarity. “You make me a better person. In more ways than you could possibly understand you make me want to scream on top of buildings announcing your perfection so that everyone can be a better person too. You inspire me...to be better.”

Taehyung smiles, kissing the other again gently. “I had to lie so much in my life, about those monsters, that now I don’t want to lie about anything ever again.”

Jeongguk hums, returning the kiss with a greater sense of insistence. He continues trailing his fingertips along his back, his touch no longer a surprise but an invitation.

“That’s why I always mean my promises,” Taehyung continues through the kiss, his words halting every so often when the other’s lips override his thoughts. “I never lie because now I can tell the truth, and I want to whenever I can. I want to tell the truth when I can because I might not get another chance..”

Jeongguk pauses, kissing the corner of Tae’s lip and then his cheek, leaving tiny pecks along his jaw and the corner of his ear, tracing each mole he sees with his eyes before kissing them too. “What are you trying to say?” He asks in a hushed whisper, dragging his hands up the other’s neck slowly, using his nails to slightly graze his skin. Taehyung’s back arches faintly, and he bites his lip to suppress a moan, snowflakes collecting on his eyelashes and melting down to his cheeks. The sun catches his grey eyes and Jeongguk’s breath stops.

“I’m trying to say that I-”

Taehyung’s phone suddenly rings before he can finish his sentence, interrupting their moment so abruptly that it startles the both of them shitless.

“Fuck, what was that?” Jeongguk asks alarmingly, a slight annoyance to his voice. Taehyung can feel how fast his heart is beating but he feels like it has equally as much to do with the words he was about to say as it does with the phone.
He groans inwardly. “Sorry, sorry, I think Yoongi’s calling me, he must be wondering where I am since I’m not in the apartment, give me a minute,” Taehyung responds apologetically, untangling himself, much to his dismay, from Jeongguk’s embrace. Jeongguk wants to be irritated but after all the things Taehyung had told him about Yoongi today he can’t seem to be. He saved Taehyung’s life when he had nobody, and for that Jeongguk can only be thankful.

Taehyung picks up his phone, putting it up to his ear quickly. “Hello?”

There’s some inaudible murmuring from the other line and Jeongguk can’t seem to read the situation off of Taehyung’s face.

“Slow down, hyung. Slow down..” Taehyung says calmly, pressing his lips together as the murmuring continues. “I’m at the park—I know, I should’ve told you or called but I didn’t want to wake you up—yes, I know it was irresponsible of me..and stupid.” Taehyung bites down his smile, trying hard to stifle his laugh because he knows it’ll only make Yoongi madder. The muffled line gets slightly louder. “Yes, I know you were worried because it was early but I was just going to talk with—yes that is a valid excuse! I’m safe, okay? I’m perfectly fine and happy and you’re right, I should have at least texted you but I was afraid the notification would wake you up..yes..I know it’s your job to worry about me but please..” Taehyung gives up trying to explain himself. “I’m sorry, hyung. Yes, I understand, it won’t happen again.” Taehyung nods his head after hearing something and then hangs up the phone, sighing heavily to himself.

Jeongguk bursts into laughter.

“Hey, it isn’t funny!” Taehyung retorts defensively, but even he himself is having a hard time suppressing a smile. “He was really mad!”

“I can’t believe you got chewed out by Yoongi, that must’ve been terrifying, he terrifies me.”

“I mean, he can be pretty intimidating but once you get to know him you realise he’s basically just a cat.”

The comment makes Jeongguk laugh even harder. “If he didn’t dislike me before he sure does now.”

“Oh he definitely disliked you before..I think now he hates you,” Taehyung replies, laughing along with the other as the realisation sets in. “He also wants me to head back because apparently I ‘can’t be trusted’. I mean he has a point considering I could have been kidnapped or something but still—I
“Swear he’s going to ground me.”

“So, he’s basically your mom then..” Jeongguk teases light-heartedly, ruffling Taehyung’s hair softly.

“He sure acts like it. He is a pretty good mom then don’t you think?”

Jeongguk nods his head, smiling to himself as he feels the snowfall get heavier. “Well, we should get going anyways. The snow’s getting worse and I don’t want you to catch a cold.”

“You’re the one without a jacket, remember?”

Jeongguk laughs. “Right, then let’s go before we both catch a cold.”

Taehyung smiles, kissing the other’s slightly wet nose gently. It feels cold against his lips. “Lead the way.”

_I was trying to say that I love you._

Chapter End Notes

Whew so that's done and over with. yay! this was a very hard chapter to write and yet i worked on it so much instead of getting too lazy to continue it lol, it surprised me. i think not updating for so long triggered me to write more, which i can't say i don't mind.

Tbh, i don't know if i did tae's past enough justice, and this was the only way i knew how to convey it all at once without it being too long or awkward. ik the blocks of speech might have been hard to read, but spacing them out would have removed the flow from the story. needless to say, it was finally time for jk to know the truth, so we're gonna leave it at that!

The next few chapters should be good (if i can post them sooner rather than later). so stay tuned.

Happy reading! and thanks for supporting me even if i'm a lousy writer haha
Taehyung meets Jeongguk’s family.

* smut warning! *

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Oh and Yoongi is upset bc 4 AM adventures without prior notice is extremely irresponsible and reckless.

Yoongi stares Taehyung down acutely from the kitchen table, practically steaming and most definitely enraged at the other’s little ‘5 AM outing’ with his boyfriend. He tries to calm his breath, realising that this is Taehyung so he shouldn’t be too harsh on him, but can’t seem to shake off the absolute stupidity of his actions.

What was he thinking? He could’ve gotten himself killed, run over, robbed, injured or worse. He could’ve gotten kidnapped, by strangers or by his monsters, and if that had happened…that is something Yoongi would never have forgiven himself for. If Taehyung had at least told him...texted,
He had been worried sick.

“Hyung,” Taehyung starts gently, fiddling with the stitching on the couch. He’s incredibly nervous. “If you’re going to say something say it. Your stare isn’t that discrete and it’s getting uncomfortable.”

“Oh, my stare is uncomfortable?” Yoongi asks incredulously, crossing his arms sternly. He really doesn’t want to get mad at the other but his comment is making it almost unbearably impossible. “How about your little itinerary to the park at fucking five in the morning, huh? You know what that was for me? That was also uncomfortable, hell, that was worse than uncomfortable that was terrifying. Do you know how worried I was? I thought you were kidnapped, I thought you slept walked into the night and got run over by a car, what the fuck were you thinking?”

Taehyung goes silent, regretting his idea to talk first. Oh, so Yoongi’s mad mad. “Okay, I know and you’re right it was stupid, but in my defence—”

“There is no defence here, got it? You don’t get a defence because I thought you were in trouble. I thought you were hurt; do you have any idea what that did to me? If you didn’t answer your phone I was going to call the police!”

Taehyung remains quiet, letting the other say what he needs to say because if anything, he does deserve to be mad at him. Tae should’ve let him know, and he’s beginning to feel guilty that he had made the other so worried to begin with.

“I shouldn’t have to be telling you that you can’t leave the house at literal dawn to see your boyfriend because that’s dangerous and common sense. And, if you are going to do it, at least let me know. Shoot me a text, leave me a note in braille, let me know where you are so I don’t think you’ve died on me for fuck’s sake!”

Yoongi sighs, putting his head in his hands and rubbing his eyes. It’s still early and he hadn’t managed to get that much sleep last night so he’s exhausted. “He’s a bad influence.”

Taehyung’s head perks up at that statement, the desire to speak winning him over. “Hold on, this wasn’t all his idea. Don’t do that thing that you do, where you blame it all on the other person. I’m equally as culpable and quite frankly, I did not hesitate when he asked me—”
“It was his idea, though. Wasn’t it? And yes, you are extremely to blame for this because you acted stupidly and you continued to act stupidly, but that doesn’t change the fact that your little boyfriend is a terrible influence!”

“Oh really? Jeongguk’s a terrible influence? What about you commenting on his ‘decent character’ the other day? You say that you dislike him but I think that you don’t. I think that you’re jealous of him.”

Yoongi raises an eyebrow, questioning the other’s audacity. “Taehyung, I’m going to give you five seconds to take that back.”

“It’s true! Since day one you’ve been at him, always finding the wrong in him when you know I care about him! Do you really think I’d fall in love with someone who’s bad for me? I won’t make the same mistake twice!” Taehyung replies bitterly, pulling out a stitch from the couch on accident. “You know, I didn’t mind you being jealous over him at first. I figured you’d be protective but you’ve got to learn how to accept him because he’s a huge part of my life now, just like you are. He’s not a replacement, nobody can replace you and nobody will, but he is important to me so you should grow up and learn to like him or you’re gonna continue having a hard time cause I’m not giving him up!”

Yoongi looks at Taehyung irritatedly. “Are you done?” He walks over to where the other’s sitting, a prominent annoyance radiating off his body. “I’m not jealous of him, Tae. I’m not a child and I’m certainly not an immature one. I’m just...cautious. People are out to get you, and he just bumps into you one day, then shows up at that party with all our friends, then proceeds to get close to you in this weird, suspicious way and—I had my reasons to dislike him!”

Something clicks in Taehyung’s brain.

“That is what this is about?” Taehyung asks incredulously, starting to grow angry. “You think he’s one of those spies from my step-parents?”

“Well he didn’t seem to be that innocent when I first met him! When he had offered to go look for you in the bathroom at Jin’s house, when he had comforted you and cared about you without even knowing you. You guys had barely been with each other a day and he was all over you, not to mention his encounter with you at the subway. Yes, I thought he was a spy or a stalker, and I’m not ashamed of that. It’s my job to look out for you.”

Taehyung shakes his head, unable to believe what he’s hearing. “No, it’s your job to trust me. It’s your job to be there for me and accept the people I love because that’s what best friends are for! That’s what brothers are for.”
Yoongi looks away, tempted to leave it at this before things start to escalate. “I dislike him because he’s changing you. And yes, in some ways he’s changing you for the better and I appreciate that but then when I see things like today—I can’t help but think he’s out to get you.”

“That’s not fair, hyung,” Taehyung replies. “You can’t judge him like that and you know that statement crosses a line—many lines. It may have been his idea but I didn’t see the fault in it. I didn’t want to wake you up because I know you’ve been having trouble sleeping again and I thought that—”

“No, you’re not allowed to bring that into the subject!” Yoongi interrupts harshly, his movements hastier and more unsettled. “You don’t get to play your sympathetic card over my health when your well-being comes first.”

“But I wish it didn’t!” Taehyung yells abruptly, returning to a conversation they’ve had several times before. “You don’t understand that I care about you too. A lot. And I know I have my issues and I know that you want to help me but you have to realise that I want to help you too! I love you, and I just want you to be happy and I know you aren’t when you have to take care of me!”

Yoongi stares at him, even more irritated than before..if that’s possible. “Of course I’m happy being able to help you why the hell would you think otherwise? I’m indebted to you!”

He regrets saying the last bit.

“That makes no sense and you know that.” Taehyung replies softly, trying to keep his anger and frustration in check. He doesn’t want to fight with Yoongi. He never wants to fight with him. “You don’t owe me anything so stop acting like I’m better than you or more important than you because I’m not! Think about yourself first, take care of yourself, that is what’ll make me happy. Just stop disregarding yourself because it hurts me that you don’t seem to care about your own fucking well-being!”

But I do owe you is what Yoongi wants to say.

But I’m the reason your life sucked to begin with is what Yoongi wants to follow up with. My brother jeopardised your life so he could help mine.

But.
But...

But he can’t let the words escape from his lips. He just *can’t* and he hates himself for it. He suffices with a sigh.

“Look, I don’t want to argue. This isn’t about me, this is about *you* doing something stupid.”

Taehyung nods his head. “Okay, fine, I can agree with that. But let’s not drag Jeongguk into this..I don’t want you to dislike the guy I like anymore..”

Yoongi feels guilty when he hears the other’s words because honestly, he’s right. He shouldn’t hate Jeongguk because he makes Taehyung *happy* and that should be reason enough to make him at the very least friendly, but he can’t help but be suspicious. Of course, he isn’t as much anymore, and he likes the positive changes the other’s making on Taehyung. Tae couldn’t even stand the *thought* of romance, let alone sex before Jeongguk came along, and now he’s coming home with hickeys and beaming smiles and genuine…joy.

Maybe Yoongi should cut him some slack. Especially since it was his idea for Tae to tell Jeongguk about his past in the first place.

He just didn’t expect it to be at five in the morning though. And with no notice.

“Allright, I admit I’ve been hard on him,” Yoongi states with an exhale. “And I can say it’s because I’m protective over you, and it is, but I know that you deserve better than that. I want you to be happy, I really do, and honestly, I’m glad that he makes you happy because you *deserve* to find love and be content with your life. I have trust issues..you know that..you know why I have them. I don’t like to bring it up with you but it’s the truth. I care about you too much to lose you.”

Taehyung’s expression softens. “I know, I know. But you’ll never lose me, hyung. And I know that things were rough for you but you learnt to trust me. You were *able* to trust me. You thought you couldn’t trust anyone and yet you were able to trust Hoseok and Namjoon. You trusted Jin too..you can trust Jeongguk if you just let yourself..and the fact that I trust him should be enough motivation to do so..I don’t trust just anyone either, hyung.”

Yoongi sighs, massaging his temples before looking up. “I’ll try to. I can’t make any promises though. I know I’ve learnt to trust you guys but it took time..and honestly, I can’t help but remember
the last time someone betrayed that trust. It hurt me, it almost broke me..and I can’t relive that moment again.”

“Your father?” Taehyung asks, a somber look plastered on his face. He knows that story, Yoongi told it to him, and it’s far from pretty.

“No, my brother.”

There’s a tense hostility in the air and Taehyung’s too afraid to ask. He’s too afraid to get him to elaborate. He didn’t think there would be anything worse than the other’s father, so for him to be mad at his brother..he doesn’t want to think about it.

“But anyways, that’s beside the point. I will try. I’ll try for you,” Yoongi says kindly, finally sitting down on the couch to ease his mind. “Doesn’t mean you aren’t grounded though. Two weeks. You have to get home immediately once school finishes and no more dawn adventures. If you have any weekend plans, better cancel them..and you’re only allowed your phone for guidance. No texting. No calling. Unless it’s from me or Jin..perhaps Hobi,” Yoongi finishes sternly, completely fitting the role of a parent. “And if you go against any of these you won’t be allowed to go to Busan with Jeongguk over winter break.”

“What?!”

“You heard me,” Yoongi says, a satisfaction in his voice. “Now be good. And for fuck’s sake don’t let me catch you with his tongue down your throat or anything. I’m happy you’re getting some but wow—it’s not something I’d like to see, or hear after you’ve done so..”

“How did you know—”

“I’m not an idiot, Tae. You were breathless when you answered the phone. And you don’t run.”

Taehyung blushes crimson, burying his head in his hands. “You weren’t supposed to know that, besides you didn’t mind asking me all about it the other day—”

“Ah, ah, ah, I don’t mind hearing about the *aftermath* of your adventures. You can tell me all about that. But I don’t want to hear you guys making out that’s..” Yoongi shudders in disgust. “You guys have your fun in private.”
Taehyung laughs. “I’m going to tell you that exact same thing once you get with Hoseok and I catch you guys sucking each other’s dick—”

“Alright, that’s enough!”

Taehyung laughs even harder, only dying down once an important question comes to mind. “Does that mean you forgive me?” He asks, a puppy-dog shine in his eyes. It’s rare his emotions transfer to his eyes so innocently.

“But will you always forgive me? Will you forgive me for what I’ve done?

The holidays came in a blink of an eye.

Things between Taehyung and Jeongguk has been nice, and now with his past no longer a secret, Tae feels like he’s not holding back or distancing himself from the other anymore. In fact, it only seemed to strengthen their relationship, and Taehyung feels bad that he had doubted him so much.

Jeongguk deserved the benefit of the doubt.

However, there’s no need to feel regretful about it now. Taehyung’s spent too much of his life feeling that way; feeling guilty, and he no longer wants to succumb to that emotion because most often than not, it hurts.

He wants to be happy and the people around him are making an effort for that to happen. Then, it’s only fitting that he makes the effort to be happy too.

The weeks without staying out late or texting Jeongguk had been rough in the sense that he missed spending time with him. Sure, they had class and school, and the occasional breaks and accidental
encounters around campus, but Taehyung had appreciated their time via phone and in person when school was finally over immensely.

He does understand why Yoongi did it though, and he can’t say the other was being too unreasonable either. Of course Yoongi was going to be worried, anyone would be, and he’s trying to make up for it by listening to the things Yoongi asked of him because he deserves at least that. After all, Yoongi’s been nothing but nice since the day he first met him six years ago.

And although Taehyung hadn’t told him for some also reasonable reasons, he quickly realises that he had put Yoongi through a lot of pain, and he would have hurt him less if he would have just briefly woken him up to tell him he would be out and that he would be safe.

But now his punishment is over and he has learnt his lesson to _never_ go out at five in the morning again, regardless if it’s for some quality time with his boyfriend or not. He doesn’t want Yoongi to blame the other either for a mistake they both made because honestly, although Yoongi’s trying to like Jeongguk, it’s still noticeably hard for him to do so. It’s kind of funny seeing Yoongi bite down every insult and retort that comes to mind when Taehyung talks to him about Jeongguk, trying his hardest to be supportive but deep down disliking the other tremendously.

What’s also funny is the encounter he had with him one day, in which Jeongguk had told Tae all about. Apparently it was incredibly awkward, and with Yoongi’s lack of distasteful comments and sharp glares, Jeongguk was scared the other had been replaced with some sort of clone.

He had asked Taehyung later if Yoongi was mad at them and Taehyung brushed it off because the last thing he needed to know was how infuriated Yoongi was with both of their behaviours. He kind of got the gist of it though when Taehyung explained his punishment, and he had apologised various times for getting him in trouble to begin with.

Things seem to be behind them however as the day Taehyung gets to see Jeongguk’s family finally rolls around, and it’s then that Taehyung realises he hasn’t been this restless or nervous before meeting someone in what seems like forever.

What are they going to think? Do they _know_ he’s dating their son? Do they know their son is even into guys in the first place?

What if they’re homophobic—most people are and if Taehyung becomes the one to break Jeongguk’s relationship with his family he’ll never forgive himself. Good families are hard to come by, and he would do anything to ensure that Jeongguk keeps his.
He’s also worried that he’ll give off a bad impression. He’s blind, for the most part mentally stable but who knows, and the majority people don’t really take him seriously because he has a disability and all. Being blind hasn’t really been a total bad thing in his life, and although he does want to see again, he’s content with his life currently. He’s aware that other people don’t share that same perspective, however, and he’s nervous if Jeongguk’s parents are the type of people that would also be opposed to their son dating a blind person.

The car door slams and it partially snaps him out of his thoughts. He can hear luggage being rolled against the asphalt, and gravel getting caught up in between the little wheels as it transfers from the driveway to the grass where the car is parked. His nervousness is also accompanied by excitement, because although he’s terrified at meeting the other’s parents he’s also so thrilled to. He’s so excited to meet the people that raised such a kind and caring and understanding person, and it eases his worries a bit to know that if they managed to raise such an open-minded kid, they must be open-minded too. The odds are in his favour but one can never be too sure.

“Are you nervous?” Jeongguk asks him teasingly, kissing his cheek and grabbing the last of his bags off the floor. Even though it’s a joke Taehyung lets out a shaky laugh.

“Honestly? Yes. What if they don’t like me, Jeongguk? What if they don’t like the fact that I’m blind…and a guy.”

“Tae,” Jeongguk says softly, rubbing his hair. “We’ve been over this. They’ll love you. Yeah, they don’t know you’re a guy, or that you’re blind, but I know that they’ll like you anyways because I like you, and I mean come on, what’s not to like? You’re perfect.”

Taehyung does a gesture that signifies that he’s rolling his eyes. He stopped rolling them after he lost the ability to see because since then his eyes haven’t really been apart of him. He can roll them, it’s not like he’s completely lost the feeling in his eyes, in fact some parts of them are extremely sensitive and then others are just unresponsive. He just figured that doing so would be weird and unnatural for him, so now he does a little shake with his wrists every time he feels the need to give off that expression. That and most of the time his eyes are covered by sunglasses, or at least, most of the time they used to be.

This time he does have his sunglasses on though, and it may be the last pair he has.

He needs to buy more.
“Of course you’d say that,” Taehyung replies, holding onto Jeongguk’s hand as he guides him to the car. They reach the side door and Jeongguk opens it, allowing him to sit down in the passenger’s seat. Taehyung shakes his wrists again as Jeongguk puts on his seatbelt for him, patting him on the head and kissing him as if he were a child. “And even though you are overwhelmingly charming, was it exactly necessary to strap me in?”

“Absolutely. And back to the situation with my parents, they’re not only going to like you because I like you but because of the qualities I like you for. Which is all of them by the way. You forget how incredible you are, and it genuinely irritates me.”

Taehyung laughs. “How do you think I feel about you? You forget how amazing you are and it genuinely annoys me,” he pauses, hands in his lap. “Thank you for reassuring me though. I shouldn’t be worried but I really want to make a good impression.”

Jeongguk kisses him again, this time for a little longer. “You will, you always do. I know when I first met you—wow I think my jaw dropped…literally, Jimin teased about it right in front of you..I was mortified obviously. Now, stop being self-conscious and realise that my parents will adore you. I know they will.”

“Alright, alright fine, I’ll take your word for it.”

“Good,” Jeongguk closes the car door and walks over to the trunk putting down the rest of their stuff before closing it. He walks to the driver’s seat and sits down, turning back to Taehyung. “Is Yoongi going to say goodbye?”

Taehyung shuffles in his seat, trying to get comfortable. “Oh, he already said goodbye to me a couple hours ago. He left with Hoseok early this morning because apparently, they have a lot of work to get started on. They’re gonna be staying with each other for the time being to ensure more work gets done…as if that’s what they’ll really be doing..”

He doesn’t mention the fact that Yoongi wanted to leave before Jeongguk arrived to pick him up. He’s trying to like him, yes, but that doesn’t mean he quite exactly wants to see him or anything. The key word is trying.

“You’re still on about them being a thing?”

“Of course! It’s even more obvious than before, I swear they had a moment.”
Jeongguk laughs disbelievingly, finding the other’s amusement endearing. “Whatever you say. I mean, I kind of see it but I’m not too close to Yoongi to tell.”

“You two should get closer.”

Jeongguk almost goes white. “Yeah, I think he’s the one that doesn’t want to get close to me. I’ve tried! But I swear he hates me, and not only because of the whole 5 AM thing.”

Taehyung tries to deny it. “I mean…” he pauses. “Okay so he doesn’t exactly hate you, he’s just… protective—yes, overprotective you could say. Very much so. He’s always gonna be worried about me but hey, that shouldn’t prevent you from trying. I’m telling you, he’s insanely sweet when you get to know him.”

“Yes, like a cat, I’m aware. If only he decided to share that side with me..”

“You guys will! I’m sure, just give it time.”

Jeongguk nods his head, igniting the engine. “I’ve been waiting for more than 4 months.”

“He needs a solid six to be ready to even think about it,” Taehyung says jokingly. “But seriously, I’m sure he’ll come around if it’s for me.”

“I hope so. He’s your family. And like you want my family to like you, I want your family to like me. At least Jin does, but I know that Yoongi means a lot to you and I want him to finally accept me.”

“Me too..” Taehyung trails off, feeling the car start to move. He can feel the tires rolling, the concrete and dirt beneath him, the rumble of the machine as the petrol starts to pour out in gulfs and past the engine’s awakened state. He feels slightly carsick at the sensation and tries to focus on their conversation to ignore it. Unfortunately, it’s just ended, and he has to start a new one to help divert his attention from the nausea in his stomach to Jeongguk’s voice. “So, how long did you say it takes to get to Busan again?”

“Four to six hours.”
Taehyung swallows, feeling sicker. “Four to six?!”

Jeongguk laughs. “Yeah, what’d you think? Normally I take the train cause it’s faster but this is more fun. It’ll be like a little road trip! Plus, it’s less expensive too, and I need to save up the money I do have for this month’s rent. Jin’s nice, obviously, but that doesn’t mean I can get out of paying my part. Since his family isn’t really helping him out and all..I feel like it’s important I try to keep my end of the bargain stable.”

Taehyung nods, aware of Jin’s family situation. “Understandable.”

He rolls down his window to allow a breeze into the car, immediately easing his nausea as it allows him to focus more on the sensations of the wind on his face, the seat on his back and the sun on his skin. Even though it’s cold out, the breeze gives a nice chill in contrast to the congested vehicle, and he starts to feel better.

“God, I know I just started driving but I really want to kiss you,” Jeongguk blurts out into the arising silence, causing a smile to appear on Taehyung’s lips.

“Your eyes should be on the road, not on me.”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes. “I can multi-task..”

Taehyung attempts to hit him. “Don’t be irresponsible.”

Jeongguk laughs. “What! Barely anyone’s on the road yet, and I’m being careful…” he trails off, aware of Taehyung’s attention on him. He decides to have a little fun. “I want to push you against a wall, lips brushing yours, barely any distance between us as I trail my hands down your body..slowly..tantalisingly..” He tries to draw out his voice slowly, hands steady on the steering wheel.

Taehyung hums. “Interesting.”

Jeongguk suppresses a smile by biting his lips. “And I want to touch you, feel your skin beneath my fingertips. Going down your torso and resting just above your waist, holding you there as I begin to kiss you.”
Taehyung stirs in his seat. “Are you seriously going to do this now?”

Jeongguk ignores his question, staring at the road yet noticing Tae’s increasingly restless position, pleased with himself so far. “I'll start with slowly, letting my tongue wander your mouth, our bodies pressed against each other’s..I’ll kiss down your jaw, your neck, your throat..I’ll caress you softly, my trailing lower and lower and..” Jeongguk bites his lip, side-eyeing the other in hopes his teasing has gone far. He tries not to laugh at Taehyung’s flustered face. “And then I’ll tell you that I really should be focusing on the road.”

Taehyung groans, blowing a strand of hair from his eyes as the wind continuously tries to rebel his attempts and blow it back. Jeongguk smiles innocently, pretending as if nothing had happened, being attentive to his surroundings as he sees vehicles pile onto the streets. He feels bad for getting the other so worked up, but he also finds it amusing.

It’s not like he was lying when he said all those things.

“That was mean,” Taehyung says, glaring softly in the direction of the rear-view mirror. His cheeks feel warm and there’s a familiar pressure in his abdomen. Rude.

Jeongguk laughs. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, you’re right..but don’t worry. We’ll get to those things eventually.” He winks, burying another smile between his teeth. “It’s not like you want our first time to be in the back of my car.”

“What?!”

Jeongguk laughs harder. “I’m kidding, I’m kidding…sort of..”

“You were going to have sex with me in your car?”

“Hey, hold up. That’s not what I said. I was preventing that situation from happening. At least for now I was.”

“I can’t tell if you’re joking,” Taehyung says frankly.

“Honestly, neither can I.”
The city continues to roll in and out of view, covered by trees and encased with a sort of foggy luminescence. Jeongguk can appreciate this hazy morning, the light streaming ever so softly through condensed clouds and packed trees, letting glimpses of light escape ever few seconds as the street becomes a sheet of grey. They aren’t going particularly fast, but it still seems as if everything is going by so quickly and so hazily, maybe the effect of Jeongguk’s words making them both a bit more restless than usual.

“I wasn’t joking,” Jeongguk admits, a playfulness in his voice.

Taehyung hums softly, laughing under his breath. “I figured.”

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Taehyung and Jeongguk arrive at the Jeon’s around four in the afternoon. The fog had soon turned into rain, and the rain had soon turned into a flourishing storm of thunder and lightning. The fields were quickly changed to thick marsh, the dirt a swamp of mud and the grass entangling itself between their feet,

And now, they were inside, dripping wet, hair damp and shoes soiled with the aftermath of the flooded ground. Jeongguk cringes at their dirty clothes and at their even dirtier luggage, and quickly encourages Taehyung to take off his shoes so that he doesn’t track more mud into the house.

They shuffle around quietly, trying to keep the doorway clean and listen intently for any signs of Jeongguk’s family. They can both smell some sort of meal cooking in the kitchen, perhaps a roast or a stew, so they must be home, but so far, the house appears to be empty.

“Hello?” Jeongguk asks loudly, his voice echoing across the halls. He helps Taehyung roll his suitcases towards the corner, giving him a light kiss on the cheek before treading gently in his socks towards the source of the smell. “Is anybody home?”

He hears a large thud from upstairs, followed by rushing footsteps and distant excited voices. Jeongguk’s eyes immediately brighten, his lips forming into a smile, and he goes back to grab Taehyung’s hand as another thud resonates from the top floor.

The footsteps get closer, and then, Taehyung hears a high-pitched squeal come from somewhere in front of him. Jeongguk’s hand tightens around his own, and soon there’s a lot more movement than there was before.
“Hyung! Get your ass down here, Jeonggukie’s home!”

The voice is high and light, extremely similar to Jeongguk’s in a way yet more feminine and laced with a heavily striking accent. Taehyung hadn’t realised it before but Jeongguk’s accent had adapted more to the city’s since his time there, and he would never have thought he had been raised in Busan.

Jeongguk laughs, disconnecting his grip on Taehyung briefly to hug his little sister tightly. “I missed you Eun-ji. Please tell me you’ve been good since I’ve been gone? You haven’t been giving Eomma or Jung-hyun too much trouble, right?”

Eun-ji laughs sweetly, and Taehyung’s surprised by how familiar her voice is despite having never met her. She sounds so much like Jeongguk in a way he didn’t imagine she should. “Of course not, I’m not a kid anymore I can be mature! I’m a whole fiftee.”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes. “You’re practically a baby shut up.” He ruffles his little sister’s hair, much to her dismay, and only stops when she catches sight of Taehyung, her eyes immediately widening in curiosity.

“Who’s your friend!” She asks excitedly, pointing to Taehyung’s quiet and laid-back figure. Taehyung waves hesitantly in what he assumes is her direction, smiling in an attempt to be friendly and she gasps, turning over to Jeongguk. “He’s cute,” she whispers loudly, defeating the purpose of her whispering in the first place as Taehyung hears her comment, turning red.

“This,” Jeongguk says, grinning to himself at Eun-ji’s blatant comment. “Is Taehyung. He’ll be staying with us for a few weeks, okay? So be nice to him.”

Eun-ji glares at her brother, crossing her arms. “Of course I’m going to be nice to him!” She walks closer, extending out her hand with a bright smile on her face, a significant contrast from her attitude towards Jeongguk only seconds prior. “Hi, it’s nice to meet you. I’m Eun-ji, but you can call me Ji-Ji!”

There’s an awkward moment as she keeps her extended hand out, waiting for Taehyung to shake it. Tae tilts his head to the side, understanding the situation yet remaining still in hesitation. He’s unsure how to move or react. “Her hand is out isn’t it?” He asks aloud, his question pointed towards Jeongguk. Jeongguk smiles, coming back to hold his hand and Eun-ji focuses on the way they interact with each other. She squints her eyes in curiosity before averting her gaze, holding back a thought.
“I forgot to mention,” Jeongguk states softly, looking at Eun-ji seriously. “Taehyung isn’t like most people. He has a disability, and you may want to interact with him a little differently than you would usually, but don’t. He’s entirely capable of doing what anyone else would do, it’s just a little harder for him.”

“A disability?” She asks curiously, looking at Taehyung up and down to try and figure it out what it could be.

“I’m blind,” Taehyung replies, tapping his sunglasses lightly. “But I’m wearing these right now so it would’ve been hard to notice.”

Realisation begins to set on Eun-ji’s face and her mouth forms an ‘o’, her eyes appearing extremely apologetic. “Oh, I’m so sorry I was so insensitive I should have at least—”

“It’s okay, it’s okay don’t worry,” Taehyung interrupts, giving her a small smile. He’s used to interactions like these. “You didn’t know, and like your hyung said, you don’t have to treat me any differently. It’s nice to meet you.”

Eun-ji nods her head, acquiring a new respect for the other. This is her first time meeting a blind person, and she’s surprised at how young he is and of how capable he is. “Okay, it’s very nice to meet you too Taehyung-ssi. Any friend of Jeongguk’s is a friend of mine.”

Taehyung smiles, finding it easier to breathe. He knew Jeongguk’s family would be welcoming but the confirmation that they are makes him feel more at ease, at least for the time being.

“Where’s Jung-hyun and mom?” Jeongguk asks curiously, realising that he hasn’t seen anyone come down yet.

“Well,” Eun-ji begins, a mischievous look in her eyes. “Jung-hyun’s upstairs talking to his girlfriend and Eomma is getting ready. She put me in charge of ‘making sure the kitchen doesn’t burn’, but I just put a camera down there and I’ve been paying attention to it from my room.”

“Okay one, that is extremely irresponsible of you, please make sure the house doesn’t burn down and two, Jung-hyun has a what?”
Eun-Ji smiles widely, knowing internally that would grab her brother’s attention. “Jung-hyun has a girlfriend!”

Jeongguk bursts into laughter, not believing his ears. His brother, his socially inept brother who has the worst flirting skills of the century has managed to get a girlfriend. Jeongguk struggles to gather his words.

“No, impossible. I don’t believe it.”

“It’s true!” Eun-ji protests, laughing as well because she couldn’t believe it herself at first either. “She’s super pretty too, I can’t believe he got her to like him.”

“Ji-Ji!”

“What?” she asks innocently. “It’s not like I’m wrong. Regardless, I think they’re cute together.” She turns her gaze to Taehyung, a smile on her lips as a question comes to mind. “Speaking of, do you have a girlfriend, oppa?”

Jeongguk stares at her incredulously. “Are you asking him or me?”

Eun-ji rolls her eyes. “Obviously I’m talking to Taehyung. As if you’d get a girlfriend, you’re too busy being a dork half the time.”

“That was offensive.”

“Am I wrong?”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes, nudging Taehyung to answer the question. He clears his throat sceptically. “No, I don’t have a girlfriend.”


Taehyung chokes on his spit, causing Jeongguk to burst into even more laughter. He admires his
little sister’s honesty. “Well,” Taehyung starts, trying hard not to start laughing again. “I’m not lying, I guess I never found any interest in dating them. I’m also blind so I guess that’s also a bummer.”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes, not understanding why Tae doesn’t just admit he’s gay until he realises that Taehyung’s avoiding a direct answer for his sake. Taehyung doesn’t know if the other’s family will feel comfortable knowing that he’s gay, and he’s putting it off in case they aren’t. More specifically, if they aren’t okay with their relationship.

“That’s insane. You must at least get flirted with though, right?”

Taehyung scratches the back of his neck. “I mean, again, I’m blind so I can’t really tell half the time. I just think people are being nice.”

Jeongguk hums, shaking his head quickly. “That’s so not true, people flirt with him all the time and it’s annoying.”

Taehyung makes an offended sound from the back of his throat. “As if you aren’t flirted with every single second of the day. I swear, you’re hit on at least once every time we’re together, now that’s irritating.”

Eun-ji giggles, watching their conversation with wide eyes. “So, are you single then?”

“Eun-Ji,” Jeongguk exclaims incredulously, his words coming out between clenched teeth. He doesn’t know how to explain the situation to her. “Don’t just ask him those things.”

“What? I’m just curious..”

Taehyung thinks about it, hesitating slightly. He’s not sure how to answer.

“And you’re too young to be hitting on him,” Jeongguk interjects, saving the other from a situation he knows he doesn’t want to get involved in.

He doesn’t want to be the one to out Jeongguk to his entire family.
Eun-ji glares at her older brother, crossing her arms. “Wow, way to throw me under the bus.”

“You’re fifteen.”

“So?”

“It’s a little young,” Taehyung states offhandedly, trying to remain neutral. Of course he’s going to be on Jeongguk’s side but it’s not like he wants to make his little sister despise him either. “And I feel like your brother wouldn’t like that too much..”

Well, that’s for other reasons.

“Yeah, yeah, he’s so overprotective it’s insane.”

“Alright, that’s enough,” Jeongguk says, wrapping Taehyung in his arms. He hugs him from the back, resting his head on the other’s shoulder whilst glaring at Eun-ji. “Taehyung’s my guest.”

Eun-ji puts her hands up. “Okay, okay, I’m backing off. But…I was just saying..”

“Could you just grab mom?”

Eun-ji groans. “Ugh, fine. You’re lucky I miss you.”

Jeongguk rolls his eyes, watching her walk up the stairs and disappear from his sight as he exhales a breath. He rubs his face slowly, feeling both mentally and physically exhausted even though it’s been merely minutes since he’s been back home. He hadn’t expected his little sister to actually think it right to flirt with the friend he brought over, who, turns out is actually his boyfriend, turning the whole situation into a much, much more chaotic thing.

He turns to Taehyung, his eyes softening considerably because despite his inner turmoil, Taehyung still manages to ease his worries. He kisses his ear softly, dragging his lips down to his neck and lets them linger there, taking his hands into his.
“Do you want them to know?” Taehyung asks quietly, his eyes fluttering shut as Jeongguk kisses down his neck lightly. Jeongguk hums, pondering over an answer.

“I don’t mind them knowing,” he says after a little while. He quirks his eyebrows up, lips departing from his neck temporarily. “Do you?”

Taehyung sighs “I’m fine with it if you are. Whatever you’re comfortable with.”

Jeongguk smiles, drawing his lips from the other’s skin and licking over them hastily. He stares at the other with a certain look in his eyes but refrains from continuing, his desires although insatiable, for the most part, and certainly for the time being, under control. “Later,” he whispers lowly, and his words send a shiver down Taehyung’s spine as he realises the promise beneath them. He drags his hands down the other’s body, resting them on his waist temporarily before letting go of him entirely, sighing in sexual frustration.

They jolt slightly when they hear more footsteps coming down the stairs, these ones louder and more rushed. Yes, Jeongguk doesn’t really mind his family knowing about his relationship with Taehyung, however, he’d rather have them figure it out through him telling them rather than them catching him and Tae doing something...promiscuous.

Taehyung clears his throat, rubbing his neck out of habit and hides a smile. “Later,” he repeats quietly, squeezing the other’s hand one last time before letting it go. The footsteps grow closer, and then, Taehyung hears another exclaim of happiness.

“Jeongguk! You’re home!”

There’s movement and then beside him feels empty as Jeongguk runs up to hug his mother. She’s still in the process of getting ready, her hair in curls and her makeup only half-done. Taehyung feels a tightness in his chest at the sound of her voice, a happiness he can’t quite understand. Jeongguk’s mother sounds so much like him as well. It’s gentle, soft yet stern and of course, it emanates that same sweetness that Jeongguk possesses. He’s never met the other’s family and yet it feels like he’s known them forever just based on the similarities they share with Jeongguk. It makes him feel more at ease.

“My goodness, you’ve grown so much since I last saw you!” Mrs. Jeon remarks in surprise, holding her son’s shoulders and giving him another tight embrace. Jeongguk coughs, complaining that he can’t breathe because she’s holding him too tightly yet smiles like it’s the only thing he’ll ever do. He
hadn’t realised how much he had missed his mom since he had been abroad, and he can’t begin to imagine how much she must’ve missed him as well. She lets go of Jeongguk briefly, squishing his cheeks together and scanning his face for any deficits or signs of stress. She smiles brightly, and it’s almost identical to the one Jeongguk shares himself. “You look well! And healthy! Though, you could put a little more meat on your bones..”

“Eomma,” Jeongguk complains jokingly, holding her hands in his own so she stops squeezing his cheeks. “I’m eating fine, just running a lot.”

“You and your running,” she says, sighing slightly to herself. “You never change…Let’s go eat. I prepared lunch but I didn’t know if you’d be on time because of the storm so a few things need to finish cooking. I didn’t want the food to be cold once you got home.”

Jeongguk kisses his mother’s cheek, a shine in his eyes. “Thank you. I’ll help with whatever’s needed.”

They walk to the kitchen, Jeonggunk making his way back to Taehyung so he can guide him, placing his palm on the base of his back gently. While Taehyung feels more at ease than he did originally, he’s still a little awkward, feeling out of place given the situation. Even though it feels like he knows these people he doesn’t, and that’s a crucial factor he needs to face no matter how much he tries to think otherwise. They don’t know him. They don’t know that he’s blind or gay or that he’s in a relationship with their son.

Mrs. Jeon grabs a couple glasses from the counter, filling them up with water from a dispensary. She eyes Taehyung particularly, looking at Jeongguk for clarification. “You brought a guest?”

Taehyung pales.

“Wait, you didn’t tell her?” He whispers to Jeongguk quietly, feeling exponentially more uncomfortable than before. He had assumed that the other would have at least told someone about his appearance. He had assumed that his family would have at least known he existed. Jeongguk gives a sheepish smile, presenting Taehyung with his two hands.

“Right, I didn’t tell you. I wanted to keep it a surprise,” Jeongguk starts excitedly, grabbing one of the glasses his mother had filled up. Mrs. Jeon takes a sip of water, a little upset that she hadn’t known of this mysterious person beforehand.
“You wanted to keep this a secret?” She asks questioningly, eyeing him oddly. She puts down her cup of water so she can fill up another glass, walking over to hand it to Taehyung because she knows that Jeongguk wouldn’t just bring anyone over. It must mean that he’s important to him, and Mrs. Jeon is more curious as to why she hadn’t known about this person before, considering that he’s now in her house.

“This,” Jeongguk says, smiling widely. There’s a pit of nervousness in his chest, but for the most part, he feels ready. He feels like this is exactly the thing he is supposed to do. “Is Kim Taehyung. He’s my —”

Mrs. Jeon’s eyes widen before he can say anything else, surprise written on her face in almost absolute clarity as she drops her glass. It ricochets off of the ground, shattering against the tiles and flying up towards the ceiling, encasing the ground in shards as gravity pulls them back down again, splashing water onto both her and Taehyung’s clothes. The sound echoes across the room for a few seconds, crisp and sharp against the air and Taehyung cringes, feeling his heart in his throat as he remembers the countless days where this sound would resonate constantly throughout the house. Where this sound meant..pain.

Jeongguk quickly jumps out of the way, pulling Taehyung with him so he doesn’t step into any of the fragments scattered across the floor. He stares at his mother for a few seconds, confused and surprised because the thing he had wanted to say, the actual shock inducing statement that followed Taehyung’s brief introduction hadn’t even been said. He’s curious but at the same time concerned.

“Mom, are you okay-”

“I’m so sorry,” she interrupts quickly, her hands trembling slightly from the shock of the glass. Jeongguk looks down at her fingers, then back up to her face, and wonders if this news was really that shocking to cause such a reaction. “I’m sorry it’s just…What did you his name was again?”

Jeongguk gives her a confused glance, his mind whirling with possibilities. He hasn’t even told her that he’s into guys yet and she’s freaking out? It doesn’t make sense.

Taehyung clears his throat, trying hard to swallow down the deep-ridden fear crawling up his throat.

The glass had been a stark reminder of his past, a too real and too engrained sound that still makes him anticipate the strike or the blow and the screams and the yelling that would follow suit. It still manages to make him want to cover his head, shut his eyes and pray that he’ll make it out alive the next day. It still manages to make every fibre in his body stop, freeze, and pulse in trepidation. His mouth tastes sour and his spine feels cold as the familiar icy feeling spreads through his joints,
turning his movements solid. He holds onto one of his hands to prevent it from shaking, digging his
finger nails deep into his palms to distract himself from the pain that’s resurfacing from his memories,
the pain he thought had finally dulled and faded away. “It’s Kim Taehyung,” he responds politely,
afraid of what she might think of him; afraid of what she might think of Jeongguk because this isn’t a
reaction he thought would occur just moments after being introduced.

Mrs. Jeon’s face turns white, and Jeongguk doesn’t think he’s ever seen her that nervous before. She
seems afraid. She seems guilty in a way. “I’ll clean this up,” she says quickly, a ghastly expression
written on her face as she goes to get a dustpan. Jeongguk looks between Taehyung, who looks a
little shaken up, and his mom, who looks as though she’s seen a ghost, and Jeongguk turns to face
her.

“I’ll help you..” He looks at Taehyung again, reaching out to touch his shoulder but stops as he
watches the other flinch, a wince appearing on his face and transforming his features into an
expression of pain and fear. He hadn’t touched him and yet he could sense it coming. What’s even
oddier is that regardless if he had touched him or not, Taehyung doesn’t flinch because of Jeongguk.
Taehyung isn’t afraid of him, he never has been, and yet he was anticipating a hit. He was expecting
Jeongguk to hurt him.

Mrs. Jeon sweeps up the glass shakily, the dustpan trembling ever so slightly in her grasp. It leaves
Jeongguk conflicted because there’s clearly something wrong with Taehyung right now but at the
same time, there’s clearly something not right with his mother either. He has to figure out what the
hell his mother is so freaked out about but he also needs to be there for Tae and whatever it is that’s
causing him to feel so scared. He looks at Taehyung worriedly.

“Are you okay?” He asks, his voice gentle and steady.

Taehyung nods his head hastily, taking in a shallow and discrete breath. “You should go talk to her,”
he whispers. Mrs. Jeon gets up to throw away the shards of glass, swallowing thickly to herself.

Jeongguk presses his lips together, feeling as though things have taken a turn for the worse. “Are you
sure?”

“I’m sure.”

“I-,” Jeongguk hesitates, wanting to say more yet unable to say anything else. He opens his mouth
and closes it back again in futility, realising that he has nothing to say to the other that could prove to
be beneficial or helpful in any way. He sighs, stepping away from Tae briefly so that he can talk to
his mother who is now emptying the dustpan over the bin, hitting it harshly against the edge of it so
any smaller fragments can fall inside. She seems focused on distracting herself.

“Eomma, is everything alright?” Jeongguk says over the noise, exasperated in a way he hasn’t felt towards his mother in a long time. “Did I say something surprising..?”

Mrs. Jeon appears conflicted, a weary look in her eyes as she stares at her son with guilt and bewilderment. “I-” she stops herself, relinquishing her thoughts. He can’t know. It would…be too detrimental for him to know.

It’s probably just a coincidence. It has to be. And so, she convinces herself that it is.

“It’s me, mom. I just want to know if you’re okay.”

Mrs. Jeon rubs her eyes with one hand, looking up at Jeongguk with more confidence as she puts down the dustpan, going back over to collect more of the shards. “It was really nothing, I had no idea what came over me. Really.”

“Nothing? You look like you’ve seen a ghost and I’ve barely said anything.”

She hits the brush this time against the edge of the trash can, a little louder than before, and Jeongguk stutters.

“I’m telling you it was nothing. I didn’t mean to drop it…My hand slipped, that’s all,” Mrs. Jeon says, a certain calmness and reassurance to her voice. Even with her forced smile, Jeongguk can’t help but believe her.

She walks to the sink to grab a few paper towels, mopping up the water between tightly pressed hands. The liquid sops into the paper, turning it soggy and damp, and the drenched napkin now floods her hand with a mix of mineral water and small bits of glass. Jeongguk takes the paper towel from her hand, throwing it away abruptly so that she doesn’t hurt herself and he eyes her particularly.

“Your hand slipped?”

Mrs. Jeon nods, going back to the floor to wipe up more of the water despite most of it being gone.
Jeongguk sighs, kneeling down to stop his mother’s hand as her actions become unnecessarily tedious.

She looks up at him. “I’m getting old it’s not unbelievable,” she states defensively, taking her hands away from the floor. She stares into his eyes. “I’m sorry I didn’t mean to scare you two, I should’ve been more careful. I promise you it’s nothing.”

Jeongguk sighs, believing her for the most part. “Okay, okay. It’s just..you seemed nervous that’s all. I wanted to make sure everything was alright.”

Mrs. Jeon swallows. “Everything is. I’m certain.”

It’s just a coincidence.

Jeongguk gets up, warped a little in confusion. He feels like it wasn’t nothing but if his mother said it wasn’t than it shouldn’t be. Why would she have any reason to lie anyways? Hands slip and people make mistakes so he isn’t too concerned anymore. He looks back at Taehyung, expecting him to be as afraid as before but is surprised to see that he looks fine. He seems alright too.

So, things are okay? He exhales a breath, relieved that the day hasn’t been ruined before its even started.

Mrs. Jeon gets up soon after, wiping her hands on her pants before going back to Taehyung, bowing down briefly. “I’m very sorry Taehyung-ssi. I didn’t mean to startle you or hurt you by any chance.”

There’s something unnatural about her voice but Jeongguk can’t really pinpoint what it is. She seems to be overly sorry for such a small thing. Taehyung smiles in response, something that feels odd to him because he could’ve sworn that Tae wasn’t okay when he was last talking to him. He had been so apprehensive and wired up but now..he’s smiling?

“It’s completely fine, it’s only a little water. It’s nice to meet you Mrs. Jeon.”

Her eyes shimmer in the light, and she presses her lips together. “Likewise.”
She turns to Jeongguk. “I didn’t know there would be guests over so I don’t look my best,” she says, pointing at the curlers in her hair. “I’ll finish quickly and come back down.”

“It’s fine, mom. Actually, Taehyung is—”

“It’ll only take me a few minutes,” she interrupts quickly, another forced smile making its way onto her lips. Jeongguk stops his explanation, realising that it won’t take long for her to figure out that Taehyung is blind anyways. He nods his head and she seems relieved, giving him one last kiss on the cheek before going back up the stairs.

He stares in the position she once was blankly, trying to wrap his head around everything because he feels as though the atmosphere has drastically changed.

Maybe she figured out they were together without him having to say anything. Maybe she’s upset..

“Do you guys have a guest bathroom?” Taehyung asks, fiddling with his hands nervously. Jeongguk blinks a couple of times in confusion before looking back at Taehyung, nodding his head.

“Yeah we do. Do you need to use it?”

Taehyung nods his head and so Jeongguk takes him to it, hesitating to hold his hand.

“I’m sorry if I jumped when you tried to touch me earlier..” Taehyung starts quietly, feeling somewhat guilty. Although it was a minute gesture, he had never wanted to feel even a fragment of this feeling with Jeongguk. Not with him. “The glass startled me and it reminded me of some..things, but I promise you it won’t happen again. I was just shaken up that’s all.”

The realization hits him too hard and Jeongguk feels nauseous, a bitter taste lining his tongue. He stops walking, grabbing Taehyung’s hand quickly to stop him too and stares intensely at the wall. He feels angry and frustrated, a pesky feeling of enragement glowing from within him and then a billow of sadness. His nose burns, his eyes sting and without thinking about it, he wraps Taehyung into a secure embrace, holding onto his frame tightly with the intention of never letting go.

“Jeongguk-”
Jeongguk shushes him, burying his head into the other’s neck and breathing in deeply. “Don’t say anything,” he whispers softly, willing the sadness in his gut to go away. “Don’t apologise. Just… know that I’m here.”

Taehyung smiles, relaxing into the other’s grip and allowing his emotions to surface and wash away naturally. He had originally planned to lock himself in the bathroom and wait out his panic attack but it seems as though Jeongguk had managed to prevent it just in time. His chest heaves a little less quickly and his hands shake a little less intensely and then…the grip on his heart goes away.

“Thank you,” Taehyung says quietly, wrapping his hands around the other’s waist too. “I needed that.”

“I’m always going to be here.”

“I know. Me too.”

They let go and Jeongguk kisses him, aware that his family could come down at any time and catch them. He doesn’t care as much.

“Let’s get you a clean shirt,” Jeongguk says in a hushed tone, amusement in his voice to turn the mood somewhat lighter. “Yours is all wet now. Both from the rain and the water.”

Taehyung makes a little sound, resembling a chuckle but lighter and airier. “Suddenly I don’t need to use the bathroom anymore.”

Jeongguk sits on the bed, looking at Taehyung distinctly.

“Don’t look!” Taehyung exclaims, glaring at Jeongguk with surprising accuracy from across the room. Jeongguk had brought them to his room for the time being so that Tae could change out of his wet clothing but it seems as though the other’s still shy as he refuses to change unless Jeongguk turns around.

Jeongguk laughs, putting his hands up. “I wasn’t going to!”
He totally was.

“Besides,” he adds nonchalantly. “It’s not like I haven’t seen you shirtless before..”

“Pervert.”

“What do you mean pervert?! We’re dating!”

“And that doesn’t change what I said, so do as you’re told and turn around,” Taehyung retorts, holding the bottom of his shirt tightly. “I’ll know if you’re looking, I can sense those things so don’t even try!”

“Okay, okay, I’m closing my eyes.”

“No, you have to turn around,” Taehyung insists. “I can’t tell if you open your eyes or not but I can tell if you turn around so just..do it!”

Jeongguk laughs, turning around obediently and resting his hands on the bed, raising his eyebrows. “Is this sufficient enough?”

Taehyung thinks about it, squinting his eyes even though it doesn’t help him see any better. He nods his head in satisfaction, believing that the other had turned around. “Yeah that should do it. Now, no peeking.”

“Come on, as if I was going to—”

“You were planning on it don’t even lie.”

Jeongguk sighs. “Okay fine maybe I was going to, but only a little bit!”

“See, you’re being perverted.”
Jeongguk rolls his eyes. “Okay, okay, I’m being tame now, could you just change already.”

Taehyung smiles, holding onto the bottom of his shirt and slipping it off slowly, searching around for the extra one. He furrows his eyebrows after a few seconds. “You took the spare shirt didn’t you.”

“You never said anything about not doing that.”

“That was implied.”

He hears movement around him and he covers his body out in reflex, glaring in Jeongguk’s direction with again, surprising accuracy. “You’re not supposed to be looking.”

“My eyes are closed I swear!” Jeongguk says, and he’s not lying. With closed eyes he gets up from the bed, hesitantly reaching out in hopes of making contact with the other’s skin, walking uncertainly. Soon enough, his fingertips meet something warm and smooth and he smiles, trailing his hands down the other’s naked back and letting his nails graze his skin.

Taehyung shivers, his body naturally welcoming the other’s touch no matter how much his mind tells him that they shouldn’t be doing this now. “I told you-”

“You told me not to look,” Jeongguk interrupts, leaning closer so that they face each other. “And I’m not looking.”

He pulls Taehyung in by the waist, his chest against the other’s naked one.

“Well there’s no point in that now, you cheated the system.”

“Does that mean I can open my eyes?” Jeongguk asks with a raised eyebrow, travelling his hands across the other’s back lightly.

Taehyung sighs. “Fine, yes you can open them.”
Jeongguk peeps them open slowly, making eye contact with Taehyung’s face first. He removes his hands from the other’s body to cup his face, rubbing his cheek with his thumb tenderly.

“Don’t move,” he whispers, an idea making it’s away into his brain. He steps back from Taehyung a bit, leaving the other feeling slightly empty and looks over his body, his eyes glazing over his chest and stomach with an almost burning gaze.

He sees golden skin, soft and smooth and almost free of blemishes.

Almost that is.

Upon closer inspection Jeongguk sees the scars that litter the other’s body, some larger than others, most of them pale yet some a little more natural looking in colour. He sees the marks of where stitches used to be present and the patches of where wounds used to be. He can see his history painted onto his body as if it were text, words replaced with white memories that take the appearance of marks and ivory blemishes and he’s aware of the trauma.

“Turn around,” Jeongguk says, arising a confused glance from the other. Nonetheless, he does as he’s told.

Jeongguk stares, captivated. His back holds more memories, more tattered marks that show his survival. They’re jarred, longer, larger and more prominent as well as frequent. He can see a long stripe of pale pink stretching from the bottom of his tailbone to the middle of his back. He can see the whiter lines painting there way from his ribs to his stomach, and then up to his neck. They find their way to his shoulders, the back of his elbow, even the nook of his wrists, although not entirely obvious still eminent in the overhead light. He steps back to where he was originally, holding on to Taehyung’s hands gently, dragging his fingers up his arms and then down his back. He breathes into the other’s ear, a feeling of desire and domination coursing through him. He wants to replace these marks with something else. He wants to replace them with painless marks of his own. His lips touch Taehyung’s ear but barely so, and he closes his eyes. “Tell me,” he starts, smiling at how the other reacts to his touch and his voice. He can feel the goosebumps emanating from his body, and feel the slight shudder that the other involuntarily makes. “How I can take the pain away.”

“The pain?” Taehyung asks.

“The scars, the memories..I can’t erase them but I can help you replace them with something else. I can..” he bites the other’s ear lobe, tracing his lips down to his neck. Taehyung’s breath hitches. “I can make it easier..”
Jeongguk turns him around, staring at his anticipation and smiles, latching his lips back on his neck, kissing down and following the pale scars that streak his skin. He can hear Tae suck in a breath, tilting his head slightly back as his eyes naturally flutter shut.

“I’ll start here..” Jeongguk whispers, sucking softly against the side of his neck. Taehyung opens his mouth, a sound resembling a sigh and a moan escaping his throat and he clenches his jaw, swallowing prominently. “And I’ll make my way..” he continues, kissing lower against his neck, reaching his collarbones and then his chest, going over his scars with the movement of his lips. “Down.”

He kneels onto the ground, moving his hands up to the small of the other’s back, kissing along the line of his stomach and then to the side. Taehyung grabs onto Jeongguk’s hands, his breathing growing quicker as he clenches his jaw harder.

“Jeongguk..we shouldn’t be..” his voice trails off and he swallows again. “Your family’s-”

“Shh,” Jeongguk interrupts, resting his lips right above the hem of the other’s pants. He rotates him gently, kissing along the pinkish scar that still taints his back. He sucks on his skin, biting softly before running over the marks with his tongue. Taehyung shudders again. “We don’t need to think about that. Just focus on what I’m doing..” he runs his hands down Taehyung’s legs, feeling scars there too. They’re smoother than his usual skin, and his fingers glide over them with ease. “Feel my lips against your skin..and don’t try to hold back.”

Taehyung sees purple again, a tendril of fiery violet that sparks more tendrils to paste through the darkness. He feels light, sensations coursing throughout his entire body and it’s hard for him to think or breathe properly. Jeongguk kisses the skin along the line of his pants, his fingers fumbling with the other’s belt buckle.

“Wait, wait, wait,” Taehyung says abruptly, holding Jeongguk’s hands down so that they stop what they’re doing. Jeongguk hums, still kissing the marks that scar his stomach. “Really? Now?”

Jeongguk moves his hands against the other’s grip, trying to break free. “I locked the door.”

“So, you knew this would happen?”

Jeongguk plants a kiss along his V line, trailing lower. His voice sounds low and hushed, hot against the other’s skin and almost breathless. He bites his lip. “I was hoping it would.”
Taehyung blushes, something electric sparking throughout his nerves at those words. “Pervert.”

Jeongguk laughs softly, smiling when Taehyung removes his hold on him anyway, allowing him to continue. He runs his hands along the outside of his pants, cupping the bulge there firmly and squeezing it while he kisses up and down his abdomen.

Taehyung moans, biting his lip down harshly as his mind goes blank, the tightness in his pants intensifying the more Jeongguk kneads his hand into it. His knees turn weak, his jaw slackening and his breath hitching, an incredible wave of pleasure washing over his body.

“Jeongguk.”

He rubs over his hard-on once more, stroking it through his pants at an increasingly moderate pace. With the buckle of the other’s belt now undone, the material is much more loose and flexible, allowing him to use the friction of Taehyung’s clothes as an added bonus.

He detaches his lips momentarily, getting up from his position slowly with his hand still on the other’s dick, moving up and down in continuous circles. He uses his other hand to hold Taehyung securely, kissing him on the lips for a few seconds before breaking away to whisper something in his ear.

“I’m going to lift you up for a bit, okay? I just want to move you to the bed.”

Taehyung nods his head, wrapping his arms around Jeongguk’s neck as he feels hands underneath his butt lifting him off the floor. He wraps his legs around Jeongguk’s waist, sighing when their lips meet again in a fight for dominance. They kiss slowly, breathing in through their noses, and Jeongguk slips in his tongue, allowing it to wander throughout the other’s mouth.

He walks over to the bed, placing Tae down gently before hovering on top of him, reconnecting their lips and letting his hands continue what they were once doing. He kisses him slowly again, moaning softly into the kiss as he slips his hand underneath Taehyung’s pants, reaching the material of his boxers. He drags his fingers upward, smiling when he sees the other’s head fall back in pleasure, his mouth dropping open and his neck tilting slightly to the side. Jeongguk takes it as an opportunity to leave a hickey, kissing Taehyung’s neck once again while searching for that spot he knows is sensitive for him.

Jeongguk licks up to the place below his ear, moving a little lower as he senses the other shiver, and
sucks slowly. Taehyung lets out a quiet whimper, sucking his breath in between his teeth before letting out another, louder and needier moan, throwing his head back further into the now crumpled sheets.

Jeongguk smiles again, dragging his hand along the other’s length in a long extenuated stroke, groaning at the way Taehyung’s hips move to his movements. He kisses up Tae’s neck, a little breathless himself at the situation and brings his lips up to his ear, his breath hot and teasing.

“You’re wet,” he whispers lowly, moaning quietly in his ear because he knows the other likes it when he does. Taehyung’s body physically reacts, his hands gripping at Jeongguk’s shirt in order to bring them closer as his hips thrust into the tight grip of his hand. He feels warm and unbelievably sensitive, his skin tingling with desire and his mind glazed over with purple euphoria.

“Take off your shirt,” Taehyung whispers back, his eyes squeezing shut a bit more when Jeongguk slips his hands underneath his boxers, direct contact meeting his bare hard-on in an almost electrifying way. Taehyung can feel the other’s hand move up and down in an increasingly fast pace, touching all that right places as his body moves on top of the other, giving him increments of access to Taehyung’s skin. He suppresses a groan, not wanting to make too much noise yet finds it exponentially hard to do so. Taehyung bites down on his lip again, humming in satisfaction while gripping the bedsheets tightly within his fingers to help prevent a loud vocal expel of ecstasy.

Jeongguk stops what he’s doing temporarily to fulfill Tae’s request, which proves to be beneficial to Taehyung as the pleasure had been building up a little too quickly, making it hard for him to control himself. Jeongguk pulls off his shirt hastily so he can continue pleasing the other, but is delayed when Taehyung runs a hand along his bare stomach, dragging his fingers up until he reaches Jeongguk’s chin. He caresses his face tenderly, brushing some of his hair behind his ear and Jeongguk’s expression softens. He leans into Taehyung’s touch, kissing him passionately on the lips and slipping in his tongue once again. They share a combined moan of pleasure, the sound of their lips filling the silence of the room and Taehyung finds it hard to control himself again.

“Fuck,” Taehyung whispers quietly between the kiss, letting himself become captivated by the other’s touch. He feels extremely hot, an unbearable pleasurable feeling surfacing its way throughout his body and concentrating in his pants, intensifying the pleasure he feels almost tenfold. “Please.”

Jeongguk kisses him harder, his movements getting needier as the situation progresses. “Tell me what you want,” he responds, panting slightly, feeling his way down the other’s body again to hold his hand. He jerks him off a little quicker, feeling him get increasingly desperate.

Taehyung buries his head into the other’s shoulder, biting onto his lip in an attempt to hide his moans despite them already being muffled by Jeongguk’s skin. He squeezes Jeongguk’s hand, desperate for release, trying so hard to remain quiet because the last thing he wants is anyone hearing him from
across the hall.

“I want you,” Taehyung responds, a difficult thing to do whilst trying to keep himself quiet and controlled. He shuts his eyes tightly, clenching his hand against Jeongguk’s bare arms as he whimpers quietly to himself.

Jeongguk hums, kissing down his neck again. He traces over the hickeys that cover his chest and upper abdomen, going back up to leave one more on the base of his neck. He wants to go higher but he knows that if he gives him anymore, they’ll be harder to hide. He strokes the other up and down at a slower pace, reducing his motions to prolong their experience and squeezes the base of his dick. He moves his fingers gradually upwards, cupping the head of his dick and focusing particular attention to it. Jeongguk strokes him in long circular motions, teasing him, before finally rubbing the head of his dick with more pressure.

Taehyung chokes, letting out a high-pitched moan that travels into a series of quiet whimpers, his skin ablaze with the feeling of ecstasy. His dick pulses against Jeongguk’s hand, his body singeing with heat and the hickeys that scatter his body seemingly glowing in feverish embers. His cheeks grow red with embarrassment upon making such a sound, and he hides his face further into the crook of Jeongguk’s neck to try and calm his burning cheeks.

Jeongguk moans softly, kissing the top of Taehyung’s head with a certain gentleness as he uses his free hand to hold the back of his hair. He brushes his fingers through the strands, calming the other’s embarrassment enough for him to stop covering his face even though his cheeks still burn scarlet.

“Why are you blushing?” Jeongguk whispers against his ear, teasing him by continuing to rub circles against the head of his dick. Taehyung’s mouth falls open again and he bites his lip, choking on a suppressed moan.

“You know..why,” Taehyung manages to respond, swallowing thickly to himself. He readjusts his position, sighing when Jeongguk’s fingers brush against his entrance.

Jeongguk hums. “Do it again.”

Taehyung’s blush deepens and they share a kiss, tongues battling each other slowly and yearningly as Jeongguk grinds on top of him. Taehyung moans against his lips, clutching onto his back with trembling fingers, throwing his head back when he feels the other suddenly increase his pace. Taehyung whimpers, giving into Jeongguk’s command by letting his inner restraints release themselves, fully immersing himself into the sensation. He calls out Jeongguk’s name quietly, letting out another high-pitched moan as he feels the pressure in his abdomen gradually intensify.
He sucks in a breath, his voice a breathless and desperate whisper. “Jeongguk, I’m g-”

There’s a knock at the door.

Jeongguk kisses Taehyung deeply, sucking on his bottom lip and muffling his moans with the movement of his mouth. He curses under his breath, impatient and horny, trying to ignore the disturbance that resides outside his room despite knowing that their situation is bound to come to an end. He can feel Tae starting to come undone below him, his breaths growing more and more irregular and his moans more frequent, and he needs to find a way to stop the progressing events before they’re caught. He knew that this might’ve not been the wisest idea considering everything, however, he hadn’t really expected to be interrupted at such a bad time.

“Tae,” Jeongguk whispers softly against his lips, gradually stopping his movements. Taehyung whimpers, bringing Jeongguk closer to him with his hands while reconnecting their lips, impatient with the loss of contact. Jeongguk gives in slightly, moaning quietly into the kiss but soon breaks away as he understands the severity of the situation. “Tae, Tae, we need to stop.”

Taehyung groans in frustration, shutting his eyes tightly before re-opening them to nod his head, understanding the situation as well. He lets go of Jeongguk’s body, relaxing against the bed and rubs his face with his hands, wiping the sweat that had collected on his cheeks and forehead. He touches his lips hesitantly, feeling how swollen they are and makes another frustrated sound, his body aching for release. “I fucking hate you.”

Jeongguk snorts, kissing the other on the cheek sweetly before removing his hand from his pants, admiring the precum that laces it as he draws it out. “I’m sorry, I really didn’t want things to—”

The knock on the door becomes a series of pounding, each growing more impatient than the last. “Jeongguk! Open up! Lunch’s ready!” It’s Eun-Ji’s voice, and she seems brightly amused.

Jeongguk sighs heavily, annoyed to say the least. “I just wanted to have sex with my boyfriend, that’s all I wanted,” he says to himself.

“You’re the one that’s frustrated?” Taehyung asks exasperatedly, turning over so that his face buries into the sheets. “I was about to cum. I don’t see you on the verge of an orgasm now do I!”

“Shh, shh,” Jeongguk whispers, rubbing the other’s back with his clean hand to try and soothe his
tremendous frustration. He massages the tense muscle, feeling apologetic as he watches Taehyung try and get rid of his boner by remaining still against the bed, face suffocated by bedsheets. "Can I help you—"

"Do not touch me."

"But I could—"

"If you try and help you’re just going to make me want to cum more, and this is your fault to begin with so if you want to help just…I don’t know, open the door!"

Taehyung turns back around so he’s facing up, his face flushed and his lips red and glistening under the light. Jeongguk feels bad for stopping but it’s not like he was going to let him reach his climax with his sister right outside of the room. Still, he figures he should have thought everything out better. Taehyung squeezes his eyes shut again, the front of his pants appearing slightly wet with a bulge very prominently outlined through it. Jeongguk swallows, wanting to take care of it, but refrains for the time being as he gets up to go open the door.

He can feel a tightness in his own pants, growing worse as he walks and so he tries to readjust himself so that his boner isn’t so obvious.

He opens the door slightly, making sure to hide Tae’s body and the bottom of his torso for that matter. Eun-Ji smiles widely at him, sticking her tongue out.

“What took you so long?” She asks innocently, trying to see past the barrier of the door. Jeongguk narrows his eyes, blocking her line of sight even more.

“Why were you being so impatient?”

Eun-Ji rolls her eyes, crossing her arms against her chest. “Eomma said to get you as soon as possible. Lunch’s ready.”

Jeongguk sighs. “Alright, fair enough..I’ve been notified now so you can go.”
He goes to close the door but Eun-Ji stops him, a curious glance in her eyes. “Hold on a minute.”

“What is it now?”

“Gosh, you’re so moody you’d think you’re the fifteen year old girl,” Eun-Ji retorts sarcastically, trying to get a better view of his room. “Anyways, where’s Taehyung-ah?”

Jeongguk glares at her sharply. “Okay, it’s Taehyung-ssi to you until he says otherwise,” he states, not believing his ears. “And why do you need to know?”

“He’s our guest!”

“He’s my guest.”

“Well he’s in our house, therefore he’s our guest.”

Jeongguk looks at her with annoyance, not having the energy to argue with her right now. “Okay fine, he can be considered our guest and our guest is in the bathroom right now. Does that satisfy your question?”

Eun-Ji hums, considering something. “Okay! Just make sure you’re both down quickly so Eomma doesn’t get mad. Lunch will get cold, and she’s very anxious to meet your friend.”

She eyes him weirdly, a sort of mischief in her stare.

“Alright, we will.”

She smiles cheekily. “And look in the mirror will you.”

“Look in the mirror?”
Her eyes dance with amusement and she struggles not to laugh. “It looks like you’ve just had sex.”

Jeongguk’s eyes widen, and he looks at her questioningly. “How do you even know what that’s supposed to look like?”

Eun-Ji shrugs her shoulders. “Jung-hyun looks that way every time he spends the night with his girlfriend. He thinks we can’t notice but it’s so obvious,” she whispers, this time unable to hold in her laughter. “Plus, you’re not denying it.”

“I wasn’t having sex!”

Eun-Ji puts her hands up. “Okay, okay, geez you’re so sensitive I was just joking. As if you’d get laid anyways.”

Jeongguk can feel himself getting ten times more irritated, and he really tries with all the strength he still has in his body to not yell at his sister and her absolutely trivial insults. The combination of getting interrupted and her wildly close accusations not to mention that he just wants to fuck his boyfriend right now is really getting to him, and he needs to take a couple of peaceful seconds to control his temper. “Just go back downstairs!”

“Hurry up then. And tell Taehyung-ah I say hello.”

“Tell him yourself when we come down!”

Jeongguk closes the door almost immediately (a little too hard too), sighing to himself as the interaction with his little demonic sister finally comes to an end. He loves her, but she’s a pain in his neck more often than not.

He closes his eyes, taking a couple of seconds to recuperate himself, breathing in deeply and slowly and then exhaling his breath in a meditative manner. He opens them back up once he’s relatively calm to see Taehyung, who’s surprisingly in the exact same position he was before, perhaps with an even more irritated expression on his face.

“Are you…feeling any different?” Jeongguk asks nervously, walking over to go console him. He sits down on the bed hesitantly, watching Taehyung’s concentrated face in silence, tracing over his delicate features with an intense stare that he knows even the other would be able to sense at this
Taehyung shakes his head, scratching his neck gently with his eyes still closed. He shivers when he accidentally brushes over the hickeys Jeongguk had given him, sighing in even greater defeat as that had only managed to amplify his aroused state. “No.”

Jeongguk nods in understanding, getting how frustrated the other must feel right now. “Are you mad at me?”

Taehyung tries hard to stay mad but can’t find himself to. It’s impossible for him to hold a grudge against Jeongguk, no matter how stupid his actions were to begin with. He turns to lean on his side, blowing a strand of hair from his face. “No.” he admits softly, his sincerity making Jeongguk’s heart pang. Tae opens his eyes slowly, the clouds in his eyes almost resembling a storm, his eyelashes appearing longer against the white pillows. Jeongguk lies down next to him, intertwining their hands carefully and giving them a squeeze, turning his face so that he’s staring into the other’s eyes.

“Do you want me to finish taking care of it?” He asks, a genuine guilt in his chest. Taehyung’s eyes inadvertently focus on the ceiling, blinking without meaning. He shakes his head.

“No, we shouldn’t,” he says, shifting his sightless gaze to the bridge of Jeongguk’s nose, his eyes travelling in a way that gives the illusion he can actually see. “We got lucky this time, and I feel dirty doing it quickly to get it over with. I want to...enjoy it with you.”

Jeongguk feels his heart soften yet again, the other’s honesty and innocence despite referring to such a sexual topic making him feel sentimental. He cradles his cheek in his hand, bringing his face closer so that their noses brush. He holds his breath, the desire to kiss him overtaking him once more.

“Fuck, I want to kiss you now.”

Taehyung laughs, licking his lips without thinking about it. “You were just kissing me.”

“I know,” Jeongguk whispers, exhaling deeply. He doesn’t want to add onto the situation but it’s almost impossible not to display affection with the other. He stares at Taehyung for a while, noticing the way his eyes keep fluttering shut, as if anticipating for him to do something. Jeongguk kisses him softly on the lips, innocently, waiting for Taehyung to push him back, smiling when he feels no resistance. He grabs the other’s cheek a little more firmly, breathing in shallowly as he slips in his tongue, turning the innocent kiss back into something erotic. Taehyung knows they should stop,
especially after what just happened, but can’t find it in himself to let go right away.

Jeongguk tugs on the other’s bottom lip, sliding his tongue over the teeth marks before capturing them once again, moaning softly.

Taehyung freezes, his eyes opening in reflex. He breaks away reluctantly, breathing a little heavily and holds Jeongguk’s shoulders back, a conflicted expression on his face.

“Sorry, I got a little carried away..” Jeongguk admits, licking over his lips hastily.

Taehyung swallows, nodding his head as he plops back down on the bed, feeling more on edge than before. “No more kissing until we’re sure we won’t be **interrupted.**”

Jeongguk sighs, agreeing nonetheless. “Fine, fine. I’ll head down first and you can sort things out and come when you’re ready. Are you going to..” he blushes, stuttering over his speech. “You know..do anything..in particular?”

Taehyung raises an eyebrow. “What do you mean?”

“Don’t make me say it!”

“I don’t know what you’re implying?”

Jeongguk sighs, hiding his face with his hands. “Are you going to help yourself get rid of your issue…in any way.”

“Are you asking me if I’m going to touch myself?”

He swallows, coughing nervously. “I mean..well yes..I just—I feel bad okay!”

Taehyung laughs a little, rubbing his face with his hands as he gets into a sitting position. He plays with the hair falling into his eyes, smirking to himself. “Hm, I guess you’ll never know. ”
“Tae!”

“Go downstairs, and your sister’s right, look into a fucking mirror.”

Jeongguk glares at him. “You don’t even know what I look like.”

“I can tell you look like you were just making out with someone because you just were! Go freshen up, and give me some time to ‘sort things out’ because let me remind you that this is all your fault in the first place. And to think you did the same thing but in words when we were in the car, you are ruthless.”

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry.” Jeongguk pauses, looking at Taehyung for a few seconds, his mind whirring. “Wait so are you actually-”

“No.”

“I was just asking!” Jeongguk says defensively, putting his hands up. “Make sure to change your pants.”

“Alright.”

“And wear a turtle-neck!”

Taehyung touches his neck, eyes widening. He knew the other left some but he’s surprised at how many he left.

“You’re really testing me.”

“I’ll make it up to you I swear!”

Jeongguk walks into the bathroom, rolling his eyes when he hears his sister yell from downstairs for
him to hurry up.

Next time they’ll make sure not to get interrupted.

Next time.

Chapter End Notes

and THAT'S THAT. there will be a next time..just fyi..

OKAY SO, if u skipped the beginning note (bc i do that all the time) basically i've been afk cause i was at a coding/computer science camp for awhile (made great friends, one who's trying to find this fic cause i told her i have one but i swear she isn't going to find it lololol).

and basically i've been too busy to write. i've also been travelling so i can see my mom's side of the family, and yknow, trying to really enjoy my last relaxing summer before junior year absolutely KILLS ME. applying to university has never seemed so distastefully hard and i'm afraid of APs. those also seem hard and I don't wanna take any Ls but i'm still studying strong.

sorry for the wait but ur used to it by now so it shouldn't be too shocking (ok but actually i'm sorry i missed the one year anniversary of this story and i can't believe it's taken me this long to fucking write i'm such a bitchskdjfskfjs). OKAY I WANT TO FINISH formatting the story now so i'm gonna leave but i hope ur doing well and that ur happy and that ur having a great time cause ur great.

see you hopefully soon!
who do you love?

Chapter Summary

things get interesting at the Jeon household..and Jin visits his family?

things don't quite go as predicted, but hey, when do they ever?

--

lots of vkook with a snippet of namjin

Chapter Notes

heyo i'm back and better than ever (lol that's a lie, i just got a cold, there's currently a massive storm outside, and school starts in a couple days). regardless! i am so happy :)

bruh can we take a second...this is a whole 47 PAGES OF WRITING CONTAINING 19,267 WORDS (not including spaces) and i spent the better part of two all-nighters getting the last bit done (it may seem a little rushed oops). i'm just...excuse me while i go leap in victory. also i kept singing the monsta x song 'who do you love' while writing damn it's so good, and it fits the title nicely.

alright, i'm done, have fun reading my dudes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Taehyung sits at the lunch table with a black turtle neck and fresh pants, nervous despite having no reason to be yet. He can hear various commotion surrounding him, the sound of plates against marble counters and distant conversation. Jeongguk told him to stay at the table while he and his family bring out the food, which is convenient for him because he would hate to break something by accident.

And that’s not only because he’s blind or anything. He tends to be clumsy in nerve-wracking situations and would not like to seem incapable before they even get to know anything about him.

He hears someone walk over and sit down, perhaps in front of him but he’s not too sure. This person’s footprints are barely noticeable, and seem to be non-existent in the gentle clamour of the room. Taehyung tries to look more attentive, as if he’s ready to listen to whatever it is they might say but grows confused when they don’t say anything. He can simply feel them staring at him, directly at his face, and he’s not sure how or why he can sense this sort of thing but he does. He swallows perceptibly.
“So, you’re my brother’s friend?” The person finally asks, and Taehyung assumes this is Jeongguk’s older brother from his voice. Again, his family sounds awfully similar to each other, despite their heavier accents.

Taehyung nods, wanting to pull up his turtleneck up more in fear that it’s not covering up everything. “Yeah, my name’s Taehyung. And your Jung-hyun?”

He figures the other nods too. “So he talks about me..that’s a first. I’m confused why he never talked about you though, considering you’re now having lunch with us.”

Taehyung doesn’t know how to respond, hesitating his answer.

“But it doesn’t matter does it?” Jung-hyun says anyways, realising that he’s putting the other a little too much on the spot. “Any friend of Jeongguk’s is a friend of mine. We’re glad to have you.”

Taehyung lets out a quiet exhale of relief, smiling. “Thank you for having me.”

Quite nearly on cue, Jeongguk and his sister walk from the pantry holding steaming plates, arguing with each other over something inaudible and most likely unimportant and idiotic. Eun-ji almost drops her plate and laughs, earning a glare from her mother as she walks out behind them too, scolding their behaviour half-heartedly. She still seems a little shaken up.

“Behave.”

Jeongguk and Eun-ji apologise simultaneously, still alarmingly irritated with each other. Well, Jeongguk more so than her, she appears more amused at the matter than annoyed.

Jeongguk puts down a plate in subdued anger, catching Taehyung’s face out of the corner of his eye. It makes him feel slightly better.

He sits down at the table first, choosing the seat next to Tae before his sister can get to it first because knowing her, that’s something she would do. He squeezes the other’s hand gently from underneath the table, a nervousness in his chest sending shocks through his fingers.
His mother sits down too, at the centre of the table and Eun-ji follows suit, going next to Jung-hyun.

“Where’s dad?” Jeongguk asks, noticing an empty seat.

“He got stuck at work because of the storm.” Her eyes dart from Taehyung to her hands anxiously and she swallows a breath. “But he’s very excited to see you.”

Jeongguk nods, passing around one of the many warm plates with food on them. There’s a heavy silence for a few seconds, thankfully the sound of lunch preventing things from becoming too awkward. Jeongguk serves Taehyung first, giving him a brief explanation of everything that’s laid out in front of him. Taehyung nods, hesitantly moving his hands across the table so he can feel his plate, determining its width mentally. Jeongguk helps him serve the food, covering his hand with his own over the ladle and moving it carefully from plate to plate.

He then focuses on his own portion, looking up briefly to see everyone’s eyes on them, confusion on both his mother and brother’s face and pure amusement on his sister’s.

Jeongguk clears his throat, passing the food to his brother. “So, how’s everyone been doing..?”

Eun-ji smiles, pointing her fork towards him. “Don’t try to change the subject.”

“Don’t point your utensils at people.”

She puts down her fork, narrowing her eyes slightly. “Alright, fair.”

“We’ve been good,” Jung-hyun responds regardless, rolling his eyes at their behaviour. He’s used to the two of them fighting all the time because they’re closer in age. For him, he’s the older one by a couple years, meaning he has to be the sensible brother in most situations. This also means that he mostly observes his other two siblings fight from the outskirts, and he finds their disputes unnecessarily chaotic and stupid. “Eun-ji’s been annoying as usual.”

“Hey.”

But he does like to side with Jeongguk a lot considering they’re closer in age and have some sort of
supernatural brother intuition. They’ve always gotten along, even when they were kids.

“And mom and dad have been busy like always,” he continues, looking between Jeongguk and Taehyung particularly. He coughs, taking a bite of food. “Anyways, what have you been up to? How’s university been? How’d you meet your friend?”

Jeongguk smiles. “It’s been nice. I met Taehyung in one of my classes early in September and we’ve been close ever since. He’s also friend’s with Jin, you know, my roommate? It’s a funny coincidence actually..we met officially at his dinner party.”

“Well, before that he did run into me at the subway and cursed me out,” Taehyung juts in, suppressing a teasing smile. “But granted he was late and I was in the way.” Jeongguk laughs sheepishly.

“Yeah, that did happen..I still feel guilty about it”

Eun-ji bursts out laughing. “You cursed him out? Wow, how rude of you.”

“I didn’t know he was blind,” Jeongguk protests softly, turning to face Tae. “But still, even if you weren’t I shouldn’t have been so aggressive.”

Mrs. Jeon eyes widen slightly, and she makes an odd sound at the back of her throat, as if she had stopped herself from choking on something. “I’m sorry, you said he was blind?”

Taehyung laughs awkwardly. “I am blind, yes. But trust me when I say it isn’t as big of a deal as you may think.”

“Wait,” Jung-hyun interjects, his eyebrows furrowed in absolute surprise and confusion. This is the first time he’s hearing about this too. “You can’t see anything. Like anything at all?”

“It’s completely black,” Taehyung responds, waving his hand in front of his eyes. “I don’t see a thing.”

He lets out a long exhale, seeming to deflate in his chair. “I’m sorry I had no idea. I assumed
Jeongguk was being unnecessarily polite when he was serving you but...wow, that’s really— I’m sorry.”

Taehyung rubs the back of his neck self-consciously, careful not to let his turtleneck slip down. “It’s okay, I’ve gotten used to it by now,” he pauses, taking a hesitant sip of water. “And it’s a little hard to notice at first, so I understand.”

Jung-hyun nods, swallowing eminently. He feels dumb for not noticing it sooner but also surprised at how well the other handles himself for it to not seem so obvious at first glance. He wonders how long he has been blind.

Mrs. Jeon’s expression remains tense and stolid and she eats her food to try and calm her whirling thoughts. She knows that this situation is probably all a coincidence, some sign from the universe or some sort of bad karma to remind her of her selfish actions. She knows that this Kim Taehyung may not even be the Kim Taehyung that’s never left her mind, the one that’s been eating away at her conscious day by day and year by year because she hid the poor kid’s origins from everyone. She knows that this could just be a huge, terrible coincidence but the more she hears him speak, the more she hears him explain himself and smile and laugh, she can’t help but be overwhelmed with this suffocating guilt.

He’s suffered considerably, and she doesn’t need him to say it for her to realise it.

She clears her throat, breaking the silence once again. She needs to confirm that this is just a coincidence. She hopes that that’s what all of this is. “So Taehyung, where are you from?”

Taehyung takes another sip of water, putting down his glass with an incredible fluency. “I’m from Daegu, but I moved to Seoul when I was around fourteen with a friend.”

“Wow, that’s very young. You moved without your parents?”

Jeongguk’s heart drops when he feels the conversation going into dangerous territory, understanding that Taehyung wouldn’t really be up to describing his entire past to, for him at least, complete strangers. He looks at Taehyung with a strained expression, wondering if he’s okay to talk about it and if he should stop the discussion from going any further but relaxes when the other seems relatively fine. Perhaps he’s used to these sorts of questions.

“Yeah I did, it was a pretty crazy decision now that I look back on it but I don’t regret it.”
“So you’re like a runaway!” Eun-ji exclaims loudly, arising a serious look from both her brothers. Her smile dies down and she coughs. “I didn’t mean it in a bad way..”

Taehyung laughs, a genuine amusement in his voice. Jeongguk’s surprised to say the least. “Kind of like a runaway, yeah. But I knew it was the right decision, and my friend was an adult at the time, so everything worked out.”

Mrs. Jeon bites her lip, drowning out her incredibly worse thoughts and assumptions by drinking the rest of her water hastily, not wasting a second to even breath.

“Hold up,” Jung-hyun starts uncertainly, trying to wrap his head around all of this. “Have you not seen them since you moved? You speak as if you don’t see them anymore.”

Taehyung shakes his head with indifference, a nonchalant expression Jeongguk would have never thought he would have given the topic. “I don’t and honestly, I don’t think they’d be too happy with me if I came back. It’s better this way.”

Even though Jeongguk knows the real story, he still finds it sad hearing the other speak. He had wanted to be on good terms with them, he can tell that Taehyung had truly wanted to keep on loving them and keep on living with them. He can tell that he had wished they hadn’t done the things that they did. He can tell he still wishes that.

Obviously he’s afraid of them, and obviously he would never go back, but Jeongguk can’t help but realise the tinge of loneliness in the other’s voice. It makes sense. After all, everyone wants to have a family that loves them, and because Taehyung’s been deprived of loving parents for so long, it’s only natural that he would seem to want it.

Jung-hyun nods understandingly, not pushing the subject further in which Jeongguk respects because he’s unsure how much farther Taehyung can go. He’s worried that his family will be too nosy, because they tend to do that sometimes, and if there’s one person they shouldn’t pry it’s Taehyung, especially in this situation.

However, Taehyung seems okay with disclosing this information, and for that, Jeongguk smiles. He feels happy knowing that the other somewhat trusts his family, even if they are newly-met acquaintances after all.
They eat comfortably for a few seconds, absorbing what had just been said and then Mrs. Jeon stops eating, an even more conflicted expression on her face.

“You said step-parents, as in plural,” she says gravely, her fingers trembling again. “Were you adopted?”

Taehyung seems a little taken aback, a tight expression appearing on his face. Jeongguk knows immediately that this is the limit for the other, and that they shouldn’t go any farther. Honestly, he should’ve stopped it beforehand so it wouldn’t have been able to reach an uncomfortable point in the first place. “I was,” Taehyung responds gently, moving his food around slowly with his fork as if contemplating something. “I was four when they took me in.”

Mrs. Jeon drops her utensils and all three of her children stare at her oddly, analysing her pale and troubled face. She wipes her hands on a napkin shakily, dabbing her lips carefully as she presses them together. “Excuse me,” she says, her voice barely above a whisper, getting up from the table in an anxious manner. Jeongguk follows her figure leave worriedly, his eyes wide with dismay and confusion. He shares a look with Jung-hyun, and his brother decides to get up first, giving him a knowing glance.

“Don’t worry,” he says, smiling at Jeongguk reassuringly. “I’ll go talk to her. I’m not sure why she’s so..frazzled,” he pauses, looking at his little sister. “Entertain them Eun-ji, and be polite.”

She nods obediently, too surprised herself to retort with something sarcastic or witty like she normally would at a comment like that. She swallows sharply, looking at Jeongguk with consternation and then to Taehyung, who seems considerably uncomfortable.

“I’m sorry,” she says hesitantly, averting her gaze. “She’s not usually like this..”

Taehyung nods, a burning sensation in his nose. “I understand.”

It’s completely silent after that, an awkwardness so overpowering encapsulating the situation so that the three of them can only eat, occasionally hearing some loud incomprehensible voices from the pantry. Taehyung feels uneasy, suddenly losing his appetite. He hears a similar tone in her voice, one she had given him before. She sounds apologetic and guilty in a way, which doesn’t make sense because there’s nothing to feel guilty about. Taehyung’s never met her, and it’s pointless to be hung up on someone else’s unchangeable life, no matter how bleak it may seem.
The voices from the pantry grow louder and then there’s an exasperated cry. Taehyung clenches his hands tightly, the situation sounding remotely familiar to when his foster parents would argue with each other and he wills the panic in his veins to die down. He’s not there anymore, and so, he doesn’t want to feel like he is.

Jeongguk holds his hand, noticing his discomfort, which catches Tae by surprise. He feels better knowing that the other is there beside him, and he squeezes his hand back in a grateful manner, displaying a small smile.

Eun-ji, who had been staring at the entire interaction, looks away quickly, a pink tint reaching her cheeks as she holds back another thought.

Suddenly, the voices come to a halt and the room becomes unbelievably silent, the scenario so unpredicted that the sound of lunch no longer drowns out the intense quiet. In fact, nobody continues to eat at this point, everyone waiting in astute apprehension for what’s going to happen next.

Jung-hyun walks out of the pantry after a few minutes, an indescribable look on his face. Jeongguk meets his gaze and asks a question with his eyes, knowing that his brother will understand what it means.

Jung-hyun simply shakes his head, shrugging his shoulders as he sits back down. “She said she wasn’t feeling well,” he says, not entirely believing his words either. “But she’ll come back out eventually, she just needs some space.”

Jeongguk nods, biting his lip impatiently. He had wanted to come out to his family today; announce his relationship with Tae for better and for worse because he loves him and he’s ready to but now? How can he when his mother is already wired up for some unknown reason, one certainly not being over the fact that he’s dating a guy. He feels like coming out might make the situation even worse.

“I see,” Jeongguk says, a sadness to his voice. He had just wanted everyone to like Taehyung, and he had been sure they would. What isn’t to like? And although he’s aware that his siblings do seem to like him (one a little too much), he had craved his mother’s acceptance more than anything else.

Why does she appear so afraid of him?

Is it because he’s blind?
Jeongguk’s riddled with confusion, and he wonders what could possibly make his mother so anxious and nervous around a person she’s never met before. He can’t arrive to any conclusions that make sense, and so he gives up.

“But, it doesn’t have to be all a bummer,” Eun-ji says with a forced happiness, trying to lighten the mood. “I’ll put on a movie and we can all have a family movie night! Hopefully Eomma will feel better and join us, and the storm should be dying down now so dad will be able to see you soon. We can all still have a good time.”

Jeongguk smiles, feeling slightly better. It’s times like these that he really does appreciate his sister. “That sounds like a great idea.”

Jin stares at the front door for a long time, an inkling of regret encapsulating him.

He wonders why he came back. He wonders why he had agreed to come back. Better yet, he wonders why he had let Namjoon come with him in the first place.

The idea had seemed promising, he thought that it’s been so long his parents are bound to forgive and forget and move on and listen to him.

For once, they would listen to him. Maybe his absence made them rethink some things about their actions and their words, how they treated him, but he doubts it. His parents aren’t the reflecting and understanding type, but he can’t quite blame them. It’s how they were raised too.

Namjoon looks at him patiently, his concerns swallowed into the depths of his gut. He doesn’t want to pressure the other, or make him feel uneasy, so he stands idly by, watching the clouds collect and form more opaque shapes in the blossoming sky.

A storm’s coming.

Jin sighs, jumping up and down to muster some courage in his bones. He feels pathetic for hesitating, and he feels even worse knowing that Namjoon’s watching him get cold feet towards his very home. This should be simple, it is simple, and yet he can’t find it in himself to move forward.
Just one step. It’s all it’ll take to get him going and then he thinks he’ll be fine, he just has to make the first step.

His hands burn white, his fingernails purple from the cold and he shivers as the weather mimics his trembling heart. He should see his parents again, it’s what any good son would do, but they’ve made it quite clear that he’s not the perfectly good son they had dreamed of. In fact, he’s beginning to think he never lived up to their ‘son’ title either, and regrets even making an effort to fulfil their empty requests to see him.

Namjoon shuffles closer to brush his hand against his, an appendage of warmth reaching his skin and giving him an energy he hadn’t thought possible. Jin closes his eyes, envisioning positive outcomes before reopening them, taking a hesitant movement forward, his mind and bones still begging him to stay still.

“I’m sure they missed you,” Namjoon says softly, intertwining their hands.

Jin nods his head, knowing that Namjoon’s words are supposed to be reassuring but not finding them exactly so. Maybe they missed him, maybe they didn’t, they asked for him to come and so he did but that doesn’t mean their intentions haven’t differed from before.

They only want to use him, and Jin’s aware of that now.

“Maybe.”

Namjoon holds his hand tighter, looking at him with a torn sympathy. “I’m…here, if you need me.”

Jin smiles, glancing down to their feet. He squeezes the other’s hand back, sighing uniquely in a way that’s not sad but not entirely happy either. He nods his head, finding it in himself to take longer strides.

The door appears closer, more taunting, and then, he’s there, inches away from everything he decided to dissociate himself from. He grows more anxious but doesn’t let it reflect in his movements, breathing in deeply.

He rings the doorbell.
It echoes three times before it stops, a buzzer resonating loudly in reply. Namjoon looks up at the tall building in front of him, pondering over Jin’s family and the wealth that exhibits itself solely from the exterior of their house. He knew Jin was well off but he hadn’t considered that it would be to such an extent.

He gulps as the door opens with a series of mechanical noises, gliding to the side and disappearing into a wall as if they were entering some super secret base. Honestly, Namjoon wouldn’t be surprised if it was one.

A camera rolls across their frames, staring acutely at their faces with a sharp intensity. Jin inserts a password, the numbers on the padlock glowing green as he inputs it correctly. Another door opens itself, and they make their way inside, walking closely next to each other.

Namjoon had thought this would be the end of it, but turns out, that was merely the entrance to their entrance, meaning that they’ve only just now gotten into the walkway that leads up to the actual main building. He stares at his surroundings in awe, admiring the largeness and beauty of everything and its architecture, gasping inwardly. He looks at Jin for some sort of clarification, mainly a reason as to why he hadn’t explained just how rich he was before, but halts as he notices the deep grimace on the other’s face.

He clearly doesn’t want to be there.

They walk in silence, the gravel beneath their feet the only noise to fill in the penetrating quietude. Namjoon continues to stare in fascination, keeping his comments to himself, and swallows when they finally reach what seems to be the real entrance this time. Judging by the way Jin tenses, he assumes that this is it.

Jin stops walking to collect himself only briefly, going to ring another doorbell. It resonates for a shorter amount of time, and as soon as it stops, the door immediately unlocks itself, letting the two of them come inside.

The interior of his house is just as, if not more impressive than the exterior, an array of bejewelled ornaments painting the ceiling and the walls with a gleaming brilliance. The floor is covered with a large patterned carpet, boasting in affluence simply through its colours and threads. Namjoon’s eyes appear like saucers and Jin laughs at his reaction, feeling the most at ease since they arrived.

“It can be much at first,” he says, taking off his shoes by the doorway. Namjoon follows suit, still in
blazing astonishment. “But, and not to sound spoiled…you do get used to it.”

Namjoon nods his head, not finding a reason to judge his words because he knows that Jin wouldn’t be so apprehensive without reason. Something they did has made him want to keep his distance, and for that, Namjoon can only show that he’s supportive of whatever decisions Jin decides and has decided to make in the past. “I’d imagine.”

Soft voices seem to come from everywhere, through each room and staircase. The house seems to go one for miles, and occasionally Namjoon sees a butler or a maid walk by hastily, not seeing them pass through as they busy themselves with urgent tasks.

“Do you think they’re home?” He asks Jin sincerely, curious at the seemingly destitute building.

“Yes, of course they are,” Jin responds, almost bitterly. “They always seem to be nowadays.”

Something about the way he talks makes Namjoon think he was neglected a lot as a child, which makes sense if his parents are as successful as the house portrays them as. Perhaps they didn’t have enough time for him, which would explain Jin’s resent towards them.

Still, Namjoon couldn’t possibly imagine living in all this wealth.

A butler sees them out of the corner of their eye and he smiles brightly, walking towards them gracefully. He bows his head politely, looking at Jin with such an excited and content expression. “Young master, you’ve come back home.”

Namjoon raises his eyebrows at the term, looking at Jin weirdly. “Are you some sort of prince?”

Jin shushes him, smiling back to the butler warmly. “Thank you, Junhee. It’s been a long time. Where’s Mr. and Mrs. Kim?”

Namjoon takes note on how he refers to his own parents more like co-workers, politer and more emotionless rather than loving and close. It really seems to disconnect their relationship from parents to son.
Junhee smoothens his gloves, his eyebrows furrowed. “They’re already upstairs, waiting your presence. They’ve had us set up lunch…” he looks at Namjoon blankly, a hint of fretfulness in his eyes. “I don’t think they were expecting you to have a guest, however.”

“It’ll be fine,” Jin says curtly, his jaw tense. He’s become a lot surer in himself and diplomatic since speaking, but Namjoon guesses that’s just the norm around here. “They requested me here yet they didn’t say who I could or couldn’t bring. Therefore, my guest shall be greeted warmly by the household.”

Junhee nods, turning to Namjoon and bowing down politely as well. “Of course. It is an honour for you to be here. Young master doesn’t bring many guests here..if any. As you can tell, it’s been a long time. We’ve missed his presence greatly.”

Namjoon still finds the whole ‘young master’ thing, as well as the unbearably polite gestures and speech, weird and medieval, but he doesn’t question it. After all, Jin did say not to question what he might see or hear, and with the aesthetic of his house and the way he’s described his parents, it doesn’t seem too out of the ordinary in comparison.

“Thank you,” Namjoon says, following Jin around a corridor and up a flight of broad stairs. The wallpaper seems to gleam from the foggy sunlight of a nearby window.

“I should warn you,” Jin starts, his movements growing slower and softer. His voice is tense. “My parents aren’t very understanding. If you don’t come from a good upbringing or if you aren’t well off like them, they won’t show any interest or respect towards you. Honestly, they might not like you either.”

Namjoon nods, feeling slightly nervous too. He’s not really sure what he’s getting himself into but he knows for sure that he’ll do anything to make sure Jin’s comfortable, and if his support can help the other in any way, he’s more than happy to be here. “I get it. It’s another world for people like them, and I’m sure guys with drug addict parents aren’t very credible to begin with..I wouldn’t respect me either.”

He smiles.

“Stop,” Jin swallows, biting his lip hesitantly. “Don’t say that, you’d only prove their point and their point is wrong. People aren’t like their parents, I’m not, Yoongi isn’t, and you aren’t either.. Just… don’t take anything they say personally. Really, it’s not worth it,” he sighs, closing his eyes. “And, it’s best if you don’t mention our relationship either.” He pauses, realising how badly that came out. “But it’s not the fact that you’re a guy! I mean, I’m sure they would absolutely hate that factor, but
they don’t like me dating anyone if it’s not chosen or picked by them.”

Namjoon nods, remembering what Jin had said a couple weeks ago. “Don’t worry, I’m only here to give you support. I won’t bring up anything unnecessary.”

Jin sighs, smiling pitifully to himself. “I’m sorry that I’m giving you all these restrictions, geez, I sound just like my parents but I…I don’t want them to make you feel like there’s something wrong with you because there isn’t. And you shouldn’t have to take any shit from them.”

Namjoon feels sorry that the other’s had to deal with this all his life. He can tell that they haven’t given him the most support or confidence, and he feels bad that he had to live in such a toxic and professional environment all the time.

And he can tell the sort of effect it has had on him.

From the moment they stepped in, Namjoon noticed the way Jin became more poised, his posture more meticulous, and his way of speaking much more refined and composed. In one way it’s good because he appears to be the perfect businessman, straight and cut to the point, eloquent and well-spoken, but in another way it’s terrible because it removes all the character and personality from him, leaving him a shell of someone boring and destitute of any actual interesting qualities.

The qualities that Namjoon had fallen in love with him over.

Jin clears his throat. “But in any case…You’re incredible the way you are and that’s why I like you. What they say doesn’t change that, and what they think doesn’t mean anything either.”

Namjoon’s face softens. “Jin, I know that,” he runs his hand through the other’s hair gently, letting his head relax in his hand. “And I know that nobody’s going to interfere with our relationship because I’m so incredibly in love with you that it hurts me to see you so anxious right now. I’m here and I always will be; you’re trying so hard to protect me that you aren’t protecting yourself, and the one thing that will make me feel sad is if you’re sad, so please…” he trails off, lifting the other’s head up slightly so he can stare into his eyes, searching through them. “Please listen to your own advice too..”

Jin lowers his head, nodding to himself. He holds onto Namjoon’s hand tightly with closed eyes, wishing to never let go. “Okay.” He breathes in deeply, his heart beating faster. “God, you’re so cheesy but okay.”
Namjoon kisses him, his hands brushing against Jin’s briefly. Once he breaks away, he gives Jin a reassuring stare, a warmth dancing in his eyes. “You will be fine.”

Jin nods again, feeling a genuine surge of confidence and peace. “We will be fine.”

They walk the remainder of the way up, greeted by a large window that displays more of the foggy sunlight, the clouds packing up significantly. Alongside that, paintings decorate the walls, some of marshy landscapes and others of people, portraits of what Namjoon would only assume are members of the family. One painting catches his eyes, a large portrait of a man in well-fitted clothes and sophisticated attire. His stare is sharp, his eyes lacking any sort of warmth, however, at the same time, the person in that portrait is almost the splitting image of Jin.

“You have a brother?” Namjoon asks, pointing at the painting curiously.

Jin shakes his head. “No, that was a portrait of my father when he was around my age, maybe a little older. He and I were always so similar and yet we never saw eye to eye.”

They walk a little more, following an ornate carpet for what seems like forever until they reach a fairly large wooden door, carved with deep intricate structures.

“This is it?” Namjoon asks, looking at the way Jin hesitates.

He nods. “Yeah, this is it.”

Jin opens the door, his motions turning more graceful and his face falling into a certain composed expression. It’s like he’s been trained for this.

They enter the room and the first thing Namjoon sees is a large oak table, littered with platters and plates, silver cutlery and tall candles in metallic cases. He sees what is presumably Jin’s parents, a tall woman with short hair and glossy eyes, and then a man with sleek hair and slight wrinkles near his mouth and cheeks. Another person also sits by the table, a young girl, perhaps around their age too with long black hair and a rosy complexion. She’s extremely pretty, and wears a long satin dress with a golden necklace, as if radiating prestige. She also doesn’t appear to be Korean. Everyone looks up upon their arrival, staring at them in a way that neither of them can really describe.
Mrs. Kim’s eyes widen considerably, and she looks at Jin completely as if he is the only person in the room. She doesn’t even seem to notice Namjoon either.

“Seokjin! You’ve come home!”

She gets up from her chair, walking quickly yet elegantly towards Jin, enveloping him in a tight embrace. She stares at his face, looking over his features and his frame, her eyes analysing him in an obvious way. “You don’t look a day older, though, you have changed a little. You’re hair..it’s longer and messier, and you don’t stand the way you used to.”

Jin bites down harshly, looking at her with a similar lack of warmth. “I missed you too.”

His voice is sarcastic, and his mother stops analysing him after hearing his tone, sighing heavily to herself. She seems disappointed.

“I see you haven’t changed much in behaviour then…since your little stunt.”

Jin uses all of his effort to not roll his eyes, debating if he should just call it quits and leave. He’s already come this far, however, he’s not sure if he wants to go any further. “I see you haven’t changed your heartless attitude either.”

There’s a tense awkwardness, and Mrs. Kim can do nothing but bite her tongue, stepping back and letting go of her son’s body as if he’s something tainted or scorned. Her eyes reach Namjoon’s face, and she narrows them, not looking the happiest.

“You’ve brought a friend?”

Jin nods his head. “You didn’t say I couldn’t, so I thought it would be fine.”

She sucks in a breath, staring between Namjoon and Jin. “Usually we don’t bring commoners into the house.” She pauses, watching Jin’s face grow increasingly irritated, his hands clenched into indiscreet fists. “But I suppose it’s alright. Luckily we have extra seats.” She turns to face Namjoon, scrutinising him on the spot. “What is your name?”
“Namjoon. It is a pleasure to mee-”

“I meant your full name,” she interrupts, already looking down upon him despite barely any words escaping his mouth. Namjoon nods, clearing his throat.

“It is Kim Namjoon, Miss.”

She coughs distastefully, glancing at Jin with a sort of disrespect. “Very well, let’s all sit then.”

Jin shares an inconspicuous stare with Namjoon, trying to convey with his eyes that it’s okay to follow them and that he very well should, because if not, it’ll cause problems. Thankfully, Namjoon got the message the first time, and they go to sit.

Jin meets his father’s gaze and he simply nods his head, not exchanging any words. Mr. Kim looks away, his lips pressed together and he serves himself more wine, not looking the most pleased.

Then, Jin sees the girl in the satin dress, and his face practically goes pale. He appears scared, sick even, and he looks at his parents with a subdued desperateness. Namjoon doesn’t think he’s ever seen the other that distressed before. “What is Mei doing here?”

Mrs. Kim sighs as if she was expecting that reaction from him. “Seokjin, we invited her here.”

“Why?”

Mr. Kim scoffs loudly from his chair, his glass now full with rich burgundy liquid. “You dare ask that question.”

Mrs. Kim puts her hand up, easing the situation. She looks at Jin cautiously. “We thought we could.. plan the wedding once we knew you were going to come. Mei was available and more than happy to join us, and we hadn’t expected any unwanted arrivals so we didn’t see a reason not to.”

Namjoon stares at Jin widely, not believing his ears. He feels his heart break slightly at Mrs. Kim’s words, hoping that Jin denies the claims, hoping that he’s not actually getting married to someone and he had no idea. He keeps remembering the promise he told him, to not question anything he
might hear or say, but if this was the sort of thing Jin hadn’t wanted him to comment on then he’s fucking crazy to not have told him beforehand.

Jin meets Namjoon’s stare and he turns a shade whiter, if that’s even possible. His eyes hold distress and anguish, his face screaming something that Namjoon doesn’t understand.

*Why* isn’t he denying it?

“I thought I had made myself clear before I left.” Is all Jin says, his voice incredibly strained. Namjoon stares at him with even more shock and confusion, his heart continuing to split into smaller fragments.

“And I thought we had made it clear that you don’t make the rules, we do. And you agreed.”

“I-” he halts his response, deeply conflicted. He hadn’t thought they’d bring her over the very first day he arrived. He hadn’t thought they’d have to explain to Namjoon this situation because he was planning to leave *after* the first day. He hadn’t wanted him to know. He thought he could’ve run away and it would be gone and forgotten about. He thought he could escape. “I agreed to try, that’s all.”

*Why* did they bring her here?

“And yet you’re the one that proposed,” Mrs. Kim replies flatly.

“You coerced us into it!”

Mr. Kim starts to get angry, his expression serious and incredibly terrifying. “We are not having this discussion now. It is both disrespectful and childish, not to mention futile, so we will proceed with the arrangements as such. Now, could we all *sit*.”

Mei seems vastly uncomfortable in her seat, her hands folded against each other on her lap, squeezed tightly and clamped with nervousness. She tries not to show it in her face, but Namjoon can see her slightly biting the inside of her lip, trying not to be improper.
Jin sits down obediently, exhaustion already on his face but Namjoon still wants to ask him what the hell is going on; he wants Jin to explain, and yet he can’t. He promised him he wouldn’t but if he knew it was going to be something like this…maybe he wouldn’t have.

Mei gets up from her seat, bowing politely. She’s staring at Namjoon and he stares back at her. “It’s nice to meet you, Namjoon-ssi. My name’s Mei Misaki, I’m Seokjin’s fiancé.”

Eun-ji had taken a long time to choose a movie.

And a long time is an understatement as they spent the better part of an hour deciding what to watch. It was mainly Eun-ji browsing through options and being unsatisfied with them that kept them so long, because the rest of them couldn’t have cared less what they were going to watch.

But alas, a movie had been chosen, but not so soon after that, Eun-ji, who had been the one orchestrating the entire ordeal in the first place, was starting to fall asleep.

After lunch’s fiasco, the three of them had decided to eat dinner silently, on the couch, some simple leftovers. Nothing too fancy. Jeongguk’s dad had called and said he wouldn’t be home for another few hours, and that was two hours ago. He still was caught up in the rain, or perhaps it’s traffic now as the storm was said to die down later in the evening.

The night, however, has already greeted itself. The moon shines brightly through the storm clouds, providing a bit of ambient light from the arched windows, and seems to leave a patch of glowing white in the middle of the dark storm.

The movie plays eminently in the background.

“How are you doing?” Jeongguk whispers to Taehyung softly, leaning a bit closer towards him. They’re sharing one of the couches, Taehyung’s head lying almost on his shoulder, his hair covering his face.

“I mean, it sounds like a great movie,” he whispers back, smiling to himself. “And I’m sure it looks good too.”
Jeongguk purses his lips. “I know it wasn’t exactly the best choice of activity...and I’m sure my sister wasn’t thinking really when she suggested it.”

“No, I didn’t mean it like that,” Taehyung responds, letting his head finally lean against the other’s shoulder. His hair cascades down his face, the light from the television turning it a shade of fluorescent blue. “I like listening to movies, it’s relaxing in a way. And I’m glad she made an effort to keep us all involved.”

Jeongguk laughs quietly, nodding his head. He turns to see Eun-ji now, her body fully extended on one of the couches, cradled how a baby would sleep. He laughs again. “She’s completely asleep now...I guess school’s been keeping her busy.”

“Yeah,” Taehyung sighs, his eyes fluttering closed. “Movies are also a good time to sleep.”

Jeongguk pinches the other’s cheek softly, perking his eyebrows up. “You’re tired?”

“Only a little.”

“You should rest then.”

Taehyung shakes his head. “Everything’s finally calm, I don’t want to get up and leave...It would be rude.”

There’s a loud explosion from the TV, a blinding array of colours dancing on top of Taehyung’s face, making his eyes appear a milky orange.

“Then lie down on my lap.”

Taehyung raises an eyebrow. “Wouldn’t that be too informal of me?”

“Oh come on,” Jeongguk says, rolling his eyes. A bright display of blue illuminates his features. “My family is your family, you can make yourself at home here. I want you to feel like you can.”
Taehyung bites the inside of his lip, thinking it over. “Just for a bit then..”

He hesitantly lifts up his head, leaning down so that he rests against the other’s lap, his hair still cascading down his face. The TV glows vibrantly, highlighting both of their slightly flushed faces and Jeongguk swallows. They stay like that for a few seconds, Taehyung’s heart in his throat, and then he manages to relax, sighing quietly to himself.

Jeongguk hesitantly places his hand on top of the other’s hair, stroking through the strands gently. Taehyung closes his eyes, feeling the initial stress in his body dissipate. He’s still nervous from the conversation at lunch, even though it’s been a few hours now, and he’s unsure how to interact with Jeongguk’s mother knowing that there seems to be an underlining tension between them. An underlining issue, really. He decides not to focus on it for the time being, realising that it’ll only lead him to crazy assumptions, so he relaxes underneath Jeongguk’s touch and rests his mind.

The TV flashes again, painting his face in gold, and he hears quiet explosions. For some reason, they make sleep come faster.

Jeongguk runs his hand through the other's hair calmly, noticing how his breathing gets more even and his heartbeat slows down. He smiles to himself, a look of genuine endearment on his face, and he looks back up to actually start watching the movie. His eyes directly meet his brother’s as he turns his head up and Jung-hyun quickly averts his gaze, centring his attention to the television again in hopes that Jeongguk hadn’t caught him looking at them. Jeongguk coughs, tensing his jaw, a blush almost reaching his cheeks.

He did want to come out today, and maybe this is a good opportunity for him to tell someone at least in the meantime. His sister is asleep, so he won’t have to deal with her overdramatic comments or shocking realisation, and his brother has always understood him, so it’s promising that he’d understand.

Certainly, he’s the best person to talk to about it.

Jeongguk clears his throat, preparing to speak.

“So...hyung..” he starts awkwardly, the sound of the TV filling the void. He suddenly feels nervous, and he wonders if this is such a good idea.

Jung-hyun perks his eyebrows up, pretending to be oblivious. “Hm, what’s up?”
He’s unsure how to segue the conversation without making the statement seem too blunt or unnatural, however at the same time, is what he wants to say really something that would ever seem subtle or natural to begin with? He sighs heavily.

“I like guys.”

Jeongguk feels a sort of relief when he says it, his heart beating tremendously yet his lungs finding a new-found liberty. He feels less constricted than before, like he can breathe more easily despite his brother not even giving him a response yet, and he turns towards him, awaiting a reaction.

Jung-hyun nods shortly, still assimilating the recent information in a profound silence, the sound of the TV alleviating any thick or uncomfortable air. He breaks his gaze on the TV so that it meets Jeongguk’s as well, and he smiles a little. “I know.”

Jeongguk raises an eyebrow, almost choking on his spit. “What?”

Definitely not the reaction Jeongguk was expecting.

“I mean I didn’t know but I thought something was different with you today and I couldn’t quite pinpoint it until I realised that you’re in a relationship again. Which is nice to see.”

Jeongguk tries hard not to get flustered, staring at his brother more intensely. “So, you knew and you didn’t bring it up or anything?”

Jung-hyun shrugs. “I didn’t want to make you feel uncomfortable. I know it’s not an easy thing to come out and all, and I didn’t want to put you on the spot. If you weren’t ready to tell me, then you weren’t ready to tell me. But it didn’t stop me from observing.”

Jeongguk closes his eyes briefly, re-opening them in both relief and gratification.

“Plus,” Jung-hyun adds, tapping his temple. “I could’ve been wrong. I wasn’t a hundred percent sure, because for all I knew you and him could’ve simply had an unusually close and touchy friendship..”
Jeongguk looks down at Taehyung, his heart squeezing when he sees his gentle expression, the features of sleep softening every aspect about him. His skin glows, his eyelashes catch fragments of scattering light, and his mouth stays slightly parted, small breaths leaving his lips in a steady fashion. He turns to look at his brother again. “So, you knew it was him.”

Jung-hyun laughs quietly, nodding his head. “You look at him very fondly.”

Jeongguk blushes. “And that’s what gave it away?”

“No exactly.” He pauses, looking between the two and their current position. “I think the fact that you seemed to worry about him a lot got to me, and when mom started talking..you seemed very protective.” He looks down. “And he is lying on your lap so…”

Jeongguk laughs lightly, continuing to run his hands through the other’s hair. He glances over at Eun-ji to see if she is still sleeping, and she appears to be. “Yeah that too.”

“But, mostly, it’s because you seem happy.” Jung-hyun smiles a little, turning back to the TV. “And it’s been awhile since I’ve seen you smile like that again.”

Jeongguk lowers his eyes. “Yeah..”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to bring anything up.”

He shakes his head. “No, no, it’s not that..it’s just. It’s the first time I haven’t thought about her, I hadn’t even realised.”

There’s a sparkle in his eyes, one that dances in the blue light from the screen and a relief fills Jung-hyun’s heart. He’s happy that he was able to move on, even if it has been awhile.

“I’m glad then,” Jung-hyun responds softly. “I’m glad he makes you happy.”

Jeongguk sighs, running one hand over his face. “Man, I’m not even sure why I was so nervous. I
thought you were going to be homophobic for a second.”

“You’re an idiot,” Jung-hyun says flatly, rolling his eyes. “The last thing I would be is unsupportive, especially when it comes to sexual preference. It doesn’t change who you are, and it certainly doesn’t change how I look at you, and I think that applies to all of us.” He gestures towards Eun-ji’s sleeping figure, a look of endearment on his face. “I’m sure she’d be happy to see you move on too.”

Jeongguk nods his head, tracing a finger across the bridge of Taehyung’s nose, outlining his cheeks and then his jawline. He smiles, watching him shift a little underneath his touch and looks back up to see his brother looking at him again.

“I fall in love easily,” Jeongguk admits, sighing slightly to himself. He trails over Taehyung’s lips softly, letting them linger. “I always have, and sometimes that’s why I don’t trust myself.”

Jung-hyun sucks in a breath. “Is this—"

“But,” Jeongguk interrupts, staring at Taehyung’s asleep face affectionally. He can feel his heart in his throat. “I don’t think I’ve ever felt this way about someone before. I know it’s cheesy but..I didn’t feel this way with her. And it’s the first time I’ve really felt sure about something in a long time.”

“It’s like you would do anything for them.”

Jeongguk nods his head. “Yeah, it’s exactly like that. And I don’t remember having this precise emotion in my last relationships. I mean, I did love them, I think, but it never felt so excruciatingly strong like this. It feels like if he’d die, I’d die..and honestly, that’s pretty terrifying.”

Jung-hyun understands. “That’s love. Real love at least. You feel like they’re apart of you, and if anything bad were to happen to them, you’d feel it too.”

Jeongguk nods his head again, looking up abruptly. “And you know from experience, don’t you?”

Jung-hyun presses his lips together. “So Eun-ji told you.”

“It was practically the first thing out of her mouth.”
Jung-hyun laughs. “Well, yes. You aren’t wrong then.”

“What’s her name?”

His brother thinks about it for a little, a smile on his face. “I’m not telling.”

“No fair, I poured my heart out to you!”

“And that’s you. I’m me.”

Jeongguk frowns, pouting like a child. “Why won’t you tell me?”

“Because, I’m not ready for people to know about her yet. Not even you.”

Jeongguk sighs. “Alright, fine. You’re so supportive of me that it’s only fitting that I be for you. I respect your choice, even if it’s irritating.”

His brother laughs. “You’ll find out soon enough. She’s great, you’d get along well with her.”

“I’m sure I would.”

Taehyung turns over slightly, unconsciously registering the pressure that lies on his lips, and makes an incoherent sound. His eyes slowly flutter open, still hazy from his short nap, glazed over with an obvious sleepiness. Jeongguk smiles even wider than before, noticing that he hadn’t removed his fingers from the other’s face. He slowly draws them back, brushing the hair away from Taehyung’s eyes, even if it’s somewhat useless. Tae appears confused for several seconds before realisation begins to set in his face, a thought surfing across his mind.

“Did I seriously fall asleep that quickly?” He asks quietly, his voice lower and raspier than before. Jeongguk laughs at the same volume, playing with a strand of the other’s hair that had fallen out of place.
“Yeah you did…It was funny.”

“Please tell me I didn’t drool.”

Jeongguk wipes his thumb across the corner of the other’s lips, finding it dry. “You’re good.”

Taehyung exhales a sigh of relief, earning a bright laugh from Jung-hyun, who had been observing the situation. He’s washed over with embarrassment.

“Right…” he mutters, hiding his face with his hands as it starts to grow rosy. He bites his lip. “I forgot there were people.”

“He knows,” Jeongguk whispers, taking the other’s hands away from his face. “I told him.”

Taehyung swallows, his eyes searching for something to focus on despite not being able to. “And…”

“And I think you guys are cute,” Jung-hyun replies for him, looking at Jeongguk with amusement. He can tell Tae’s nervous. “I’m happy for you two.”

Taehyung seems to let out another exhale of relief, this one a lot more genuine and earnest. “Oh my god, thank you for saying that.”

A deep part of his conscious had been nervous, expecting a bad reaction from Jeongguk’s family towards their relationship. It was only natural, but the intense relief he feels upon hearing the other’s supportive words is so incredibly strong that he can’t help but feel both surprised and overwhelmed.

Jeongguk rubs the back of the other’s ear, looking at him fondly. “You were nervous.”

“Of course I was nervous,” Taehyung mutters, his mind still foggy and slow. He closes his eyes, his speech slurring together slightly, and Jeongguk finds it adorable. “I didn’t want to cause any drama.”

Jeongguk hums. “You’re sweet.”
“Please don’t kiss.”

Jeongguk glares at his brother, trying not laugh at Taehyung’s immediately flustered expression. “Hyung?”

“Hm?”

“Please shut up.”

Jung-hyun puts his hands up. “I’m just saying.”

Eun-ji stirs from her position on the couch, peeping her eyes opened tiredly. She looks at the TV, confusion on her face, and then at Jeongguk and Taehyung, observing their situation particularly with squinted eyes. She rubs her a hand over her mouth, still obviously out of it, and Jung-hyun starts to laugh, throwing his head back against the headrest of the couch. Jeongguk follows suit after a while, and soon all of them are laughing despite Eun-ji’s clear lack of understanding on the given situation.

“What type of drugs did you all fucking take?”

“Hey,” Jeongguk reprimands softly, frowning. “Watch your language.”

Taehyung lifts up his head from Jeongguk’s lap, running a hand through his hair to erase any signs of sleepiness, and leans back into the couch. He laughs a little too.

“Seriously,” Eun-ji says, rolling her eyes. She sits up a little more, her face still screaming sleep. “What did I miss?”

Jeongguk clears his throat, sharing a look with his brother. They both start to laugh again, pure amusement on their faces, earning a simple sigh of frustration from their sister.

“You guys are useless.” She turns to Taehyung, addressing him directly. “You’ll tell me what I
missed, won’t you Taehyung? Pretty please?”

Taehyung seems to burn, and Jeongguk laughs even harder, watching as his brother follows suit, holding onto his stomach as tears form in his eyes.

“And on that note,” Jeongguk starts, struggling to form words in between his fits of laughter. He wears an amused smile. “I think we should all take our leave.”

“What are you talking about take our leave it’s only—” she looks down at her phone, catching the time. Her eyes widen, and she looks between the TV and her brothers cautiously, clearly surprised. “I was asleep for that long?”

“Yes, you were. You picked the movie and yet you’re the one that fell asleep from it.”

She laughs sheepishly. “Alright, moving on.” She looks at the time again, biting her lip. “Is dad back home yet?”

Jeongguk shakes his head. “No, not yet. The storm should be dying down though so I’m sure he’ll be back soon. He’ll probably call us before arriving.”

Eun-ji nods, looking slightly nervous. She doesn’t like it when the family isn’t together because it reminds her of harder times, when both her parents used to work late in order to provide for them. She remembers how Jung-hyun would make her dinner instead of her mom, and how he and Jeongguk would tuck her in instead of her father. There were times they were there for her, of course, like on birthdays or special occasions, but it was mostly her brothers helping her with homework or teaching her how to ride a bike; basic kid things. Even if she does clown them a lot, she still values and appreciates their efforts to take care of her. Now that things have settled down a bit more, life has been different, but she still doesn’t like to be reminded on how her brothers raised her more than her parents did when she was younger.

And she doesn’t want them to feel guilty for it. They had to work, they needed to get the money, and if they hadn’t perhaps she wouldn’t even have a home to begin with. So she’s grateful, but at the same time, she missed their presence in that time of her life greatly.

“Well, should we call a night then?” Jung-hyun asks, noticing the TV rolling credits. Jeongguk doesn’t think he watched more than 5 minutes of it. He can barely remember what the synopsis was anyways.
He nods, looking at Taehyung who still seems to be tired. His eyes droop a little, his face relaxed, and Jeongguk tries not to laugh at how cute he is. “I think we should.”

After saying short goodbyes, Jeongguk helps Taehyung up the stairs to his room, watching Jung-hyun pick Eun-ji up on his back and carry her to the kitchen. She had muttered earlier that she was hungry, and so in their mother’s absence, he had decided to prepare something for her.

Jeongguk asked Tae if he wanted to eat anything else and he said no.

So, they made their way up the stairs, following a fairly large corridor down a hall with a set of doors. They’re three doors; his, his parents’ and his brother’s. Jeongguk and Eun-ji used to share a room but then they extended his brother’s so that everyone had their own space. A wall separates Jung-hyun from Eun-ji, as well as a small wooden door, but because the wall is thin Eun-ji often hears all the conversations Jung-hyun has in the other room. Hence, why she knows he’s in relationship.

Jeongguk opens his door, realising how much nostalgia overtakes him upon a simple motion. He hadn’t really taken in his old room, the one that has more personality than the one he has at Jin’s. His walls are light beige, his carpet a comforting almond colour. His curtains are white, a personal request because he always admired how the sunlight would wash through his window and paint the curtains in some sort of golden hue. Before he had curtains that swallowed up the light, thick yellow drapes that would block the sun instead of inviting it inside. He still remembers the day he had asked his parents for a new set of drapes, one’s that were thin enough to see the light outside but opaque enough to do their job. He had been overjoyed, such a small change making everything seem entirely different, and with that, entirely him. He didn’t have that much money growing up, and although things are better now they aren’t the most well-off. He knew that those new curtains were a gift they couldn’t afford, and yet, they had worked even harder to be able to. He hardly asked for things growing up, but this was something he knew he’d appreciate even when he grows up.

He’s still grateful over the efforts his parents undertook to keep him happy and loved, and upon thinking on it more, he wishes that Taehyung had the same. He wants Taehyung to know what it feels like to be loved like that, to have people that would give you beautiful white fluorescent curtains even though it’s unnecessary and perhaps not such a frugal decision, nor a decision they had the luxury or privilege to have, but still doing so because they know it makes him happy. He wants him to feel what it’s like for parents that take sacrifices for you, putting the well-being of their children before themselves. He feels as though he deserved that sort of life, and now he wants to make it his goal that he gets to have that life after all.

The only issue: his mother is still unfavourably odd around him.
He wonders what made her so anxious at lunch, not to mention her complete silence throughout the evening. He can’t seem to understand what’s making her so unusual and it bothers him, because honestly, it’s ruining his plan on allowing Tae to experience what it’s like to have adults that look out for you.

Parents.

They might not be his real parents, and they might not even be his foster ones, but Jeongguk knows that he wants to share what he has with Taehyung, so that he too can understand the feeling of being a kid.

Being a kid who is loved.

Jeongguk closes the door, staring at his window with the same loosely drawn-back curtains. His eyes shine as the moon sweeps through the glass, illuminating his carpet and his walls in a colour that almost resembles blue, and he believes that he is lucky. He knows that he is lucky, and that he always had been, despite evident financial issues, and he’s glad to know that that’s the only problem he’s had to face so far in life. Well, family-wise that is.

He still loves those curtains, even though they’ve been well-spent and pretty worn out by now. He still loves them for what it means, a symbol for what he’s been granted in his life, and of courses, for the way the sun shines out of them.

He turns to Taehyung, staring at his eyes and his long lashes, admiring him like he always does. He’s begun to realise how much the other means to him, and he doesn’t know if Tae knows that yet. Granted, Jeongguk doesn’t think he’s told him how much he likes him.

That he loves him.

For him, this emotion has come easily. A little too much so that is, and more often than not, he gets his heart broken because of it.

But honestly, that’s quite an understatement. He gets taken for granted, and he knows it because when he looks back at his past relationships, where he had put in his all, he was simply not given the same effort back. Many liked him for his looks, but that was it, they never truly got to know him or understand him. For them, he was just some sort of popularity boost, or a nice one-night stand to be later ignored and forgotten as they went back to their exes, crying that they had forgiven them over
some bullshit cause.

Except one person that is. Or, should he say two, because he can guarantee that Taehyung’s not dating him for how he looks, of all things.

He had a girlfriend before Taehyung, multiple really, but this girl had been special to him and so he likes to consider her as his first real relationship.

Long story short, things didn’t end well, and whilst going into detail would be neat, he’s not ready to talk about it just yet. He trusts Tae with the information, he just fears that if he brings it up, he’ll realise that he hasn’t really moved on, and he’s tried desperately to forget about her and all the things that caused their inevitable break-up. Plus, who talks about their ex to their current partner anyways?

“I really like your family,” Taehyung says, finding his way to the edge of the bed so he can sit on it. There’s an expression on his face that Jeongguk hasn’t really seen before, and for some reason it makes his heart swell. “And your siblings are amazing, I don’t think I’ve ever liked people that quickly in a while.”

Jeongguk laughs, sitting down by the bed as well. He holds the other’s hand, smiling widely. “Yeah, they’re a handful but really I do love them. Even if Eun-ji is insufferably loud at times.”

“No, no, that makes her even more adorable, honestly. I’ve seen people be too quiet for a long time, even myself that is. It’s so refreshing to have someone that energetic with so much attitude. And you handle it pretty well.”

Jeongguk bites his lip, amusement on his face. “You said she was adorable, hm?”

Taehyung shakes his wrists, attempting to shove the other. “Is that seriously what you got from that?”

“Well, it was a crucial factor.”

“Yes,” Taehyung sighs, smiling as well. “She is adorable. She’s like you but younger.”
“So, I’m a girl now?” Jeongguk jokes.

“I could assume but I have sucked your dick, so I can confirm you are indeed..male.”

Jeongguk bursts into laughter, hugging Taehyung from the side. He holds him tightly for a couple seconds, relaxing against him and just letting his touch linger. His heart feels heavy in his chest, and the desire to say those words become overwhelming.

“I shouldn’t be jealous, should I? I can tell she likes you..a little more than a friend,” Jeongguk says after a moment. He’s joking, obviously, but the part of his sister liking him isn’t exactly.

Taehyung laughs, leaning his head against Jeongguk’s shoulder. “Jeongguk, I’m very, very incredibly gay. And I say this with confidence because originally, I thought I didn’t like anyone, but the thought of guys did come across occasionally.”

“Point taken.”

“And,” he adds, smiling to himself. “I hardly think she likes me.”

Jeongguk scoffs. “Are you kidding me? She was totally into you! I was so close to strangling her I swear-”

“You were jealous?” Taehyung snickers, finding it hard to find the situation anything short of hilarious. “You’re so stupid.”

“What do you mean?! I swear, the way she talked to you was way too..close.”

Taehyung shakes his head. “Jeongguk, I’m pretty sure she knows we’re together.”

“I never told her!”

“And does that stop someone from figuring out the obvious?” Taehyung asks, raising an eyebrow. “I’m pretty sure she was acting like so that you could tell her we were dating yourself. But hey, that’s
just what I observed.”

He’s silent as he thinks over something. “Are you sure though? She asked if you had a girlfriend.”

“She was probably waiting for me to say I was gay! Or better yet, mention the elephant in the room, which is that we are together.”

Realisation hits his face. “Oh.”

“And you never said it!”

“Well I was planning to but she fell asleep!”

Taehyung doesn’t buy it. “You purposefully told your brother at that time because you knew she was asleep.”

“I-” he laughs. “Yeah, I kind of did do that, didn’t I?”

“If she didn’t know when we first walked in she definitely found out once you opened that door. She even said that you looked like you were having sex!”

“Technically,” he states, holding back a smile. “I wasn’t.”

“She knows.”

He connects both his hands with Taehyung, bringing their bodies closer together. “And yet her flirting still seems very very real.”

“Who knows, I could be wrong then,” Taehyung teases, feeling the other’s face close to his. He sucks in a breath, bringing his voice to a whisper. “But I am perceptive.”
“That you are.”

“And even if she did, I know who I like, Jeongguk. And it’s always going to be you, even if someday we break up—”

“Don’t say that,” Jeongguk interrupts, the words stinging his chest as he hears it. He doesn’t want to think of that.

“Even if we break up,” Taehyung continues, the same indescribable expression on his face. Jeongguk looks at how the moon catches his eyes, his lashes, his face. He’s mesmerised by his soft voice and gentle words; by the way the curtains serve his features justice. “I’m always going to like you. You’ll always be a part of me, even if I eventually find someone else. You’ll always be my first..”

Jeongguk kisses him softly, hurt but charmed by what he’s saying. He knows the feeling, and he knows that he’d feel that feeling too with Taehyung.

But, what’s different from his first real relationship is that he knows that he won’t have to feel that feeling with him. He knows that what they have, is more than now, and he knows that one day, it might be forever.

It’s crazy to think about, and scary given his last relationship, but in this exact moment, it feels so real and tangible. It feels like his future.

He breaks away, finding it cute how Tae continues to lean in, expecting his lips to be there. Jeongguk cradles the other’s cheek with his palm, breathing in deeply. He wants to say those words, and surprisingly, there’s nothing holding him back from doing it anymore.

He’s unsure what was keeping him from saying it in the first place.

“I love you.”

Taehyung freezes, his heart taking an extended leap out of his chest. He can feel his heartbeat in his abdomen, taking over his movements, and his world quite honestly stops.
And it’s in a good way. Frankly, it’s in the best way.

But there’s one thing he has to say before he says it back, because he spent way too much inner turmoil and debate for this to slide over so simply.

“Why’d you have to say that,” he starts, reconnecting their lips briefly.

Jeongguk frowns, pulling away. There’s some sort of hurt on his face. “What do you-”

Taehyung shushes him, letting their foreheads touch. There’s a sparkle to his foggy eyes, and it’s the first time Jeongguk’s seen them so alive before. It looks like he can see him, as if he’s looking right into him, understanding his emotions. “Why’d you have to say that before me.”

The frown on Jeongguk’s face washes into a squinty-eyed smile, almost immediately in nature and he laughs brightly. He holds Taehyung’s face in his hands, running a thumb across his cheek, and there are tears in his brown eyes.

“You could’ve been quicker,” Jeongguk whispers, a laugh bubbling in his throat. Their noses brush against each other’s, their lips close to reconnecting. A lone tear rolls down his cheek, the rest collecting in his bottom lashes, and he closes his eyes, letting them fall down naturally. “But I couldn’t hold it back any longer.”

“I was going to,” Taehyung murmurs, his voice soft and breathless. He inhales deeply, their lips still inches away from touching. He wants to kiss him. “At the park we went to at five in the morning..I almost did.”

“Why didn’t you?”

“Yoongi called and interrupted the moment.”

Jeongguk laughs quietly. “I remember that.”

He lowers his eyes. “But now I can’t say it first, because you already did.”
Jeongguk holds him tighter, smiling at his ridiculousness. “You may not be the first one to say it, but you can be the first one to say it back.”

Taehyung brings his fingers up hesitantly until they reach the other’s face, wiping away the wet streak that paint it. “You’re crying.”

Jeongguk covers Tae’s hand with his own, leaning his cheek into it. “Because I’m happy.”

“I didn’t say it back yet.”

“No,” he admits, taking a long exhale. He smiles. “But I know you will.”

He kisses him with more passion, an eagerness to his actions. He leans Taehyung against the bed so his back lays flat on the mattress, their lips still attached and moving to the rhythm of their hearts. It sounds cheesy, but really, Jeongguk’s never felt more in harmony with the other.

He slips his tongue into Taehyung’s mouth, kissing him deeply and then reducing the pace so that their moment lasts a little longer. He continues to run his thumb across the other’s cheek, tightening the gentle grip on his face every time he deepens the kiss, taking little time to breathe in between.

His heart is afloat, his mind is afloat off the feeling of consonance, every yearn or crave in his body becoming satiated by Taehyung’s unspoken yet reciprocated words. He pushes him further into the bed, breathing through his nose as he continues to kiss the other slowly and sensually, capturing his lips fully.

Taehyung breaks away to breathe, his chest falling up and down quickly. There’s a smile on his face, illuminated by the moon, and his lips appear more kissable than before.

“I love you too.”

His cheeks are rosy as he says it, his voice barely above a whisper. Jeongguk’s breath gets stuck in his lungs, and all he can do is smile, letting their foreheads touch again, an incredible surge of happiness swimming throughout his bloodstream.
“Took you long enough.”

Taehyung laughs softly, kissing him again. This time he leads the kiss, and he wraps his arms around Jeongguk’s neck, the other’s body still hovering over him. He tugs him closer, tilting his head to the side, letting his mind wander as his lips are captured by the other’s, a tremendous sense of ease drifting through his conscious.

He feels Jeongguk slide his hand underneath his shirt, roaming his chest in a careless manner, running his fingers down the length of his abdomen. Taehyung stops him, a shiver overtaking him, and he swallows. “We’re not having sex…yet, right?”

Jeongguk raises an eyebrow. “Did you want us to?”

He shakes his head, biting his lip. “Not right now.”

Jeongguk understands, lifting them both up so they’re back in a sitting position. He brushes Taehyung’s hair out of his face, trailing his hands down the other’s face and then his neck.

“We don’t have to have sex, Tae. Not if you don’t want to.”

“No, it’s not like I don’t want us to.” He pauses, looking a little flustered. “I do, it’s just…ugh it’s so stupid I swear.”

Jeongguk’s curiosity peaks, and he rubs the back of Taehyung’s ear reassuringly. “I bet it’s not stupid. I did just say I love you.”

“I guess I don’t want us to do it right now. It feels too casual..” he trails off, the pink on his cheeks blossoming. “I want it to be special..I guess.”

Jeongguk tries not to melt from his words, squeezing his eyes shut. He sucks in a breath. “That is the cutest thing I’ve ever heard.”
Taehyung flushes even more, hiding his blush with his hands. “I’m being serious!”

“And I am too,” Jeongguk replies, smiling gently. “Tae, our first time will be special. I promise.”

His eyes shimmer faintly, some sort of excitement etched in his face. “Really?”

“How could it not be?”

He kisses him again, this time lasting a bit longer. They both smile, enthralled by each other, and Taehyung makes a bold move to bite the other’s lip, swiping his tongue over the indents he made.

Jeongguk groans softly, becoming more dominant in the embrace. He shifts his position, making it so that Taehyung’s on his lap, his legs around his waist. They kiss for a couple more minutes, Taehyung’s back arching slightly as Jeongguk runs a hand across his spine.

When they finally break apart, both of their faces are glowing, soft pinks reaching their cheeks not from embarrassment but from the heat radiating off both their bodies. Jeongguk sighs heavily, sucking his own bottom lip in concentration so he can refrain from getting too into it.

Taehyung composes himself too, placing a hand on Jeongguk’s shoulder. “I need to shower.”

Jeongguk almost laughs at the random statement, finding the contrast of their situations amusing. He hesitates on what to say.

“Sorry, I should’ve asked if I could use you’re shower before stating that I needed to but I’m still dirty from the rain not to mention the stuff we were doing before—”

“Tae, I got it. It’s alright,” Jeongguk interrupts, slightly flustered. “Of course you can use my shower it’s not a problem just..” he caresses his cheek softly, bringing his hand up to his hair so that he can run his fingers through it, feeling the warmth of Taehyung’s skin against his fingertips. “The statement caught me off guard that’s all.”

Taehyung nods, getting out of Jeongguk’s lap to sit on the edge of the bed, moving outstretched palms across the sheets so he can identify where he is and how far away he is from the ground.
Jeongguk stands up hastily, determined to guide the other considering this is new territory for him. He goes in front of him, taking the other’s hand in his own, and helps him stand up too.

“Jeongguk, you don’t need to-”

“It’ll be easier.” He smiles, squeezing his hand. “Trust me.”

After leading him to the bathroom, and showing him which way is cold and which way is hot (as well as how to turn the shower on and off) he stays by the doorway anxiously, biting his lip.

“You’re sure you’re okay doing this by yourself?”

Taehyung double checks where the towel is, nodding to himself. “I’ve done this so many times. I’ll be fine.”

“But you aren’t familiar with my bathroom.”

“I’ll be careful,” Taehyung reassures. “What’s the worst that could happen?”

He regrets saying that last part.

“Uh, I don’t know, how about you slipping and breaking your back? What if you hurt yourself and I don’t hear you? What if you hit your head and drown? I know you’re capable Tae but I don’t want you to risk it regardless.”

Taehyung presses his lips together. “I’m sure you’d hear me if I fell, and I told you I will be careful. You can leave the bathroom door slightly open if that makes you feel better.”

It does, but he’s still wary about it.

Taehyung would usually be upset over this sort of nagging but this scenario reminds him of the time
when Yoongi first let him shower completely by himself (before he would stay outside the slightly parted door, his ear practically against the wood). He knows that it can be dangerous but frankly, he’s had six years to adjust to this darkness, and he’s truly come to live with it.

He knows what he’s doing.

“Okay that would make me feel a little bit better but..”

“How about this?” Taehyung starts, trying to negotiate. “Every so often you can call out to ask if I’m alright and I’ll answer you that I am. If I don’t leave the shower after 30 minutes then you can barge in, but only if I don’t respond.”

Jeongguk sighs. “Alright fine, I’ll take the deal..I don’t mean to make you feel as if you can’t do anything I’m just nervous about it. It’s easy for anyone to hurt themselves in the shower, and the that’s the last thing I would want.”

“I get it, Jeongguk. I’m not mad at you for it, but trust me when I say that it’ll be fine.”


Taehyung shoos him off so he can take off his clothes, not wanting a repeat of last time. As Jeongguk closes the door, leaving a crack of it open as agreed upon, Taehyung makes his way to the shower, feeling for the knobs and turning them hesitantly in the direction Jeongguk had told him.

Cold water douses his body, dripping down his chest and the outside of his thighs and he yelps in surprise, not expecting it to be so freezing. He leans against one side of the shower wall, frigid tiles against his back, smooth yet jarred in nature and waits for the temperature to increase.

Jeongguk quickly opens the door again, extreme amounts of concern on his face, and he looks at Taehyung without really thinking about it.

“Are you okay?!?”

Taehyung’s eyes naturally widen, the cold water gradually turning tepid. “What are you talking
“about, nothing happened?”

“You yelped!”

Taehyung gives him a straight face. “Yeah because the water was cold.”

Jeongguk rubs the back of his neck sheepishly. “Oh.”

“And how’d you even hear that it wasn’t even that loud?” Taehyung closes his eyes, not even needing his response. “You were right outside the door, weren’t you.”

“I was right outside the door.”

Taehyung sighs. “Okay, I’m alright, so no more barging in unless you think it’s urgent.”

“But-”

“Please?” Taehyung asks sweetly, feeling some steam start to accumulate around him. He wipes his face. “I appreciate the concern but I’d rather you trust me.”

Jeongguk nods his head, his eyes widening when he begins to realise that he’s been staring at the other this whole time. He coughs awkwardly, his eyes tracing the outline of the other’s body. His skin appears vibrant, small droplets rolling down his body, and Jeongguk swallows. “The shower..it’s a glass door.”

There’s confusion on Tae’s face. “I don’t understand?”

Jeongguk suppresses a smile, averting his gaze. “Okay, well I’ll just be leaving then. Enjoy your shower! I’m checking up in ten minutes!”

The door is brought in a little more, and Taehyung removes his back from the wall, putting his head underneath the water.
A stream of warmth falls down his neck, his scalp soothed by the comfort, and he sighs heavily. He reflects back on Jeongguk’s words, still a little confused, and runs a hand through his hair, shaking up the strands so that the water is evenly distributed.

He hums a familiar melody, letting his voice carry throughout the tiled floors. He’s not loud, his voice but a gentle wisp through the air, but it still echoes through the water pattering against the drain.

He fumbles around for some soap, finding a round and smooth bottle. There isn’t any braille for him to determine what it’ll smell like, or if it’s even soap, but he has around a 33.3% chance of getting right (assuming Jeongguk is the type of person to simply have shampoo, conditioner and soap in his shower). He brings the nozzle to his nose, smelling lavender and pine with maybe a hint of rose. It smells exactly like Jeongguk, which makes sense since it is his product, but it’s still weird to associate with a plastic bottle.

He pours some in his hand, washing his arms with the slightly cool, glossy liquid, feeling it foam underneath his fingertips and emanate that fresh comforting smell. He’s glad to know that his gamble for ‘is this soap?’ paid out in his favour.

He’s always found showers comforting, and he’s sure that others would agree. In one way, it’s scary because you are vulnerable (and naked) and there really isn’t a worse combination than being vulnerable and naked simultaneously (perhaps if you add blind it gets worse but that’s an unlikely circumstance for most). However, despite that, he feels incredibly safe underneath the water, as if he’s barricaded from the world. Although his thoughts can get out of hand at times, there’s still the water to distract him, to prevent them from taking over, and he can appreciate that.

He lathers his hair with some of the suds still on his hands, reaching to his right to find another mystery bottle. He wonders where Jeongguk got his products from, not so he can buy them himself, but so that he’ll be able to find that familiar comfortable smell once again, when he’ll want to. His fingertips trail the tiles for a long time, mainly because he’s being more careful and slower with his movements in general, and finds humour in imagining what these tiles would look like. Guessing from the feel of it they’re rectangular, made of a firm clay-like material. He wants to think they’re blue, or a wonderful turquoise, the type of tiles that appear one colour but then shimmer in holographic galore as the light touches it. Maybe Jeongguk’s the type of guy to have a pristine simple look, and so he imagines the tiles gleaming in some off-white or crystalline colour as well.

He finds what he thinks he’s looking for, a larger bottle with a slightly broken nozzle. He sniffs it, wondering if it’s shampoo or conditioner because they do differ in smells, believe it or not. Conditioners just naturally smell softer whilst shampoos have a sharp, almost pungent odour to them. They’re slightly acidic in a way too, but Taehyung guesses that’s just him being overly observant.
The mystery substance ends up being shampoo, and he can tell from the consistency alone.

It simply has that sort of feel.

It smells like lavender too, and Taehyung notices Jeongguk’s going for a theme here. There’s more to it, perhaps it’s his sensitive nose or just the complexity of the brand, but he can smell layers to it. There’s lavender but also jasmine, some vanilla undertones to it as well, but for some reason it still holds some masculinity.

He continues to hum as he massages his scalp, sighing as the water washes suds onto his face, some finding the corners of his mouth. He blows gently, water falling from his lips, and he smiles, raising his head up so that his face meets the stream of warm water.

Meanwhile, Jeongguk waits anxiously by the door. After the first few minutes he had decided not to seem like a creep, and so he gradually started pacing from the middle of his room to his bedside lamp, attentive to anything he might hear.

He’s still slightly drunk off the feeling of reciprocation, the words he told Taehyung nothing short of the truth. He had wanted that moment to last forever, but he thinks the feeling he’s experiencing now is sufficient enough. He’s just so happy, happy that this is going well; ‘this’ indicating the first relationship he’s had since he broke up with his girlfriend.

He’s happy that he isn’t feeling this heavy, electrifying feeling alone. That Taehyung is equally as in love with him as he is.

It makes him feel secure, reassured and complete in some incredible way that he hasn’t felt in a long time, maybe even ever. He’s sure of his feelings, and although his sexuality is quite a literal mess, he knows that it doesn’t matter for the moment, because right now, he knows that he loves Taehyung, and he could care less of his gender.

He hears a knock at the door, a contrast to his thoughts and the calm hush of the shower. Even beyond that, he swore he could hear Taehyung singing something, but the sound of the water had drowned him out to the point that he isn’t sure.

He goes to open the door, surprised to see his mother standing right outside, an apologetic look on her face. She’s biting her lip, her hands folded together, an expression he knows she makes when
she’s about to apologise.

“Can I come in?”

Her voice is dainty yet holds exhaustion, as though she’s been thinking for quite some time. Jeongguk nods his head hastily, still confused but also relieved to see his mother in a different atmosphere than before. She walks carefully into the room, looking around briefly before sitting on Jeongguk’s bed, contemplating a thought.

“Where’s Taehyung?”

Jeongguk scratches the back of his neck, using his other hand to point to the slightly cracked bathroom door. “He’s taking a shower.”

Her face falls a little, not incredibly noticeable but still enough for Jeongguk to notice, and she pats the bed so that Jeongguk can sit down beside her. He does, analysing her posture and the way she sits, wondering what she’s going to say.

“I’d first like to apologise for my behaviour today. I wasn’t fair to you or to him, and I should’ve been a better host.”

“Mom, really it’s fine—”

“No really it isn’t,” she interrupts softly, squeezing his hand shortly. “I wanted to apologise to him too...it wasn’t my intention to make him feel uncomfortable.”

There’s some delicate silence, the sound of the shower providing a thickness to the thin air, and after some time, Jeongguk nods.

“Thank you for saying that.”

He’s genuine with his words but there is some confusion and curiosity there too.
“But can I ask,” Jeongguk starts, looking at his mother in the eyes. “What made you act so weirdly?”

She presses her lips together, as if expecting this question. She swallows, tapping Jeongguk’s hand a few times before retracting her own, appearing paler than before. “Well, you see, I..know Taehyung.”

“You..know him?” Jeongguk asks, the news making him, if possible, even more confused. A thousand possible possibilities sprout into his mind, even the impossible ones.

She nods her head, her tone grave. “Yes. Specifically, I know of him. I know his name, I knew of his existence.”

Jeongguk raises an eyebrow. “But he doesn’t know you?”

“He doesn’t.”

“Mom, you’re making me even more confused.”

She sighs, rubbing her eyes. “I figured I would.” She takes in a deep breath, recollecting her thoughts, and then says something Jeongguk hadn’t even thought to think of. Out of all the possibilities he went through, both possible and impossible, this was something he had not assumed; something that wouldn’t possibly make sense to assume. “I know his father.”

His eyes widen considerably, his hands growing cold. He’s filled with a furiousness even he didn’t think he was capable of, and he pinches his eyes closed. “You know what?”

“His father, Jeongguk. Not his step-father, but his real one..his birth father.”

Even though this isn’t much better, Jeongguk can’t help but exhale in relief. It’s still a bad situation, but if his mother had known Taehyung’s foster father, he doesn’t think he would be able to handle that knowledge.

How could anyone?
Nonetheless, this is still immensely coincidental, and Jeongguk can’t completely quell his initial rage because although this isn’t necessarily her fault, *how* does she know Taehyung’s birth father when even Taehyung isn’t aware of who he is? It just doesn’t seem fair.

“How do you know him? Wh-Why do you know him?”

She sighs again, probably expecting these questions too. She hadn’t thought this day would ever come, frankly, she hadn’t thought this would ever come back to bite her. She’s never forgotten about that file, or the name written on it. She has *never* forgotten him, and she lives with the guilt, and she feels as though she deserves to live with it.

And maybe she does.

She could’ve easily said no to his demands. She could’ve risked herself, and her job, and denied his requests, perhaps living a guilt-free yet homeless life. However, she knew that she couldn’t do that. It wasn’t her that was just at risk, it was her family, and she had no idea who Taehyung was or if he was even in any danger. Well, she suspected so, but she didn’t want to believe it.

To her, Taehyung was a stranger, someone she could pray for, cry for, and hurt for, without truly knowing him. It made the guilt bearable, it made her actions bearable to reflect upon.

But now?

Now he’s here, he’s living, he’s breathing, he’s in her *house*, and the faceless name she had imagined all these years now has...well, a face. The guilt she had is now embodied into this person, the fear and nausea she received from that file is *now* a tangible human being that she can no longer imagine as a figure of her regrets or mistakes. She can’t because he’s *alive* and he’s here, and although she knew this person was out there, it was easier to breathe when she didn’t know who he was or what he had endured from an early age.

She swallows again, feeling sick. “You were young at the time, around twelve. Actually, now that I think about it, it was your birthday.”

“My birthday?”
She nods, regretting the explanation already. “I worked as an accountant at the time, for a very busy and successful person, who was also a very powerful and easily angered person..well, he very well may still be.”

“What does this have to do with him?”

“I’m getting to that.” she bites her lip, a nervous habit that she still has after all these years. This time, however, she’s not lying. “I had to give him these files, you see. These very important files, and if I didn’t, bad things would happen.”

Realisation sets on Jeongguk’s face, fragments of his memory returning to him. “I remember those files. It was the morning of my birthday and you had gone to take a phone call..a man, he threatened you..and you had a file in your hand.”

Mrs. Jeon nods again, a grimace on her face. She remembers those exact moments too, everyday she’s remembered them, and the guilt never gets easier to swallow. “Yes, exactly so. I had to get these files to him, these—very important files.” Her voice goes shaky, her breath sharp. She can’t explain the whole truth, it’ll kill him. It’ll kill the both of them. “And, the man that I was giving these to was Mr. Kim. He was—is Taehyung’s father.”

Jeongguk frowns. “How do you know that though?”

“Jeongguk, I know what the man looks like. They’re almost identical.”

She’s not entirely lying, but she is hiding part of the truth.

“That doesn’t mean they’re related, so many people have the last name Kim, and I’m sure it’s just a coincidence that they look alike.”

Mrs. Jeon sighs. “Maybe they’re not related.” Now that was a blatant lie. “But regardless, he reminded me of him, and as you know, he wasn’t the most forgiving or kind person. It reminded me of harder times, and that was unfair to Taehyung. To the both of you.”

Jeongguk nods, accepting this answer. Mrs. Jeon can’t bring herself to tell him the full story, the story where she blatantly knew Taehyung was his son yet gave Mr. Kim those files to be burned and shredded from existence. She erased his name from the table, hid his past, hid his family, his origins.
She cut the line between him and his birth father, burdening him with a terrible life, by the looks of it, and she cannot forgive herself for that. She wouldn’t expect Jeongguk or Taehyung to either.

“But you know he isn’t like him, right?” Jeongguk says, his chest feeling lighter. “I mean, let’s say they are related, that still doesn’t make them the same person. I know Taehyung, he’s amazing, Eomma. He has so much energy and life for someone who’s suffered so much and I..admire him. I want you to know that he’s a good person.”

Mrs. Jeon nods her head, his words making the needle in her heart push a little deeper. The guilt isn’t so bearable anymore. “I know that, I have come to know that, which is why I came to apologise. He seems like a lovely person, and I was too focused on this aspect that I couldn’t get to know him. I promise I’ll be better from here on out.”

It’s what Taehyung deserves. She’s going to make it her goal that Taehyung has the happiest life he can have from now on, and whatever that may undertake, she’ll accept it. She has to accept it, both for his sake and for her own sanity.

“Thank you, I truly appreciate it, and I’m sure he will to. He’s not very vocal when it comes to something he’s uncomfortable or upset with, but I know that your apology will mean a lot to him. He just wants you to like him too.”

She holds Jeongguk’s cheek tenderly, smiling in a way that makes the wrinkles around her eyes more prominent. “I do like him very much already.”

Maybe, in another life, she would be able to like him without the burden of guilt. She wants to believe that she likes him naturally, but a deep part of her, the same part that has never forgotten his name for all these years, feels as though she has to like him. Which again, isn’t fair.

She likes the way he speaks, his gentle movements, his familiarity and skill with the seeing world despite being disconnected to it. She admires him too but she also fears him for what he symbolises, and it’s not his fault that he symbolises that.

It’s hers. He symbolises her guilt, her deepest regret, her most forlorn mistake. She wants to help him and treasure him but she also feels as though she is indebted to, and once again, that isn’t fair to him.

She has to learn to live through this knowledge, so that she can grant him a life that’s better than the one he’s already endured. She has to and she’s determined to.
She gets up from the bed, forcing a smile for Jeongguk and their seemingly resolved conflict. It’s partially resolved of course, and for the most part, things are okay, but that’s just the surface. Mrs. Jeon knows that she’ll always have this guilt but she also knows that she doesn’t want to drag her son nor Taehyung into it.

It’s her own problem to deal with.

She walks towards the door, looking back to wish Jeongguk goodnight, smiling genuinely this time at his relaxed expression. He deserves to be at ease, and she feels bad for causing him turmoil to begin with. “I love you, Jeongguk.”

“I love you too mom.”

She closes the door and Jeongguk exhales heavily, the lightness still comfortably in his chest. He’s happy things are resolved, and that her weirdness had only been a misunderstanding. One thing he has noticed, however, is that with all the talk about those files that she had, all those years ago, she never told him what was in them. He assumes it’s not of his importance, or else she would have told him, right? And maybe she hadn’t known either, considering Mr. Kim is a scary man.

As far as he knows it, Taehyung had briefly reminded his mother of her terribly demanding and sexist boss, and therefore she felt weird talking to him. But now that things are cleared up, and she understands that this is all most-likely a coincidence, he feels at ease.

His family does like him, and Taehyung will feel happy knowing so.

The shower stops and it catches Jeongguk’s attention. He was supposed to check up on him but he guesses the other takes quicker showers than he had thought.

He wonders if he should help Taehyung, or bring him some clothes, but he doesn’t want to seem even more protective than he already has. He trusts him and he wants Tae to know that he does too.

Shortly after that, he hears a significant thud, an ‘ow’ following suit. The door opens up to reveal Taehyung, a towel around his waist, his skin still wet and oddly enough, a hand to his nose. He laughs, rubbing his nose gently and outreaches to the side of him so he can feel the texture of the door.
“There aren’t any doors in my house so I didn’t realise...” he taps the door twice, a sheepish expression on his face. “I forgot they existed.”

Jeongguk laughs. “You don’t have doors in your house?”

“Of course we have a front door,” Taehyung explains, running a hand through his hair. It smells like lavender and vanilla. “But because I kept running into them, Yoongi got rid of most.”

Jeongguk nods, finding this newfound knowledge about him interesting. It makes him further realise how close Yoongi and Taehyung really are. It also shows him that although Taehyung does seem extremely familiar with his surroundings, he still has his weaknesses, and for some reason it makes Jeongguk admire him more. “Makes sense.”

He watches Taehyung walk relatively naturally, his hand lowly placed in front of him, making sure he doesn’t run into any walls, or quite frankly, anymore doors. Jeongguk bites his lip in amusement, watching him bend down onto his knees so he can open the suitcase that he bumped his foot on. It’s honestly impressive watching him move so comfortably.

“How did you do that?”

Taehyung perks his head up. “Hm? Do what?”

“Figure out where the suitcase was so quickly?”

Taehyung feels a dangling object and pulls, unzipping the suitcase easily. He rummages through his clothes, feeling for satin material. “Muscle memory?” he guesses, not really knowing either. “I’m not sure, sometimes I get this sort of extra sense and just know where to go. But you know, I also felt it with my foot.”

Jeongguk stares at him widely. “That’s insane.”

“That I felt it with my foot?”
“Your extra sense,” Jeongguk says, rolling his eyes. “Shouldn’t doctors be analysing you or something?”

“I was joking, of course I don’t have an extra sense that would be crazy. And besides, even if they wanted to analyse me I am not staying in any hospitals longer than I need to be. Not happening.”

“Okay, so even if it’s a hypothetical extra sense don’t you think it’s interesting? Have you ever thought about how incredible it is the way you handle everything?”

Taehyung finds what he’s looking for, his hands curling around soft pyjamas. He does a little internal dance of victory and then thinks about Jeongguk’s question some more, going into more depth. “Can’t say I’ve thought about it,” he admits, shrugging his shoulders. “I’m not the only blind person. So many people who can’t see, even those from birth and those who have had it longer than me, those who have had it worse than me, are able to do these things. I feel like it’s only surprising and impressive to you since I’m the first blind person you’ve ever met.”

Jeongguk’s at a loss to say, not really expecting that response.

“Sorry, that came across a little blunt,” Taehyung says, standing back up slowly so that his towel doesn’t fall off. “I didn’t mean it in a bad way, it’s nice that you think so highly of me..but truly, people like me just have to make the best out of an unfortunate situation. And thankfully, with time, things do get easier to manage.”

Jeongguk nods his head, finding everything that Taehyung has to say about this topic fascinating. He’s right, since Tae is the first blind person Jeongguk’s ever met it’s only natural that he accidentally assumes that all blind people are a certain way, or that he is some sort of exception. It’s what most people would do.

But Taehyung’s been around the world of the unseeing, he’s met them, learned from them, understood them, and he’s had to do so because he is a part of it.

“Some people still struggle with it,” Taehyung continues softly, finding his way back to the bathroom door. “I’m not speaking for everyone, and I’m definitely not certain if every person who’s been unable to see for a long time is ever used to it. I know sometimes it may seem like I am, but really, I’m not one hundred percent used to it at all. I’m just used to it enough that I can live my life the way I sort of would like to.”
Jeongguk remains quiet for a bit, absorbing the information. He then quirks his head up, a sincerity in his voice. “Would you ever want to see again?”

Taehyung swallows the question heavily, a little off guard. He sits on it (not literally of course) and before responding, asks the other a question back. “If you could see, and then one day you couldn’t any longer, would you want to see again?”

Jeongguk nods his head. “Yes.”

“But then, if you lived your life in this darkness for around half as long as you’ve been able to see, where you’ve built your life upon this domineering factor of your existence, would you want to see again? Would you want to see even though you’ve grown used to the darkness? When finally, the darkness felt normal and safe and..familiar?”

Jeongguk hesitates. “I don’t know.”

“Then there’s your answer,” he finishes, stopping briefly to point to his eyes. “I don’t know if I’d want to. I mean, if someone told me that I had the chance to my immediate thought would be yes, and I probably wouldn’t think twice about it. But if I thought twice about it, like I am now, I wouldn’t be too sure if I’d want to.” He pauses for a moment, thinking on it some more. “I miss being able to see, and I miss being able to know where I’m going, who the people I meet look like, how the ocean looks again, because quite honestly, I’ve forgotten. I miss seeing colours, and admiring beautiful people, and seeing the expressions on people’s faces without having to perceive them through sound or touch or any other extra sense. I miss being like that.”

Jeongguk understands, remaining silent.

“And yeah, I miss how the sky looks, when they’re sunsets or sunrises or simply clear blue days or foggy grey storms. I miss being able to see the grass before I smell it, and stare across a room and see the person I’m looking for without having to hear them. I miss those kinds of things.”

“Who wouldn’t?”

“But,” Taehyung says, biting the tip of his finger gingerly. “I also would miss who I am today. I’m perceptive, I’m careful, I understand things a lot of people who can see don’t because they’re distracted by all these distractions and colours and beauty. I’m jealous but I’m also alright with the fact, because with the ability to see, I’m frankly not the same person.”
“But it doesn’t define you, Tae,” Jeongguk interrupts. “Your personality isn’t just being blind.”

“I know that, but it does make up a lot of it. Think about it? Half the things I do are attempts to understand where I am or who I’m with, I spend more time figuring all these things out, analysing this makeshift image into my mind, that by the time I’m done, the situation is already over. I spend so much time trying to do what a normal person would do automatically, and that’s the difference.”

Jeongguk’s confused. “..Isn’t that a bad thing though? Doesn’t it get tiring?”

“It’s all I know how to do, and so, it doesn’t seem so tiring anymore.”

“Personally, if I’d be given the chance to see again, I’d take it,” Jeongguk admits, pressing his hands together. “But I think that’s because I’m spoiled off the visual world, and I wouldn’t be able to let it go.” He realises something then and there, and he continues his thought. “Which I’m guessing is how you feel about the non-visual world.”

Taehyung nods his head, his skin almost dry by now. “Maybe I can’t let it go. Maybe not yet, and I guess I won’t have to.”

It’s all he says and yet there are so many layers of emotion to his words. He sounds desperate, lonely and attached to the very world that he once despised and perhaps still despises. He would want to see one day, but he’s afraid that he’s grown so accustomed to the darkness that the light will be overbearing. He’s unsure the light would ever be normal to him, given he had the chance to see again.

And luckily, as terrible as it sounds, he doesn’t have that choice, nor does he have to make it. He’d much rather let fate handle those things, because at least then he won’t have a say in what happens and he’ll just have to live with it.

For some reason, that seems better.

He’s always ‘just lived with it’ he’s always endured. It’s what he’s best at.

“But anyways,” Jeongguk says offhandedly, not wanting the mood to grow sour. “You should put some clothes on. As much as I like staring at you in just a towel, I’m worried you’re gonna catch a cold.”
Taehyung feels his cheeks burn and he attempts to glare, the smile on his lips proving difficult. “Oh so now you want me clothed.”

“What can I say? I’m truly a saint.”

Taehyung walks back into the bathroom, being weary of the door this time, disregarding Jeongguk’s comment because it’s somewhat of an eye-roll. Scratch that, it’s very eye-roll inducing.

Whilst he gets ready, Jeongguk smiles to himself, wondering how he got lucky. It’s as though the universe had answers his prayers and rewarded him for handling his insufferable time of loneliness. And he guesses the lonely aspect of it wasn’t so bad, it was just the memories that he had to endure during that time. It makes him feel like crying honestly, and he’s unsure if it’s out of relief, sadness, happiness, or just all three.

He hears the bathroom door creak open, this time without a thud (thankfully) and he looks up to see Taehyung in a white satin shirt, long white silky pants to match. His hair is tousled, as if he had been running a hand through it consistently, and his neck beams with several bright hickeys.

It stands out against his golden skin and white pyjamas, a few water droplets accentuating their range of vibrant colour.

Taehyung raises an eyebrow. “Are you staring at me?”

Jeongguk laughs, looking away. “Are you sure you don’t have an extra sense?”

“I’m certain that I do not..You just quiet down a lot after I enter a room.”

Jeongguk hums. “I mean, who wouldn’t?”

Taehyung lowers his eyes, a blush on his cheeks. He clears his throat. “You..” he hesitates, looking for the words to say.
Jeongguk leans his head to the side, smirking. “I?”

“You’re so cheesy!”

Jeongguk feigns hurt, gasping dramatically. He puts a hand to his chest, hovering over his heart. “You take that back.”

Taehyung sticks out his tongue briefly, provoking the other more. “I could take it back, but frankly, I don’t want to.”

“The absolute horror. My pride, Tae, you’ve destroyed it all.”

They’re both smiling at each other, on the verge of laughter. Taehyung makes his way to Jeongguk slowly, finding his way through his voice. “Have I?”

He gives a teasing smile. “You have.”

Taehyung puts his hands in front of him, finding Jeongguk’s fingertips. He holds onto them, leaning in closer, and brings his voice to a whisper. “That’s unfortunate.”

Jeongguk kisses him softly, smiling between their lips before suddenly grabbing his shirt, pulling him closer. Taehyung makes a little gasp of surprise, melting into the embrace as they kiss for a few minutes, focused on each other’s movements.

They stop before things can progress too quickly.

Jeongguk bites his lip. “I never get tired of doing that.” He trails a hand up to the other’s exposed neck, tracing some of the hickeys he gave him. Taehyung shivers and then sighs, that area always sensitive but now even more so.

“See?” Taehyung teases quietly. “You’re so cheesy.”

“Don’t act like you don’t love it.”
Taehyung smiles. “Only a little.”

He lies down at the edge of the bed, holding onto Jeongguk’s hand. His hair falls in front of his eyes, and he appears sleepier than the other had initially thought.

“I’m going to go take a shower too,” Jeongguk says, looking at him endearingly. He rubs the other’s cheek, viewing the way his nose wrinkles at the sensation and finding it cute. “I won’t be long though. If you need me just call out.”

“I’ll be fine, you worry too much.”

He gets up from the bed, remembering something. “Before I forget, my mom came into the room while you were showering.”

“Oh?”

“She wanted to tell you she was sorry for her behaviour, and that she won’t be so distant anymore. She does like you, truly, and she wanted you to know that.”

“Had I done something wrong?” Taehyung asks, his eyelashes framing the storm in his irises.

Jeongguk’s unsure what to say. On one hand he should just say the truth, essentially what his mother had told him, but on the other, he doesn’t want to give Taehyung false hope. They don’t know if Mr. Kim is his real father, and that would simply be unfair to Taehyung if he told him that his mother thinks that he is, without really having any proof (as far as Jeongguk’s concerned). It would be even more heart-breaking.

“No, not at all. You reminded her of someone she knew years ago, but everything’s been cleared up now. Don’t worry.”

Taehyung nods his head sleepily, a peaceful smile on his face. “I’m glad then.”
The expression on his face is priceless, and Jeongguk’s glad he had remembered to tell him. The relaxation that appears on his brows, on his mouth and on his skin is something he wouldn’t have missed for the world.

He goes to take his shower.

He doesn’t know exactly how long it took, but by the time he came out, brushed his teeth, and put some clothes on, Taehyung was fast asleep. He lies near the very edge of the bed, on his side with his arms extended out in front of him. Jeongguk’s surprised he hadn’t managed to fall off by now, but can’t seem to focus on that for too long as he centres his attention on how cutely the other sleeps.

It looks like he wants to hold something, his face relaxed, his hair still in front of his eyes. When Jeongguk gets closer to him, he notices that his hair is still slightly damp, dry near the corners but still cold and fresh. He looks peaceful and at ease of any worries.

Jeongguk carefully pushes him more towards the middle, his position worrying him as it had been so close to the edge. He tries not to wake him up, being exceedingly gentle and slow, but somehow the other is the lightest sleeper known to man, and he wakes up almost immediately upon his touch.

His eyes open groggily, a newfound tension near the corners of his eyes. “I didn’t mean to fall asleep on your bed.”

Jeongguk leans down to kiss his nose, bringing the covers up and over his body so that it covers up to his neck. “It’s okay, Tae. I was just pushing you so that you weren’t so close to the edge. Sleep here.”

Taehyung nods his head sleepily, his head relaxing against one of the large pillows. His eyes flutter closed. “Are you sure?”

“Of course. Go back to sleep.”

Jeongguk turns off all the lights, making his way to where the bed is with extreme hesitance. Honestly, he doesn’t know how Taehyung does it. He finds the empty side, crawling underneath the sheets as the winter air makes the room feel colder, even if the windows are closed, and he lets his eyes adjust to the semi-darkness. The other is warm even though Jeongguk isn’t touching him, heat radiating off his body and spreading throughout the covers. It’s comfortable and reassuring for him. Taehyung’s breaths are even and calm, soothing in the otherwise silent room. Jeongguk’s missed
having someone beside him like this.

The moonlight becomes more prominent, showering one part of Tae’s face with white light, and Jeongguk looks at him for a while, memorising his features. He wants to reach out and brush his fingers against his. He wants to hold him in his arms, and have Tae hang onto his hand, their bodies giving each other warmth and comfort.

However, he doesn’t. He doesn’t know if Tae will be alright with that, and he looks so peaceful and tired that all Jeongguk wants him to do is rest for now, without any interference or inconvenience he might bring. He plainly just wants him to feel cosy and secure.

“I love you,” he whispers, the urge to say it taking over him again. It’s a lot easier to say naturally, now that he’s already said it once, but that doesn’t mean he means it any less. In fact, he thinks his love for him grows second by second.

A soft smile lies on Taehyung’s face at his words, and he hums quietly. “I love you,” he whispers back, the warmth of the covers, the smell of lavender and vanilla and pine…the feeling of soft cotton sheets, their collected presence, and the sound of their restless hearts, singing them to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

this entire chapter was...chaotic for me to write to say the least. between tense then happy then tense again and then sad and WOW SURPRISE, and then more happy, and then a mix of tension and sad and finally...comfort.

whew, i hope u had fun reading all of THAT shit. even tho it's kind of all over the place i really liked how it came together, cuz idk, conversations in real life are pretty spontaneous like that too and i like making my writing as realistic as possible.

i also like seeing namjin's side story unfold,, i've been planning that FOR AGES and i'm so happy i've finally been able to fully address it. you'll be seeing more of namjin and sope in the next few chapters, but ofc a lot of vkook bruh there's SO MUCH DRAMA in store (But also good things) :) i proof read this but honestly i was really LAZY so there's probably a lot more typos and weird formatting errors but hey, it's about the writing, right? i didn't wanna postpone it any longer, and i especially wanted to post it before school starts because then who KNOWS when the next update will be.

ewjdks i've rambled enough, have fun waiting ;)}
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